

Vallum

The enclosing system of early medieval monasteries:

a study of eleven sites in south Co. Sligo.

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the *vallum* system in 11 early medieval monastic sites in south Co. Sligo and attempts to identify the *vallum* system through research of resources including O.S. maps, published reports and, especially, study of the landscape where the *valli* exist in the form of field boundaries though in many instances only as fragments. This study also describes the morphology of the *vallum* system and explores the symbolic significance of that morphology.

The *vallum* system was the enclosing element and an essential part of the early medieval monastic settlement. The *vallum* was constructed of an earthen bank with an internal ditch of corresponding proportions or a drystone wall without a ditch. Traces only of the *vallum* system, particularly of the ditch, are now evident or visible on the ground, in the maps or aerial photographs. The *vallum* system was three-fold and consisted of three curvilinear elements enclosing areas of: the outermost *sanctus* (holy - for mundane activities of the monastery), *sanctior* (holier - for the less important monastic duties) and the innermost *sanctissimus* (most holy - the most important religious space for sacred rituals and containing the oratory and founder's grave). The spiritual symbolism of the three-fold *vallum* system was profound. In some instances the *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* areas were conjoined rather than concentric and quite often no trace remains of the *sanctus vallum*. Most people look only at the monuments which are located inside the innermost enclosure.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The early medieval monastic vallum system

The *vallum* system of the early medieval monastic foundations in Ireland is considered in this study. The Irish monastic *vallum* system had its origins in the eremitic and cenobitic monasteries of the early church which had developed in the deserts of Egypt (Hughes 1948, 136-9). The eremites lived solitary lives apart from other people and were not bound by rules. The cenobitic communities were bound by very strict rules of behaviour (Waddell, H. 1998, xxviii). The community lived within an area which was rectangular in plan and enclosed by a single *vallum* of such slight proportions that it could be stepped over easily (Walters 1974, 9). The *vallum* was not a defence system but a sign to those inside and outside of the existence of a boundary which enclosed a special spiritual place (*ibid.*, 9). The monastic system moved from north Africa through Gaul to Ireland where the first widespread appearance of the early medieval monastery emerged with the curvilinear *vallum* system in the century after St. Patrick. The early medieval monastic foundations are an important part of Ireland's history and archaeology. There was a period of uncertain transition from the preceding Iron Age and perhaps some aspects and memories of that society prevailed. There were some unidentified influences that led to the adoption of the curvilinear *vallum* system for the monastic foundations (Ó Ríordáin 1940, 176). In this regard some of the inscribed grave slabs that were uncovered in modern routine internment in Carrowntemple are of interest in that the designs do suggest influences earlier than Christian (Rynne 1987, 43).

In Ireland the *vallum* was of such height as to impede visibility to the other side but not necessarily greatly massive. The *vallum* could be a drystone wall or an internal ditch with outer earthen bank which was surmounted with thorn (dePaor 1958, 52-4; Hughes and Hamlin 1977, 54-56). The importance of the *vallum* lay, as it had in the desert, in its symbolism as a boundary and liminality. The ideal early medieval monastery in Ireland was enclosed by a *vallum* system composed

of three enclosures (Jenkins 2010, 91; MacDonald 2001, 15-21). The outermost area *sanctus* (holy) was the domain of those who carried out the mundane duties of the monastery such as maintenance and farm duties of animal and plant husbandry. The outermost *vallum* of the *sanctus* was the least imposing structure, the *sanctior vallum* was more important and the *sanctissimus vallum* was the most imposing. The intermediate area, the *sanctior* (holier), was reserved for the less privileged members of the community who carried out the less onerous duties of the monastery. The innermost enclosure termed *sanctissimus* (most holy) was the area reserved for the abbot, the oratory, the grave of the founder and the cross (Jenkins 2010, 91; MacDonald 2001, 15-21). Only the very privileged persons were normally allowed to enter the *sanctissimus* enclosure. In Ireland some sites such as in Reask, Co. Kerry, (Fanning 1957, 73), the *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* were conjoined and both enclosed by the curvilinear *vallum*, being separated from each other by a north-south interior curving *vallum* with the *sanctior* in the western larger area and the *sanctissimus* in the eastern. There was no reference to the outermost area (*ibid.*). Fanning and other excavators did not refer to the three-fold *vallum* system. The outermost *vallum* of the *sanctus* was a less imposing structure. It may have coincided with the seashore as in Iona, or not built at all. The *sanctus vallum* quite often now is not visually evident. The *vallum* system was imbued with symbolism of spirituality, the significance and liminality of which was recognised by all.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aims of this work are to correlate the work of several sources especially Swan (1983), on early medieval monastic enclosures, where he identified the characteristic features especially the importance of the curved field boundaries which were revealed by the O. S. maps, with the aerial photographic studies (Norman and St. Joseph 1969; Mould 1972) and with the reports of archaeologists working on early medieval monastic sites in Ireland. It is intended to review published works relating to the early medieval monastic development

from its origins in the Middle East through Gaul to Ireland. It is intended to search for references to possible parallels in other countries especially Gaul. It is intended to study the origins and development of early medieval monastic settlements in Ireland and to study the status of the *vallum* system in 11 of these sites in Sligo which have been identified by Egan *et al.* (2005) as having fragments of the original *vallum* system. Where possible it is intended to attempt a delineation conjecturally of the original ground plan of the sites. It is intended also to compare these sites in Sligo with other early medieval monastic sites in Ireland where excavations and studies have been made, with the purpose of establishing the existence (or not) of a whole island 'canon of planning'. This study will also address the issue of verification and consistency of Swan's list of characteristic features of the early medieval monastic sites and how that list has borne the tests of time, excavation results and research progress since 1983.

This study is focussed on the complete *vallum* system itself of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* in rural settings in south Co. Sligo. The objective is to discover the existence and the extent of the *vallum* system in early medieval monastic landscape and to show that the system was more widespread than hitherto realised.

The study will show that on the whole the sites were small, poor and located on isolated bog islands or at the ends of ridges. This study will use O.S. maps from the early 19th century, contemporaneous reports, photographs both aerial and terrestrial, and will attempt to reconstruct the original ground plan. Further objectives of this study are to identify and describe the *vallum* system of the 11 early medieval monastic sites in south Co. Sligo.

In Chapter 2, an overview is presented of the difficulties experienced by the early Christians in coping both with Roman imperialism and the internal problems like Arianism (the Trinity) and Pelagianism (Grace of God through Baptism). The development of monasticism of the Desert Fathers in Egypt is

related (Finneran 2002, 11). The lives and progress of St. Antony the eremite and St. Pachomius the cenobite are considered. The layout of the monastery with its *vallum* is described (Hughes 1948, 136-9; Ryan 1931, 16). The movement of monasticism into Gaul and from there to Ireland is traced. St. Patrick's mission ostensibly to counter Pelagianism is related. Social life in Ireland is referred to and the development of monasticism in Ireland. References to the Tabernacle of Moses, the Temple of Jerusalem and the influence of the Holy Place are considered. The ground plans of the early medieval monastic site in Egypt and Ireland are discussed.

The meaning of the word *vallum* is explored with particular reference to the importance of the boundary and its meanings. Many different kinds of boundaries exist for many social reasons and some boundaries are not physical. Enclosures have always existed and are of different significances and these are explored in this chapter. The origin of the curvilinear *vallum* of the early medieval monastery is considered and possible prehistoric influences are explored. The dimensions and fabric of the *vallum* in Ireland is investigated. Ringforts and monasteries of the early medieval period are compared and contrasted.

In the literature review in Chapter 3, the development of the interest in antiquities is traced with reference to early monastic foundations and especially to the *vallum*. The developments from the Renaissance period are considered when the development of interest in antiquities is believed to have emerged through the depiction of landscape in paintings which were intended as aids for meditation on spiritual subjects. This interest in depictions was followed by an interest in antiquities. Informed people travelled and observed, visited sites, formed societies, wrote and sketched. The 18th century fostered many publications on Irish antiquities. In the early 19th century the political decision was made to map the whole country in an integrated manner. The opportunity was seized upon by scholars to research and to record the antiquities which were

to be depicted on the maps. The accompanying memoirs and letters of the Ordnance Survey, together with the later editions of the O.S. Maps of 1880s, 1914s and the 25" map, now comprise valuable resource materials. In the 20th century the first methodical archaeological excavations took place. The National Museum and university departments of archaeology were established, publication of learned journals flourished and professional archaeology emerged. With these developments are traced the new scientific approach and the increasing numbers of excavations of sites including the early medieval monastery.

In Chapter 4 the methodology adopted in this study is explained. This includes the research into characteristics of the early medieval monastery in Ireland. Swan's list of features associated with early medieval monasteries is a core foundation (Swan 1983). The *Archaeological Inventory of County Sligo Vol 1: South Sligo* (Egan *et al.* 2005) is of fundamental value in identifying the sites and their special features. From the inventory, 11 early medieval monastic sites are identified as having potential for study. Tables will be drawn up giving details of the sites and features. The 11 selected sites will be visited after permission has been obtained from land owners. Topographical surveys will be prepared including the surrounding field systems in order to identify those field boundaries with fragments of curving arcs encompassing the sites. The catalogue of these sites will be drawn up and the dimensions of observed features will noted. Most of the sites have only fragments of an original curvilinear *vallum* and some evidence, only, of a *vallum* system. This study will include considerable desktop studies complementary to field work. The relevant source materials consulted also will include aerial photographs from the National Monuments archives and GOOGLE Earth.

In Chapter 5, a catalogue will be prepared of all of the selected early monastic sites. Details for the catalogue will be taken from RMP records, O.S. maps, John O'Donovan's letters, O.S. field notes, aerial photographs, Swan's list of features

of an early medieval monastic site and Egan *et al.* (2005). The process will include field walking and studying the landscape and noting important features. These features and details of each site including co-ordinates, extent and parish and diocese will be presented in a table (Table 4.1). This work will be supported by photographs, aerial photographs and maps.

In Chapter 6, each site will be considered in turn in terms of Swan's list. The characteristic features of all will be considered and discussed and then presented in a table. A conjectural ground plan of the original monastery will be drawn for each site and is justified by the evidence based on the observed features of the site. Comparisons will be drawn with other early medieval monastic Irish sites.

In Chapter 7, the findings from south Co. Sligo will be reviewed. This study will draw attention to the existence and the importance of the complete three-fold *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* enclosures which are more widespread than hitherto considered. The work of Swan will be revisited and related to the evolution of the monastic system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*. The sacred symbolism of these issues will be emphasised. The features of the selected sites in south Sligo and some other reported Irish sites will be compared and the significance of the *vallum* system discussed as well as the view of a 'canon of planning' of monastic sites for the country as a whole.

It is hoped to verify:

- Swan's list of characteristic features of the early medieval monastic site
- the 'canon of planning' adopted for the whole island of Ireland
- the uniqueness of the curvilinear format of the Irish early medieval monastery
- the importance of the *sanctus/sanctior/sanctissimus vallum* system in Ireland
- the existence of concentric and conjoined *vallum* system

Chapter 2 Early Christianity and Monasticism

2.1 The scope of this chapter

The history of the development of the monastery and early Christianity is traced from the Desert Fathers in the near Eastern countries through Gaul to Ireland in the 5th century AD and the emerging of the unique Irish format.

2.2 The Desert Fathers

In the decades following the death of Christ, Christianity made steady progress until the persecutions commenced with Nero in 64 AD. Christianity had been flourishing in Roman north Africa (Finneran 2002, 11). Alexandria in north Egypt for many years had been a centre of an intellectual Hellenic Jewish population and it was there that the doctrinal philosophy of early Christianity flourished. In 306 AD Constantius, Caesar of the western Roman Empire, died. His son Constantine seized power and replacing, Diocletian, installed himself as Roman Emperor. Constantine, through the edict of Milan in 313, sanctioned Christianity in the Roman Empire which in time would become the official religion of the Empire (*ibid.*, 19-20).

Arianism

Arius (c.250-336 AD) disputed the divinity of Christ. The issue led to the Council of Nicea of 325 AD and the declaration expressed in the Nicene Creed on the dual nature of Christ.

Reclusive ascetics

As early as the second century BC, at the time of the Ptolomies, there were 'solitary reclusive ascetics' who were called 'Memphis'. These were hermits who followed a life of *anchoresis* and who had by choice withdrawn into the desert (Finneran 2002, 74). Christianity was three-fold and based on revealed doctrine, organisation and way of life. This was a tradition that was to continue and later intensify. Another way of life was asceticism in ordinary life and that

of the *continentes* or virgins who vowed themselves to perpetual continency. However, if they followed this life from their homes, the commitment required the consent of the bishop in order to ensure adherence to the dedication (Hughes 1948, 136-9). Christian monasticism emerged from these requirements of regulation and in 250 AD, St. Antony placed his sister in a house with women who, of a similar mind, had moved from their homes.

St. Antony – eremite

St. Antony himself observed an ascetic way of life and sought solitude as an anchorite or eremite in the Egyptian desert ((Hughes 1948, 39). St. Paul of Thebes had been the pioneer of this way of life (*ibid.*, 139). St. Antony sought solitude by moving in ever increasing distances into the wilderness (Finneran 2002, 2-3; Ryan 1931, 17). Soon others followed, living separate lives, receiving poor nourishment through crevices in the masonry of their dwellings (Finneran 2002, 74-5). Being eremites, they did not have a community, rules, buildings or enclosures. Some sought the desert to pursue an eremitic way of life. Others sought the desert to avoid the persecutions of Decius in 250 AD. Antony was preceded by St. Paul, whom St. Jerome called ‘the First Hermit’, who had retired to a cave near the Red Sea where he died in 340 AD (Ryan 1931, 16). St. Antony (*b.* 251) in 285 AD moved to Pispir which was a remote and wild place (Ryan 1931, 16-17; Finneran 2002, 74-5). There he found an abandoned fort and lived in isolation for 20 years. During Antony’s lifetime many others gathered nearby to live the same life in the deserts.

Pachomius - cenobite

St. Pachomius was born of pagan parents (Dunn 2003, 27; Ryan 1931, 26-7). He was pressed into Constantine’s army and, while he was in the army and experiencing life as a soldier, he encountered Christians and was impressed by them. When he was released from the army he became a Christian and after receiving instruction from Palaemon, who guided anchorites, he established a community in a deserted village on the east bank of the Nile. Pachomius was

determined from the beginning that all should live in one establishment with one 'Rule' (Dunn 2003, 25-8). He established his first monastery in 320 AD for like-minded men in a highly regulated environment.

A monastery was contained within a wall and consisted of a church with as many as 30 to 40 buildings. A community could have up to 40 members, each with his own cell. The Rule was comprehensive and the objective was to have a community that was self reliant (Finneran 2002, 21). The settlements in Cellia (in Egypt) had walled enclosures. The walls however could never have been effective defences as they were of poor construction being very thin (c.0.8m) and of no great height. The function of the walls was delimitation rather than fortification (Walters 1974, 9). Pachomius' foundations were for communal living and the rules were exacting, specific and comprehensive (Ryan 1931, 29-43). Monasticism, both eremitic and cenobitic, spread from Egypt to Palestine, Jerusalem, Syria and Mesopotamia. By the end of the fourth century monasticism was flourishing not only in the East but also in Gaul (*ibid.*,44-8).

Monasticism in the desert

Within a year of the death of Antony the Great in 356 AD, Athenasius began to write an account of his life in Greek (Dunn 2003, 2-3). This account of Antony, later translated into Latin by Evagrius of Antioch, was the first literary account of life in the deserts of Egypt (*ibid.*, 3-4). Its influence was immense. John Cassian in 420-30 AD wrote two works on monastic life in the desert. The experiences of John Cassian were to be the basis of his *Institutes* and *Conferences* which were his interpretations of the monastic life in Egypt and were widely circulated and read in the 'West' and he was to be of particular importance in the establishment of the monastic network in southern Gaul. (Walters 1974, vii). These accounts were of particular value to the monks of the 'West' who were to work in monasticism although in a very different climatic environment. One such account, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, which Jerome incorrectly ascribed to Rufinus, describes the progress and reports of the

visits to monasteries in the Nile valley. The authenticity of the account, despite expressed doubts, is supported by following on modern maps the course of the journey as reported (Walters 1974, vii).

The influence of the desert monastic movement was immense regarding the contemplative way of life. The people and their writings are still referred to today. The Christian monastic way of life spread to the east and then north and particularly north west to Gaul and thence to Ireland. The episcopate preference was for cenobitism because of the controllable entity (Dunn 2003, 73).

The experiences of the Desert Fathers in the establishment of the monastic system with its rules are of great relevance in understanding Christianity in Gaul and especially the monastic system in Ireland. Also of importance were the internal difficulties of the heresies of Pelagius and Arius and the deliberations of the Councils in the formative stages of Christianity. The Christian period in Egypt is considered to have ceased flourishing with the Arab incursions in 641 AD (Walters 1974, vii).

2.3 Monasticism in Gaul

Movement from Egypt

In 339 AD Athanasius introduced monasticism to Italy when he was a fugitive from north Africa and accompanied by Isidore and Ammonius. They were later followed by St. Jerome. Eusebius established a form of cenobitic rule in Northern Italy in 340 AD and Ambrose likewise in Milan (Ryan 1931, 51-2). Arles had been part of the Greek colony that had settled in Massilia (now Marseille) from 600 BC and had been an important centre for Aegean traders. Athanasius had founded a monastery in Trier. St. Hilary of Poitiers and St. Martin of Tours in 360 AD were to found monasteries in Liguge and Marmoutier respectively. It was in Gaul, and largely due to St. Martin of Tours, that monasticism first flourished in the western world (Hughes 1948, 143).

Island monasteries

After Rome was sacked in 410 AD, Honoratus founded a monastery in the deserted island (off the present French Riviera) of Lérins (Dunn 2003, 82-3; Ryan 1931, 62-3). Many who came to Lérins were later to become bishops. Because of the great influence of the writings of Cassian, Lérins soon became an important centre of monasticism (Dunn 2003, 82-3).

Christianity in Gaul

There is little evidence of the coming of Christianity to Gaul and the first event in the church was a historical record of persecution in Lyons and Vienne in 177 AD, when the bishop Pothinus, aged 90 years, was martyred with others who had emigrated to Gaul from Asia Minor. Eusebius established the link with Asia Minor. The Christians in Gaul, in the second half of the third century, were subjected to continuous suppression primarily from the Germanic tribes' invasions and then from the Roman responses to the invasions (Phillips 1933, 7-8).

The Council at Nicea and the issue of Arianism

The example of the success of monasticism in Egypt and Asia Minor is thought to have inspired the setting up of monasteries in Gaul in the fourth century. Also it is thought that St. Martin of Tours (*fl.* 317-397) had been the pioneer of Gallican monasticism when he founded Liguge and Marmoutier on the lines of Pachomius' monastery. There are however no references to enclosures or the *vallum*. Because of his support for the monastic system, Martin of Tours was subjected to the enmity of those in the episcopal and diocesan system. This led to Sulpicius Severus writing about his life in his defence in 397 AD (Anon. no date, 4). From the above accounts it appears that there is some disparity in beliefs concerning the establishment of monasticism in Gaul.

Monastic spread in Gaul

From the early fifth century monasticism spread rapidly and caused some concerns within the diocesan structure because of the perceived rivalry. The established ecclesiastical system was based on the system of urban hierarchical Roman civil service and hitherto the source from which bishops were drawn (Chadwick 1961, 29-30; Phillips 1933, 25). Fifth century Europe was in the process of change in that the Roman Empire was withdrawing not only from Britain but also from Gaul. Roman civil administration had more or less coincided with Christian administration and so, after withdrawal, Rome left behind in Britain and Gaul the infrastructure of cities, roads, structures of civil administration with defined areas of jurisdiction and the diocese.

2.4 St. Patrick and his mission in Ireland

St Patrick was born in Britain about 385 AD. When 16 years of age, he was captured, brought to Ireland as a slave and was tending flocks in Slemish (Bieler 1953, 3-4). After six years, reputedly, Patrick left. He walked 200 miles to a port where he found a trading ship bringing goods to Gaul. There, there was turmoil because of the withdrawal of Roman civil and military authority. Patrick then went back to his parents in Britain and, despite their entreaties, almost immediately returned to Gaul to Germanus' church in Auxerre where he undertook clerical studies (*ibid.*, 4-5). Shortly afterwards, Prosper of Aquitaine wrote of the disquiet expressed by Pope Celestine arising from the activities of Pelagius (who advocated 'free will' rather than God's Grace through baptism) in Britain, and the threat that Pelagianism posed to the unity of the church (Chadwick 1961, 15). In Auxerre there were discussions on the subject of sending bishops to Britain and Ireland to counter Pelagianism. During these discussions Patrick's name was mentioned, however he was not then selected. Tradition holds that Patrick travelled within Gaul, to Italy, to the islands of the Tyrrhenian Sea, to the monastery in the island of Lerins where Honoratus was abbot (Ryan 1931, 64) and then to Auxerre where he was associated with St. Germanus (*ibid.*, 60, 66). In 431 AD Palladius was sent from Rome to the Irish

'*credentes in Christo*' as first bishop (*ibid.*,16; Bieler 1953, 6; Ó Cróinín 1995, 14). Palladius passed through Auxerre where he rested for a while.

About a year later (*c.* 432 AD), after the death of Palladius, Patrick was consecrated bishop and sent to Ireland. In Ireland Patrick concentrated on the conversion of princes and increasingly relied on native clergy. Patrick appears to have adopted the existing territorial divisions (*túatha*) as diocese (Chadwick 1961, 33) although Ryan (1931,78) states that the frontiers of the bishoprics were not defined. Some feel that Patrick's mission was different from Palladius in that Patrick considered that it was to the heathen and not to the Christian that he was sent (Johnston *et al.* 1953, 15). Patrick felt that spiritual care was to be entrusted to the bishops and clergy in the church that he founded, and he ordained many bishops. Patrick also held that monasticism was to have an important, although secondary place (*ibid.*, 82–93). Some communities with abbots were established and there was a mention of a hermitage (*ibid.*, 81). Three bishops, namely Secundinus, Auxilius and Iserninus, came from Gaul to help Patrick, *c.*439 (*ibid.*, 82). Patrick died in the year 461 (Chadwick 1961, 18) shortly after writing *Confessio*. There has been some considerable controversy concerning the times of Patrick's mission and of his death which some put in *c.* 490 (O'Rahilly, 1942).

Before the arrival of Patrick there had been Christian communities in Ireland (dePaor 1993, 38-39). It is thought that Declan was ordained bishop by the pope who sent him to Ireland. On his way to Ireland, Declan (*fl.* 330 or later); (Kenney 1968, 311) met Patrick in Gaul and formed a friendship (dePaor 1998, 250-1). St. Declan is said to be a student of Dymna who built a church in Ireland. Very little is known of Declan (Plummer 1910, lxi). These first Christians have left some few traces in tradition and on the landscape and may have lived in the present diocese of Ross (Norman and St. Joseph 1969, 90). Two monuments are shown on the 6" O.S. map of the townlands of Clonmelsh and Garryhundon, Co. Carlow. One was an oval shaped enclosure of *c.* 60m

diameter and the other an extant oval shaped enclosure (c. 56 x 34 m) with a granite cross having characteristics shared with ecclesiastical centres in north England in Anglo Saxon times (Fanning 2003, 166-72). This seems to suggest a pre-Patrician custom of curvilinear settlements. Some Latin loan words such as *dia*, *cretem*, *ires*, *crabud*, *erlam*, *cruimther*, *manach*, *cailleach*, *cresen*, *domhnach* are thought to persist from these pre-patrician times. The pre-patrician saints referred to are Declan, Ibar, Ailbe, Ciaran of Saighir and are associated with the south east part of the country (dePaor 1998, 34).

2.5 Monasticism in Ireland

Monastic type in Ireland

Antony who pursued the solitary way of life has been variously defined as eremite, anchorite or hermit. The community life according to rule established by Pachomia has been defined as cenobitic or community. These two types were distinct and separate in the Middle-East but apparently not so in Ireland e.g. Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry, and Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. This problem of classification was first articulated by Henry (1957, 157) who felt that anchorites lived separately but in association with a community. This is a constantly re-occurring subject of discussion.

Ireland was never part of the Roman Empire. There had been communication with Britain particularly in matters such as trading, raiding and capture of slaves. Patrick was later to protest to Coroticus after his slave raid. This is evident from archaeological artefacts such as pottery sherds and coins, burials and artefacts in Lambay, Co. Dublin. There were references from abroad including Julius Caesar. Tacitus wrote on climate and of merchants' knowledge of ports and harbours in Ireland through trading. There was the well known map of Ptolomy (Raftery 1994, 200-5) and also the ogham stones in Britain and Gaul. Because Ireland did not directly experience the influences of Roman occupation including its infrastructure, the establishment of Christianity required recognition of, and adjustment to, the hereditary and customary system of land

occupation and society. Permission was required of local kings to establish a Christian centre in the *túath* (Chadwick 1961, 33). The new foundation could not be in the *dún* of the chief or on a prominent place. The see had to be situated in a locality some distance apart (Ryan 1931, 88). Elizabeth O'Brien (*pers.comm.*) felt that when the time came for ecclesiastical foundations the better terrain had already been allocated and so ecclesiastical sites are found at the edges of clusters of secular ringforts. This comment appears to suggest that ringforts preceded monastic foundations, or that ecclesiastical sites may post-date unenclosed settlement of land where ringforts were later constructed, or that a ringfort had been granted as a site. However some church sites had commanding views of ancient places associated with pagan kingship which suggests that there had been a deliberate policy or concessions on those occasions at least (dePaor 1993, 41).

Monastic origins in Ireland

There appears to be an acceptance that monasticism was the prevailing system of Christianity in Ireland 100 years or so after the arrival of St. Patrick (Phillips 1933, 120). This acceptance has not been complete. There are questions on how an episcopal organisation founded in the fifth century could become so monastic by the sixth, and how monasticism could be brought from the Egyptian deserts and the Tyrrhenian seas to Ireland, Britain and Wales (*ibid.*). However similar sites to those in Ireland, also without explanation, are found in western Scotland (*ibid.*).

A century before Patrick's time, St. Ninian in Galloway, Scotland, had founded a stone church dedicated to St. Martin where a loose form of monasticism may have existed. A century later this form appeared as *Candida Casa*, a school for training monasticism (Ryan 1931, 106). A similar school called *Rosnat* or *Magnum Monasterium* emerged later in the same site, to train St. Enda of Aran, St. Tigernach of Cluain Eois, St. Eogan of Ard Sratha, St. Finian of Mag Bile and St. Coirpre of Cuil Raithin (*ibid.*). Some of these were Columban but others

are earlier (Thomas 1971, 182). The possible East Mediterranean connection may be supported by the finding of Bii ware and the peacock motif on a slab in Reask and Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981, 159; Sheehan 2009, 192-206). There was evidence of iron working at Reask but only one fragment of a one-sided knife. There was also a fragment of bronze but mostly the finds were of stone e.g. spindle whorl, rotary quern fragments, a polisher and rubbing stone. There were also glass beads and fragments of pottery (Fanning 1981, 156), 'an abraded sherd of Bii ware' pottery (*ibid.*, 86) but an 'absence of objects of a distinctly ecclesiastical nature' (*ibid.*, 157). There are however the considerations that the earlier phases of occupation in monastic sites (suggested by the absence ecclesiastical artefacts and presence of artefacts associated with farming and iron works) of Reask, Co. Kerry, and of Church Island, Co. Kerry, were secular rather than ecclesiastical (Fanning 1981, 159; O'Kelly 1957, 136) thus indicating a change in ownership on a personal basis or of the political agenda.

Meyer (1913, 3-5) considered the question of how in Ireland 'the remarkable outburst of classical learning should have developed in the late sixth century'. Such learning could not have come from St. Patrick himself who was by his own admission a *rusticitas* (*ibid.*, 3; Bury 1905, 6). Meyer defers to Zimmer who asks where could this learning, and the associated books in Latin and Greek, have come from. He dismisses the suggestion that Great Britain might have been the source (Meyer 1913, 4). Zimmer in turn defers to Lucian Müller (*ibid.*, 5-6) who writes of the terror caused by the invasions of the Huns, Vandals, Alans and later the Visigoths from the early fifth century onwards. There was, as a result, an exodus of Gaulish scholars and, since Spain was not secure, Ireland could provide asylum secure from invasions (*ibid.*, 6-7).

Ireland and Pelagianism

There had been commercial and social transactions for some time with Gaul. Consequently Ireland had not been a *terra incognita*, but was also part of the

‘Celtic world’ (*ibid.*, 8-9) and so could be regarded as vulnerable to Pelagianism (Chadwick 1961,15). There were concerns in Rome about the danger of Pelagius’ influence in Ireland. In Britain, Pelagius had been teaching with some success on the importance of Free Will as opposed to Grace of God (Phillips 1933 vol 1, 83/4,109). In Gaul some contemporaneous writings refer to Christianity in Britain, Gaul and the dangers of Pelagianism.

In Ireland the only contemporaneous writings of the 5th century are Patrick’s *Confessio*, written late in his life, in which he gives details of his work, the many difficulties encountered, and his hopes for the future. There was also Patrick’s *Letter to Soldiers of Coroticus*, after that British prince, during a raid, killed and captured as slaves, some of Patrick’s converts (Meyer 1913, 11-12). There are also the ogham stones in Ireland, Cornwall, Wales and Manx but these are considered to be markers of events or places rather than records. The origins of the ogham stones are obscure and perhaps represent ‘the sounds of Primitive Irish’ as fourth century (*ibid.*, 40) with possibly earlier use of ogham writing on perishable wood (Binchy 1961, 7-18).

2.6 Early medieval monastery in Ireland

Ground plan of the early monastery in Egypt

The basic ground plan of monasteries that had emerged in North Africa was rectangular. The cenobetic monastery at Cellia in Egypt is regarded as the model of other monasteries in Egypt, and excavations in Egypt indicate that a rectilinear walled enclosure was adopted from the beginning. The central court was surrounded by several small rectilinear buildings or cells along the perimeter close inside the *vallum*. The early *vallum* was flimsy and clearly not of a defensive nature and since it could be easily stepped over, it could have been of symbolic value only. The orientation of the church was east-west with a door on the south wall (Walters 1974, 7-19).

Earlier monastic foundations in Ireland

There is the much quoted reference in St. Patrick's *Tripartite Life*, 'Patrick came to Fiacc and marked the settlement for him using a measuring rod *c.* 50m for the enclosure' (Ryan 1931, 89, 105, 286-9). The normal enclosure settlement, the *Less* or *Lios*, was *c.* 50m in diameter with a high wall of earth, three buildings, a large dwelling house, a church or oratory and a kitchen/refectory. Life inside these enclosures was severe, regular and little different in externals from monasticism, and 'unless the prepared site had been handed over, the founder marked out the boundaries of the settlement usually in the form of a *less* or *rath*'. This provided privacy and some protection without being a fortification. Firstly the ditch was dug and the rampart built, and then the edifices within' (Ryan 1931, 89, 95-6, 106, 285). On Ardoilean, Co. Galway, the monastic enclosure was an oblong *vallum* *c.* 38m by *c.* 23 m, the Inis Muiredach enclosure was pear-shaped. The shape was irregular in Glendalough and Clonmacnoise because of the terrain; Durrow had a circular rampart-like *vallum*. Farne had an almost circular *vallum* of rough stone and sods and Nendrum had three concentric *valli*, which were not quite circular (*ibid.*). Reeves had, in 1845, described Dundesert, Co. Antrim, as having a circular *vallum* of fosse and bank faced with embedded large stones to a height of about 5-6 m. Inside this at an interval of 7m was a similar *vallum* of bank and ditch. In the central area were a church of *c.* 30 m by *c.* 10 m with a burial ground. There were two entrances each was the width of the fosse and having large flat stones. In Ardoilean, there were four entrances through the *vallum* with a cross at the outer entrance of each. The main building inside the enclosure was the church. St. Patrick's standard length for a church was 9m (Ryan 1931, 105, 286-9). The trend towards monasticism, evident in Armagh towards the end of the fifth century, seemed to come from Patrick's teaching rather than external cause. Sanctuaries are sometimes mentioned as *nemed*, a borrowed word, from Irish and having pagan connections (Ryan 1931, 105, 286-9).

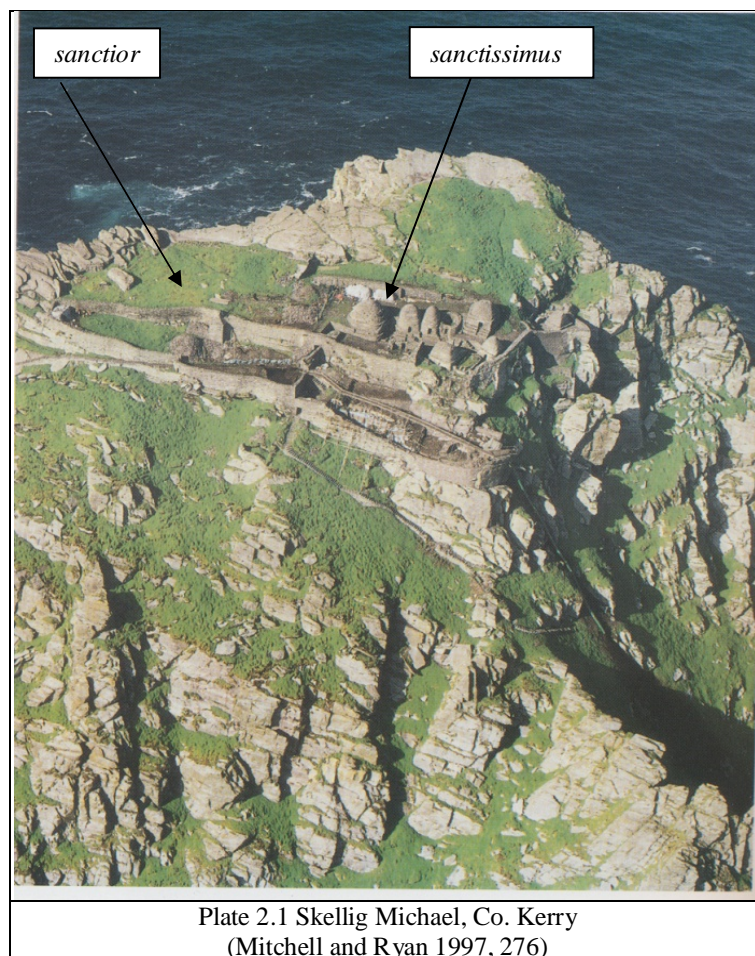
Iona monastery

Adomnan's *Life of Columba* provides evidence of a *tri-vallate* boundary system of limiting and defining a monastery and its surroundings in Iona. A similar system is considered for Clonmacnoise (MacDonald 2001, 15, 18-19). The study of the enclosure encompasses not only the praxis but also motivation and inspiration. On the theological side there is the potential influence of the scriptural paradigms of holy space upon the built ecclesiastical environment, *vide* the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis, De Locis Sanctis, Vita S. Columbae* (Jenkins 2010, x). The enclosure and layout of ecclesiastical settlement in early medieval Ireland reflect the generic conception of the nature of Holy Space. They were not ordered according to insular or vernacular influences but by the biblically inspired understanding of Holy Space (*ibid.*). All monastic endeavour is to some extent aimed at re-creation of heavenly space here on earth (*ibid.*). The religious topography is influenced by the canonical and hagiographical texts with insights and focus on the enclosure and the internal spatial organisation (*ibid.*). In brief these answer the questions why and how. The key elements within the *vallum* are: oratory, cross or cross-inscribed slab, tomb of saint or founder. More than one of these elements are found within the sacred core, that is the *sanctissimus*. The three enclosures are also termed Termon, Platea and Suburbana. It appears then that the early Irish Church had biblical influences and inferences, reflected in the ninth century *Plan of St. Gall* and in the Jerusalem Temple, rather than insular *schema*. The pre-Christian legacy of corbel, circular footprint and native building materials such as wood and stone are also in evidence (Jenkins 2010, xi-ii, xiv).

Internal spaces

In Ireland the ground plan of a monastery typically was round, sub-round, oval, pear shaped or curvilinear with a cusp and always enclosed by a *vallum* system. The internal area of the enclosure was divided into two or three distinct spaces. Depending on the circumstances the spaces were concentric or *tri-vallate* and were segmental or radial. At Nendrum, Co. Down there were three concentric

oval shaped enclosures. The church, burials and the round tower were in the inner enclosure which was the ritual zone - the *sanctissimus*, the middle area – *sanctior* - was for community living and activities and the outer enclosure – *sanctus* - was for farm working activities (MacDonald 2001, 15; McErlean and Crothers 2007, 335). This was the arrangement described in Iona. This type of layout is indicated by modern field boundaries in Carrowntemple, Kilboglasy, Drumcolumb, all in Co. Sligo.



In a difficult terrain such as Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry and Killabuonia, Co. Kerry, the *tri-vallate* ground plan was arranged in terraces with buttressing where necessary (Plate 2.1). The *sanctissimus* was the highest level.

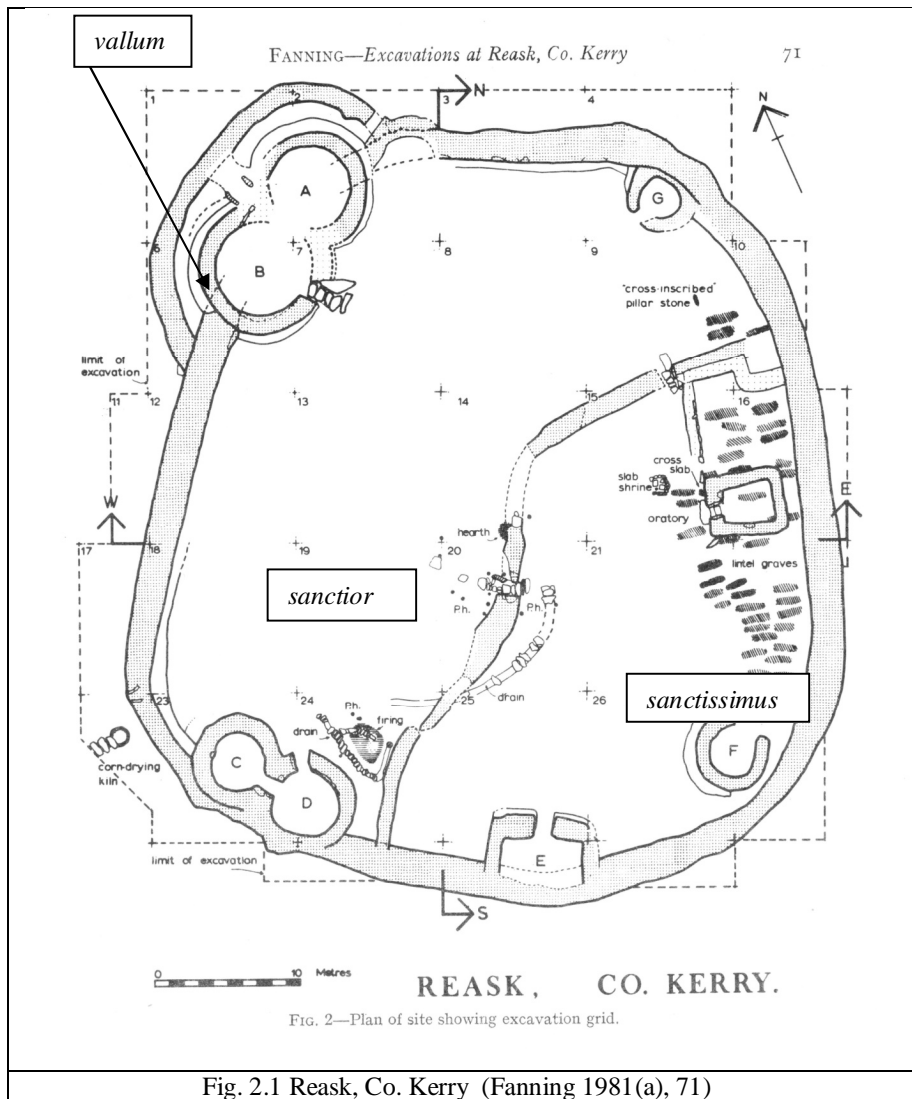


Fig. 2.1 Reask, Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981(a), 71)

Other sites were partially terraced and with stone revettments or faces. This was the arrangement at Carrowntemple, Co. Sligo, and Kilboglasy, Co. Sligo and perhaps at Innishmore, Co. Galway. Again the *sanctissimus* was the highest level. In other monasteries, internal *vallum* cut off segments of the internal area.

At Reask, Co. Kerry the internal division took the form of a curved S-shaped drystone *vallum* separating the internal area into two segments (Fig. 2.1). The oratory, slab shrine and graves were in the eastern section.

This arrangement was paralleled in Ballydawley, Co. Sligo. Internal dividing *valli* can be of drystone as in Reask, Co. Kerry and Ballydawley, Co. Sligo or earthen as at Moyne, Shrule, Co. Mayo. In Moyne, Shrule, Co. Mayo and in Kiltiernan, Co. Galway there are indications of radially arranged sub-enclosures.

Types of vallum

The *vallum* could be of drystone or earth and stone. The sites at Reask, Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981(a)), Innishmurray, Co. Sligo (O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008), Nendrum, Co. Down (Lawlor 1925), Kiltiernan, Co. Galway (Duignan 1951), and Ballydawley, Co. Sligo (Egan *et al.*, 2005) are all enclosed by a drystone *vallum* system. A noted feature of Moyne, Shrule, Co. Mayo (Manning 1987) and Ballydawley, Co. Sligo (Egan *et al.*, 2005), is the large size boulders in the lower courses of the *vallum*. In Caherlehillan (Sheehan 2009), the *vallum* is composed of stone slabs in both vertical and horizontal positions and is described as a low wall. The *vallum* could be a stone faced terrace as in Skellig Michael (Marshall and Rourke 1990, Bourke 2000).

In Carrowntemple, Co. Sligo the *sanctissimus* was in the north-west corner which is now a rectangular terrace (Wallace and Timoney 1987; Timoney 2002), and also in Kilboglashy (Keeley 1998). The drystone *vallum* can be substantial as in Innishmurray (O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008) or insubstantial as on Church Island, Valencia, Co. Kerry (O'Kelly 1958), where it was the last element of the site to be constructed. However, there, it is thought to have been provoked by the inclemency of the sea shore environment. In some sites the later construction is thought to be occasioned by the threat of Viking attentions.

The *vallum* was built of rubble and earth which had been excavated from the internal ditch. The bank (sometimes referred to as a rampart) and ditch structure is more common but also more subject to erosion (particularly the ditch) than drystone. Seir Kieran, Co. Offaly has a substantial *vallum* of earthen multi-ramparts which gradually diminish down the slope towards what was a marsh. Parts of earthen bank *vallum* survive as field hedges in Co. Sligo in the sites of

Carrowntemple, Church Hill and Drumcolumb (Egan *et al.*, 2005), as well as Killederdrum, Co. Tipperary (Manning 1984), and Ballyallaban, Co. Clare (Sheehan 1981). It would appear that an earthen *vallum* was easier and cheaper to build. Even in rocky locations in Co. Kerry or in the Burren, Co. Clare, if earth was available, for instance, in valley locations, then the choice would be for an earthen bank and ditch (John Sheehan - U.C.C. - *pers. comm.*).

Curvilinear and linear adaptations considered

In early medieval Ireland the particular monastic feature was the curvilinear *vallum* and the rectilinear church with an east-west orientation. Usually the *vallum* was not substantial and appears to have consisted only of a thin palisade or a hedge on a bank external to a corresponding ditch. The diameter of the *vallum* enclosure was much larger than that of the ringfort sometimes by a factor of four. The inter *vallum* areas were quite large and so the monastery was quite distinct from the *multi-vallate* ringfort. The ideal monastic plan as described by Adomnán was that on Iona (Jenkins 2001; MacDonald 2001). The inner area was exclusively for the use of the selected few and consequently activity and noise was minimal. Those people who were visible were identifiable by tonsure and habit and, except for bells, silence was the norm in the inner enclosure with increasing level of noise from the outer enclosures where mundane activities took place. Archaeological parallels with Iona are yet to be found in Ireland. Fragments of earthen bank and ditch in Iona had been traced (Mac Arthur 2001, 50-1). The insubstantial nature of the *vallum* was quite evident. However the ideal described by Adomnain is not easily visualised.

Considerations on the vallum system

A drystone *vallum* never had a ditch and has suffered less from climate and agriculture. Both elements of the earthen *vallum*, being vulnerable to erosion, have in many instances collapsed and become levelled. Quite often the ditch had become silted in or back-filled and its former presence only becomes apparent on excavation or by vegetation change, non destructive investigation. Excavation

in Killeddardrum, Co. Tipperary (Manning 1984) revealed a V-shaped ditch of dimensions *c.* 2.8m wide with *c.* 1.6m deep which had been infilled perhaps with bank material. At Millockstown, Co. Louth (Manning 1986), there had been no surface evidence of a ditch, yet excavation revealed three phases of ditch construction. The dimensions being from *c.* 1.4m wide with *c.* 0.6m deep, *c.* 2.7m wide with *c.* 1.5m deep and *c.* 3m wide with *c.* 1.4m deep. In Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly (Murphy 2003) excavation revealed a substantial V-shaped ditch with a flat bottom. The top width varied from 5m - 6m and the bottom from 1m - 2 m. Back-filling occurred in one operation in the expansion of that phase of the settlement. In Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath (Simpson 2005) excavation revealed a ditch that had an upper width of *c.* 4.5m and a depth of 2.4m. This ditch was unique in that it filled up with water when a stream was unblocked. Excavation revealed that there were seven phases of reconstruction and the ditch had been back-filled when reducing the enclosed area in one of the phases of reconstruction (*ibid.*).

2.7 Symbolism of the vallum as a boundary

A monk of the monastery of Cîteaux had a vision of being in heaven and on his return to earth, found the monks in the choir surrounded by light and angels as it had been in his vision. This incident was interpreted as an ‘earthly manifestation of heavenly space’ (Jenkins 2010, ix). However, the study of monastic settlements has, hitherto, been focussed on the praxis of the enclosure and spatial ordering and not on that endeavour of creating heavenly space in this world (Jenkins 2010, ix-x). In *Saltair na Rann*, attention is drawn to references to the celestial city and the use of words such as *síd* (abode of the gods), *bile* (sacred tree) and *forad* (a raised and sacred mound of earth). Many churches had been established on former pagan cult centres (Doherty 1985, 51-53). In the seventh century changes within the Irish church took place e.g. the cult of the saints with hagiographical writings (*ibid.*). There were also violations of graves which had resulted in the emphasis on the practical importance of a sturdy *vallum*. Attention is also drawn to the importance of the canonical works namely,

Collectio canonum Hibernensis, in which the three-fold division of the enclosure is perceived as a reflection of the tripartite division of the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Jerusalem. The early medieval Irish church, albeit of wood and stone, had a ‘biblically based understanding on how the sacred topography should be ordered’ (Jenkins 2010, x-xi; Doherty 1985, 51-53).

Replication was not attempted, there was rather a reflection of an ideal. The expression *termon* has been used to define the *terminus* or points of the inner enclosures of the monastic settlement (Jenkins 2010, xiv-v, 87). However the term has also been used to define the extent of the monastic influence or *paruchia* and this can lead to confusion in the mind of the reader.

Monastic internal disposition

There is consistency in the pattern of internal planning of the early medieval monasteries in Co. Kerry (Henry 1957,45). However the practice of an implicit ‘canon of planning’ has not been accepted by all e.g. dePaor (1958, 64) Hughes and Hamlin (1977, 73) have pointed to disparity in planning layout but they do suggest the possibility of ‘zoning’ (Jenkins 2010, 5). Thomas (1971, 109-10) thought that many ecclesiastical establishments developed from enclosed cemeteries, whilst others thought that secular settlements had been the original element. More recently there has been the proposal that some were proprietary churches and that a proto-parochial system was in operation since the eighth century (Ó Carragáin 2005, 129-30). There are also references to the canon law tracts, and biblical texts and their references to ‘cities of refuge’ with a sacred core and the decreasingly less sacred peripheries. The Temple of Jerusalem complex had its outer court, inner court and temple. In *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* there are references to the two or three *termini* around the holy place (*ibid.*, 58) and a standard plan appears to have had emerged in the seventh and eighth centuries (Doherty 1985, 57-59). It is unlikely that wholesale reorganisation of sites occurred and to date, there have been no discoveries in Ireland of unenclosed ecclesiastical settlements (Ó Carragáin 2005, 58).

Irish monastic foundations and the Temple of Jerusalem

In the case of Iona the identification with Jerusalem and the Temple appears to be reasonable in that the three concentric areas of increasing sacral exclusiveness was observed. The excavators of Skellig Michael have accepted that the settling monks were inspired by the Egyptian asceticism in response to the Culdee revival and the development of the monastic *paruchia* (Horn *et al.* 1990, 76).

The site at Reask, Co. Kerry, albeit on the small scale like most ecclesiastical settlements in Ireland, with its two conjoined enclosures appears to satisfy the concept of Jerusalem and the Temple complex. Others interpret Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* as providing evidence of the three-fold (concentric) *vallum* system of the monastic island of Iona and similarly Clonmacnoise (MacDonald 2001, 15-21). In some instances in other monasteries these boundaries were defined by crosses. Such markers could be high crosses as in Clonmacnoise and simpler crosses elsewhere. The *Book of Mulling* (Fig. 3.9) has a vague schematic drawing of concentric circles and many crosses (Jenkins 2010, 86-7; Lawlor 1897,167).

The issue of sanctuary has not been clarified as to the extent of protection of the person or the extent of the sacred ground and whether or not it included all area inside the *sanctus vallum* or the termon.

2.8 Boundary (physical, political, cognitive, subliminal) and the *vallum*

The word *vallum* is being used in this study to refer to the enclosing element of the early medieval monastic foundation. The *vallum* in its basic use is simply a boundary or barrier of a physical nature. In reality the *vallum* was far more than just a physical boundary. The word and the structure were replete with symbolism of the boundary between the sacred and the profane. The *vallum* was a sacred rampart separating the worldly from the religious and sacred and enclosing a sacred space and incorporating the sacred symbol 'O' with an

inscribed cross meaning enclosed totality (Rykwert 2010, 47-8). In discussing the meaning of the word *vallum*, many issues must be considered such as the morphology of the boundary and also its significances relating not only to practical and physical structure but also to sacral and supernatural (*ibid.*).

Ó Ríain (1972) in *Studia Celtica*, published *Boundary Association in Early Irish Society* and focussed attention on the subject of boundaries in early Irish society. He wrote that temporal or seasonal boundaries had received much attention as well as transition-rites or rites of passage in peoples' lifetimes. Landscape or topographical boundaries on the other hand had not received the same attention. Ó Ríain drew attention to the boundaries between tribal territories of waste or uncultivated land or woodland which came to serve as meeting places for assembly or trading purposes and trading routes. In the passage of time these nodes of activity lead to the construction of *oppida* (towns) and sacred places which in turn lead to the idea of sanctuary locations (*ibid.*, 12-4). These sites typically became established where routes intersected and in time led to two-road systems e.g. radially and peripherally. Road systems followed territorial boundaries (*ibid.*, 16).

In early medieval Gaul inter-tribal areas consisted of uncultivated, waste land of bog and woodlands. Boundary areas were bleak, inhospitable, infertile and dangerous. It was there that activities took place such as trading, assemblies, religious activities, mediation through consensus, inter-tribal transactions and routes for travel (Ó Riain 1972, 16-18). Some of these places became centres of healing, assembly, commerce. Others became permanent and developed into *oppida* (towns) and centres of power. In some instances chains of churches have been identified on what had been territorial boundaries and so suggesting that the organisation of the *paruchia* was based on existing boundaries (*ibid.*, 26).

Similarly in early medieval Ireland there were areas of mountain, bog and rough terrain which were of little use for most purposes. Such areas had restricted and shared rights which did not include strangers and would today be regarded as

commonage (Kelly 1997, 406-8). The law tract *Bretha Comaitchesa* (*ibid.*,17) recognised 12 types of boundary markers e.g. rivers, lakes, sources, woods, marsh and some humanly constructed features. Boundary areas were not clearly defined. In Ireland over 400 instances of churches located on traditional boundary areas have been noted (*ibid.*,16-8). It appears that early medieval ecclesiastical settlements regularly became established on boundary areas and that important assemblies (including religious) were held on boundary areas (*ibid.*, 25). The Old Irish law-texts are not clear about rights in commonages or unoccupied land. Boundaries however were recognised and accepted by the communities concerned (Kelly 1997, 409). Travelling was dangerous and possible only between places which were on old travel routes and linked waterways (Bitel 1990, 28). Five main roads were recognised which originated on the east coast and radiated to the corners of Ireland (Ó Lochlainn 1940, 465-73). Early boundaries were inhospitable places and defined boundaries such as townlands were later developments (P. J. Duffy - *pers. comm.*).

The landscape of early Ireland was a patchwork of secular farms and monastic settlements. Sometimes an occasion arose whereby a monastic settlement on a boundary was patronised by people from other sides of boundaries and part of the *termon*, that is an area recognised as being within the boundaries of influence of a particular monastic foundation, straddled a perceived boundary area. In general in Ireland the emergence of agreed and recognisable boundaries was a gradual and uneven process over time (Ó Ríain 1972, 24-5). However the suggestion that monastic sites were located on boundaries in early medieval Ireland has been questioned on the grounds that boundaries at that time were vaguely located and quite often fluid depending on the fortunes of the competing kingdoms (Hurley 1982, 310-11). In the later period some boundaries coincided with what would subsequently be barony boundaries (Binchy 1961, 109). There is, for example, the instance of the grouping of *bi-vallate* forts at Mohill, Co. Leitrim near the present meeting point of three provinces. Something similar occurs with the baronies of Eglisish and Ballyboy in Co. Offaly and the straddling

of boundaries by parish and barony (Stout 1997, 139, 141-3). Some Norman holdings did reflect earlier *Trícha Cét* divisions in Wexford (MacCotter 2008, 37–38). These comments however refer to the later part of the early medieval period.

Boundaries that are not physical

Boundaries that exist in social interactions can be deliberate and artificial as in language, race, social status and culture. They can also note stages in life cycles of birth, adolescence, marriage and death (Dowling 2006, 32). There are also the cycles in the calendar which were celebrated on low-key community occasions. Calendrical boundaries have been celebrated with major festivals and assemblies. There is a potential for ‘non-utilitarian’ significance to some artificial boundaries, they may also embody resonances beyond the practical and imply significance of magico-religious properties (*ibid.*,32). Boundaries have become associated with ritual and ceremonial activity in prehistory and also sometimes with formal or structured votive deposition. The physical boundaries may have been perceived as sacral or liminal locations as a ‘space between’ or a ‘non-space’. Some boundaries that are conceptual can exercise powerful influences on human behaviour and negotiations when the crossing of boundaries may involve complex social action (*ibid.*,16). Ambiguities on the definition or accepted usage of conceptual boundaries can cause anxiety and conflict particularly where there is a perception of magico-religious properties and issues of precept and ‘taboo’(*ibid.*,16).

Topographical boundaries have been marked by the construction of monuments including earthworks and a common aspect of late prehistoric Europe was the enclosing of sacred centres (Dowling 2006, 17). Boundaries both physical and conceptual have profound influences on human behaviour today and need to be considered in interpretation of the past and the importance of the *vallum*. Apart from the physical evidence of the ditches or the *vallum system* of the early medieval monastery, the processes whether cognitive, social, cultural memory or

sacral that impel the building activities, are not detectable in the archaeological record.

2.9 Enclosures

Ancient enclosures and ground plan

From early times in Europe boundaries of the foundations of some cities were marked in a sacral and ceremonial manner by a plough drawn by a white ox and cow, starting on the southwest and going anti-clockwise. Hence the association of the words *urbs* (city), *urvum* (plough) and *orbis* (globe) when referring to the foundation of a city. The enclosing walls were then built on the inside of the furrow (Doherty 1985, 48; Rykwert 2010, 29, 65). The outcome was the foundation of an occupation site boundary traced by the plough and oxen team with the cow on the inside to denote fertility and growth, and the ox on the outside to signify robust defence. However not many of the classical foundations in Europe were curvilinear, they were in fact mostly linear or orthogonal (*ibid.*,60). The boundary of the typical Pachomian monastic model in North Africa was orthogonal in shape with a number of small buildings or cells also orthogonal in ground plan parallel and close to the boundary and the larger orthogonal ceremonial buildings in the central area. Christian monasticism had emerged and developed in North Africa where the native population had been subjected to foreign control firstly from Greece and then from Rome for over 300 years. It was from the Greek community that Christianity came to influence the native community and the Coptic language ensued. The Arab intrusion came in the early sixth century after which date stronger *valli* and towers were built (Walters 1974) .

Enclosures in Ireland

In Ireland the late prehistoric enclosures, such as hillforts and royal inauguration sites, as well as the early medieval ringforts and monastic settlements all had enclosures of curvilinear shape and plan. It cannot be said with any certainty why this was so as there are no obvious shared influences or inter dependencies

in evidence. It is possible that this activity came from a desire to enclose as large a space as possible within a perimeter of given length. It is possible also that the origins lay in memories of ceremonial or cultural rituals. The importance of memory, both social and biblical, can be emphasised but memory is not necessarily monolithic but ‘diverse, transient and often contested’ and in an oral culture will not ‘usually retain a high degree of integrity for more than 200 years’ (Ó Carragáin 2010, 144).

The curvilinear enclosing system in early medieval monastic settlements in Ireland contrasts with the monasteries in the desert where the ground plan was linear. Irish curvilinear enclosing elements occurred in Iron Age and early medieval period monuments (both secular and ecclesiastical). There does not appear to be any explanation as to why Irish early medieval monasteries adopted the curvilinear ground plan. The features of the *vallum* design may be derived from several sources such as Europe, biblical from the Temple of Jerusalem or native influences from memory of similar constructions. In Ireland there are no records of intent or purpose explaining the adoption of the curvilinear plan of enclosures. What is clear however is that such curvilinear enclosing elements have been used in the building of hillforts, royal inauguration sites, ringforts and monastic foundations and consequently all of these monuments will be referred to in this study. It is necessary to distinguish the early medieval monastic sites as they appear at present.

2.10 Enclosures of Iron Age Ireland

Hillforts

The term hillfort is used to describe a large enclosure on a prominent hill top having a defensive character and exploiting the natural properties of the terrain. The enclosing feature was always substantial and the ditch when present was always on the outside. A drystone wall boundary did not have a ditch or fosse. The entrances were designed and built to hinder easy ingress.

In the classification of hillforts:

- the *uni-vallate* has one set of ditch with bank,
- *bi-vallate* has two banks,
- *tri-vallum* or *multi-vallate* have more than two,

(Waddell 2010, 374; Raftery 1994, 38-48; Raftery 1972, 39).

The ditch or fosse in hillforts was external although it may not now be clearly discernable because of infill resulting from later agricultural activities or natural forces. Such building cost a lot in terms of human power and resources so there must have been powerful motivating influences. All hillforts have a substantial curvilinear enclosing element of a defensive nature and are on prominent sites and visible from a distance. It appears that hillforts were enclosures of importance in their time, the use of which declined and went into abeyance towards the end of the Iron Age. They do not appear to have had any influence - morphological or sacral - on the early medieval monastery or its *vallum* system.

Inauguration, ritual or royal sites

Iron Age inauguration ritual sites include Tara (*Temair*), Co. Meath, Rathcroghan (*Cruachain*), Co. Roscommon, Dún Aillinne, Co. Kildare and Navan (Emhain Macha), Co. Meath (Raftery 1972, 42-3; *ibid.*, 1994, 64; Waddell 2010, 339; MacGiolla Easpaig 2005, 427-8). Royal inauguration sites also had an enclosing element. Some were tribal cult centres and dominated their province. The most common features are large curvilinear enclosures with significant ramparts and corresponding internal ditches.

Interpretation of enclosing element: Tara

The cutting of the great V-shaped fosse 3m deep into the bedrock in Tara raises issues of interpretation in terms of liminality, paranormal and magico-religious significance (Waddell 2010, 340-1; MacGiolla Easpaig 2005, 423-49; Dowling 2006, 15-37). The building of this ditch of such dimensions required great commitment of resources. This in turn implied that importance must have been attached to the spiritual and supernatural requirements accorded to religious practices and beliefs of the time and of that place. A review of the results of the

excavation of a part of the ditch in *Ráith na Rig*, and the outcome of the considerations, implies that right of protection or sanctuary did exist within boundaries enclosing ceremonial areas (Dowling 2006, 15-7). The royal site of Dún Aillinne, Co. Kildare, had an internal ditch and bank with a height of 4m on a rounded hill. The enclosed area is about 13.5h. There are similarities with the Emhain Macha construction (Waddell 2010, 358 – 361; Harbison 1988, 155-8; Raftery 1994, 74). Emhain Macha was the capital of ancient Ulster and associated with the great series of the Ulster Cycle early Irish tales. The site was encircled by a bank and internal ditch of diameter *c.* 50m (Lynn 2003, 8). There are also parallels with Cathedral Hill, Armagh (Brown and Harper 1968). The significance of the royal late prehistoric sites lies in their curvilinear construction of an earthen rampart with the fosse on the inside. There is also the suggested religious inferences and suggestions of liminality and sacred space and sanctuary. The sites are large and readily recognisable in the field.

2.11 Early medieval enclosures in Ireland

Enclosures - ancient influences and later adaptations

It seems reasonable to suggest that in a non-literate society some continuity would be transmitted from the former practices to the new religion. Despite the chronological gap between the Late Iron Age royal sites and the later early medieval monastic sites, there have been several references (Raftery 1994, 64; Raftery 1972, 42-3; Waddell 2010, 339; Mac Giolla Easpaig 2005, 427-8) to the quotation from *Féilire Óengusso* (The Martyrology of Oengus):

‘Oengus exults over the defeat of pagan rituals which had taken place at Tara (*Temair*), Co. Meath, Rathcroghan (*Cruachain*), Co. Roscommon, and Navan (Emhain Macha), Co. Armagh’.

Despite Oengus’ ‘crowing’ over the destruction of the pagan practices in Tara, Armagh and Rathcroghan, (Stokes,W 1984, 24) there does not seem to have been great movements in the early medieval period to take over important sites. There were however some instances of the taking over of former cult centres

(Doherty 1985, 45-7). There has been continuity in Kildare, where a pagan goddess was accustomed to preside over a festival celebrating the new Spring - *Imbolc*. Brigit was the title of the 'chief priestess', the last of whom adopted Christianity in the sixth century. There is a medieval period church in Tara and the church in Kildare provides a continuity from the pagan period of cult and site (Doherty 1985, 60-1). Kildare was a major ecclesiastical site where the outline of an inner enclosure is indicated by the present walls of the churchyard and street pattern suggesting an outer enclosure (Swan 1985, 86-9). Brown and Harper (1984) excavated a massive ditch that had been back-filled from an outside bank and included early medieval detritus. This site traditionally has very strong associations with St. Patrick.

Adaption of secular site in the early medieval period

Occasionally in Ireland a secular site was adapted for use as an ecclesiastical site as in Millockstown, Co. Louth (Manning 1986, 137- 41) or the site relapsed into secular use as is suggested in Church Island near Valencia, Co. Kerry (O'Kelly 1958, 90). With some monastic sites the origins could have been an earlier defensive fort, a secular ringfort, a private church or a cemetery. Some monasteries have definite defensive features such as a thick, high drystone *valli* with steps leading to platforms on the internal side and small entrances. This is the case in Innishmurray, Co. Sligo (O'Sullivan and O'Carragáin 2008) and Nendrum (Lawlor 1925) and so suggests adaption of an earlier defensive foundation. The physical origins of a particular monastic settlement quite often is not clearly understood. On the other hand at Caherlihillan, Co. Kerry (Sheehan 2009, 194), excavation revealed that a series of trenches (apparently drainage) were dug through the compact subsoil and backfilled with stones, loose material and boulders in the foundations contemporaneously with the building of the *vallum* system. From this the conclusion was that this particular foundation was designed as a monastic site *ab initio*.

Distinctive monastic vallum system and contemporaneous enclosures

The focus of this study is on the *vallum* system which is the most distinctive feature of identification of early medieval monastic foundations. There are other accepted features of the early medieval monastery that have been referred to above, however in the field the *vallum* system is most important in the process of identification of early medieval monastic foundations and of the distinction from the other field monuments such as the almost contemporaneous ringforts. With this in mind it is considered desirable to review the characteristic and distinguishing features of field monuments from the beginning of the early medieval period.

It is in the period of Christian conversion in the fifth and sixth centuries that monastic enclosures and ringforts appear (Ó Carragáin 2005, 59). The early medieval enclosures are low key compared with the ostentation of previous times. Crannógs also developed in Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries (Stafford 2009, 91, 432). It will never be possible to know the precise number of ringforts built and the best estimate of a possible number is given as 45,119 in 1995 (Stout 1997, 53).

One of the distinguishing features of the ringfort is the curvilinear enclosing bank with outside ditch. Ringforts comprise the most numerous and widespread of all monuments in Ireland (Ó Ríordáin 1953, 1; Stout 1997, 11; Edwards 1990, 11-33). The accepted and enduring view is that most of these structures were domestic with a protective element for cattle (Ó Ríordáin 1953, 5), and these are the only domestic monuments to survive in significant numbers (Stout 1997, 11). Since most ringforts were farm settlements, the quality of the soil was of prime importance. Low lying, peats, sea shore and shallow soils were avoided as were high exposed areas. It appears, from the absence of a strong fence on the bank with the poor design of the ditch and entrances, that defence was not of prime importance except perhaps against cattle stealing (EMAP Report 2.1, 65). Nevertheless sites that afforded a good view of surrounding areas were favoured

for ringforts (Edwards 1990, 19). Ringforts are usually found in sheltered positions below the summit of a hill except in drumlin country and even there they do not encircle the summit (Raftery 1972, 38).

The native origins of ringforts are uncertain as somewhat similar settlements with much less frequency have been noted on the fringes of early Roman influence in north and west Britain (*ibid.*, 18-9). From the study of the distribution pattern of ringforts in Ireland, a European parallel is accepted with regard to the dispersed individual farmsteads there (Stout 1997, 32). The term ringfort is not accurate since the structures quite often are neither ring-like nor fortified (O'Kelly 1970, 50).

It has been written that 'in its simplest form the ringfort may be described as a space, most frequently circular, surrounded by a bank and fosse or simply by a rampart of stone. The bank is generally built by piling up inside the fosse the materials obtained by digging the latter' (Ó Ríordáin 1953, 1). The variety of names include: *ráth* (always means construction by digging of earth and incorporated), *lios* (the space enclosed), *dun* and *daingean* (strongly built with stone faced ramparts), *caiseal* and *cathair* (built entirely of stone), (O'Kelly 1970, 50-1; Edwards 1990, 12-5).

Most ringforts have a living space varying from diameter of *c.*15m to *c.* 35m according to local variations (Edwards 1990, 12-5) and indicate the status of the occupier (Kelly 1997, 361). Most ringforts are *uni-vallate* but *bi-vallate* and *tri-vallate* structures also occur reflecting the status of the occupier (Stout 1997, 16-18). There are zonal distributions of high and low density of ringforts and distribution, spatial organisation and size indicate the social status of the occupier (Stafford 2009, 432; Stout 1997, 110).

Monastic sites compared with ringforts

In Ireland the received progression of development of an early medieval ecclesiastical site was:

- the construction of the curvilinear *vallum* system
- the building of the wooden rectangular oratory (or clay and wattle) (*dairtheach* – oak house) in the central area
- drystone replacement oratory (*damhleach* or stone house) in the site of and bigger than the original oratory sometimes cutting the grave of the founder;
- the stone slab reliquary
- later round tower or *clocteach* or bell house

(Herity 1995, 19-56, 57–65).

This development appears to shadow or correspond closely with the early Egyptian Pachomian model. However in Ireland the only orthogonal building was the oratory. The *vallum* system and buildings were round in plan and this is in contrast to the Egyptian practice. There are large numbers of both ringforts and monastic sites in the country and the importance of recognising the distinguishing features of both cannot be over emphasised.

The early medieval monastery was a busy place not only with religious duties but also with the daily and seasonal routines of agricultural, industrial and those internal activities which were necessary for self sufficiency just as in the ringfort. Ó Carragáin (2010, 59) wrote that the bulk of enclosures both ringfort and monastic are from the sixth to the ninth centuries. The enclosing element of both is curvilinear in plan. However the diameter of the area enclosed by the *vallum* of the average early medieval monastery measured about 90m which is considerably larger than that of the average ringfort. The ditch or fosse of a monastery is on the inside of the *vallum* whereas the ringfort ditch is on the outside. In the *multi-vallate* ringforts the spaces in between are small when compared with the three-fold *vallum* monastic system. The early medieval monastic site has at least some of the features listed by Swan (1985) which are never in the ringfort. Monastic sites are often found on the lower and outer margins of ringfort settlements (Stout 1997, 100-8). The problem of distinguishing both has been approached by Swan and Hamlin (Hamlin 1992,

138; Swan 1998, 5). The *vallum* or indications of its footprint are of importance in the identification not only of early medieval monasteries but also some towns (*oppida*) still in existence today such as Duleek, Armagh, Kells, which had developed around early medieval monasteries (Swan 1985, 77; Doherty 1985, 45).

Concluding comments

The Christian monastic system which emerged in the third century AD was of two types namely eremitic or sole hermit and cenobitic where a group assembled as a community with strict rules. Both systems came to Ireland from North Africa through Gaul and appeared to settle in harmony with each other. The cenobitic system emerged as the early medieval monastery in Ireland and in a format unique to Ireland. There are no references to similar sites in Gaul. The pre-Patrician sites in the south-east of Ireland appear to have traits shared with some sites in Scotland but otherwise there are no parallels abroad apart from Irish influences. It was in the post-Patrician period that the now familiar tri-vallate system emerged either as concentric or conjoined format emerged. The *vallum* system had powerful symbols of boundary which had physical as well as spiritual significances. The Irish curvilinear boundary system for early medieval monasteries was unique and its origins have not been identified. The *vallum* had significant boundary implications. The curvilinear monastic system appears to have been influenced by biblical studies and does not appear to have been influenced from earlier period Irish monuments. Ringforts are distinguishable from monasteries.

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3.1 The awakening of interest in antiquities through visual expression.

In this chapter there is an attempt to identify the origins and to trace the progress of the interest in antiquities with reference to ecclesiastical archaeological remnants through literature and representative art from earlier times. The method adopted is primarily chronological with emphasis on persons of particular importance of that time. From before Renaissance times there has been a continuing interest in the depiction of landscape as an aid for meditation on spiritual matters. Humankind has always had a continuing interest in landscape with its antiquities. This interest including its portrayal was shared in Ireland.

Edward Lhuyd 1700s

Interest in archaeology had developed parallel with an 18th century interest in the landscape. People came to sites of ancient ruins, wondered, described and then sketched. From this developed a trade in sketches and in the collection and distribution of artefacts. Early collections were of a haphazard nature without contextual reference. Edward Lhuyd came from south-west Wales and travelled extensively in Wales, England, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Brittany, developing his interests in antiquities. Lhuyd was the first to recognise the similarities and distinctions between the Brythonic or P-Celtic (Breton, Cornish and Welsh) and Goidelic or Q-Celtic language (Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic). Lhuyd visited Ireland in 1700, and in pursuit of antiquarian interests, sought out places of known importance. He also witnessed 'excavations' in Newgrange, Co. Meath and was the first to realise the importance of stratigraphy in archaeology that is that the lowest layers in excavation are the oldest. Lhuyd's interests were broadly based and included botany and language as well as antiquities (Hayes 2009, 499-500).

3.2 Ware and Harris 17th/18th century

From the 17th century in Ireland there was an increasing interest in matters antiquarian and groups of people formed societies such as the Royal Irish Academy and the Dublin Society, later named the Royal Dublin Society. One such society that did not survive was the Irish Antiquarian Society which had included distinguished persons such as General Vallancey, Charles O’Conor of Belnagare, Edward Ledwich, Mervyn Archdall, William Beaufort and William Burton Cunningham of Slane Castle, most of whose works have survived and are respected today. Outstanding among those was Sir James Ware who, in 1613, succeeded his father (of the same name) to the office of Auditor General in Ireland. Ware collected Irish manuscripts including *The Book of Ulster*. His life was spent in the study of ancient manuscripts (O’Sullivan 2009, 798-9).

Writing in Latin, Ware, from about 1628, compiled his collected material which Harris translated into English in 1764. This publication is in two volumes of folio size and has 21 large copper plates. Volume 1 has the title of *Antiquities of Ireland* and Volume 2 of *Writers of Ireland*. It is with Volume 1 that this study is concerned wherein attention is directed to the background of the people of Ireland. The writer refers to the round towers with a description of several followed up by speculation as to their origin. He thought that their purpose was a haven for monks and he drew a parallel to the ‘stylite’ form of eremitism in the east where the ‘anachoret’ hermit spent his life alone and isolated on the top of a pillar (Harris 1764, 127-33). Ware quotes St. Bernard ‘that Malachy thought proper to build a lime and stone oratory in Bangor in 1145 such as he had seen in other parts of Ireland’ (*ibid.*, 134). These words, not fully understood, are now considered to refer to buildings of stone and mortar of the round towers, Christ Church and St. Michael’s in Sheep Street, Dublin. In the chapters that follow, Ware deals with ‘anachorites’ (*sic.*). The description, taken from *The Book of Ulster*, the manuscript which he had acquired, of those who lived in desolate places in small cells. Ware also refers to ‘dane’s forts’ or ‘dane’s raths’, fortified

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places such as *dun*, placenames, underground caves, ‘intrenchments’, cromleachs, cairns, pillar stones, dress, ornaments, weapons, *comharb*, *erenach*, *termon* lands and tonsures. Ware refers to the ancient schools in Armagh, Clonard, Co. Meath, St. Finian and St. Fachnan. The monastic institutions that he describes are those of post 12th century reforms at home and abroad. Whilst his interest in the early medieval period is clear, and much of his material refers to that time, he does not refer to early ecclesiastical monasteries in contexts of fabric or layout (Harris 1764, 134-5, 137, 138, 139, 140, 144, 174-8, 232-38, 238-42).

Francis Grose 18th century

In late 18th century England, Francis Grose recognised the growing interest in ancient monuments and their settings. After his father’s death, Francis having a talent for art, travelled through England and Scotland producing drawings of antiquities. In 1791 he came to Ireland where he completed his corpus of work which was later published in two volumes of water coloured sketches with interesting commentary. Grose died in May 1791. He had, on coming to Ireland, sought out Edward Ledwich whose previous work and interest in antiquities were well known. Ledwich wrote the preface to Grose’s posthumously published work in 1791.

Grose’s view of monasticism in Ireland is mainly of the post 12th century reforms. He depicted only one early medieval monument, a *rath*, on a hill top encircled by an entrenchment and bank without stakes (*ibid.*, xxiii, xxiv). However there is no indication of place, so the reader must conclude that what he depicted was what he had heard of rather than actually saw. He quotes Lhuyd who described the earth-defence surmounted by stakes (*ibid.*, xviii). Of the medieval period, some churches are in a graveyard setting, some have round towers, while others have subsiding stone crosses and there is one high cross included. Each illustration is accompanied by a factual contemporaneous commentary. In Volume 1 there are 140 plates. Whilst some of these refer to

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early medieval monasteries, none could in any way be described as illustrative or depictive of an early medieval monastic *vallum*. In Volume 2, Grose quoted Bede who wrote of an Irishman, St. Cuthbert, who in 684 on Lindisfarne Island, had built a monastery with an outside wall ‘the height of a man’ to restrain his sight (*ibid.*, Volume 2, iv.). This quotation has been much repeated by other writers. There are 120 illustrations in Volume 2. The first plate has two illustrations (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, iv fig 1) of Dun Aengus with its massive walls and most impressive, but fictional, internal buildings of post 12th century reforms of an ecclesiastical nature and the omission of *chevaux de frise* on the outside. The poor quality reproduction of the illustrations show influences of romantic ideas such as medieval churches within Dun Aengus (Fig. 3.1).

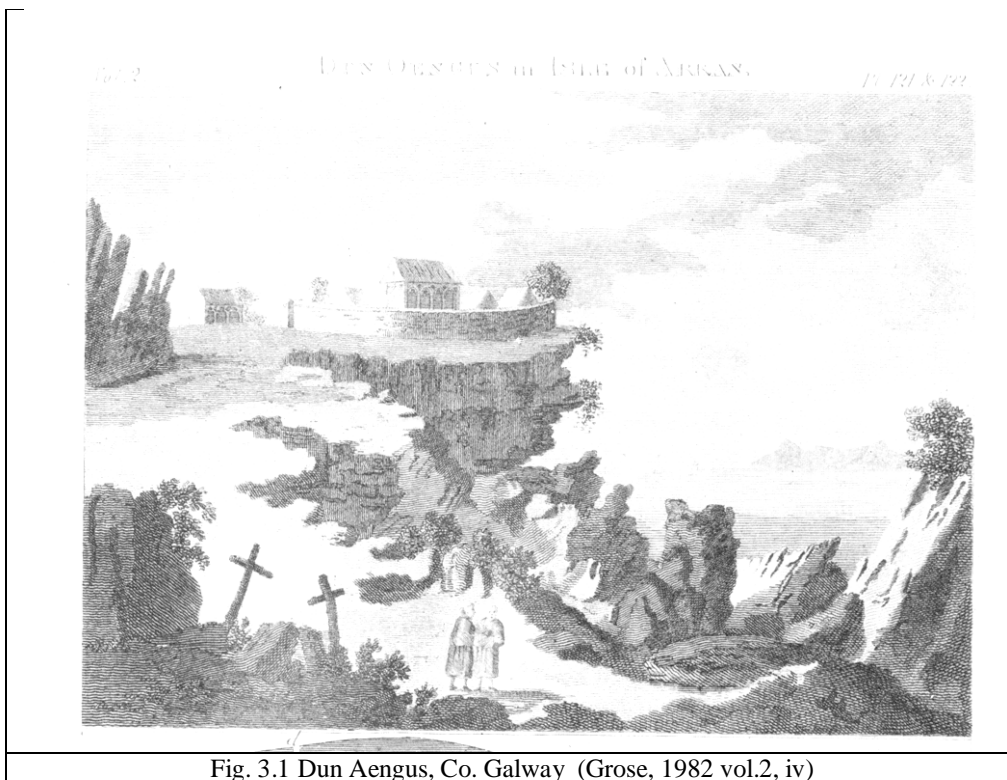


Fig. 3.1 Dun Aengus, Co. Galway (Grose, 1982 vol.2, iv)

It appears that artistic licence was deliberately employed to convey the erroneous impression of an ecclesiastical foundation. On the same page , there is

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an impressive ground plan of Innismurray (Fig. 3.2). From the descriptions it appears that Grose felt that a solid drystone *vallum* was a feature of the early medieval monastery. The plan of Innismurray has appeared in several publications but always without attribution (Harbison 1991, 246). It appears that Francis Grose was the first writer to refer to the early medieval monastery and its *vallum*.

Daniel Grose 18th century

Daniel Grose, a nephew of Francis, continued the work of his uncle. The reproductions are in colour and attractive. This work was edited by Roger Stalley and published by The Irish Architectural Archive in 1991. Depicted are romanticised views of medieval monuments, castles, monasteries and carved ornamentation in stone. Only one depicts a *vallum* which is a capped stone wall and clearly of much later times, of Kilonan 'Abbey'. Daniel Grose's work has to be regarded as part of the school of romantic views of Ireland rather than of archaeological interest.

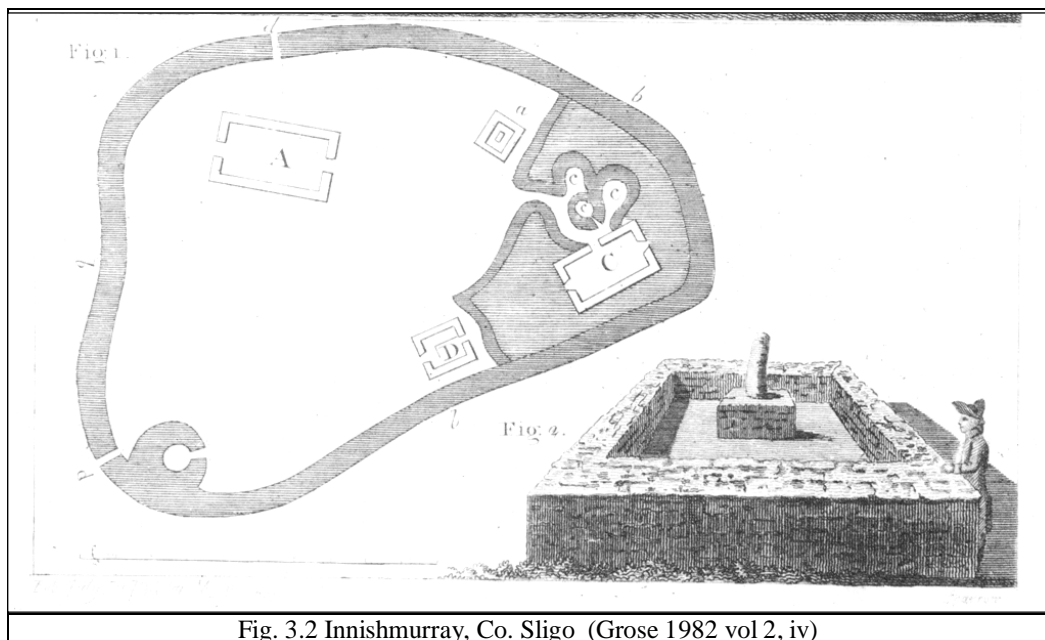


Fig. 3.2 Innismurray, Co. Sligo (Grose 1982 vol 2, iv)

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Beranger 18th century

Another collection of views of the ancient past was that of Beranger (*fl.* 1760-1780) who was forgotten about until Sir William Wilde revitalised an interest in his work in the 1870s. Beranger was an artist by profession and spent some time sketching Irish antiquities and was patronised by the Irish Antiquarian Society (Harbison 1991, 6-7). Here also the emphasis was on medieval monuments and there are not any references to early medieval monasteries or the *vallum*.

Cooper 18th century

Yet another lost collection was the work of Austin Cooper (FSA), who worked from 1776 to 1779. The drawings are now in the National Library (21229 TX) (1) and (21229 TX) (2) (Harbison 2000, 9). Harbison included relevant information and occasionally a small modern photograph on the page opposite the drawings.

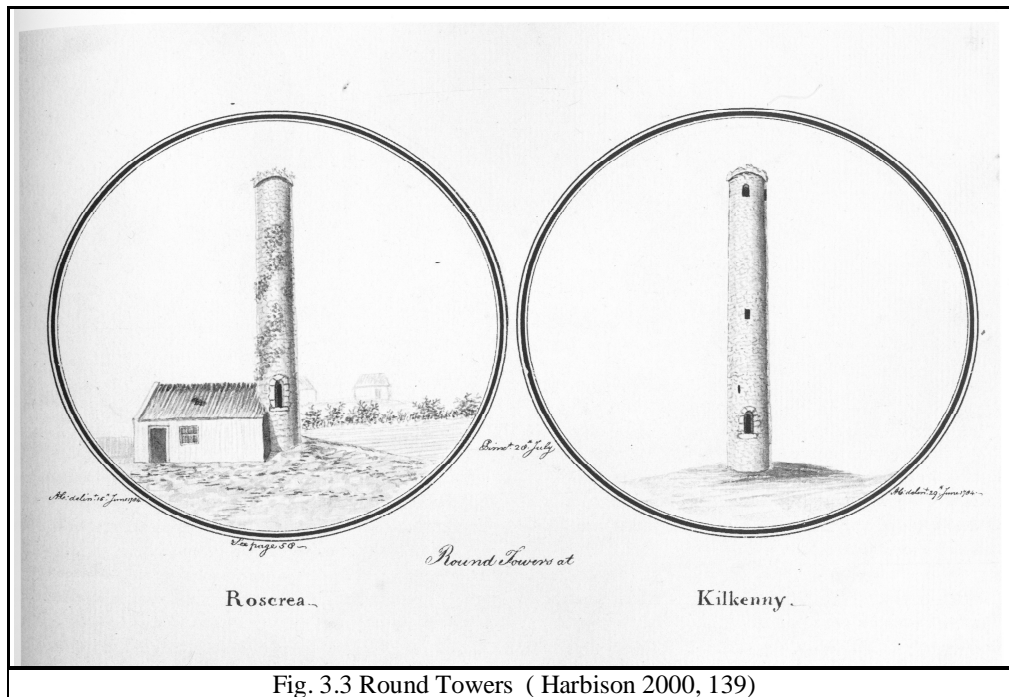


Fig. 3.3 Round Towers (Harbison 2000, 139)

There are two views (from north-east and south-east) of Monasterboice, Co. Louth. There are no references to early medieval monasteries or of *valli*. But there are depictions of round towers (Fig. 3.3). These are depicted in a graveyard

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setting with a linear stone wall having a round tower, two high crosses, church ruins with intact east and south walls and a phalanx of subsiding headstones. Cooper also has the plan of Innismurray, Co. Sligo which has been referred to above in the comment on Grose and Beranger and which is considered to be the first published of Innismurray (Harbison 1991, 246).

There is a comprehensive collection of Irish topographical prints and drawings in the National library of Ireland. The revised catalogue includes over 2,000 entries some of which are, in themselves, collections. It appears from a study of the published works of Francis Grose, Daniel Grose, Beranger and Cooper that the awakening interest in antiquities from the late 18th century did not, apart from Innismurray and the quotation from Bede, include much on early medieval monasticism or the *vallum*.

3.3 Ireland's pioneers in the early 19th century

Ledwich 1804

Ledwich, who had introduced the volumes of Grose, provided continuity to the developing antiquarian interests from the late 18th century into the 19th century with his work on the antiquities of Ireland (Ledwich 1804). The work is remarkable in the range of information including mythology and facts and an understanding of past events. Ledwich wrote comprehensively of the coming of St. Patrick, the Council of Arles and the persecutions of Dioclesius (*ibid.*, 1804, 54-64). Ledwich did not accept the view that Kieran, Declan, Ailbe and Ibar were in Ireland before St. Patrick. He wrote of the life of St. Patrick and his peaceful methods of converting people from 'druidic influences' He also wrote of the Christian foundations on what had been pagan sites of oak groves, from which emerged the preponderance of placenames with '*doire*' and '*kill*' (from *coill* or wood). Ledwich felt that the high crosses were coeval with the round towers (*ibid.*, 75-8). Ledwich was aware of the traditional differences that had arisen in Ireland between the earlier Christians and later arrivals and he felt that

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these differences arose from the fact that early Christianity came to Ireland from the Middle East (presumably through north Africa and Gaul) and that the later arrivals came directly from Rome.

Ledwich was very well informed on the early medieval period and early monasticism and wrote that 2,000 monks attended the funeral of St. Martin of Tours and the swarm of monks that came from Egypt to the island of Lérins (*ibid.*, 88-200). He wrote of St. Antony, the rules of Pachomius and of Basil. Ledwich felt that monasticism in Ireland had become well established by the sixth century with its cenobites (with community and abbot), the anachorites (hermits) and those with no rules or community, the sarabaites (*ibid.*, 92).

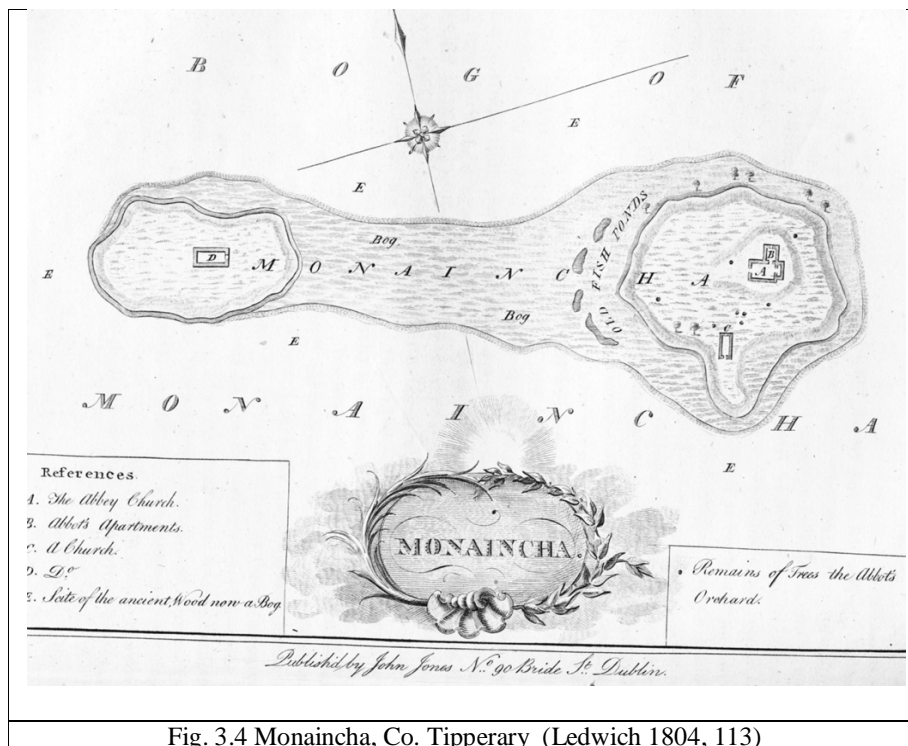


Fig. 3.4 Monaincha, Co. Tipperary (Ledwich 1804, 113)

Ledwich referred to the *Ceile De* or Culdees, their motivations and their foundation in Monaincha, Co. Tipperary (*ibid.*, 102). Ledwich described the buildings of Monaincha and includes a plan of the foundation including the *vallum* on the island in the bog (Fig. 3.4). This is his only description either

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visual or written of an early medieval ecclesiastical monastery. The reader is led to infer that this arises from the writer's own regard for the Culdee movement. Ledwich then moved his attention to the stone roofed churches at Killaloe, Doulagh, Glendalough, Cashel and Cormac's chapel (*ibid.*, 138-42).

It is easy to understand why Grose, when he came to Ireland, should seek out Ledwich. Their short association was remarkably productive. Grose died shortly afterward he came to Ireland and Ledwich, by introducing and publishing his work, provided a continuity in the developing interest in antiquities from the late 18th century. Overall Ledwich was remarkably well informed about ecclesiastical matters in the early medieval period and he did refer to 'monachaism' (*ibid.*,102) but apart from Monaincha, which was late in the early medieval period, he wrote nothing on monasteries or the *vallum* and gave no attention to the enclosures, monastic life or the fabric of the immediate environment.

3.4 Ireland to the end of the 19th century

The O. S. and John O'Donovan

The Ordnance Survey was established in the early 19th century (Doherty 2004, 13-4). Its purpose was to provide an acceptable basis for local taxation based on the relative values of property and land for the whole country. Several teams were involved in order to establish the boundaries, the placenames, the valuation of the property and accurate maps. Hitherto the best maps available were the Grand Jury maps which were county maps independent of each other and did not interlace nationally and were not reliable enough for a nationwide system of property taxation (*ibid.*).

The activities of the O.S. were to provide, in time, two great tools for archaeologists. These were (a) the maps themselves showing townlands, roads and later field boundaries and monuments and (b) the placenames. The process was to start in the north of the country and work south to cover the entire

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country. At first it was hoped to have a Memoir for each local area and this practice was commenced but later discontinued because, it was claimed, of the prohibitive cost. The memoirs that had been published of some of the counties in the northern part of the country were subsequently to be of great value to scholars (Andrews 1974,1-3; Anon. 1991,13, 24-5).

The O. S. surveying started in 1830s and the first maps were to a scale of 6" to the mile and coloured. These maps had details of roads, bridges, woods, some field boundaries and, most importantly, monuments. These included ringforts, barrows, graveyards, monastic foundations and church ruins. The process of map making reached the southern parts of the country a few years later. A second revised edition with more detail and all field boundaries commenced in the 1870s and a third edition in the 1920s. Because the published 6" maps lacked required details, the 25" to the mile maps were produced for urban areas from the late 19th century, and for the country some years later in the 20th century. For rural areas the 25" scale, which provided greater detail of field boundaries and including the area of each field, was based on the 6" maps for details of monuments, roads, and some buildings. The succeeding editions recorded what was to be observed on the ground. This meant that any monument that had been overlooked previously was now included and also that those monuments that had been removed since the earlier editions were not recorded (*ibid.*, 24/5).

John O'Donovan and his team of workers from the Ordnance Survey visited all parts of the country in order to establish the correct names of places. They described some major early medieval monasteries such as Inishmurray, and Skellig Michael, but did not write specifically of monastic enclosures or the *vallum* as such. Their interests appeared to be in placenames, pronunciations, their derivations and boundaries of townlands, parishes and diocese barony and county. This part of their work is invaluable being written in pre-famine Ireland when Irish was still widely spoken. The team was in constant communication through letters with their learned colleagues in the libraries and archives in Dublin. These letters had been published in typescript from the late 1920s by

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Michael O’Flanagan (Co. Sligo in 1930) and more recently in print by others. The O. S. Field Name Books, written with quill pens, are available in filmroll for reference purposes in the libraries and illustrate the Irish handwriting and script of the time.

Petrie

In 1845 Petrie continued the work of Ledwich and described the *vallum* system as

‘circumvallations’ or circular enclosures usually around a group of buildings of the very early ecclesiastical establishments in Ireland. These were described as having been built sometimes of stone and sometimes simply of earth, or of earth mixed with stone and occasionally earth faced with stone. All were more or less circular in their plan. When of earth only they were denominated *Rath* or *Lis*, when of stone or earth faced with stone they were termed *cathair* or more usually *caiseal*’ (1845, 45).

This description is still valid for all enclosures including both ecclesiastical and secular. In later times Ó Riordán (1953, 1) was to use similar terms and which were repeated by others later (Stout 1997, 14). Petrie continued that many monastic enclosures had been destroyed through the passage of time and that there were ‘ancient’ references to Rath, Armagh, Ferta, near Armagh; and Lismore, Co. Waterford. Petrie then referred to the cashel of St. Fechin in High Island and commented that only a few stones remain of the entrance of Rathmichael, Co. Dublin. Some ecclesiastical foundations were built within pagan (secular) fortresses such as Donoughmore at Tailtinn, Co. Meath, Cill Benen, Dun Lughaidh and Fenagh, Co. Leitrim. The use of the word ‘pagan’ meaning pre-Christian continued into the early 20th century. Petrie described the ruins of Molaise’s church in Innismurray as having an irregular ground plan of c.6m of greatest internal diameter and the wall of c. 2mW and c. 3-4mH. He also described the gateways of Inishmurray, Co. Sligo, Rathmichael, Co. Dublin and Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. His work indicates a movement towards factual

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descriptions, measurements, comparison of sites and the context of the components of the sites and a recognition of the early medieval monastery.

Wakeman

Wakeman (1848) had only one reference to the monastic *vallum*. That was the island of Ard Oileain or High Island off the coast of Connemara. He described the ruins including a church erected by St. Fechin in the seventh century, encompassed by a *vallum* of uncemented stones near the centre of the island (*ibid.*, 60-1). In the third edition the editor referring to drystone *valli* wrote that cashels were built where stone had been abundant (Wakeman, 1903, 171-80) and has a sketch of the secular Staigue Fort, Co. Kerry. Wakeman quoted O'Donovan (O.S. Letter) who described the 'pagan cashel' with its cyclopean doorway more extensive than Aileach, having walls of *c.*4m in height and *c.* 2m in width. The *vallum* is compared with Dun Aengus, Co Galway, Staig Fort (*sic.*), Co. Kerry and Caher Gall, Co. Kerry. The three clochauns inside Innishmurray enclosure are referred to and the drystone *vallum* is fully described (Fig. 3.5). Wakeman was distinguishing the defensive secular origins of sites which were later adapted to monastic purposes on the basis of the width and height of the drystone *vallum*, intramural chambers, internal wall steps and the big stones surrounding the small doorways and referred to Petrie who had written that early Christians utilised pagan forts which had originally been constructed as fortresses (*ibid.*,182-3). There is no reference to the three-fold *vallum* system.

Stokes and Dunraven 1870s

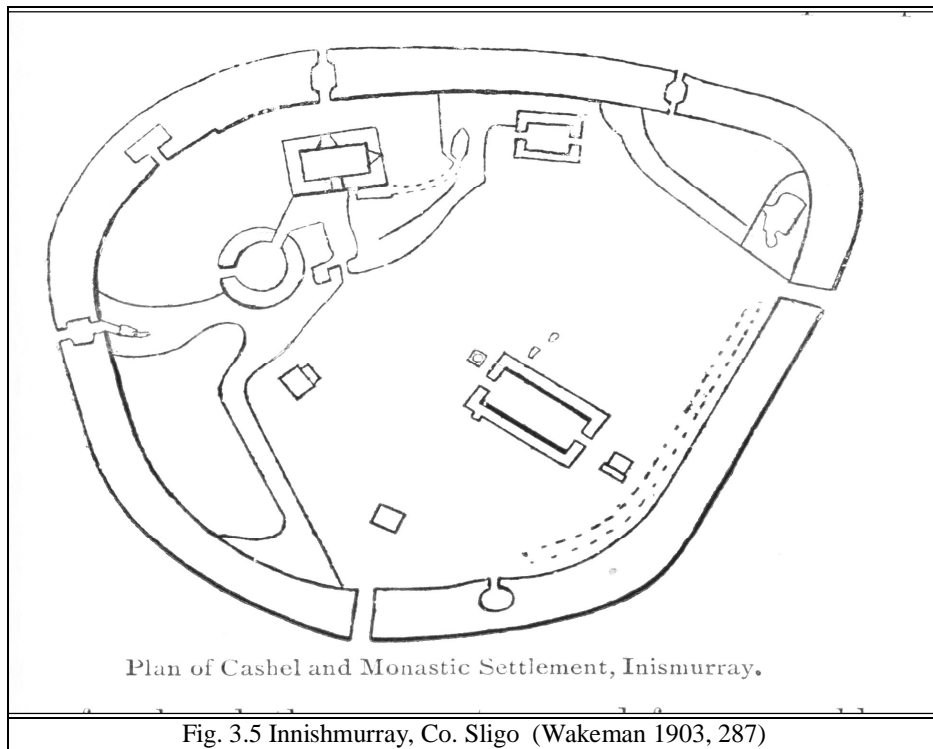
Stokes (1875) collaborated with Dunraven. Whilst she wrote the text, his contribution was to provide large format photographs. This appears to be the first occasion that photographs of sites appeared in a published work on archaeology of Ireland. Stokes wrote on Skellig Michael and described the ascent through the 'Way of the Cross' and the first glimpse of the enclosing drystone *vallum* of the monastery (Fig. 3.6, 3.7). She then described going

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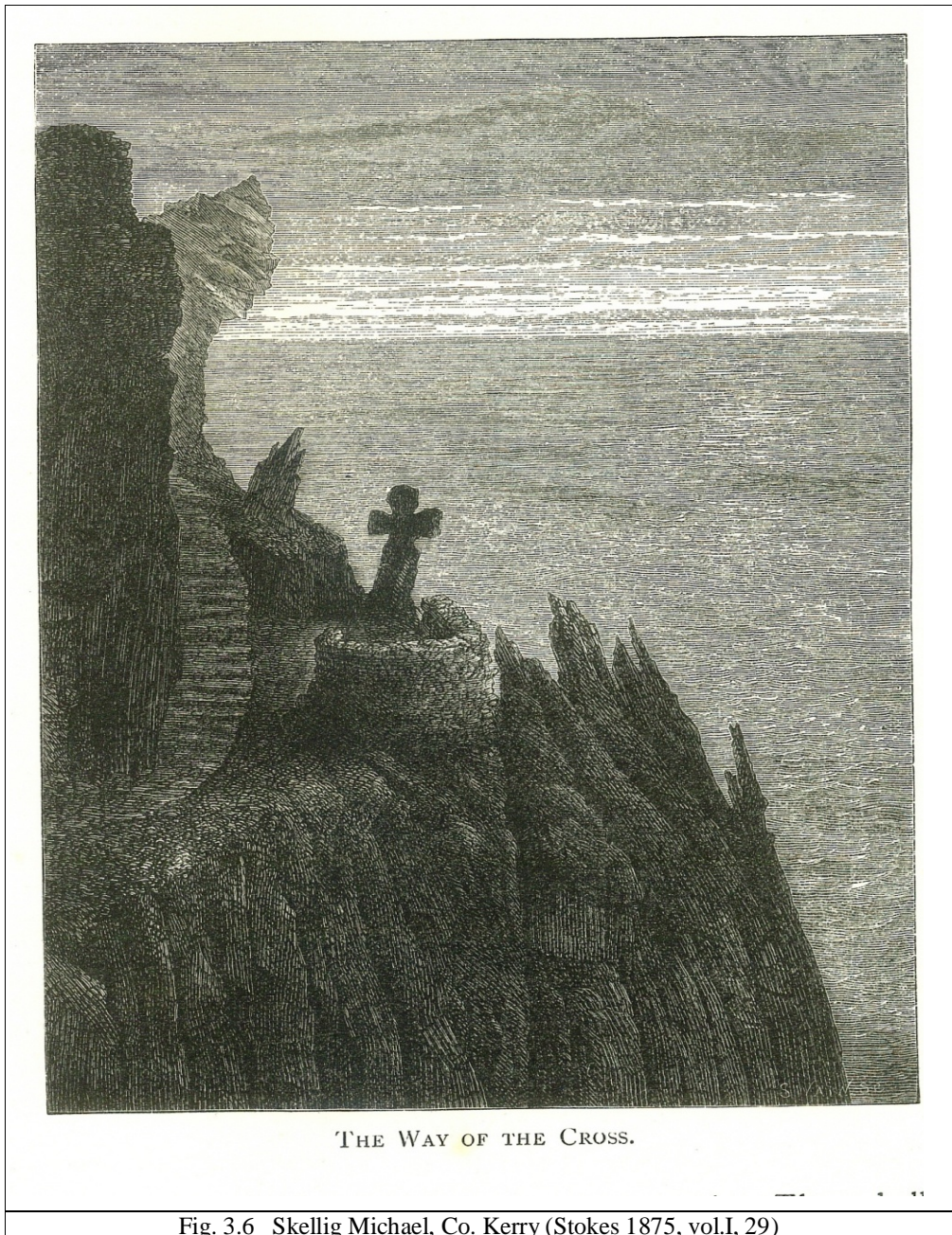
through the entrance to the garden of the monks and through the terraces to the final area on which the church and the beehive huts rest. Some of the *vallum* had fallen into the sea. Below that there were the remains of an ancient wall which was not part of the monastery and was of masonry similar in construction to that of Staigue Fort which was not too distant on the mainland (Stokes 1875, 26).

The other early medieval monastic sites they visited in Co. Kerry were Inis Glora, St. Brendan's Oratory, Church Island on Loch Corrain, the White Church called Tempul Gel, Tempul Manchain Ballymore-Reagh and Cell near Kilmalkeadar and Gallarus oratory. There were no references to a *vallum*. Stokes did however describe Senach's Island, Magharees, Co. Kerry, where '*leachta*' had been built c.1.5m in height but at that time were much fallen down (*ibid.*, 37). Stokes also described Leabamolaga, Co. Cork where buildings had been enclosed in a cashel or termon *vallum* of drystone masonry, hammered and squared and well fitted together (*ibid.*).

On Church Island, Co. Kerry, a portion of the foundation of the *vallum* could be seen (*ibid.*, 37-62). Stokes goes on to write that the early medieval monastic *vallum* rarely deviated from regular circular or oval form to enclose already existing buildings. The *vallum* usually was a single wall of low height, the doorways were larger and there were never *chevaux de frise* outside the monastic *vallum*. Stokes was setting down some of the perceived differences between defensive secular enclosures and non-defensive and passive ecclesiastical enclosures such as Petrie referred to when quoting Bede and St. Cuthbert. Stokes was also the first to refer to *leachta*. Stokes' work, in a large format with the Dunraven photographs that convey the reality of sites, was pioneering in that the sites were accurately depicted not only in writing but also in the new science of photography.



However she did point out that some monastic sites had defensive origins. The Dunraven photographs are superb and factual even to the stooks of oats within the enclosure in Innishmurray (Fig. 3.8). In the description of Skellig Michael there are mentions of the terraces but only in the context of management of the terrain and not in any way is there a suggestion of the three-fold *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*.



Stokes (1878, 32-3) followed on her previous work and developed the theme of the differences between pagan and ecclesiastical foundations. She argued that some Christian enclosures were originally pagan. There were also differences in that pagan pagan walls were thick, usually triple, for ease of construction and there were flights of steps and platforms on the inner wall face.

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Fig. 3.7 Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry Oratory (Stokes 1875 vol.I, 30)



Fig. 3.8 Innishmurray, Co. Sligo (Stokes 1875 vol.I, 46)

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The inner area had a diameter varying from *c.*90m to *c.*20m. Stokes emphasized the defensive features that were different from seclusion; thick high walls, smaller doorways and external *chevaux de frise* in contrast with low narrow walls, doorways wider and higher and absence of *chevaux de frise*. The particular importance of Stokes was her ability to know the important sites, to perceive the importance of the sites and to describe the important features.

End of 19th century

Towards the end of the 19th century Lawlor (1897) analysed a diagram inside the back cover of the Book of Mulling (Fig. 3.9). The Book of Mulling is considered to be as important as the Book of Armagh and dates at least to the late ninth century but paleographic evidence suggests earlier and the name Mulling could be a reference to the bishop of Ferns of the late seventh century (*ibid.*, 1, 13). The diagram consists of two concentric circles with a large inner area with crosses and labels of obscure writing. The positions of the crosses which are inside and outside the circles are thought to have some significance. The diagram is not a facsimile, is not to scale and is thought to represent a typical early medieval monastic enclosure. Even though the diagram is not very impressive there is a suggestion of at least two concentric enclosures i.e. a *vallum* system. This being so, it is of importance in describing and interpreting the areas within the monastic enclosures and particularly the relative locations of the different elements within the inner enclosure, especially the crosses. It is assumed that the circles represent *valli*. The monastic enclosure had been referred to only in the abstract or through the constantly repeated reference of Bede to St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Much later Henry (1957), Fanning (1981), Swan (1983) and Ó Carragáin (2005), among others, are to discuss the issues of enclosures in a more informed manner. Modern scholarship (Jenkins 2010) has shown that the *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* not only existed but was more common than hitherto appreciated.

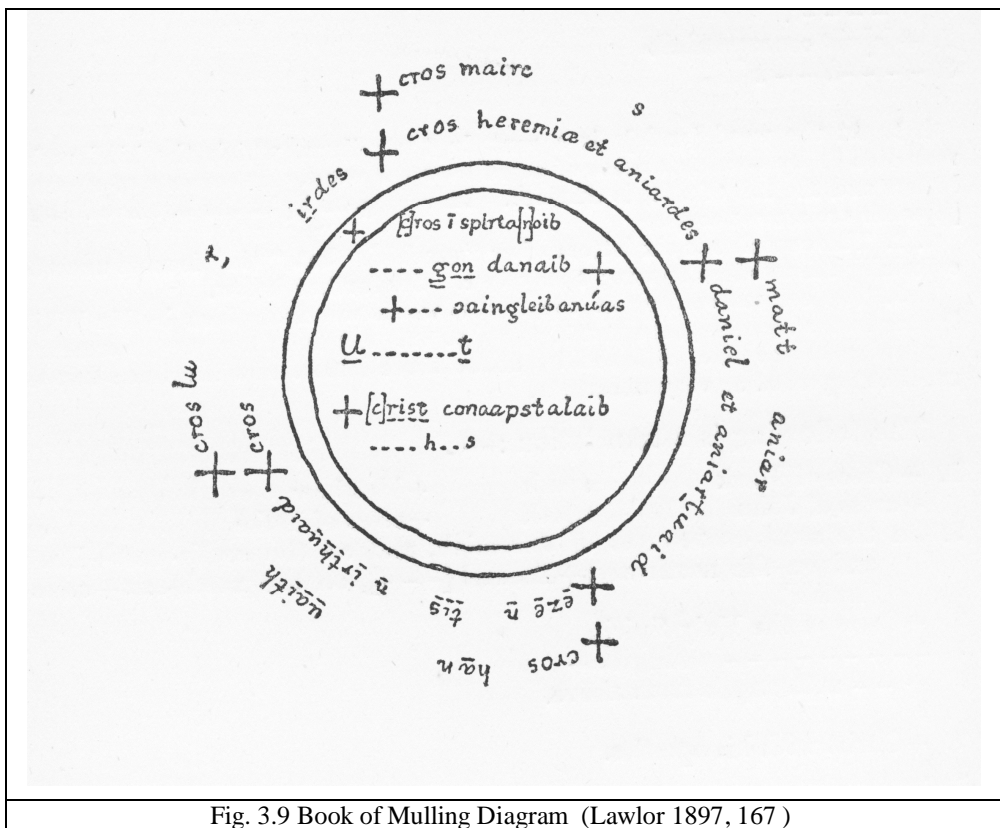


Fig. 3.9 Book of Mulling Diagram (Lawlor 1897, 167)

3.5 Widening interests, excavation, developments to World War II

Westropp

The antiquarian T.J. Westropp was born in Attyflyn, Co. Limerick and graduated as a civil engineer in 1885. After a brief period in professional work, he devoted the rest of his life to recording and reporting ancient monuments particularly in Co. Clare and Co. Limerick. He concentrated on ringforts, earth works and promontory forts of the early medieval period and on the fabric of churches and castles of post-Norman times. He produced over 300 articles in various learned journals including those of the Royal Society of Antiquaries (RSAI) and the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) as well as in journals of archaeological societies in

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Limerick, Cork and Galway. These writings are of great value as much of his research materials was later destroyed in civil unrest. Additionally some sites have been interfered with since then. Having been trained in draughtsmanship in his engineering studies, Westropp was meticulous in his drawings and illustrations (Irwin 2009, 861-2). In his work on Limerick and Clare, Westropp goes methodically through each diocese, dealing in turn with the deaneries and the parishes, describing the structures and the remains but he does not dwell at all on the early medieval monastic enclosures or the *vallum* (*ibid.*).

Champneys (1910, 14) followed from the work of Stokes and wrote that the *vallum* is necessary not for defence but as a boundary indicator for the monks as well as outsiders and which is frequently referred to in early monasteries and to the monastic settlements in north Africa. He went on to refer to the often quoted St. Cuthbert's comment on the round enclosure in Farne. That *vallum* was of uncut stones and sods. There is a later reference to stones without mortar and internal divisions of the enclosure by inner walls.

Other published works of the early 20th century

Many histories of county and diocese appeared from time to time in the early 20th century e.g. Begley's work on the Limerick diocese (1906, 1927, 1938). Bury's work, *The Life of St. Patrick*, had appeared in 1905 and Ryan's *Irish Monasticism* in 1931. The first printing of Kenney's *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* was in 1929. All of these works were the products of objective research and an important move away from the Celtic romanticism and religious hagiography of the 19th century. They were solid well referenced historical works. They were also written in a manner that appealed to the burgeoning educated middle class. Hogan (1910) published his *Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae (Index to Gaelic Names of Places and Tribes)*. All of these are still regarded as invaluable guides as links between the actual location and names of places in the ancient manuscripts. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in Kenney's work. Michael

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O’Flanagan in the late 1920s privately commenced publishing typescripts of O’Donovan’s O.S. Letters on a county basis. These had indexes based on townlands. It has been noted that the system was set up by Adolph Mahr in the National Museum of Ireland and based on the townland. The townland system is unique to Ireland. All of these works were of great importance not only with regard to the scholarly up to date content but also in presenting that material in a manner available to the general public. Much of the material presented is still constantly being consulted. The *vallum* received attention only from Ryan and even then in terms of single *vallum* structure and the size of the enclosure.

Very little archaeological excavation took place from the turn of the 20th century to the World War II years. However research and study were continued. Just prior to the end of the 19th century the newly established Museum of Science and Art was handed to the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in Dublin and was composed of several important collections that had been accumulating over the previous centuries (Waddell 2005, 181). Gradually schools of archaeology were established in the universities. Macalister had done extensive excavations in Palestine and, in Ireland, worked on the interpretation of ogham stones and early texts. From his experiences in the Middle East he had come to believe that there was a close association between the ancient texts and archaeology. His later publications built on this and he assembled a chronology of Irish archaeology. His work however, was not without its critics (*ibid.*,191-3). Adolph Mahr was appointed Keeper in 1927 and Director in 1932 in what was then named The National Museum of Ireland.

3.6 Excavations and international influences

Nendrum, Co. Down

The first archaeological excavation of an early medieval monastic site was of Nendrum on Mahee Island in Strangford Lough, Co. Down. The first excavation

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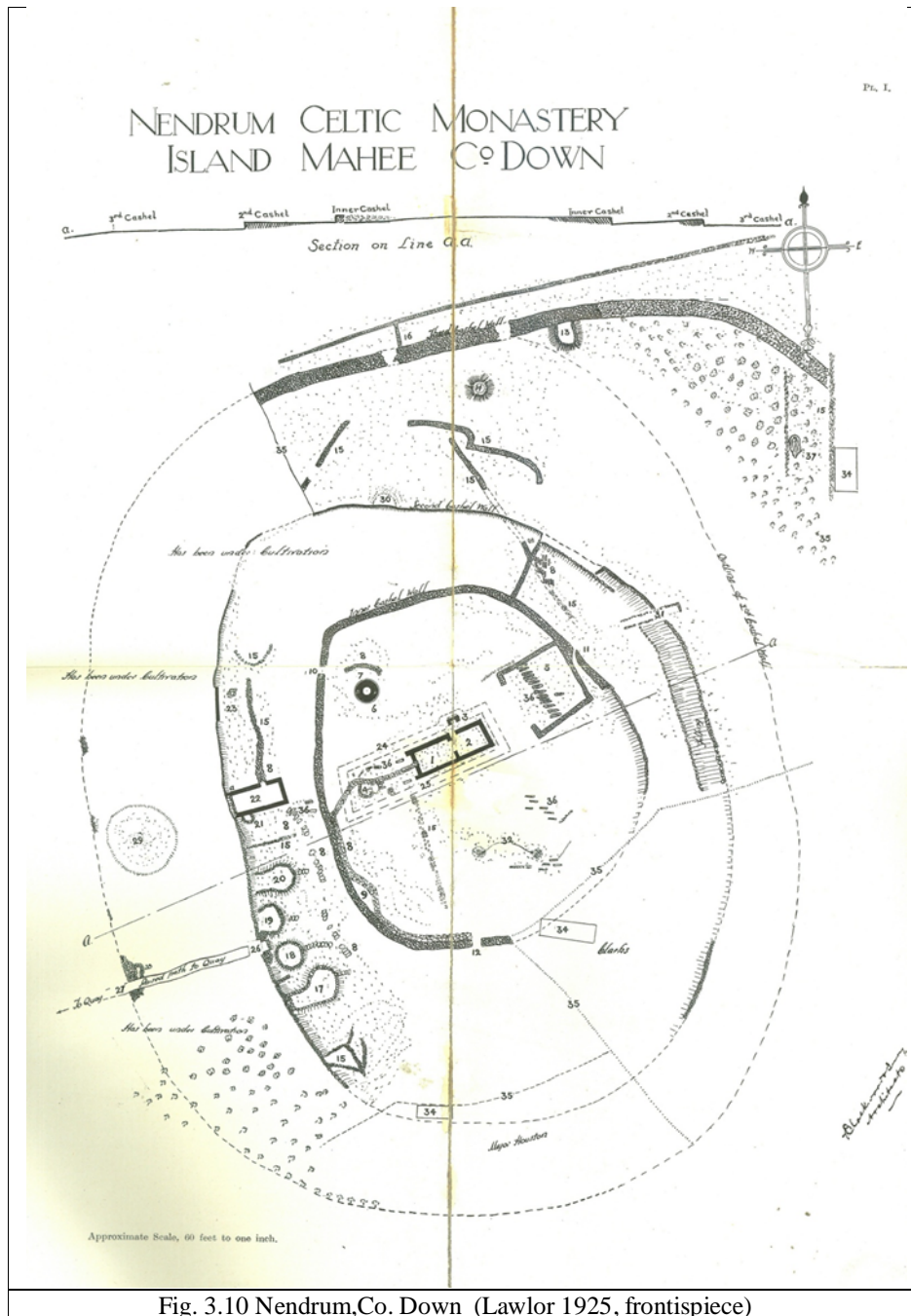


Fig. 3.10 Nendrum, Co. Down (Lawlor 1925, frontispiece)

of this site was carried out from 1922 to 1924 by Lawlor (1925). Then the site was on an island approached by two causeways. The plan of the monastic layout shows three concentric oval shaped enclosures which were ‘curiously cuspidated

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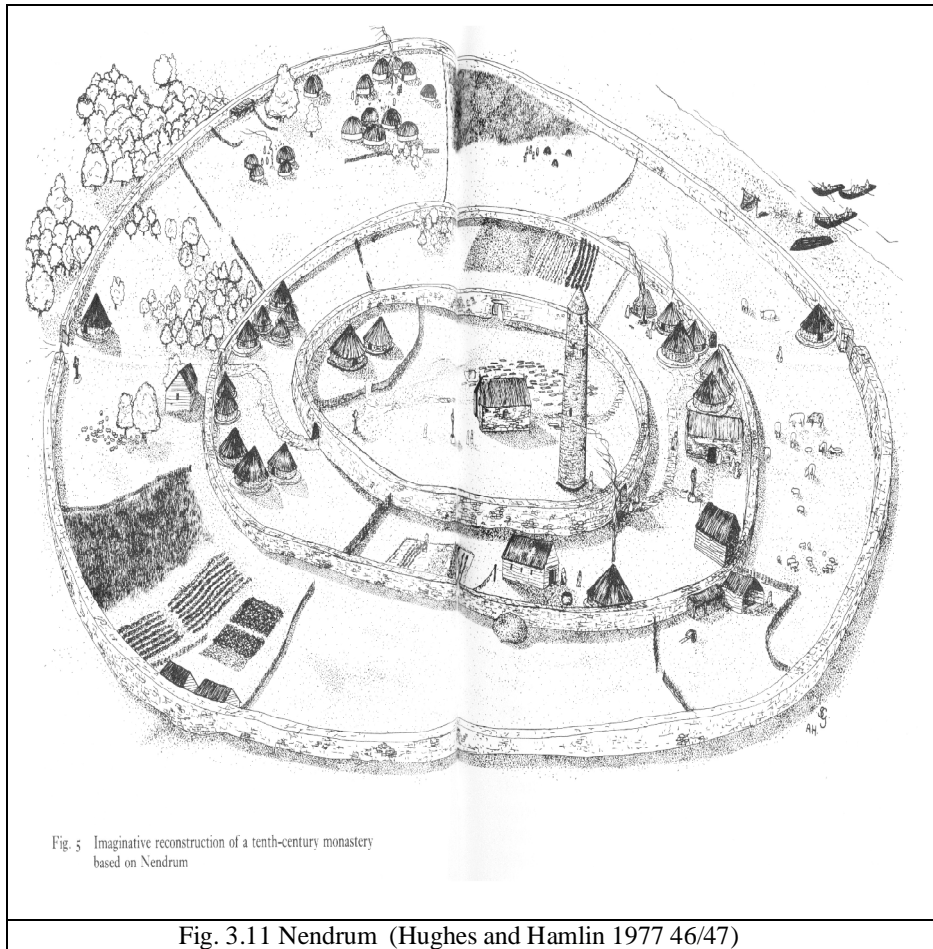
to the north' (Lawlor (1925, 95-9, frontispiece, 23; Fig. 3.10). Many graves were found in the inner enclosure in different situations and others in the second enclosure (*ibid.*,17-19). The principal feature of the site was the three-fold *vallum* system of concentric drystone *valli* of 'great' thickness which enclosed the ruins of the monastery (*ibid.*,1). The three drystone *valli* were superimposed on fragments of earlier buildings and led to his conclusion of the existence of a pre-Christian settlement of the fourth century (*ibid.*,9). The inner *vallum* was two-walled. The outer *vallum* enclosed *c.*3h, the middle *vallum* enclosed *c.*2h and the inner *vallum* *c.*0.5h (*ibid.*, 96). The monastic estate included the islands and some of the coastal areas. Lawlor referred to the three-fold *vallum* system in Iona and suggested that the economy was similar to that described by Reeves including the mill, granaries, agricultural activities, industrial activities, fishing and trade (*ibid.*,15,19). Lawlor does not use the terms *sanctus*, *sanctor*, *sanctissimus* when referring to the enclosures at Nendrum. Lawlor drew attention to the traces of internal dividing walls in Nendrum similar to those in Innishmurray and the similar disposition of internal buildings (*ibid.*, 23). He suggested that Nendrum was contemporaneous with Innishmurray and compared the ground plan of the inner enclosure in Nendrum with Innishmurray and emphasised the cusp shown in both plans and the similarity in dimensions (*ibid.*,16).

The *vallum* in Innishmurray was 2m to 4m in height and similar dimensions in width which compared with the slighter dimensions of *c.*3m and *c.*2m in Nendrum. Lawlor referred to the suggestion of O'Donovan that Innishmurray was originally pre-Christian later adapted to Christian usage and suggested a similar chronology for Nendrum. (*ibid.*,24). Lawlor proposed a three-fold chronology of Nendrum i.e. prehistoric, early medieval and late medieval. He compared the type of stone work of Nendrum with Grianan Aileach, Co. Donegal, Innishmurray, Co. Sligo, Dun Aengus, Co, Galway and Staigue, Co. Kerry, and agreed with the conclusions of O'Donovan, Wakeman and others of secular origins of some sites and later adaption to Christianity (*ibid.*, 97).

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The *vallum* at Nendrum was intended more to confine the visibility of the monks than for security and was *c.*2.4m high and *c.*1m in width. There are only traces of inner dividing walls. The assertion that the site was pre-Christian and defensive (*ibid.*,96-7) has been contested (Edwards 1990, 107). Despite its limitations the earlier excavation of Lawlor its immediate publication yielded important information and guidance for all subsequent studies. A paper reconstruction of Nendrum (Fig. 3.11) has appeared in Hughes and Hamlin (1977, 46/7).

Lawlor attributed the absence of steps on the inner wall in Nendrum to the low original height of the wall and referred to the absence of mural chambers. Two gateways were *c.*2 m in width and Lawlor suggested that because of the width, stone lintels could not have been used. Consequently, he suggested, wooden beams were probably placed over the gap and in turn surmounted by a sod or turf wall (*ibid.*, 98). In the early medieval period, activity was confined to four huts of diameter *c.*10m, the sites of which have been exposed (*ibid.*,106-7). Lawlor suggested dates of 850 AD to 974 AD for the building and burning of the round tower, the dimensions of which he gave as *c.*5m of the plinth and *c.*2m of internal diameter. The tidal powered mills with mill ponds were an important aspect of the settlement (*ibid.*, 1-8) and the focus of the recent McErlean and Crowthers excavations in 2007 (see below).



The townland system, recording of artefacts and publications

Archaeological excavation techniques and artefact recording were established firmly in the 1930s. Adolph Mahr is credited with establishing the system of recording archaeological artefacts in Ireland and their contexts based on the 6" O.S. maps, townland and county. The report of the excavation at Cush, Co. Limerick (Ó Ríordáin, 1940) including information on methods employed, team training, equipment including plane table on a tripod with alidade, drawings and photographs, demonstrates the methods used at the time. However, judging from published excavation reports, the archaeological interest at this time seemed to be on the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

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The first edition of Ó Ríordáin's *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside* was published in 1942, the second 1943 and a third revised and reset in 1953. This work was intended for the general reader and was a further important development in bringing archaeology into the public domain. This was followed a short time later by the work of Françoise Henry (1945) when she published the *Remains of the Early Christian period on Inniskea North, Co. Mayo* in which report she described her excavations (in 1938) of some houses and an attempted rapid survey of other antiquities of the same period. Her interest was in the houses which she described as an Early Christian period settlement – probably an eremitic monastery. She had already visited Innishkea North twice in 1937 and photographed some of the slabs. In the report she referred to the great quantity of remains from the Bronze Age and also to early medieval monasteries and carved slabs. There were several fields of these slabs which were labelled on 6" O.S. maps as 'Burial Ground'. Henry referred to the two concentric circles of small stones with slender central pillar with faint cross inscribed in Innishkea South but does not comment or attribute any significance to the two concentric circles. She also wrote on the corbelled drystone masonry of ruined beehive monuments, rectangular structures with rounded corners. Having added that very little remained of the stone enclosure of the promontory fort, Henry referred to another extensive round enclosure but did not give dimensions or dating attribution. The antiquities of Caher Island, Co. Mayo (*ibid.*, 1947) include a fragmented rampart which was difficult to date as it may well be earlier than the monastery. These reports are of interest because of her later survey work in Co. Kerry.

3.7 Increased activity in excavation, methods and publications

Radiocarbon dating

World wide archaeology was revolutionised in 1950 when Libby revealed the radiocarbon method of dating (Gillespie 1986, iv). Hitherto archaeologists were depending on stratigraphy and cultural sequences in attempts to obtain a

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chronology that was at best relative. This method of dating has been used most successfully in sites in Ireland. The early medieval monastery at Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry, has been dated to a period encompassing the mid-fifth to early sixth centuries (Sheehan 2009, 194, 204). Similarly at Reask, Co. Kerry, Fanning (1981) submitted four samples of charcoal for dating. Three of these samples gave unreliable results and the fourth suggested a date of 295-650 AD. Also through radiocarbon dating, Manning (1986) successfully identified three phases of development in Millockstown, Co. Louth with results of phase 1 indicating 400-590 AD and of phase 3 indicating 660-960 AD.

Leask

In 1955 Leask published Volume 1 of his trilogy on Irish churches. He repeated the belief that the origins of early medieval ecclesiastical settlements in Ireland were in Syria and Egypt where the complex of communities of monks were called *laura*. In Ireland a constant feature of settlements was the encircling *vallum* few of which remain today (Leask 1955, 11). He continued that there were numerous references to curvilinear fragments of *valli* enclosing the early church settlements. Fragments of *valli* are found of walls and ramparts such as parts of the massive earthen banks at Seir Kieran, Co. Offaly (*ibid.*, 12-15). Leask's contribution to the architectural history of Irish churches is immense but he has little to say on the *vallum* beyond general remarks.

Henry

A significant post World War II development took place when Françoise Henry who, having resumed her work on surveys, this time in Co. Kerry, published *Early monasteries, beehive huts and dry-stone houses in the neighbourhood of Caherciveen and Waterville (Co. Kerry)* in 1957. This was the outcome of several years of site surveys commenced in 1938 and continued after the war years. The feature she emphasised was the division within the *vallum*, either by terrace or dividing wall, of the oratory and the grave of the founder (*ibid.*, 154).

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This feature of an internal division by a wall or terrace appears to have escaped the attention of archaeologists until this. The important features of the internal enclosure were the oratory as the primary element, a cross inscribed slab and a shrine shaped tomb (Henry 1957, 154-5). She did not use the terms *sanctus*, *sanctior* or *sanctissimus*. Henry noted the large numbers of small hermitages and wondered if they were truly eremitic in character or ‘offshoots’ of larger monasteries. She referred to St. Fechin of Fore leaving with a small group to set up in Ardillaun, Co. Mayo (*ibid.*, 157). These considerations have been the centre of much discussion since then. Her references to the *vallum* were brief (*ibid.*, 157).

Church Island, Co. Kerry

During an excavation at Beginish, Co. Kerry, O’Kelly visited the neighbouring smaller adjacent Church Island and discovered a hitherto unknown ogham-inscribed cross-slab. There was also a ruined oratory (Fig. 3.12). Because of urgency due to active erosion by the sea near the oratory, excavations took place in 1955-6 (O’Kelly 1957, 57). Excavations revealed two early buildings, one had been a very small rectangular structure of wood (the first oratory) and the other a circular wooden hut. These had been replaced by a rectangular stone oratory and a circular stone house. The next structure to be built was a rectangular stone house and this was followed by an enclosing drystone *vallum* (*ibid.*, 58-69). There were 33 burials with an east-west orientation (one of these was female), parallel to the foundations with head to the west. These were found under and near the stone oratory (*ibid.*, 91-3). The enclosing *vallum* probably enclosed the whole of the inhabitable part of the island but is now largely eroded. The original length of this *vallum* may have been 140m with width of 1.5m to 2m and height 1.5m. The building technique was similar to that of the oratory and the stones were of two distinct types from two parts of the island (*ibid.*, 73-7).

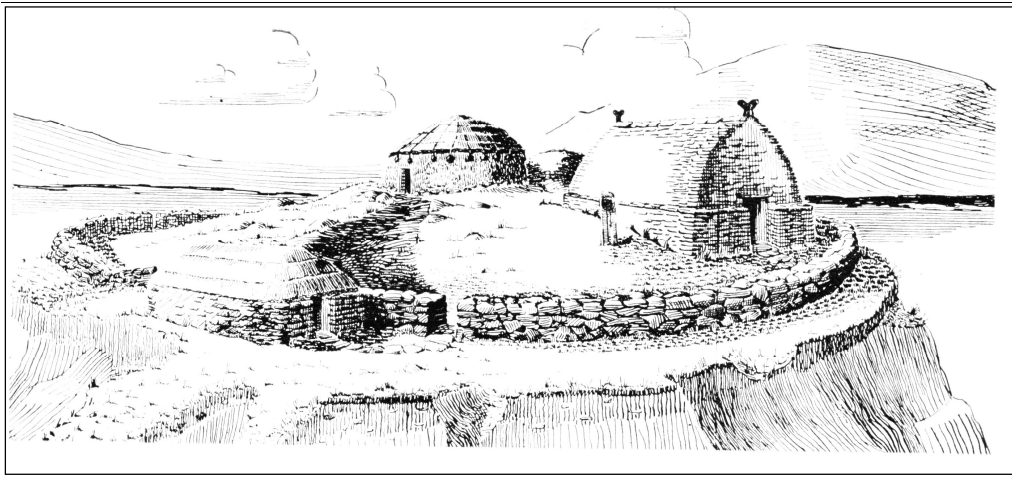


Fig. 3.12 Church Island, Valencia, Co. Kerry (Evans 1966, 127)

parallel to the foundations with head to the west. These were found under and near the stone oratory (*ibid.*, 91-3). The enclosing *vallum* probably enclosed the whole of the inhabitable part of the island but is now largely eroded. The original length of this *vallum* may have been 140m with width of 1.5m to 2m and height 1.5m. The building technique was similar to that of the oratory and the stones were of two distinct types from two parts of the island (*ibid.*, 73-7). An understanding of the late phase building of the *vallum* has not been settled. The dimensions of the *vallum* correspond with those of the *vallum* in Nendrum. O’Kelly was convinced that Church Island was an eremitic site. Others are not sure, feeling there could be other explanations, for example that it may have been monastic or broadly ecclesiastical or secular Christian or a community cemetery (Jenkins 2010, 7). Whilst the sequence of the phases of development on the island is reasonably elucidated, the actual dating is not at all clear.

Skellig Michael

Skellig Michael has been studied by many, including Margaret Stokes in 1875, Henry in 1950s, dePaor in the 1950s, Horn, Marshal and Rourke (1990) and Bourke (2005) more recently and still ongoing. In 1954 dePaor submitted a report to the National Monuments Branch of the OPW. The monastic remains

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consist of five complete beehive huts and one collapsed, two upturned boat-shaped oratories, a rectangular church and 30 cross inscribed slabs.

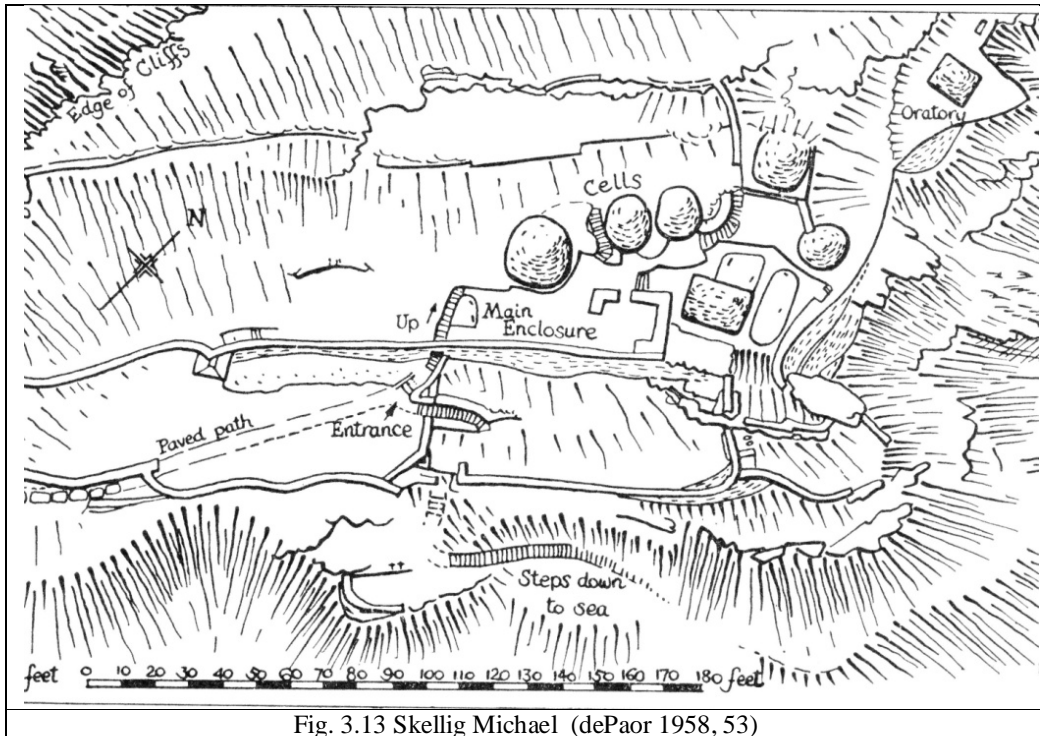


Fig. 3.13 Skellig Michael (dePaor 1958, 53)

All the buildings are of drystone, corbelled with inclined jambs, with double lintel and within a system of enclosures and on terraces supported by battered walls (dePaor 1955, 180; 1958,53; Fig. 3.13). Henry visited the island in 1946, 1947, 1953 and 1957 and described all the monuments in detail (Henry 1957,113-128). There are two summits on the island and the monastery was built about 20m below the north summit. The south peak is famous for its remoteness and hazardous approach. The well is about 200m above sea level and yields pure water. On the south peak, which is approached by a perilous path, there are remains of a simple structure which is thought to be a hermitage site and which was referred to but not described by dePaor and was described by Henry (1957, 113-128). The island and especially the South Peak has been thoroughly

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explored and photographed (impressively) by Horn *et al.* (1990, 17-38; Plates 3.1, 3.2).

Bourke (2005) enumerated the features and compared them with Swan's (1985) list of features associated with early medieval monastic settlements and notes that of the twelve features regarded as characteristic of early medieval enclosures only three - namely bullaun, *southern* and townland boundary - are absent from Skellig Michael. The townland boundary issue is however irrelevant because the whole island is the monastery and the shore line would have been regarded as the *sanctus vallum* (as in Iona) and what had been described as a *southern* is now regarded as a rainwater cistern (Bourke 2005, 123).

The monastic foundation of Skellig Michael is attributed to sixth century St. Fionán and the departure to Ballinskelligs had occurred before the end of the period. Conservation of the site rather than excavation is the main consideration at present (*ibid.*, 125). The inner uppermost enclosure or *sanctissimus* had been remodelled at various times but no details are given by Bourke.

The south and east walls had collapsed and been repaired in the early medieval period in Phase A, the *leachta* were built in Phase B and the remaining buildings in Phase C in the site's early medieval zenith (*ibid.*, 125-30). The interpretation



Plate 3.1 Skellig Michael
(Mitchel and Ryan 1997, 276)

Plate 3.2 Skellig Michael
(Horn *et al.* 1988, 53)

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of the Skellig Michael site again raises the issue of classification e.g. whether eremitic or cenobitic and it appears to correspond to the model suggested by Henry of an association of lone eremitic habitation with eremitic and cenobitic monastic community with several enclosures nearby.

Aerial photography and the early medieval monastery

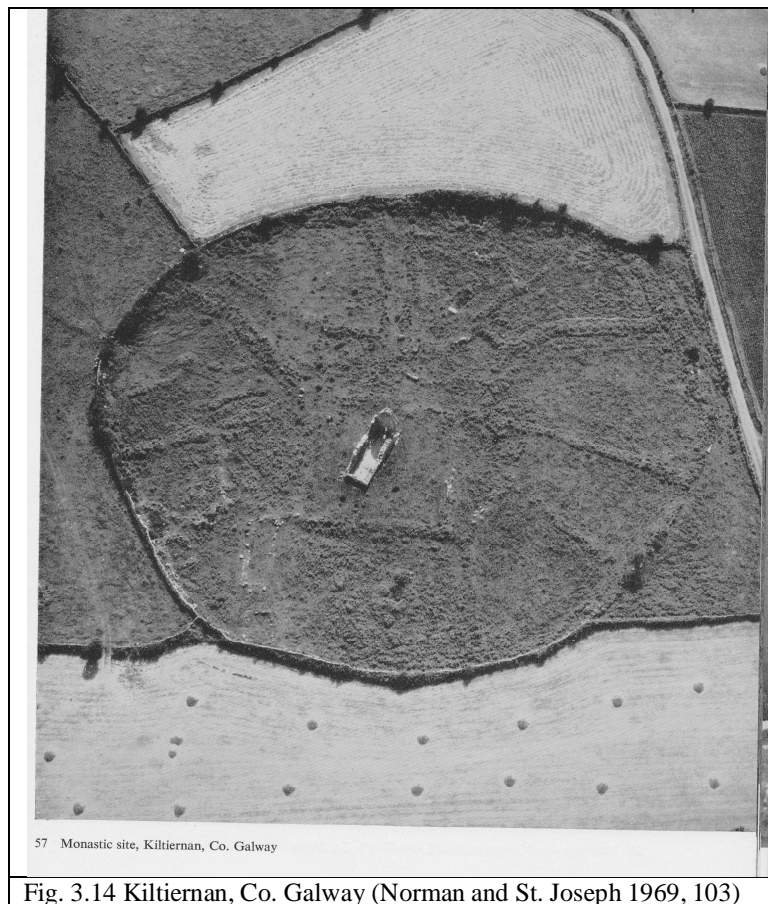
Norman and St. Joseph (1969,) published *Early Development of Irish Society* consisting of 70 aerial photographs from a selection of about 10,000 taken in the 1960s. Having discussed the different approaches to successful aerial photography, they wrote that there had been several discoveries of monuments whose existence was hitherto unsuspected. This was especially true of large enclosures on hill tops (*ibid.*, 2-17) where the full extent of the enclosure is not visible from any one point on the ground. Norman and St. Joseph (1969) continued that the early medieval monastery typically was situated within a circular enclosing *vallum* made of earth with ditch or stone. They added that most enclosures are of bank and ditch and c.60m in diameter and continued that a typical enclosure had a series of subdividing walls whose functions are not clear (*ibid.*, 96). They compared the three concentric stone built *valli* of Nendrum, with the three-fold earthen *vallum* system of Kilmacoo, Co. Cork (*ibid.*, 99). The Norman and St. Joseph photographs were in monochrome whilst later aerial photographs were in colour. They included the aerial photographs of Armagh and Clonmacnoise to illustrate the encircling development of the urban settlement (*ibid.*, 118).

Norman and St. Joseph also referred to the circular device in the eighth century *Book of Mulling* which has an enclosure of two concentric circles (1969, 100). Whilst some of the text in this work is now regarded as being overtaken by later scholarship, the publication is still valuable because of the aerial photography, the interpretation of aerial photographs and particularly as records of the sites at that time. The authors do not attempt to interpret the significance of the concentric *valli*.

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Kiltiernan, Co. Galway

Michael Duignan (1951) investigated an early monastic site at Kiltiernan, Co. Galway in 1950. The roughly circular enclosure covered *c.*1.6h within a drystone *vallum* (no dimensions were given) (Fig. 3.14). There was no evidence of a modern cemetery or medieval or later buildings. The interior was divided into sub-enclosures by the remains of walls some of which were radial and others segmental. The remains of a simple pre-Romanesque nave-and-chancel



church were centrally placed. Other buildings and a *souterrain* were uncovered in other sub-enclosures.

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To the north side of the enclosure excavations revealed a monastic cemetery with burial orientation of east-west. Further excavations to the south revealed more burials similarly orientated in conformity with the church alignment. There were also infant and foetal burials of later times but no modern cemetery.

Duignan suggested three phases:

Phase 1: a cemetery enclosure with an as yet unrevealed church,

Phase 2: the nave of the pre-Romanesque church and orientated burials,

Phase 3: the addition of the chancel.

Of particular interest is the radially disposed subdivision of the enclosure in the south east part of the enclosure. No precise datings were given and further investigation was intended. As there was no suggestion of outer enclosures or internal divisions the assumption must be that this was the *sanctissimus* or most sacred area of the monastery.

Reask, Co. Kerry

The first edition 6" O.S. map showed the site as a vague oval outline indicated by a dotted line (Fanning 1981, 69, 70). By 1970 all that had been visible above ground was a cross inscribed pillar stone at the edge of the road. The cross had a 'Celtic' scroll inscription of the letters D N E. Because of perceived dangers to the stone, Bord Fáilte bought the site and transferred ownership to the Commissioners of Public Works for whom Tom Fanning carried out full excavations from 1972 to 1975 and published the report in 1981. The excavations revealed the foundations for a roughly oval shaped enclosure with drystone walls. The best preserved section included a segment 14m long, five to six courses in height (c. 1.5m) and c. 2.2m in width. Inside they uncovered postholes for wooden huts, foundations for beehive huts, a small oratory and an internal dividing wall. There were primary lintel graves and of these some were partly under the oratory. A corn drying kiln was uncovered outside the

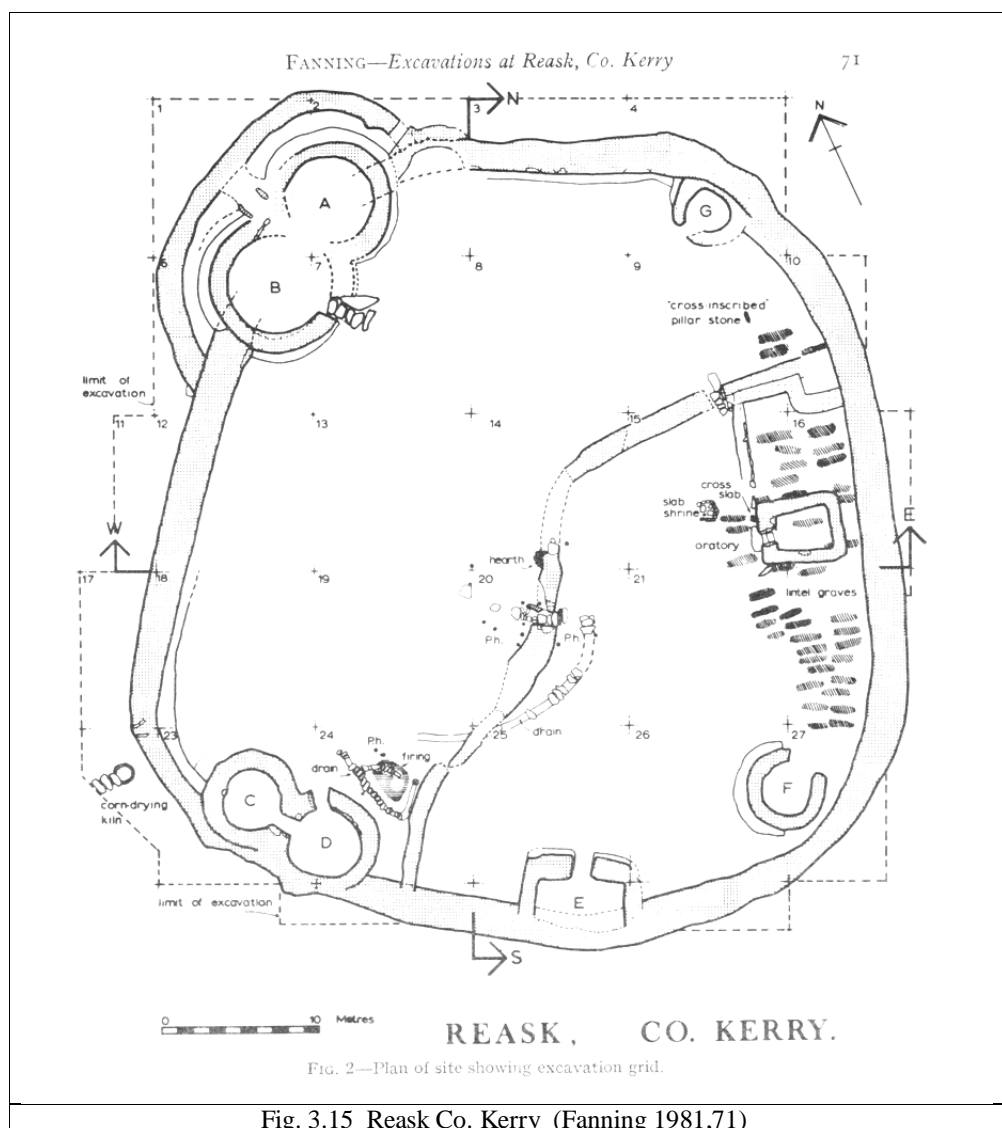


Fig. 3.15 Reask Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981,71)

enclosure. There were four samples of charcoal, three of which were not reliable for dating. The few artefacts included an abraded fragment of Bii ware (*ibid.*, 86). There were four samples of charcoal, three of which were not reliable for dating. The few artefacts included an abraded fragment of Bii ware (*ibid.*, 86). The hearth site indicated a date of 326-506 AD. Within the western part of the enclosure (*sanctor*) there was evidence of iron working viz. pits, slag, tỳere

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and vitrous material (Fig. 3.15). The base of the oratory in the eastern enclosure (*sanctissimus*) showed similarity to Skellig Michael in dimensions and having the two slabs in the doorway. This, it appears, was a site with many of the features considered to be indicative of early medieval monastic occupation and which was later abandoned. Afterwards the enclosure was used as a *cillín* and this in turn was also later abandoned.

Of particular note on this site of Reask is the drystone *vallum* enclosure with an internal section (*sanctissimus*) on the south-east enclosing oratory, slab shrine, cross inscribed slab and burials (Fanning 1981, 71). The internal section on the south-east was the *sanctissimus* and the western section the *sanctior*. The *sanctus* area was outside and not defined by a *vallum*. The internal dividing wall is paralleled at Gallarus, Currauly, Maumanorig, Kilfountain, Loher and Killabuonia (Co. Kerry) and is referred to by Henry (1957,154), Evans (1966,127), Norman and St. Joseph, (1969). There is a similar arrangement in Ballydawley, Co. Sligo.

In his survey of 56 Early Medieval monastic sites in the Dingle peninsula, Fanning (Fanning 1981, 241-2) found that 17 in Corkaguiney contain most of the following diagnostic features: a sub-circular drystone *vallum*, small drystone oratory, small rectilinear grave enclosure or *leacht*, plain cross or cross inscribed pillar or slab, internal dividing wall and beehive remnants. Also found, though not so commonly, are *souterrains*, ogham stones and a holy well. Apart from Kilmalkeader, very few have medieval remains (*ibid.*, 241-2). These findings supported Henry's conclusions on the layout of the early medieval monastic sites (1957,146). As there was no suggestion of outer enclosures in Reask, the assumption must be that the enclosure included the *sanctissimus* conjoined with the *sanctior*. There is no suggestion of a three-fold *vallum* system. Overall measurements included both *sanctissimus* and *sanctior*. As there is no evidence in the modern field system of any outermost *sanctus vallum* at Reask and given that the industrial activities were located within the *vallum* on the west sector

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(*sanctor*), one could suggest that no *sanctus vallum* had been intended. The corn drying kiln is outside the *vallum* and is thought to be of later date. The surrounding field system does not exhibit any curvilinear features.

Swan

Swan had submitted a three volume thesis (M.A. U.C.D.) in 1971 *The Recognition and Recovery of Ecclesiastical Enclosures by Aerial Observation and Aerial Photography*, and excavated Kilpatrick Churchyard, in Killucan, Co. Westmeath in 1976. In his best known work *Enclosed ecclesiastical sites and their relevance to settlement patterns of the first millenium* (1983, 269-294), Swan referred to the long observed association between settlement enclosures, churches and early burial places. He paid tribute to O'Donovan, Wakeman, Stokes, Lawlor and Norman and St. Joseph for their observations. Beginning with a country-wide map search, he discovered curvilinear enclosures around church ruins or churchyards indicated by the shape of streets in towns in Meath such as Kells, Duleek and Dunshaughlin. Sometimes a linear pattern was enclosed by curvilinear enclosure. The curvilinear shape was repeated in rural churchyards and burial grounds which in some cases dated from the early medieval period. Swan identified *c.* 400 such sites from the 6" O.S. maps of the whole country and a further *c.* 200 from aerial surveys and field work (*ibid.*, 273). The field boundaries were not the usual typical hedges but much more substantial, sometimes densely over grown, being massive in height and width (*ibid.*, 270). These were early medieval ecclesiastical sites which were identifiable by some of the following characteristics which Swan listed more or less in order of frequency of occurrence:

- (1) evidence of *valli*
- (2) burial area
- (3) placename with ecclesiastical element
- (4) structure or structural remains
- (5) holy well
- (6) bullaun stone

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- (7) carved, shaped, inscribed or decorated cross or slab
- (8) line of townland boundary forming part of enclosure
- (9) *southern*
- (10) pillar stone
- (11) founder's tomb
- (12) pattern

Swan (*ibid.*, 274) pointed out that not all sites have all of these elements but burial is most consistent. The existing or disused 'Churchyard' or 'Graveyard' was frequently referred to on the maps as *reilig*, *fearta*, *roimh* and was used occasionally as a place of infant burial. The placenames suggest an origin in the early medieval or medieval period. Swan did not refer to the specific breakdown of concentric enclosures of *sanctus*, *sanctior* or *sanctissimus*.

The two-fold importance of Swan's work lies in the identification of early medieval monastic sites through the use of maps especially the 6" O.S. editions thus complementing the work of Norman and St. Joseph (1969) on aerial photography and also, most particularly, in focussing attention on the *vallum*.

Ballyallaban, Co. Clare

Sheehan and Moore (1981) reported *An Unrecorded Ecclesiastical Enclosure at Ballyallaban, Co. Clare*. They drew attention to a surviving curvilinear segment in the east of the site of an earthen *vallum* c.50m in length and c.1m in height. The width was not given of the *vallum* fragment which survived in the east. To the south fragments of the *vallum* were highlighted by a line of trees. On the north the curve of the field boundary indicated the position of the lost portions and on the west the road curves indicated the position of the former *vallum*. The dimensions of the enclosure were 130m and 95m and there was no evidence of a ditch. A platform structure (1m by 2m and 1m in height) built of large dry slabs now supports a plain cross (cemented into position) which in turn rests on a raised area in the north-west quadrant of the enclosure. A bullaun (0.25m in

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depth and 0.4m in width) was located beside the platform. As there was no suggestion of outer enclosures the assumption must be that this was the *sanctior/sanctissimus* sector of the monastery. There were no references to a *vallum* system on this site. The existence of an earthen *vallum* in this part of the Burren is of interest. However John Sheehan (UCC - *pers.comm.*) said that earthen enclosures are found even in rocky areas where there is sufficient soil as in a valley.

Hurley

Hurley (1982) provided an account of what is known of the coming of Christianity to Ireland and particularly to the south of the country. Very little is known of the early years during which time monasticism became established. Hurley suggested that the lives of the saints are useful in identifying places (Hurley 1982, 301-6), so echoing Hamlin. The dating of sites from documents depends on the first and last entries e.g. *terminus ante quem* and *terminus post quem*. Hurley, when referring to the distribution of early medieval ecclesiastical monasteries, felt that there was correspondence with sites of ringforts that is between 30/120m OD and on the shoulders of hills overlooking streams or rivers. Some *díserts* (remote eremitic sites) were found in out-of-the-way places near swamps or woodlands (*ibid.*, 307-8). Hurley acknowledged the importance of the work of Norman and St. Joseph (1969), Swan (1983) and also Pochin-Mould (1972). He referred to all the diagnostic elements described by Swan (1983), the *vallum* (usually an earthen bank with an internal ditch where wood was scarce) and also the propinquity with later townland boundary (*ibid.*, 307-8). Referring to the location of a site, he stressed the influences of 'settlement pressure' but added that the importance of tribal boundaries as advocated by Ó Ríain (1972) is difficult to test on the ground because of a lack of determination of the location of the boundaries (*ibid.*, 310). P. Duffy (Maynooth - *pers.comm.*) said that boundaries were undefined and vague at that period. Hurley does not refer to the three-fold *vallum* system of monastic enclosures.

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Armagh

Rescue excavations in 1968 on Cathedral Hill, Armagh, revealed in a much disturbed site, a V-shaped ditch 6.4m wide and 2-3m in depth with dating of 1660 \pm 80 b.p. The ditch had been back-filled from the outer bank and the infill included debris from early medieval workshops. Parallels have been drawn with nearby Emhain Macha and the site has strong associations with St. Patrick (Brown and Harper 1968).

Manning

Of the many contributions that Con Manning has made to early medieval studies, the four relevant to this study are the reports of excavations at Killederdrum, Co. Tipperary (1984), Inishmore, Aran Islands (1985), Millockstown, Co. Louth (1986) and Moyne, Shrule, Co. Mayo (1987). There was no suggestion of outer enclosures in any of the sites investigated and the assumption must be that the *vallum* enclosed both *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* in a conjoined system.

Killederdrum, Co. Tipperary

The excavation of the early medieval monastery at Killederdrum (1984). Manning having been motivated by impending farm improvement works, was limited by time constraints. Excavation revealed two main phases of activity:

Phase (a) early medieval occupation within a *vallum*,

Phase (b) post-medieval burials.

The *vallum* enclosed an area twice the size of the average ringfort which would be regarded as normal in the surrounding townlands. The large irregular oval *vallum* (70m east-west by 52m north-south) lay on an east-west ridge in a valley between three hills and on the south-west corner boundary of the townland of Lackenavorna (*ibid.*, 237). The internal area was *c.*0.25h (*ibid.*, 240). The V-shaped ditch *c.*2.8m in width and *c.*1.6m in depth had been deliberately in-filled, perhaps with the internal bank materials. The bank had been *c.*3m in width at the base (*ibid.*, 242). The unusual feature of the extension on the west consisted of

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two low banks with an external ditch c.20m apart which stopped short on the west side of the enclosure and was cut by the road at the other end. There were about 80 burials with post-medieval indications. No remains of a church or of slabs were discovered, nevertheless the enclosure appears to correspond to the *vallum* typical early church sites and monasteries. The site is on the townland border and enclosed on the north and east by field boundaries and so is in accordance with some of Swan's diagnostic features of early medieval ecclesiastical monasteries relating to boundaries of townland and field. There were no references to a system of *valli* on this site and the assumption must be that both *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* were conjoined within the *vallum*.

Inishmore, Co. Galway

In the excavation of two church sites on Inishmore, the visible antiquities include the stump of a late high cross, the stump of a round tower on a terrace slightly lower, also St. Enda's holy well and altar and part of an ancient wall (Manning 1985). Temple Benan is a small church c.3.2m by c.2.1m and north-south orientation on a terrace (*ibid.*, 98). Of the wall foundations, some stones remain which were 0.8m in width and uncovered near the south-east corner (*ibid.*, 101). In 1880 the National Monuments Register recorded ruins of a church 'with rectangular enclosure and group of cells', later Westropp (1905) wrote of a 'group on monastic cloghauns with traces of cashel' and this was later repeated in Killanin and Duignan (1967, 62) and Manning (1985, 98). Since neither enclosure nor *vallum* survived, Manning suggested the former existence of a small rectangular enclosure flush with the north gable and surrounding the other sides (*ibid.*, 98, 110) and that the wall is considered to be the final stage of building probably as shelter from the weather. There were no references to a system of *valli* on this site but the presence of a high cross and round tower suggest a *sanctior-sanctissimus* area.

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Millockstown, Co. Louth

At Millockstown the excavation was also occasioned by land improvement activities when a *southern* had been exposed. Before the excavation there had been no surface indications beyond a low standing stone or scratching-post (Manning 1986, 135). Manning found that this was a multi-period site and suggested a sequence of three phases of occupation beginning with Late Iron Age. This was followed by a typical secular ringfort of early medieval period and the third phase was an early medieval ecclesiastical site. Manning points out that the acquisition of secular sites by the church has been attested to elsewhere in Ireland (*ibid.*, 163). There is no sign of a church in Millockstown and if there had been a church it must have been wooden. The ecclesiastical use of the site was discontinued long before the 12th century. The graves were long-cist or lintel and of males, females and juveniles (*ibid.*, 164, 174).

The excavation revealed a succession of three enclosures. The first two phases were ringfort enclosures and the final phase was early medieval monastic:

Phase 1: An enclosure *c.*60m in diameter within a narrow ditch (*ibid.*, 137) which was *c.*1.4m at the top and *c.* 0.6m in depth. There was no trace of a bank. There was a dateable find of a terminal part of a zoomorphic penannular brooch of the third century and associated charcoal with a date range of 430-480 AD (*ibid.*, 181) which suggests a late Iron Age settlement. Another *southern* was uncovered.

Phase 2: A ringfort was constructed inside the earlier Phase 1. The diameter was *c.*37m, with a ditch 2.7m wide and *c.*1.5m in depth and the enclosure had few features and could not be dated.

Phase 3: Early medieval ecclesiastical monastery.

Manning suggests a sequence of three phases of occupation beginning with Late Iron Age. This was followed by a typical secular ringfort of Early Medieval period and the third phase was an ecclesiastical settlement of habitation and burial. This third phase constituted a monastic appropriation of an earlier

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ringfort. Manning points out that the acquisition of secular sites by the church has been attested to elsewhere in Ireland (*ibid.*, 163). There is no sign of a church and if there had been a church it must have been a wooden construction. There is however no record of postholes. The ecclesiastical use of the site was discontinued long before the 12th century and was later a place of burial, mixed, with no young children (*ibid.*, 164).

In the ecclesiastical occupation the ditch was in-filled and a new ditch was dug forming a new *vallum*. This was of irregular shape, much larger than the two previous phases, measuring *c.*40m north-south and *c.*100m east-west. The ditch had a rounded profile at the bottom and was *c.*3m in width and *c.*1.4m in depth. A date of 770-800 AD was obtained (*ibid.*, 181). The contents of 20 long-cist graves were analysed and could with certainty be assigned to Phase 3. This enclosure also included the two *souterrains*. There were no references to any *vallum* system on this site so the conclusion must be that both *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* were enclosed by the same *vallum*.

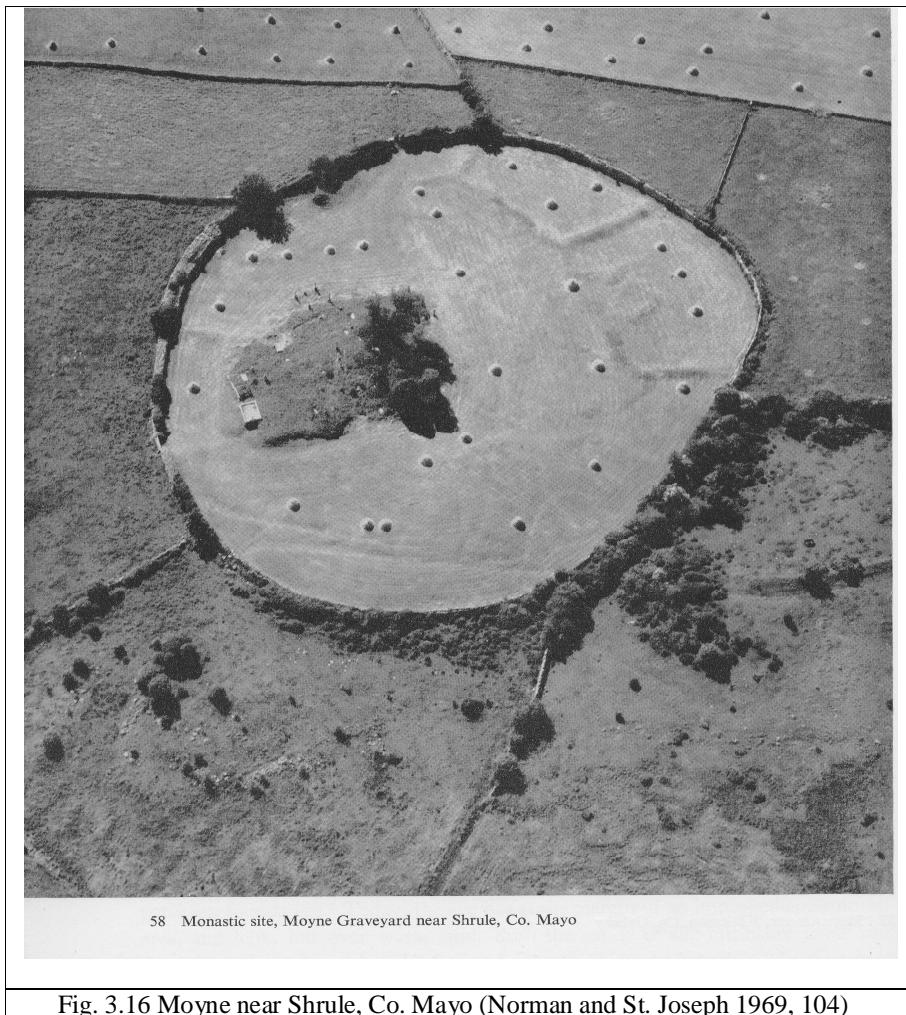
The reports on excavations at Killeterdadrum and Millockstown detail the dimensions of the *vallum* ditch namely *c.* 2m in width and *c.*1.5m in depth in both cases. Presumably the bank *vallum* would have been formed from the dugout material and so would have related dimensions. The *sanctior/sanctissimus* *vallum* could not have been very substantial and presumably would have been surmounted by a palisade of stakes and quickens such as blackthorn and whitethorn.

Moyne, Shrile, Co. Mayo

At Moyne (Fig. 3.16) Manning (1987, 37-70) excavated a graveyard in 1982 which lay within a large drystone *sanctior* *vallum* which has a diameter of *c.* 130m. The graveyard (*sanctissimus*) the medieval church ruins and two standing stones lie in the south western part of the enclosure. The enclosed area is of good pasture and the lack of a defined limit to the extent of the graveyard was a cause of concern. An aerial photograph of the site was published by Norman and St.

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Joseph (1969, 104). The enclosing *vallum* was drystone and c.2-3m in width and c.1.6-2.1m in height. Some of this *vallum* has been repaired to slighter dimensions and the surviving parts of the original *vallum* were characterised by a lower course of large blocks. Within the enclosure, on the north, two inner enclosures were defined by low banks and the *vallum* wall. On the south side between the graveyard and the *vallum* there were two radially sited banks. A linear bank on the eastern part of the enclosure appears to be continued outside the enclosure with a slight curve to the north.



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Of particular interest were the drystone *vallum*, the internal divisions on the north section by earthen banks and the radial placing of internal divisions to the south outside the graveyard. This appears to suggest a conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* system within the drystone *vallum*.

Hamlin

Ann Hamlin (1992) discussed the problems of identification of the early ecclesiastical sites. She felt that the O.S. (1984) *Map of Monastic Ireland* and Gwynne and Hadcock's *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* (1970) were uneven works and in places unreliable. She advocated a study of the lives of the saints from the late seventh century as well as the martyrologies and placename studies (Hamlin 1992, 138-9). She continued that the identification on the ground of early medieval monasteries is largely a matter of archaeology complemented with an interdisciplinary approach. Hamlin does not refer to the three-fold *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*.

Carrowntemple, Co. Sligo

The site of Carrowntemple, Co. Sligo was described as an early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure in both reports (Wallace and Timoney 1987; Timoney 2002). The site includes fragments of inner enclosure (*sanctissimus*), outer enclosure (*sanctior*), *souterrains*, medieval church ruins, facsimiles of early medieval grave slabs and an ancient field system.

Nendrum, Co. Down

A recent excavation at Nendrum was carried out by McErlean and Crothers (2007) in 1999-2001. The church, burials and the round tower were in the inner enclosure (*sanctissimus*), the middle area was for some graves, community living and working activities and outer enclosure farming activities (McErlean and Crothers 2007, 335). The first excavation at Nendrum, Co. Down in 1922-24 had been criticised because of the alleged loss of material, the methods of excavation employed, the contexts of finds which included a bell, a sundial,

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pins, tablets and coins and the consequent difficulties of interpretation (McErlean and Crothers 2007, 326-333; Edwards 1990, 101; Jenkins 2010, 3). The focus of the McErlean and Crothers excavations was on the tidal powered mills which, with mill ponds, were an important aspect of the settlement (*ibid.*, 1-8). The assertion that the site was pre-Christian and defensive (*ibid.*, 96-7) has been contested (Edwards 1990, 107).

Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry

Sheehan (2009) excavated Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry from 1992 to 2004. The site is located at the western end of the Iveragh peninsula on the north side of a valley on a fairly level terrace. The site has a sub-circular *vallum* c.30m in diameter overlain by modern field boundaries and a 19th century road (Sheehan 2009, 192). The enclosing element is a low wall with an outer facing of slabs both horizontal and vertical but dimensions are not given. Two slabs which can be dated to the sixth century are carved with the motifs of *flabellum* and peacock. There was also some Bii-ware, all of which indicated links with the eastern Mediterranean region (*ibid.*, 202). Two samples of radiocarbon dates are corroborative and indicate a mid-fifth to early sixth century establishment of an *ab initio* monastic enclosure. The earliest construction activity on the site was the digging of a series of substantial drainage trenches (*ibid.*, 194) and primary features include the *vallum*, the wooden church and a grave that appears to be special. This was lintelled with polished and tooled stones under the 'sacrarium'. Presumably the grave was of the founder of the monastery. The sequence of the building of the enclosure contrasts with Church Island (O'Kelly 1957, 57; Fig. 3.12) where the enclosure was the final stage of development. It is clear that the Caherlehillan site was, *ab initio*, an early medieval monastic settlement. In this report there are no references to an interior dividing wall, but in the plan in the report, there is a light line enclosing the north-east section.

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Iveragh Peninsula, Co. Kerry

The Iveragh Peninsula - An Archaeological Survey of South Kerry (O'Sullivan and Sheehan 1996), is a catalogue of all archaeological sites. It includes 54 early medieval monastic sites, 11 of these were of minor importance. Of these Skellig Michael is now considered to be of world wide importance, Church Island, Lough Currane was of local importance only and the rest were small enclosed church sites. Six sites including Skellig Michael are offshore islands. The sites are circular or oval averaging 33m in diameter and sometimes overlain by later field boundaries (O'Sullivan and Sheehan 1996, 246-7). These sites appear to have enclosed both *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* spaces. On Skellig Michael the main remains are on terraces. The *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* enclosures are defined by the terraces. It is clear that the terraces and supporting walls are most important and have been repeatedly repaired, revetted and rebuttressed (*ibid.*, 279-281).

High Island, Co. Galway

White Marshal and Rourke (2000) published *High Island; an Irish Monastery in the Atlantic*. High Island lies over three km west of Claddaghduf, Co. Galway. The drystone *sanctior/sanctissimus vallum* has a diameter varying from 24m to 37m. and bounds the lake on the south. The enclosure directly abuts the steep hill to the east. Petrie had described the then extant portion of the wall and gave dimensions *c.*1 m in height and *c.*3 m wide but now the wall is in a bad state of collapse (*ibid.*, 46-49). Herity (1995, 1-18) gives more information on High Island. There had been mining activity on the island in the middle of the 18th century when, because there were no housing facilities on the island, the miners built their huts using the stones from the early medieval buildings. Herity reconstructed on paper what he considered the original layout of the monastery had been. The original *sanctior/sanctissimus* was roughly quadrangular. The east boundary was built into rising ground. The drystone *vallum* on the south was a mere 0.8m in width. The curving *vallum* on the west and north was a substantial

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3m in width and incorporated two wall chambers and abutted huts (Herity 1995, 4).

Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly

Part of the *vallum* of Clonmacnoise excavated in Spring 2000 (Murphy 2003) included a segment of ‘a large ditch dated to the Early Christian period, possibly representing an outer enclosing element of the early monastic complex’ (Murphy 2003, 1).

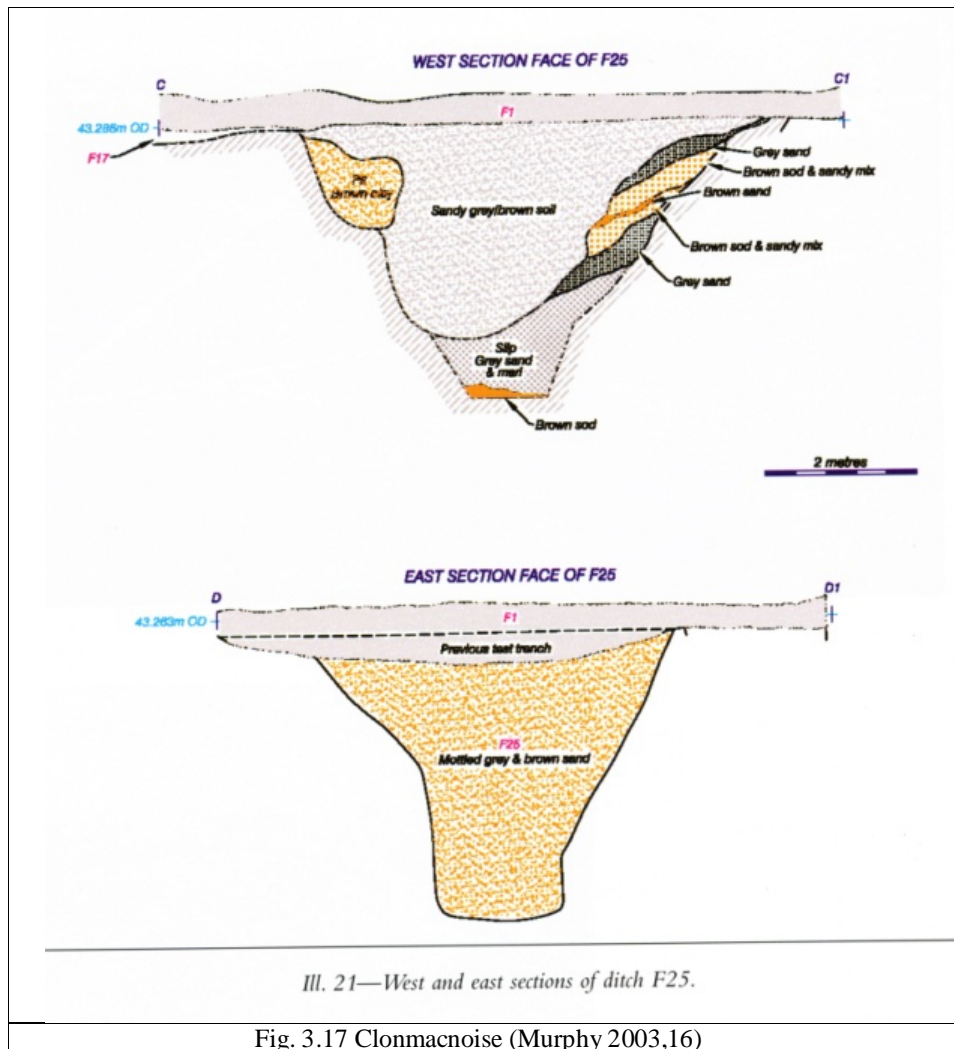


Fig. 3.17 Clonmacnoise (Murphy 2003,16)

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The back-filled ditch (Fig. 3.17) had substantial dimensions varying in top width from 5m to 6.2m and bottom width 1m to 1.7m. The depth was *c.*3.7m with a V-shaped profile and flat bottom. There was evidence of slippage on the north side, e.g. on the interior of the enclosure, with silting and purposeful in-filling in the eighth/ninth century. The slippage is thought to have been caused by the substantial weight of the bank. The in-filling appears to have been carried out in one episode and is believed to coincide with a major expansion of the monastery demanding a new *sanctior vallum* outside the *sanctissimus* of the monastery (*ibid.*, 13). The proportions of the in-filled ditch are such as to suggest that it was the outer boundary at the time of construction. Traces of a later outer enclosure are evident in the fields south and east of the enclosure (*ibid.*, 19-23). This monument was impressive and contrasted greatly with other sites at Millockstown, Co. Louth (Manning 1986) and Killederdadrum, Co. Tipperary (Manning 1984).

Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath

Simpson (Simpson 2005) excavated the monastic site at Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath in 1994. This site is well documented from St. Secundinus (Sechnal) in the mid-fifth century (Fig. 3.18). The present Church of Ireland church, with part of a stone arcade of a medieval church, lies centrally in a field of *c.* 2h. The curving modern road suggested a large oval enclosure of *c.* 210m in diameter (*ibid.*, 227).

The sequence of activities have been summarised:

- Phase 1: seventh/eighth century, a round house demolished
- Phase 2: industrial activity before late eighth century
- Phase 3: late eighth to early tenth century the enclosing bank and ditch constructed
- Phase 4: early tenth to late twelfth century bank demolished and ditch in-filled
- Phase 5: eleventh/twelfth century the ditch was recut and later filled in
- Phase 6: late twelfth/thirteenth century cultivation of the entire site

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Phase 7: ninth/tenth century five adults buried (*ibid.*, 229).

The curving *vallum* consisted of a ditch and bank. The ditch was outside and had an upper width of *c.* 4.5m, a lower width of *c.* 1.2m and a depth of *c.* 2.3m. A strong flowing spring within a stone channel was excavated.

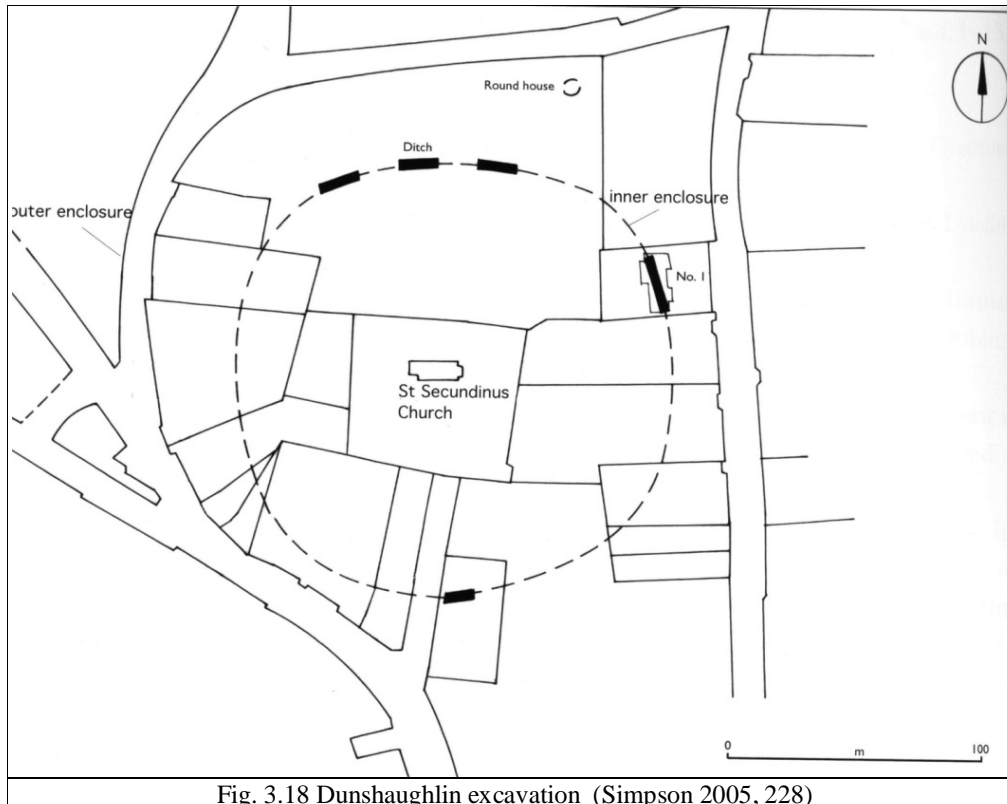


Fig. 3.18 Dunshaughlin excavation (Simpson 2005, 228)

The outlet to the stream had been sealed by the back-fill of the ditch and when the blockage was released the ditch quickly filled with water indicating that originally the ditch had been full of water. The later ditch (Phase 5) was smaller being 2.8m width at the top and 1.6m at the base and *c.* 1.7m in depth. In attempting to interpret the phases of activity, Simpson suggests that there had been a contraction in size of the site in the late eighth century when perhaps there was still an outer and substantial enclosure in existence. The rebuilding of the ditch albeit of smaller dimensions at a later date could be due to recorded repeated aggressive activities of both dynastic and Hiberno-Norse origins (*ibid.*,

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227-8). There are similarities with the site at Killeterdadrú excavated by Con Manning (Manning, 1984) and contrasts with Clonmacnoise where the *vallum* ditch had been rebuilt further out from the enclosure centre.

The site has been much reconstructed with the consequent difficulties of identifying the *sanctissimus* which was probably located in the area now occupied by the present quadrilateral church enclosure and surrounded by the *sanctior*. Simpson (2005, 228, 233-4) referred to the inner enclosure and the outer enclosure but not to the innermost core where the present Church of Ireland church stands with its medieval fragments. She does not use the terms *sanctus*, *sanctior* or *sanctissimus*.

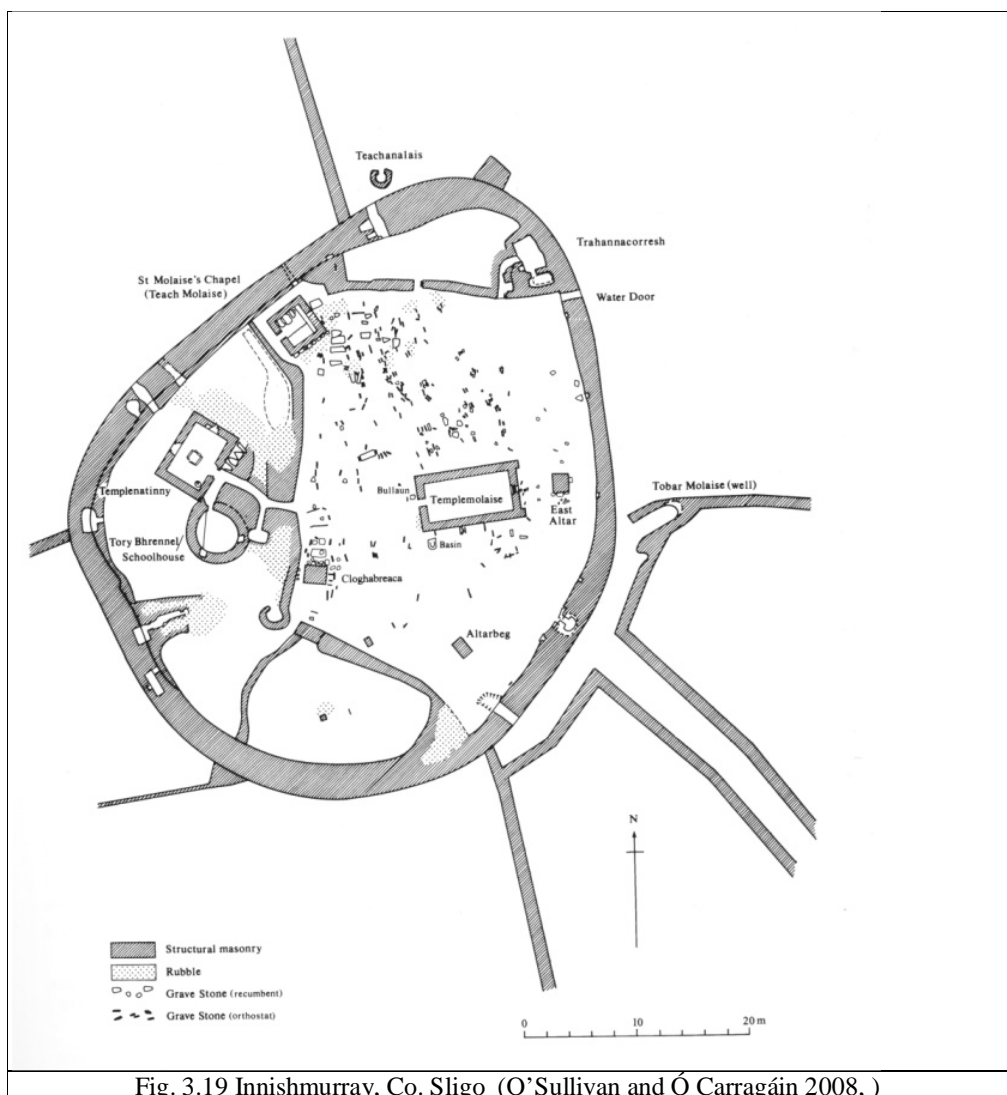
Ó Carragáin

Ó Carragáin is most prominent in research and publications on early medieval monastic churches of recent times from 1987 to date and with much more work in preparation for publication. The bulk of his work appears to be directed to the architecture of church buildings, organisation and developments e.g. *Regional variations in Irish Pre-Romanesque architecture* (2005) and *The Architectural Setting of the Mass in early medieval Ireland* (2009). In *Landscape Converted: Archaeology and Early Irish Church Organisation on Iveragh and Dingle, Ireland* (2005) he gives a good review of the introduction of Christianity to south Kerry. He refers to the important excavations such as Reask and Caherlehillan and the important sites of Kilmalkeader, Inis Úasal and Skellig Michael. The term *termon* is some times used to designate the sanctuary or inner enclosure but in other cases to the extent of the ecclesiastic lands. Ó Carragáin notes that most of the settlement enclosures are not distinguishable from others elsewhere in the region (*ibid.*, 146). He continues that a coherent model of the ecclesiastical enclosure layout is usually two, or rarely three, concentric enclosures with the ritual focus including the principal graveyard within the inner one (Ó Carragáin 2009, 57). On the subject of the height of the *vallum*, Ó Carragáin writes, that the practice dated from early times and that the reason was

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to minimise contact with the laity. He then refers to Bede writing on Cuthbert of Farne that the wall was higher than man to prevent eyes and thoughts from wandering and direct them to heaven (*ibid.*, 217). Ó Carragáin (*ibid.*, 58) also writes:

‘To date, no one has identified an ecclesiastical settlement (as distinct from a satellite monument) that was definitely unenclosed and there are few or no convincing examples whose enclosures are not curvilinear.’



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The variations of the number and the diameter of enclosures in the site are primarily due to regionality or status (*ibid.*, 58). Ó Carragáin dismisses the belief of *vallum* continuity from the ringfort type of enclosure as there are very few enclosures of late Iron Age (*ibid.*, 59).

There were big changes in the fifth century – ecclesiastical enclosures, ringforts, cemetery settlements, cemetery enclosures with no church and crannogs (*ibid.*, 59). The model of the ecclesiastical enclosure, he believes, was from Romano-British practice and the Temple in Jerusalem. The practice of sanctuary or sacred place came from the biblical cities of refuge such as Jerusalem (*ibid.*, 85).

O’Sullivan and Ó Carragáin (2008) describe the drystone *vallum* (Fig. 3.19) in Innishmurray as massive, curvilinear pear shaped on a north-east/south-west axis. The dimensions of 52.5m by 40.5m enclose an area of *c.* 0.14h. The *vallum* is now 3m in height and *c.* 4m in width with steps on the inner side and mural chambers (O’Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008, 66). Noting that O’Donovan had recorded a height of *c.* 5m they suggest that the Board of Works had reduced the height when rebuilding in 1880. They note that Heraughty (1982) considered that the construction was in response to Viking attentions and that Herity (1995, 39) associated the structure with pre-Christian building tradition.

In Ireland the period of the early medieval monastery extended arguably from pre-patrician Declan and Ibar but certainly from post-Patrick period to a decline towards the emergence of the 11th century reforms. From which time the organised parish system and new style cloister monasteries emerged. Contemporaneous literature reflected this development and decline.

Adomnán had described the monastery and the *vallum* system (Jenkins, McDonald) in the Irish sphere of influence but afterwards there was little interest until Stokes and Dunraven but even then the interest was of description rather

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than critical study. The 20th century saw the emergence of modern archaeological techniques of excavation (both open and non-destructive), O.S. map studies, aerial photography and the concomitant interpretation. The excavation reports were most helpful although the *vallum* system by and large has not been emphasised. There has been little of excavation of early medieval monastic sites specifically. An essential part of any excavation is the publication of the results and interpretation of those results. This study is part of that process of identification of pertinent reports combined with study and interpretation of published material and topographical observation.

In this chapter there is an attempt to all relevant literature on early medieval monasticism from the early 18th century on. The basic understanding was established during the 19th century and the real work of excavation in the latter part of the 20th century. Comparatively little attention has been given to the *vallum* system. Swan's work (1983) on identification of early medieval monasteries is remarkably. The work of MacDonald (2001) and Jenkins (2010) is of great importance in focussing attention on the three-fold *vallum* system that is traceable in most sites.

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4.1 Research into features of early medieval monasteries in Ireland

Having researched the early Christian development of the monastery and the *vallum* system in the eastern world, its arrival in Ireland, its development in Ireland, the relevant publications and published reports of excavations in Ireland, attention was turned to the study of the *vallum* system in Ireland with particular relevance to Co. Sligo. Additionally the objective of this research being to study the *vallum* system on the ground including the morphology and the topography of the immediate area. The study was intended to be non-destructive and non-invasive to the site, and also non intrusive and unobtrusive to the landowners to whom the author is indebted.

The study was impelled by a desire to have as full information as possible on the *vallum system* based of literature research and also topographical observation. The approach adopted was methodical in the searching for origins, introduction, innovations and practice of the *vallum* in early medieval monastic foundations in Ireland and also in the practical applications in the field. The enlightenment (led by MacDonald (2001) and Jenkins (2010) as to the frequency of the three-fold *vallum* system of the *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* in the form of curvilinear boundary, many of which still maintain their original purpose of a boundary, emerged in the course of the study.

This study consisting of research and field appraisal was simple in the approach to the study of the *vallum* and of the *vallum* system of the early medieval monastic foundations. Hitherto the focus of attention had been on the features within the *vallum* that is the *sanctissimus* enclosure whilst the *vallum* itself had received cursory attention and particularly the *vallum* structures of the outer enclosures of *sanctus* and *sanctior* have been overlooked. This study was on the *vallum* which entailed research into the origins of Christianity and of Christian monasticism. Attention was given in the literature review to the developing interest in antiquities in 18th/19th

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century Europe and particularly in Ireland with the development of interest in the archaeology of the early medieval period. An understanding of the work of John O'Donovan, the Ordnance Survey team and the several editions of the 6" and 25" maps was an essential part of this study in tracing ongoing changes in the topography.

Swan's (1983) identification of important features of the early medieval monastic settlement was particularly useful, of continuing importance and was relied upon as indications of what characteristic features to anticipate and recognise on site. This list, already presented, was constantly referred to. The *Archaeological Inventory of County Sligo Vol 1: South Sligo* (Egan et al., 2005) was a constant guide. The excavation reports of early medieval sites elsewhere in Ireland were most helpful. This study involved extensive reading, tracing sources in books and journals and constant re-assessments during the study (Plate 4.1). There were also visits to the National Archives, the Trinity College Map library and other libraries. Frequent trips were made to the sites and field work undertaken (Plate 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).



Plate 4.1 Desk top research



Plate 4.2 Church hill Surveying

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South Sligo inventory page no.		Nat Arch SL	Townland	6" OS	SW corner mm.	O.D feet	Eastings, Northings	Latitude	Longitude	Discovery	Barony	Parish
400	2612	020- 171001/3-	Ballydawley	20:12:06	863, 155	0 - 100	170460, 328020	54° 12' 1.1128"	-8° 27' 12.1574"	25	Tirerrill	Kilross
404	2619	032- 141001/3	Carnyara	32:10:02	327,233	300 - 400	154980, 316310	54° 5' 38.3691"	-8° 41' 19.7137"	25	Leyney	Achonry
405	2623	044- 056001/2	Carrowntemple	44:13:12	123,124	300 - 400	162500, 302140	53° 58' 2.2718"	-8° 34' 19.6858"	32	Coolavin	Kilfree
406	2625	032- 195001/3	Church Hill	32:16:05	776,42	233	159710, 314090	54° 4' 27.9847"	-8° 36' 58.4196"	25	Corran	Cloonaghil
408	2630	045- 011001/3	Cuppanagh	45:13:04	74, 41	200 - 300	171420, 301770	53° 57' 52.3568"	-8° 26' 10.2842"	32	Coolavin	Killaraght
408	2631	027- 141001/2	Drumcolumb	27:15:05	592,8	300 - 400	177310, 320030	54° 7' 43.9649"	-8° 20' 52.1418"	25	Tirerrill	Drumcolumb
411	2639	020- 109001/10	Kilboglashy	20:07:04	491,305	0 - 100	166540, 329620	54° 12' 51.9899"	-8° 30' 49.0236"	25	Leyney	
412	2640	031- 006001-	Kilcummin	31:04:06	875,455	200 - 300	151030, 318500	54° 6' 47.8939"	-8° 44' 58.3024"	25	Leyney	Achonry
416	2656	032- 034001/3	Kilvarnet North	32:04:02	823,605	300 - 400	160230, 320030	54° 7' 40.2300"	-8° 36' 32.6352"	25	Leyney	Kilvarnet
420	2662	046- 014001/3	Monasterredan	46:07:02	560,453	300 - 400	167090, 299190	53° 56' 27.9893"	-8° 30' 6.7736"	32	Coolavin	Kilcolman
423	2667	035- 052001/4	Shancough(Tirr.B)	35:09:02	147,262	300 - 400	182340, 316280	54° 5' 43.3953"	-8° 16' 14.3710"	25	Tirerrill	Shancough

Table 4.1 Details of 11 early medieval ecclesiastical sites in south Sligo with fragments of *vallum*



4.2 Selection of sites for the present study

Monasticism was the dominant feature of early medieval ecclesiastical Ireland from the sixth century post-Patrician influences to the 11th/12th century reforms. The persistent feature of the monastic site was the enclosing *vallum* system which was usually circular or oval in plan. Traces of some of these *vallum* systems are still fossilised in the form of field boundaries. These traces are usually fragmentary with the concave side towards the site.

Over 70 ecclesiastical sites have been identified in south Co. Sligo (Egan *et al.* 2005, 394–426). Approximately 32 of these were considered to be early medieval and, of these, 11 had been identified as having fragments of curvilinear field boundaries. These were the early medieval monastic sites chosen for this study. Some of these sites had substantial parts of a *vallum* system whilst others had fragments only.

The locations of the selected sites that were chosen for study were identified on the Discovery Series maps. The co-ordinates of these sites were extracted from Egan *et al.* (2005) and translated into the form accepted by Garmin GPS. Great reliance was placed on Egan *et al.* (2005) when identifying location, features and dimensions of the selected sites. Details of these sites are presented in Table 4.1 and the cartographical locations of the sites are shown in Table 5.1.

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Relevant details of the sites are presented in tabular form in one figure and four tables as follows:

Fig. 5.1 Map Location of 11 early medieval monastic sites (after Egan *et al.*, 2005)

Table 4.1 Details of 11 early medieval ecclesiastical sites in south Sligo with *vallum* fragments

Table 6.1 Topographical features of early medieval monastic enclosures in Sligo (after Swan 1983)

Table 6.2 Some additional features observed to be common to Co. Sligo early medieval monastic enclosures

Table 6.3 Check list of characteristic features of early medieval ecclesiastical sites in south Sligo and other counties

Table 6.4 Features of some early medieval monastic sites outside Sligo

For the purposes of this study each site was visited on a regular basis during the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Local enquiries elicited information on the identity of the land owners who were then contacted and visited. The writer sought and received permission to visit the sites for the purposes of survey and photography only. This first meeting with the landowners was important in establishing a relationship of trust. Permission was always readily granted and usually accompanied by requests to give prior notice of the visit and reminders of the need for care about gates, hay and farm animals. There was also an assurance requested and given that no excavations or interference with the sites would take place. Some information on folklore was garnered over time on these and subsequent visits. Some sites were visited frequently such as those with easy access from the roads. Other sites were approachable only through private areas

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of property and considerations of privacy entailed prior notice and limitations of the number of visits.

Visits to the sites revealed that some of the features e.g. founder's tomb and pillar stone, did not occur in any of the sites being studied. Table 6.1 identified those features in the Co. Sligo sites that occurred on Swan's list. Some other features also appeared in these sites which were not on Swan's list and these are shown in Table 6.2.

4.3 Cartographic research and O.S. maps

Work on the Ordnance Survey (O.S.) maps commenced with the first edition of the 6" maps of Co. Sligo in 1837 and later editions were to ensue in 1887/8 and 1913/4 and the 25" map of the same time. The Letters and Name Book of John O'Donovan and his team compiled prior to the publication of the first edition map made most important observations on the period of the early 19th century. This material played an important role in this study in tracing changes that subsequently occurred in the later editions of the 6" O.S. maps. The features of particular importance to this study of the *vallum* were curvilinear field boundaries, whether extant or abandoned, and other monuments of mounds or ridges in the open fields in the vicinity of the monastic foundation. When the sites and their location on 6" sheet O.S. maps were identified, arrangements were made to visit the Map Library in Trinity College, Dublin. At the library, true to scale excerpts on A3 size paper were obtained from the original 6" and 25" O.S. monochrome sheets of the county. These A3 sheets were the basis of subsequent map work in identifying curvilinear field systems arcing around the early medieval monastic settlements as well as confirming dimensions in Egan *et al.* (2005). Because the map excerpts did not include scales to show relative distances e.g. 6" to the mile, 25" to the mile or Representative Fraction, these scales were prepared by hand and included on each map depiction in this study.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Subsequently conjectural reconstructions of the original monasteries were plotted on the depictions of the arced fragments of the field systems shown on the maps and features that were visible on the ground. These A3 excerpts of the three editions of the 6" O.S. 1837, 1887/8 and 1913/4 and 25" O.S. (1912/3/4;1952) were constantly studied and compared with each other on the desk, and in the field, thus providing a longitudinal study and an opportunity to understand the changes over the century. Being to scale these A3 excerpts were most useful in checking dimensions and areas particularly at the last stage of plotting the conjectural layout of the early medieval monastic site. See examples of these excerpts of Kilcummin in Fig. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4. Arrangements were made to visit The National Monuments Services Archives in Dublin. Excellent aerial photographs were available for some of the sites and copies of these were forwarded later (Plates 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10). Appropriate information was extracted from the relevant site documentation that was made available for study. GOOGLE Earth was searched for aerial photographs some of which were very good but others were very poor (Plates 4.5 and 4.6).



Plate 4.5 Carnyara GOOGLE Earth 2010
poor image

Plate 4.6 Kilboglasy GOOGLE Earth 2010
good image

Libraries

The public library in Sligo was visited to study the O'Donovan Letters which had been issued in typescript by Fr. Michael O'Flanagan in the 1920s. Relevant extracts relating to the selected sites were extracted. The O.S. Name Book,

which was available on micro-film, was also consulted and notes taken of the references.

4.4 Preparation of catalogue and field survey

The writer prepared a catalogue of the 11 early medieval monastic sites whilst the above activities of research were going on.

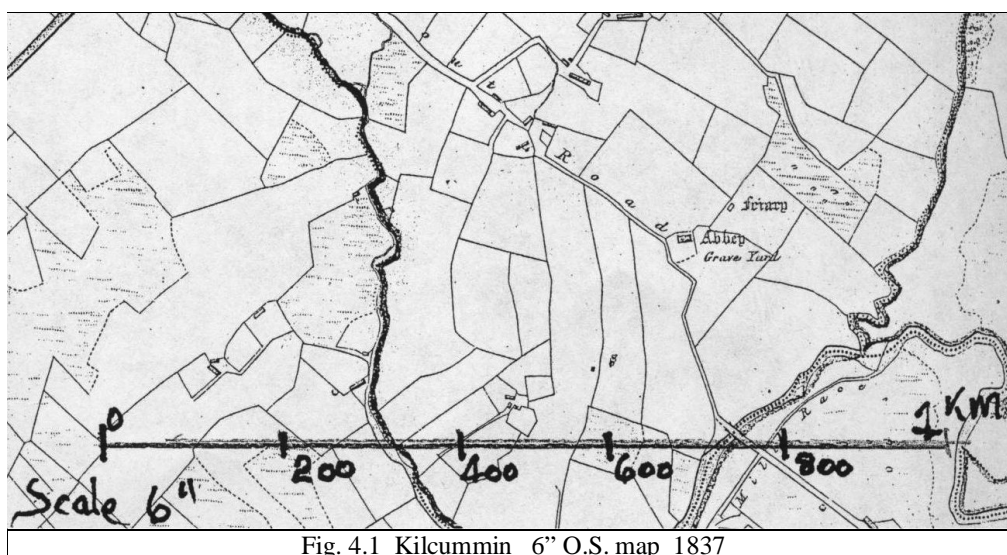


Fig. 4.1 Kilcummin 6" O.S. map 1837

Chapter 4 Methodology



Plate 4.7 Drumcolumb National Monuments archives



Plate 4.8 Kilcummin National Monuments archives



Plate 4.9 Church Hill National Monuments archives



Plate 4.10 Monasterredan National Monuments archives

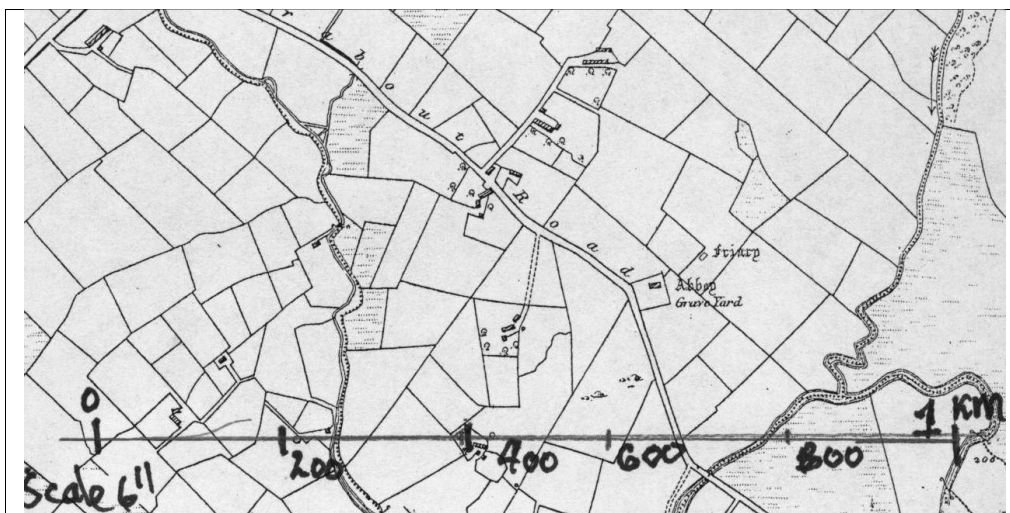


Fig. 4.2 Kilcummin 6" O.S. map 1888

Chapter 4 Methodology

In this manner relevant and observable information was constantly being added to. It was intended that the catalogue should include confirmation of the important information that had already been acquired but also to provide up-to-date observations of the current situation and so preserve for future reference a comprehensive accurate report on the site condition. This was regarded as a most important part of the study as it represents an accurate record of the current situation of the site.

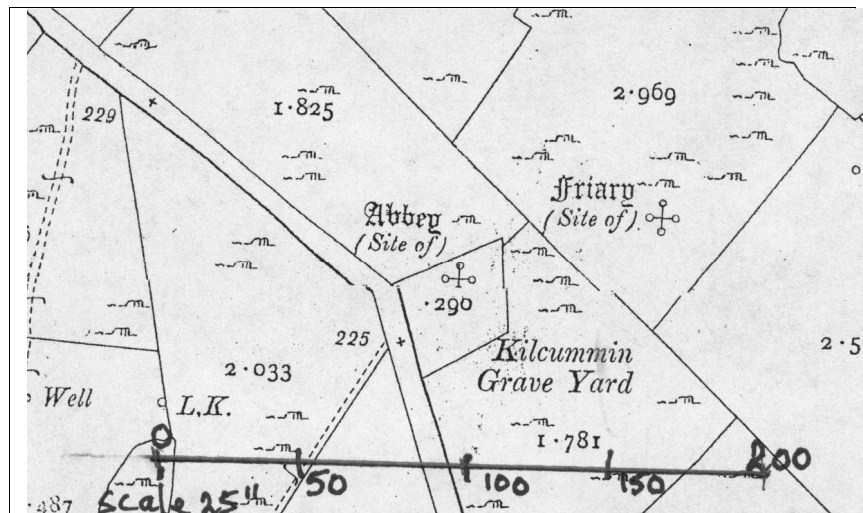


Fig 4.3 Kilcummin 6" O.S. map 1913

Chapter 4 Methodology

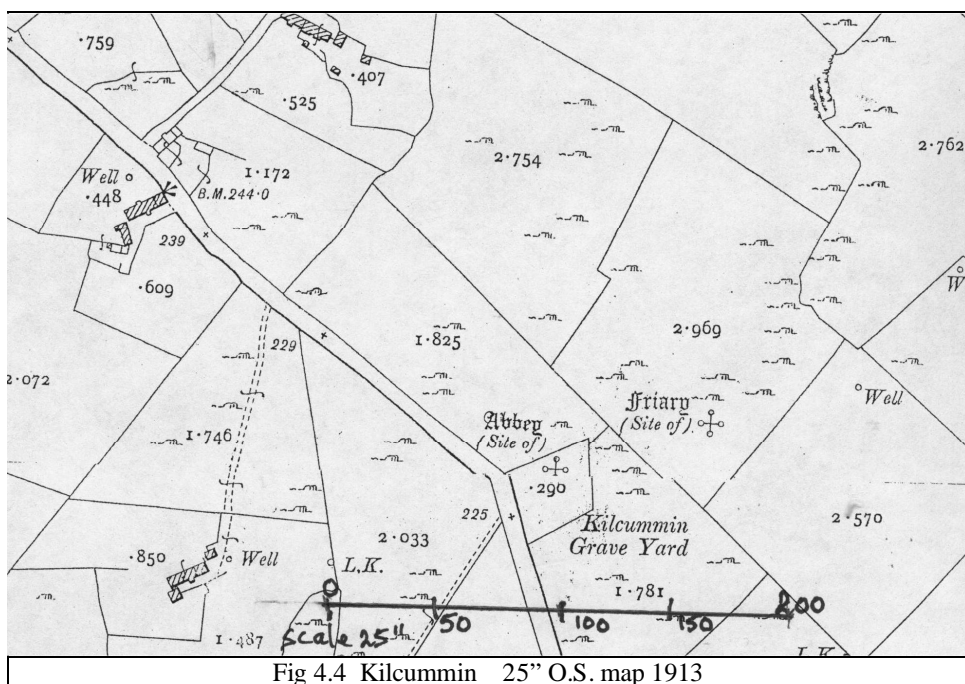


Fig 4.4 Kilcummin 25" O.S. map 1913

Each catalogue entry included a topographical survey, copies of the three 6" O.S. maps and the 25" O.S. maps. These maps were reduced in scale and size to facilitate report writing but included a scale representing 6" or 25" to the mile as appropriate and expressed in metres. The conjectural reconstructions of each of the early medieval monastic site was prepared and shown in chapter 5.

Field survey

The first part in the survey of each site was a topographical study of the principal features of the surrounding landscape as it is today. This was an essential part of the catalogue and also led to the identification of the important features especially the *vallum* system. The topographical study was aimed at confirming the dimensions already noted in Egan *et al.* (2005) as well as identifying features not noted. The study of the O.S. maps followed in order to determine what features should be surveyed. A check list was then prepared of the features noted for evaluation. In previous reports none of the sites had the three-fold *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctor* and *sanctissimus* identified or commented on.

Materials used on the site were clipboards with copies of : Swan's check list of features of interest, copies of the relevant pages of Egan *et al.* (2005), O.S. map excerpts to scale of the site, the prepared catalogue, scales, pencils and note books. These measurements were simple, linear and the equipment used comprised of measuring tapes and ranging poles (Plates 4.2 - 4.4). On the site the features in turn were identified, photographed and dimensions verified or entered as new. The map excerpts being to scale were most useful and constantly consulted especially on the site.

4.5 Conjectural ground plans of Sligo early medieval monasteries

An objective of the study was to prepare a conjectural plan of the *vallum* systems of the original monastic settlement of each site. Research had indicated an expectation of a space enclosed by at least one curvilinear circular or subcircular *vallum*. The study of the O.S. maps showed arcs of field boundaries, which when linked together, would enclose such spaces. Topographical surveys of the sites corresponded to the expectations and revealed more than one enclosure of the *vallum* system, in several sites, which had not previously been noted.

This linking of fragments in map work was plotted freehand and the results shown in a red line (solid or dotted) on the true scale excerpt of the original O.S. map as shown in the catalogue of sites. The conjectural layout of each site is discussed and presented in Chapter 6.

When calculating the area of the conjectural early medieval enclosure the greatest and least dimension at right angles to each other were measured on the map and the mean determined. Using the indicated scale of the map 25" scale, this figure was then used to calculate the conjectural area as if the space were circular in shape.

Chapter 4 Methodology

The dimensions of relevant features that appeared in Egan *et al.* (2005) were confirmed on the site with the check list and also by measurement and calculation on the maps both on site and later. The 25” maps indicate the area in acres of each of the field enclosures and this was also used as an aid to confirm calculations. These details and calculations were entered in the check list table in Table 6.3 where areas are expressed in hectares (h).

Concluding comments

The study entailed identification of early medieval monastic sites of interest in Sligo and preparation of tables of relevant information and cartographical location of the sites but also the characteristic features to be identified (Swan 1983); (Egan et al.2005). The landowners were approached and permission received. The sites were visited repeatedly. Then the O.S. maps were prepared, the letters and field notes of the O.S. surveyers were studied and aerial photographs were researched. The several sources were balanced as to uniform presentation of information. The catalogue entries for each site corresponded with each other with regard to the type of information. The catalogue of each site was prepared and each site was studied to identify the *vallum* system and to prepare for conjectural reproduction of the original monastery.

Chapter 5 Catalogue and field work

5.1 Introduction

Before work could begin an accurate description of each site had to be prepared based on the current topography of the site as well as maps, photographs (terrestrial and aerial), literary and local folk lore references. This catalogue describes all aspects or phenomena of the site which are considered to be of importance and entailed many visits and conversations with landowners and local residents. The presentation of each site on the catalogues had to be uniform in approach and content. Each catalogue included location, description, historical references, excerpts from O.S. maps, O'Donovan letters and field notes and conjectural reconstruction of the original site.

5.2 Selected sites and details for catalogue

The 11 sites selected for study were:

Ballydawley, Carnyara, Carrowntemple, Church Hill, Cuppanagh, Drumcolumb, Kilboglashy, Kilcummin, Kilvarnet North, Monasterredan, Shancough

The locations of these sites are shown above in Table 4.1 and below in map Fig. 5.1. This chapter presents a description of each of the 11 sites.

5.3 Abbreviations used in catalogue

Numbered and alphabetically presented, the 11 sites of this study have separate entries in this catalogue to include: names of Townland, Parish and Barony, National Grid References (in two forms), RMP (formerly SMR) number, Classification of site, OD, topographical description of the site, particular description of the site, excerpts from O.S. Letters and O.S. Name Book, the several O.S. maps of the site that were studied and aerial views where available.

The hand drawn scales on the O.S. maps presented here are in metres.

Abbreviations used in text are indicated as follows:

ACAP	Air Corps Aerial Photographs
ASIAP	Archaeological Survey of Ireland Aerial Photographs
By.	Barony
<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i>
cm	centimetre
C	circumference
CUCAP	Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs
D	depth
diam	diameter
dim	dimension
ED	Electoral Division
ext	external
fig	figure
ft	feet
GSIAP	Geological Survey of Ireland Aerial Photograph
H	height/high
h	hectares
IASAP	Irish Air Surveys Aerial Photograph
<i>ibid.</i>	<i>ibidem</i>
int.	internal
km	kilometre
L	length
m	metre
max.	maximum
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NPL	not precisely located
OD	Ordnance Datum (Feet above sea level (Egan <i>et al.</i> 2005, xiii))
OPW	Office of Public Works
O.S.	Ordnance Survey of Ireland

Chapter 5 *Catalogue and field work*

OSAP	Ordnance Survey Aerial Photograph
O.S. Letters	Ordnance Survey Letters
O.S. Name	Ordnance Survey Name Book
<i>pers. comm.</i>	personal communication
P.L.U.	Poor Law Union
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
T	thickness
Td	townland
W	width

O.S. Map entries are presented in italics

5.4 Key to location of sites on map

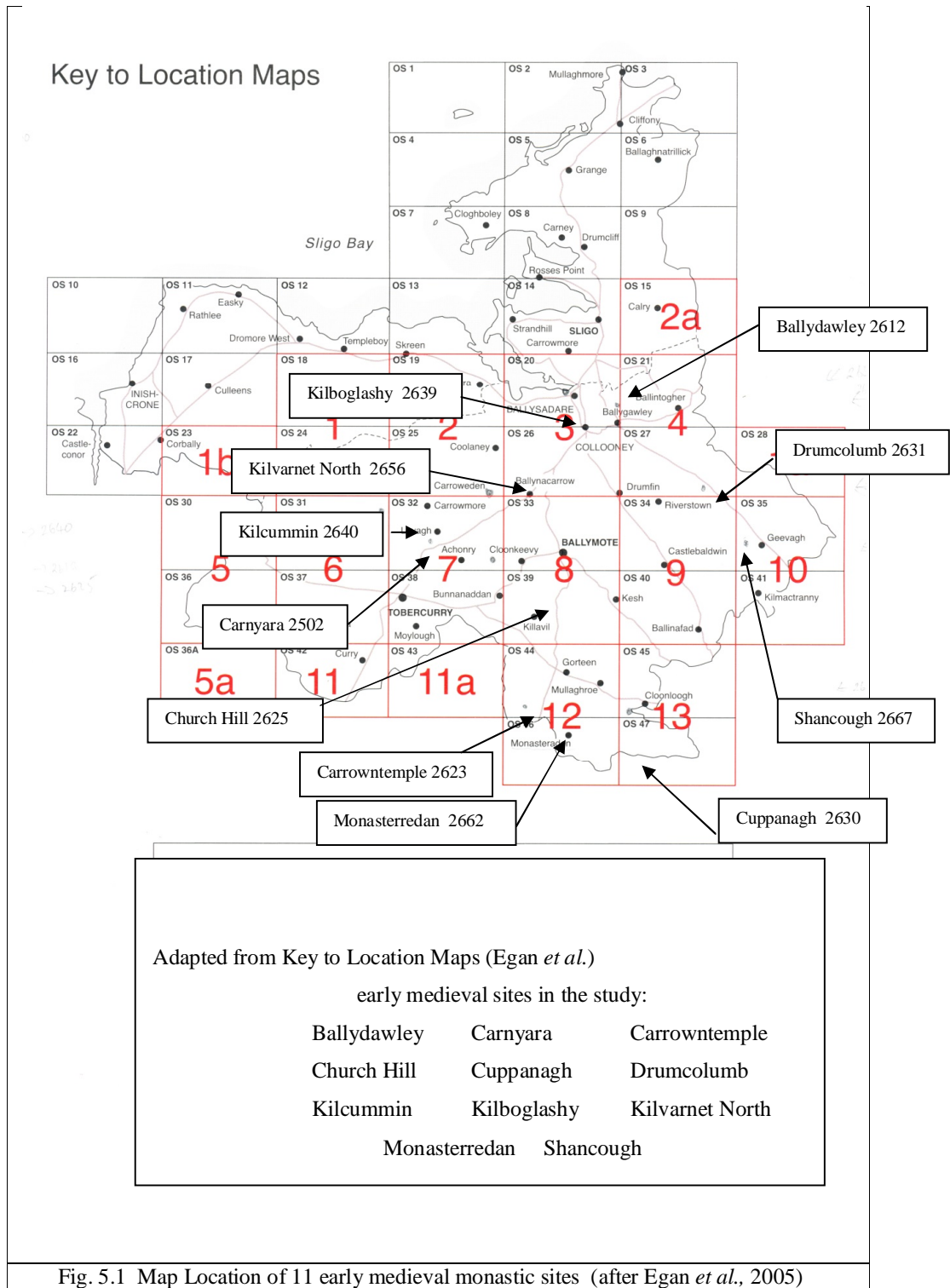


Fig. 5.1 Map Location of 11 early medieval monastic sites (after Egan *et al.*, 2005)

5.5 Ballydawley

Townland: Ballydawley Parish: Kilross Barony: Tirerrill

National Grid Reference: 54°12' 1.1128"; -8° 27' 12.1574"; (170460; 328020)

RMP No.: SL020-171003

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical Enclosure

OD: 0-30m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
792 ^a -1 ^r -1 ^p	Sligo	IV 238

The site depicted as 'Early Christian Site' is found on the east side of R284 south of Sligo just short of Ballygawly cross roads. The approach is through the farmyard, then in a north-easterly direction and up a gentle incline for some hundred metres. To the north-east in the distance the tree clad twin peaks of Slieve Dargan and Slieve Daeane dominate the landscape. Ballydawley Lough, to the north-west, is not visible because of trees which stretch from north to west. The site overlooks farm houses, roads, the low peak of Cloonmacdulf, the meandering river and Collooney to the south-west and slopes downwards on the north, east and south sides.

The site, which is of pasture of good land and of a southerly aspect, covers several fields which have been receiving improving attention by the use of fertilisers and the removal of large stones to the field boundaries.

The maps and aerial photograph (Fig. 6.1, Plate 6.3) suggest a *vallum* system. The eastern element (*sanctus vallum*) is indicated by a large arc of drystone field boundaries. This arc encompasses from a distance the inner enclosure of *sanctior/sanctissimus* from the north through the east to the south-east. The *sanctior/sanctissimus* area is divided in the north-west quadrant by what is now a drystone farm boundary wall (north-east to south-west) and the area north-west of the wall is higher than elsewhere (Egan *et al.*, 2005, 401). The *sanctior*

/sanctissimus enclosure is roughly oval (c.150m north-west; c.120m east-east) and is defined by a drystone *vallum* which varies in thickness from north-east (0.7mW; 0.8m int.H; 1.6m ext.H) to south-east (1.4mW; 0.3m int.H; 1.9m ext. H) (*ibid.*, 400). This area is labelled ‘Killeran GraveYard’ (Egan *et al.* 2005, 401).

A feature of the site is that the drystone walls of the enclosures have a basal course of larger stones surmounted by progressively smaller ones. The present entrance is in the north-east quadrant (2.4mW). The *sanctior* /*sanctissimus* areas originally abutted each other and were separated by the still extant curving drystone *vallum* from north to south leaving the *sanctissimus* to the east. The eastern part of the *sanctissimus* *vallum* has been removed. The former position is indicated by a curving ridge of steep slope about 1.5mH. This is also indicated on the later O.S. maps and by soil marks in the aerial photograph (Plate 6.3). The southern section of the *sanctior* is higher than the neighbouring field to the south and the *vallum* is revetted by large stones arranged in a curve on the outer south side. This curve continues into the next field to the north-east where it is manifested by the above mentioned ridge which now indicates the former position of the *sanctissimus* *vallum*. This curve enclosed the children’s graveyard and completed the enclosure of conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* which once had two internal linear north-south walls.

An abutment to the north-east, called the ‘cashel’, is on raised ground and has a substantial curvilinear wall and oval shape (Egan *et al.*, 2005, 401). The other enclosures are smaller satellite attachments abutted to the west of the former *sanctissimus* enclosure. The eastern enclosure is a little distance (c. 55m) to the south of the ‘cashel’ and also projects into the former *sanctissimus*. This is said to be a children’s graveyard (Pat O’Brien – local historian - *pers. comm.*). The curved stone wall on the west has larger basal stones (c.16m C.; 2.3m W; 0.4m int.H; 1.3m ext.H) and a roughly oval enclosed area (c.11m east-west; c.8m north-south (Egan *et al.* 2005, 400). The boundary of this enclosure to the east-

north-east and south-east is of levelled bank with hawthorn bushes on a collapsed wall in broken arcs. This enclosure has a stone called *Cloghaneaspaig* (The Bishop's Stone) and also a smaller flat stone with five small hollows arranged in a curve which is thought to be a candle holder (Pat O'Brien – local historian - *pers. comm.*). The ground here is covered by what appear to be grave markers of small upright flat stone slabs. *Cloghaneaspaig* within the enclosure is indicated on the 6" O.S. map 1838 as a small rectangular enclosure (c.12m north-south; c.10m east-west). In the field immediately to the south of the revetted *sanctor* referred to and close to its southern boundary, there is a flat topped boulder said to be a Mass Rock and a few metres south is the site of a well which dried up some years ago when a storm uprooted a nearby tree (Pat O'Brien – local historian - *pers. comm.*). There are now no traces of the old church on a low ridge in the graveyard in the south-east quadrant of the enclosure which had been noted in 1836 and described as an old ruin near Kilross called Killeran graveyard (Egan *et al.* 2005, 400). O'Rourke wrote of a place called Killelin near Ballygawley containing a church which preceded Kilross (*ibid.*, 400) and 'Killeran GraveYard (Disused)' which lies in the south-east quadrant of the inner enclosure.

O.S. Letters: 'Old church in ruins'. Archdall, Kilross five miles south of Sligo in Tirerrill, Clarus Mcmoylin; O'Maillchonery-Archdeacon (died 1251) founded the church of the Holy Trinity in 1233; Premonstratension Abbey of Lough Ree. In Ballygawly is *Tober Domhnaig*, near Killeran graveyard (O'Conor 1836).

O.S. Name Book: *Baile 'n Dálaigh*: This was a burial ground formerly. At the northern end of the parish, Ballydalby, Ballygawly, Ballygally, Ballygaully (O'Conor 1836).

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps of 1837, 1887, 1913 and the 25" maps (sheets 20-16 and 20-12) of 1912. The lough is named Ballydawley Lough in the 6" O.S. maps of 1837 and 1887 and Ballygawley Lough in the later edition. Also studied were the pertinent section of the RMP

map and aerial views in GOOGLE Earth. All of the maps show *Killieran GraveYard* and *Toberdonney*.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.2) depicts *Killieran GraveYard* as a rectangle with long axis in north-south alignment and *Toberdoney* as a polygon with seven uneven sides and a path-way in a north-south direction outside the eastern boundary. These two elements are separate and set within a larger empty space with no evidence of enclosures or of fragments of enclosures. The lands north-east and west of Ballydawley Lough are shown to be tree-covered. (Field boundaries were not included in the first edition of 6" O.S. maps (Anon. 1991, 23).

The 6" O.S. map 1887 (Fig. 5.3) additionally shows field boundaries around these two features. These boundaries include the conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* enclosure with the abutting graveyard and the *Toberdoney* polygonal enclosure. The arc of the *sanctus vallum* is now shown and the area between is divided into five fields. A small drystone enclosure on the north is also shown although not labelled. Ballydawley Lake is now surrounded by trees and trees have appeared north-east of the site.

The 6" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.4) shows the conjoined *sanctissimus/sanctior* enclosure as it had been in the other two maps. The space is still subdivided. The graveyard is now oval and labelled *Cloghaneaspaig*, the label *Killieran GraveYard (Disused)* now appears south-west and outside the *sanctissimus*. The space of the small enclosure on the north is now shown to have curving north boundary. The wooded areas have expanded and the lands to the north and east of the site are depicted as wet land.

The 25" O.S. map 1912 (Fig. 5.5) indicates *Killieran GraveYard (Disused)* inside the *sanctissimus* and immediately to the west of the graveyard is labelled *Cloghaneaspaig*. A new feature is shown of a rectangular shape in the *sanctissimus* abutting the eastside of the wall dividing the conjoined

sanctissimus/sanctior. Opposite that feature there is a break in the curvature of the west boundary in the form of an exterior wedge stepped out from the *sanctior*. In this study that feature is referred to as an annexe. This is not referred to in Egan *et al.* (2005)

Extract from RMP map (Fig. 5.6), which is of very poor quality, depicts the restricted area around Ballydawley.

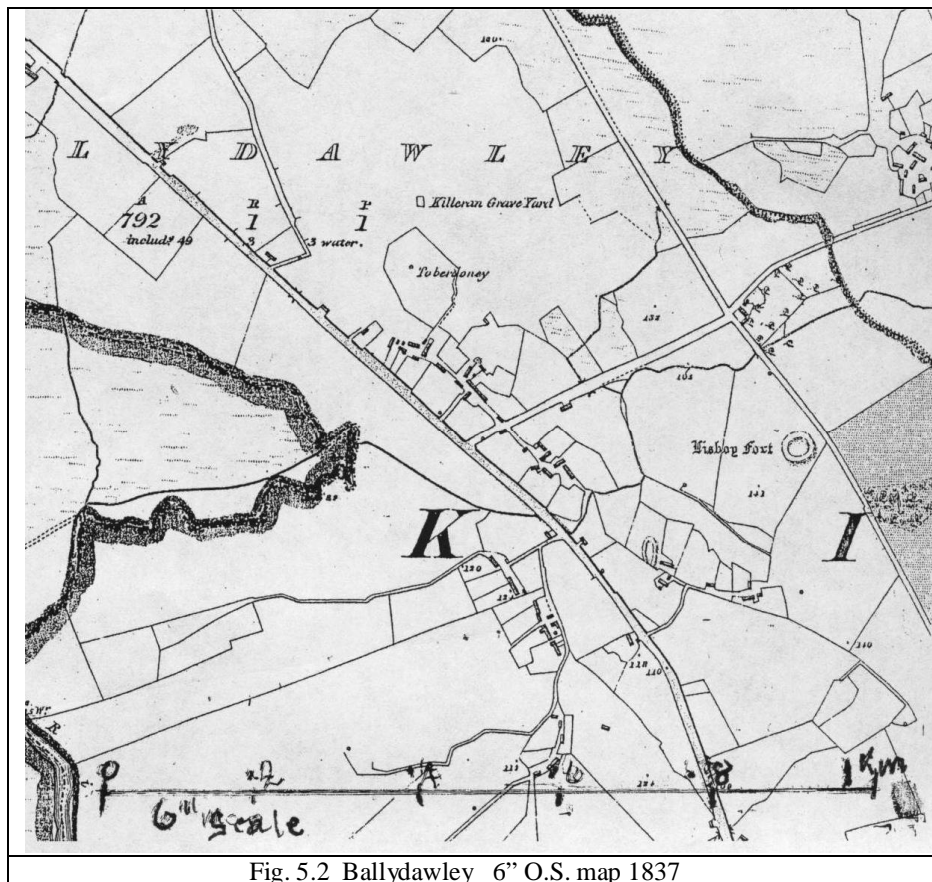


Fig. 5.2 Ballydawley 6" O.S. map 1837

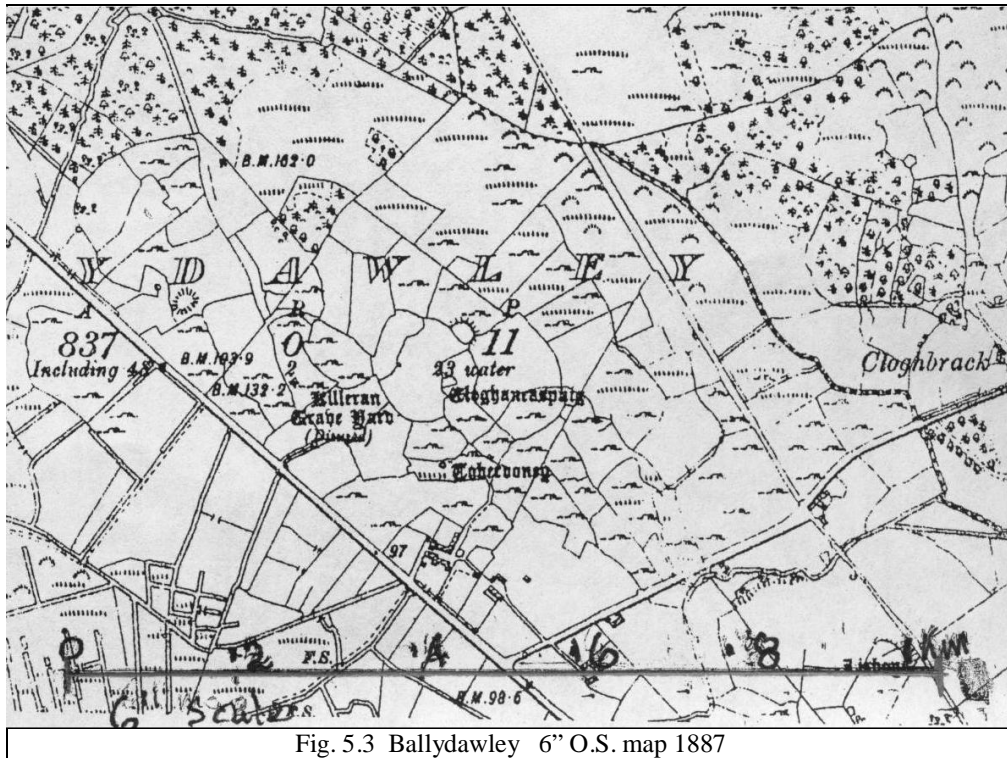


Fig. 5.3 Ballydawley 6" O.S. map 1887

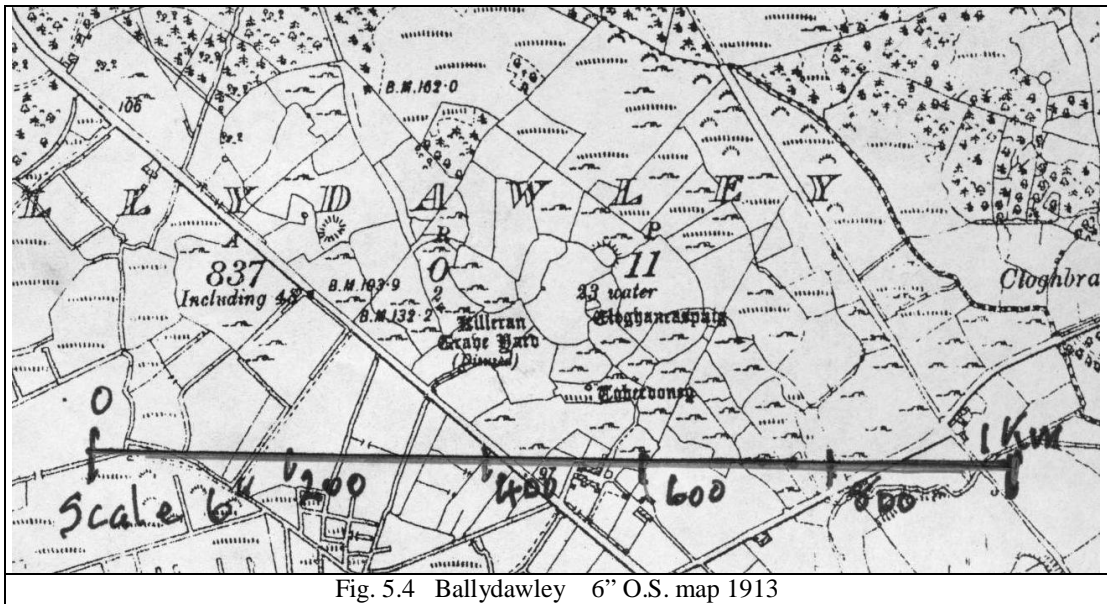


Fig. 5.4 Ballydawley 6" O.S. map 1913

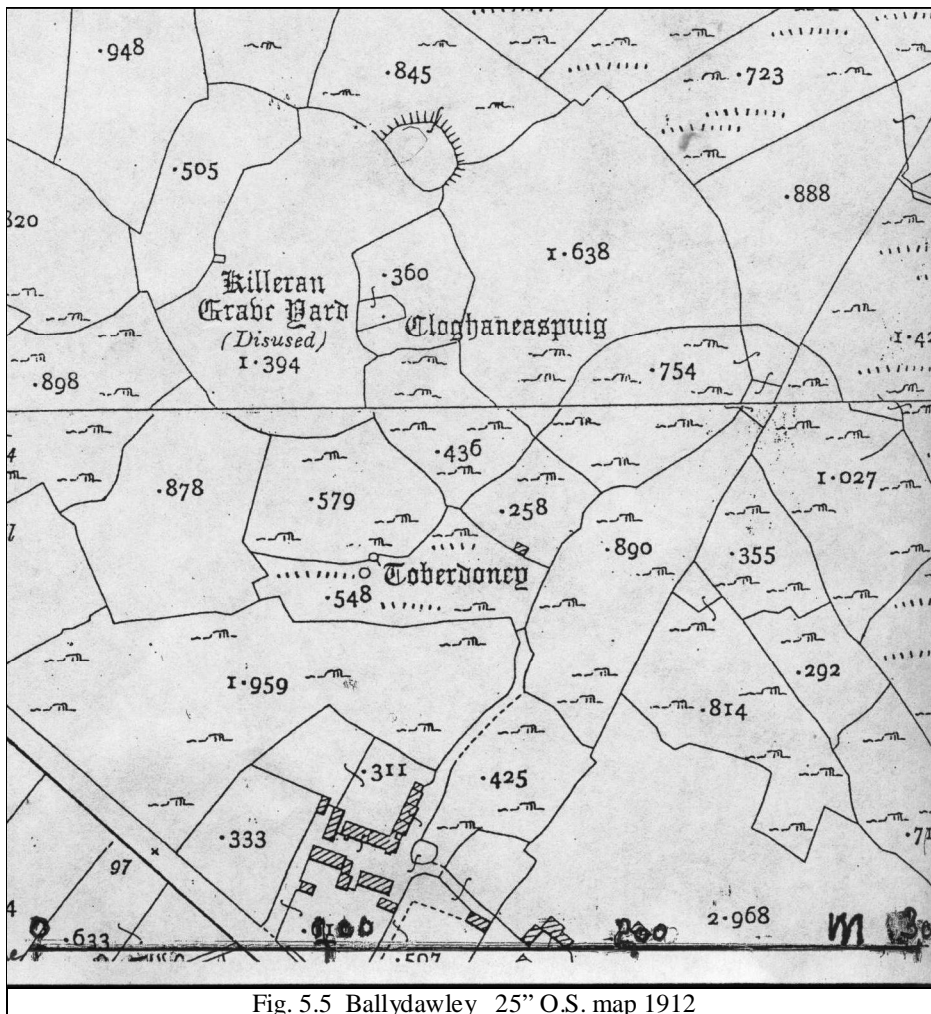


Fig. 5.5 Ballydawley 25" O.S. map 1912

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monastery in Ballydawley are:

- the almost complete *sanctor/sanctissimus vallum* system that is roughly oval in shape. The eastern part of the *sanctissimus vallum* has been removed
- possible completion of an arc to form a conjecturally complete *sanctissimus*; the continuing curve of the scarp extending from the southern curved revetted boundary of the *sanctissimus /sanctor* into the former *sanctissimus* and extending north towards the present entrance,

thus enclosing the children's graveyard in the former *sanctissimus* and including another north-south dividing wall of the inner enclosure

- the possibility that this arc (now removed) was revetted like the southern arc
- the satellite enclosure on the north called the 'Cashel' has an almost circular outer wall of c.30m D
- the small rectangular structure on the west dividing wall into the inner enclosure and the wedge shaped extrusion (annexe) in the conjecturally completed western wall of the outer enclosure opposite
- the satellite enclosure thought to be a children's graveyard which is a small rectangular enclosure with a curved west wall within the former *sanctissimus*
- The oval shape of the inner enclosure and corresponding shape of outer enclosure
- the semi-circular curve of the *sanctus* which extends by about 65m outside the inner enclosure
- the possibility of parallels with other early medieval monasteries particularly Reask, Co. Kerry, merits investigation
- the dividing wall on the higher ground to the west suggests a corresponding sector not paralleled in any other reported sites

Visits to site: Spring, Summer and Autumn 2010, Spring, Summer 2011



Fig. 5.6 Ballydawley extract from RMP map 1995

5.6 Carnyara

Townland: Carnyara *Parish:* Achonry *Barony:* Leyney

National Grid Reference: 54° 5' 38.3691", -8°41' 19.7137". (154980, 316310)

RMP No.: SL032-141001/3

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical Enclosure

OD: 91-122m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
600 ^a -1 ^r -2 ^p	Sligo	IV 238

Carnyara is found on the N17 west of Connaught Co-operative store at Achonry. The site is not visible from the road and is accessed through a farmyard with a narrow gate which is located just short of the second turning to the north after passing the Co-operative store. The site is on pasture surrounded by pastureland of good quality. To the south the dome of Muckelty Hill, partly deforested, dominates the landscape. The flat topped Knocknashee Commons, to the north-east, and Sliabh Gamph, to the north and north-west, are dominant.

There is a slight slope of a few hundred metres to reach the oval enclosure (105m north-east to south-west; 97m north-west to south-east) (Egan *et al.* 2005, 404). Within the enclosure lies a rectangular sod-covered base of a wall (int. 12.3m east-west; 5.2m north-south; 1.5m-1.7mW; 0.2–0.6mH) and the size, orientation and location suggest the remains of a small church (*ibid.*, 409). The remains are enclosed by a trapezoidal area (35.5m east-west; 25m north-south at east end; 20m north-south at west end) defined by a grass-covered wall foundations and thought to be the remains of a graveyard. The west and south ends are partially curvilinear. Further to the west there is a field mound of semi-circular shape which suggests a curvilinear enclosure which is divided by a north-south linear field boundary. A *souterrain* ('cave') lay inside the south-west boundary of the *sanctissimus* and the 'cave' has been filled in and a possible church with a graveyard. Field boundaries are now removed.

O.S. Letters: T. O’Conor was in the district but did not comment on the site.

O.S. Name Book: There is no entry.

The cartographical materials consulted include the 6” O.S. maps of 1837, 1888, 1914 and the 25” O.S. map 1913. Also studied was the pertinent section of the RMP map. GOOGLE Earth view was not satisfactory.

The 6” O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.7) does not depict the site although the field boundary is shown.

The 6” O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.8) shows the boundary of the enclosure with its dividing wall and *Cave* but not the church or graveyard. The surrounding area is now shown to be much subdivided with, for the most part, linear boundaries.

The 6” O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.9) depicts the inner enclosure with rectangular footprint of the church and surrounding space but no labels. The word *Cave* appears where it had in the 1888 map.

The 25” O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.10) is an enlargement of 6” map 1914.

The aerial map of GOOGLE Earth is of poor quality and does not identify any features and the National Monuments Service Archives aerial photograph does not relate to the site.

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monastery in Carnyara are:-

- there is a section of curvilinear bank and inside ditch wider than the rectangular enclosure and c.20m distant
- the sparsity of clearly identifiable remains above ground
- the townland boundary is the main road on the south.

At Carnyara the field walls of the inner enclosures (*sanctior* and *sanctissimus*) are incomplete and there is no evidence of a *sanctus vallum*. Field fences that did coincide with the *vallum* system have been removed leaving several low banks.

The banks are sod-covered and the occasional large rounded stones protrude where the sod has eroded. Only one of these banks is curvilinear, fragmented and almost a semi-circle *c.*0.5mH, *c.*65mD and not quite enclosing the west end (Plates 5.1, 5.2). The other banks of *c.*1m. in height form two enclosed rectangles with rounded corners. The remaining monument is a roughly rectangular enclosure *c.*20m east-west by *c.*15m north-south consisting of a discontinuous bank *c.*0.5m in both height and width and composed of grass and moss over an occasional exposed large stone. Inside that area there is a bank which is roughly rectangular of similar dimensions, but fragmented. To the west *c.*2m distant, there is a similar bank lying north-south and beyond that the fragmented semi-circular bank referred to. It would appear that the semicircular arc is the only early medieval monastic remnant. The rectangular structures have the appearance of medieval structures and the *southern* is not visible having been filled in. The removal of the field fences and the infilling of the *southern* has occurred since the last O.S. map. The depiction on the RMP extract which is shown in Fig. 5.11 does not show removal of fences.

Visits to site:- Summer, Autumn 2010; Spring, Summer, Autumn 2011.

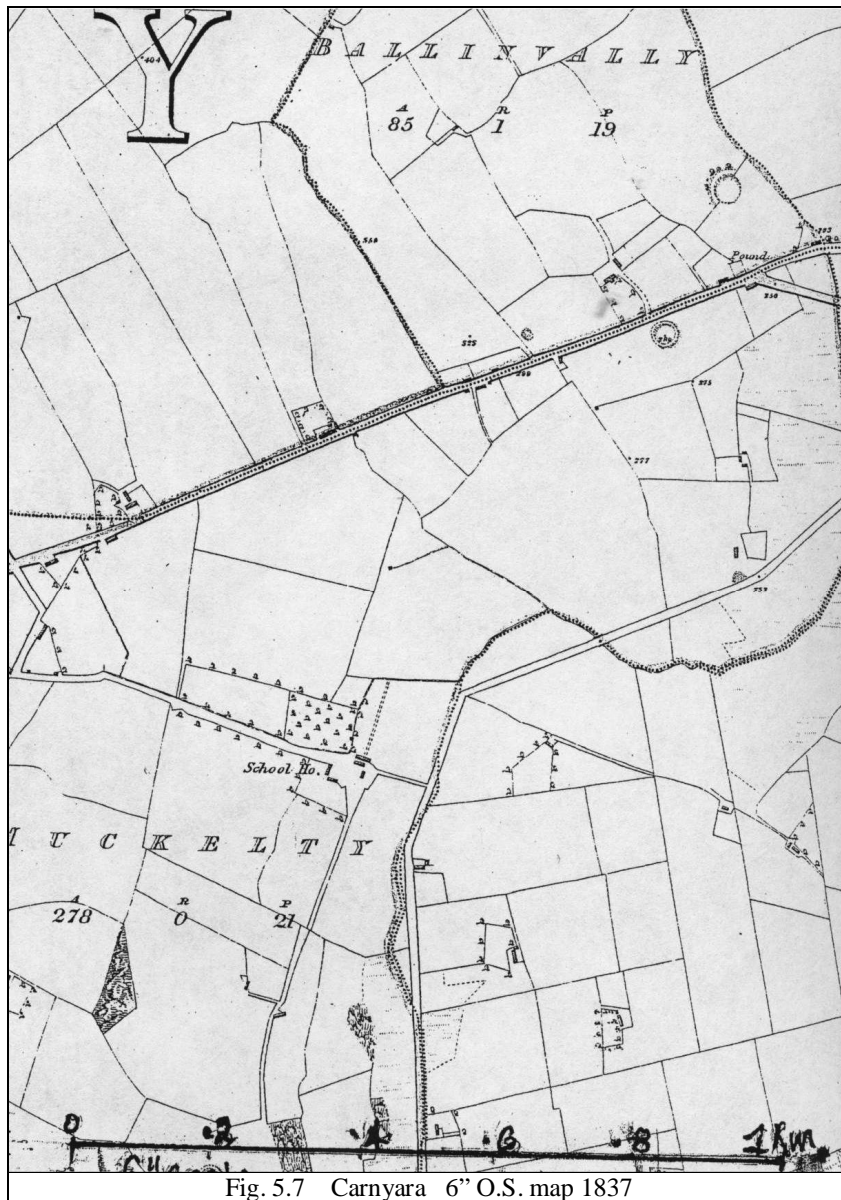


Fig. 5.7 Carnyara 6" O.S. map 1837

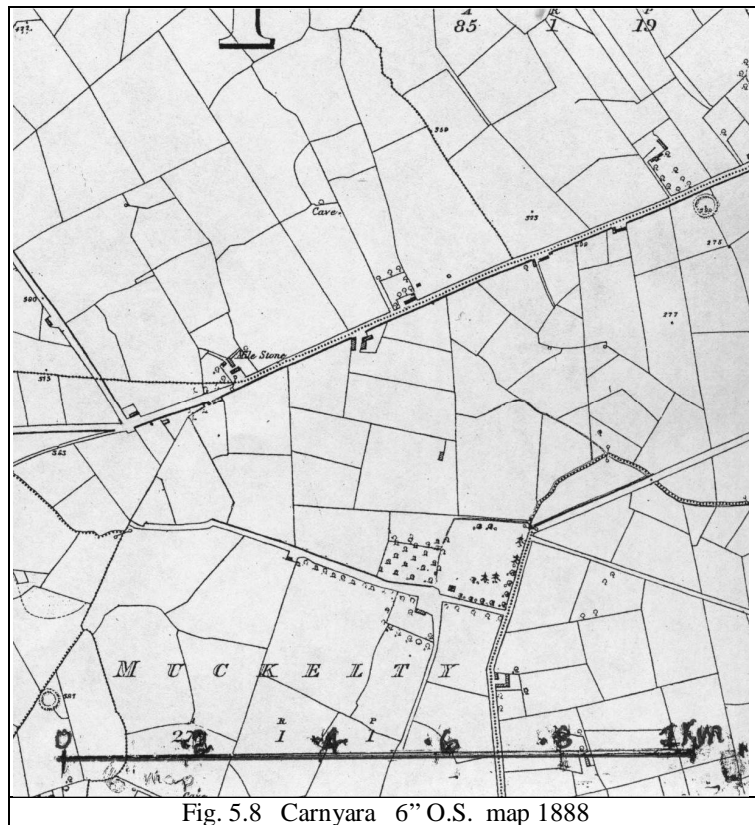


Fig. 5.8 Carnyara 6" O.S. map 1888

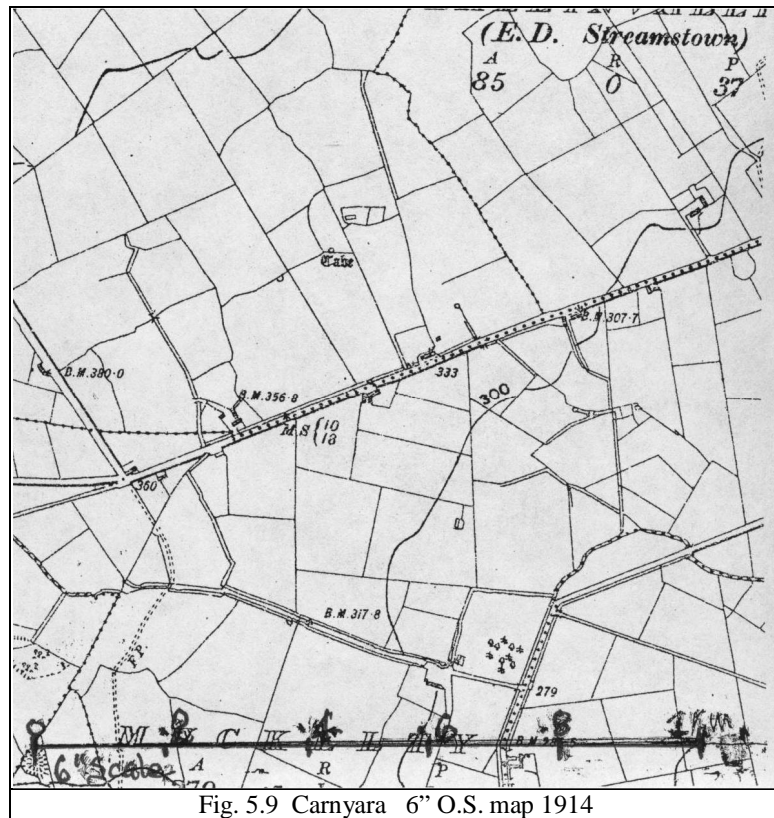
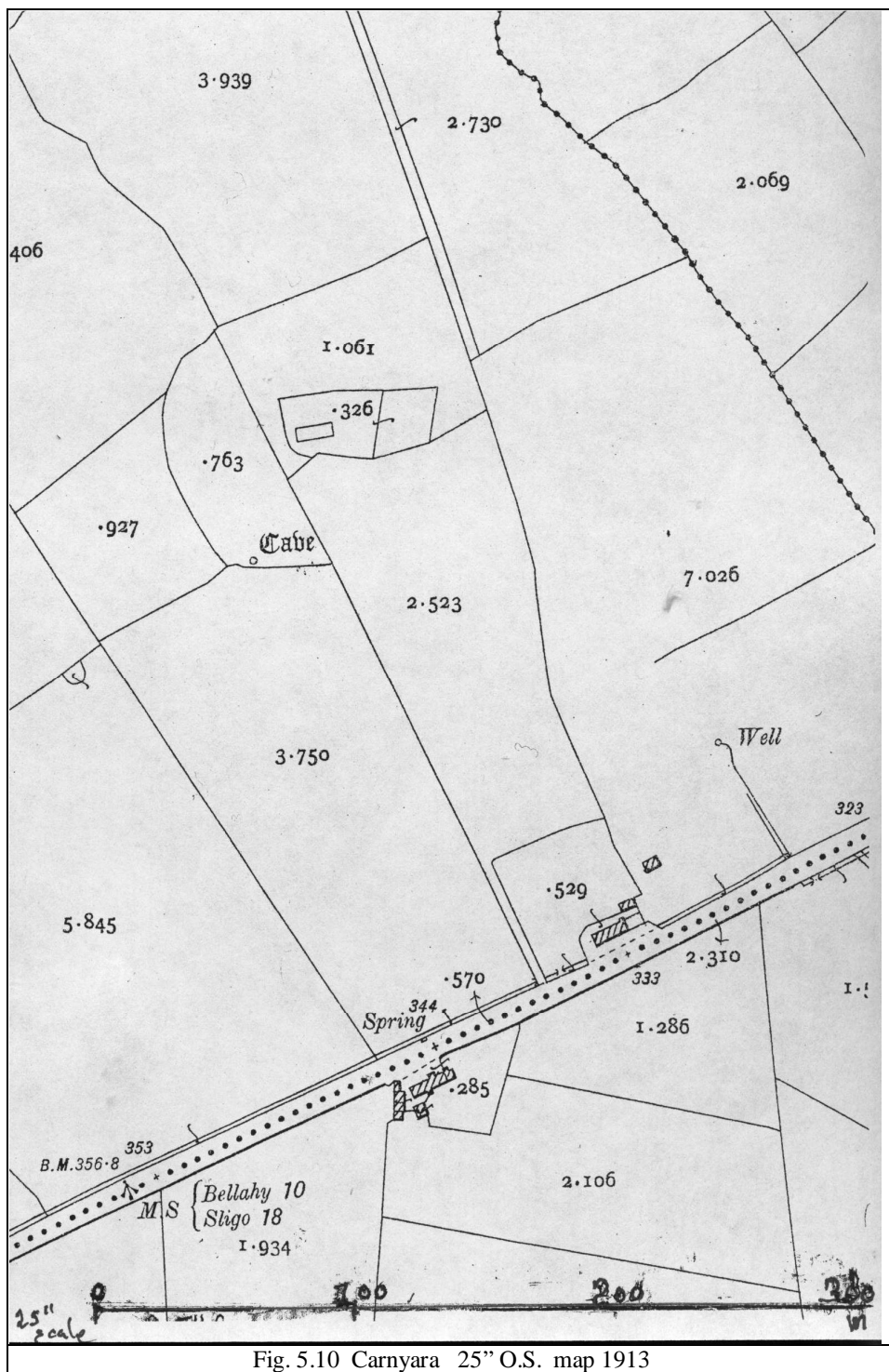


Fig. 5.9 Carnyara 6" O.S. map 1914



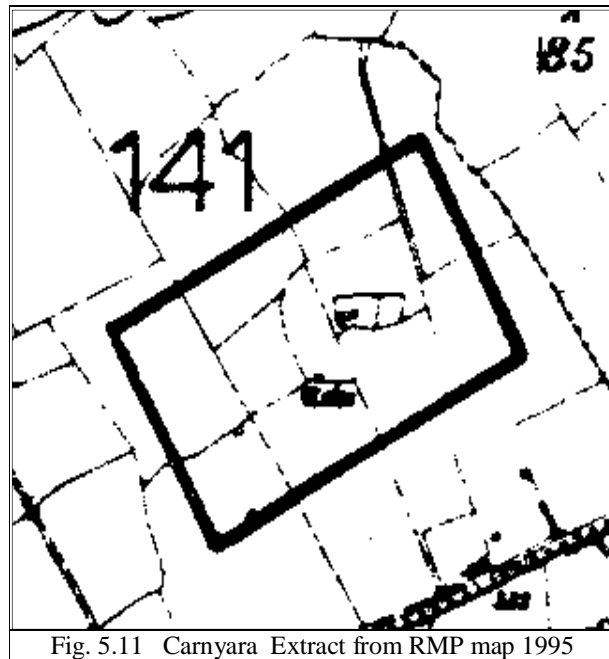




Plate 5.2 Carnyara rectangular enclosure view from south-east

5.7 Carrowntemple

Townland: Carrowntemple *Parish*: Kilfree *Barony*: Coolavin

National Grid Reference: 53°58'2.2718"; -8°34'19.6858", (162500, 302140)

RMP no.: SL 044-056001

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical Sites

OD: 90-120m

Index of Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland:

Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
767 ^a - 2 ^r - 10 ^p	Boyle	IV. 24

The graveyard, which is close to the boundaries of Co. Mayo to the west and Co. Roscommon to the south, lies on the southern slope of an esker ridge which was, in the past, the customary approach to the site for funerals from Gorteen (Frank Duffy - land owner - *pers. comm.*). The site lies at the south-western corner of Co. Sligo and is approached from the village of Gorteen taking the R293 for about 3 km and turning west at the 'finger post' sign for a graveyard for about 2km. The site is on the roadside. Pasture surrounds the enclosure on all sides. Bogland lies beyond the road and field to the south where until recently turf was cut (John McGuin-land owner - *pers.comm.*). Beyond that there is modern forestry and in the distance the wind turbines of Co. Roscommon are visible. On the east of the site, on the adjacent field, a stream, having origins in the bog on the south, flows to the north forming a boundary with the townland of Doon. Another stream, some fields to the west, also flows from this bog to the north. Both streams join the Owenmore river.

The *sanctor* enclosure has been extended on a number of occasions to form the present graveyard. The northern boundary of the present enclosure is a partially collapsed stone wall with trees and shrubs. There is a modern concrete extension to the east. The southern boundary along the road's edge is a stone wall with a similar concrete modern extension towards the east. This road is not depicted on the 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.12). The western boundary of the graveyard, like

part of the northern side, is a stone wall with trees and shrubs; the eastern boundary is part of the modern concrete wall extension.

The complex at present consists of four elements: the medieval church ruins which lie in the north-west within the old graveyard (*sanctissimus*), the modern extensions to the graveyard to the south and east; and the remnants of the *sanctissimus* bank *vallum* outside the graveyard to the west and north, and the semi-circular *sanctior* drystone *vallum* to the south. The church ruins are of uncoursed limestone with lime mortar and considered to be of medieval parish origins (Egan *et al.* 2005, 405). The ruins, with encroaching graves, are on raised ground revetted by recent stone faced scarp on the south and east. Twelve replicas of thirteen inscribed early medieval slabs which had been uncovered during grave preparations are attached to the south facing scarp overlooking the modern graves. In addition to the incised-slabs and a slab rough-out, there were also fragments of a quernstone (diam. *c.*0.35m), metal slag and a hammerstone found in the graveyard (*ibid.*, 405).

Outside the present west boundary and parallel to it are two substantial banks of earth-covered with shrubs both of which now form field boundaries. One of these banks extends in a northerly direction and beyond the north western corner of the graveyard, thus forming an arc (*c.*80m; south-north). The other bank of similar dimensions also forms part of the field boundary on the other side of the same field. This has a bend and spur into the adjoining field north of the enclosure. These banks are constructed of earth and stone (3–6.6mW; max. 2.5m H) and are probably what remains of the ecclesiastical enclosure (*ibid.*, 405/6) and appear to be joined forming a curve in the 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.13). Aerial photographs (Plate 5.3) show that these two segments were linked by a similar structure and forming a curve of the *sanctissimus vallum*.

An outer enclosure (*c.*380mD) is indicated by the field boundaries south, south-west and north of the graveyard. Two adjacent *souterrains* lie within the

enclosure (c.20m) to the north-west of the graveyard and yet another *southern* (c.150m) lies to the west outside the enclosure (*ibid.*,406). Both are now obscured.

O.S. Letters: 'In the townland of Carrowntemple (parish of Kilfree) are the walls of an old abbey and an old burial place. This establishment, called in Irish, *Mainistir Cheathreamh'n Teampaill*, is said to have been founded by two brothers whose names are not remembered' (O'Keeffe 1836).

O.S. Name Book: There is an entry *Ceathramh'n Teampuill* (church quarter) and reference to 'the ruins of an old church or abbey; likewise a graveyard and cave or rather covered passage; nothing remarkable' (*ibid.*).

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps 1837, 1888, and 1914 with 25" O.S. map 1913. Also consulted were the pertinent section of the RMP map and the aerial views in GOOGLE Earth and of Swan (1998). All of the O.S. maps depict curved field boundaries which appear to suggest outer enclosures. In addition to the boundaries of the *sanctissimus vallum* already referred to, a narrow road bordered by walls and ending in a farm facility, lies to the south. Another arc-shaped boundary, which is contiguous, lies to the south east, also across the road, and coincides with a modern farm hedge and river which are part of the townland boundary. It appears that this was the *sanctior vallum*. At a distance to the north beyond the esker is another boundary curve which does not appear to be directly related to the site.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.12) shows a village to the west of the site some few scattered fragments still exist. The monument is depicted as a four-sided closed rectilinear space and the rectangular footprint of the church within. There is an adjoining unenclosed rectangular space of three sides to the east. The word *Abbey*, with undecipherable signs, is depicted to the west of the enclosure and the words *GraveYard* on the adjoining unenclosed space to the east. Few field boundaries are depicted around the site and no road is shown. The cluster of

houses, with corn kiln, to the west of the enclosure appears to have been approached from the north-west with a section curved around the abbey towards another corn-mill to the south-east.

The 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.13) depicts the abbey surrounded by enclosed fields with linear boundaries. The *Abbey* and *GraveYard* are now depicted as one space and approached by an entrance from the new east-west road on the south of the monument. The village to the west is now much reduced and the road appears to have cut through what was village space.

The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.14) is similar to that of 1888 except that the height 400 ft is depicted. The words '*Abbey (in Ruins)*' appear to the east of the enclosure and the word *Cave* appears to the north-west of the enclosure and the words '*GraveYard*' to the south-west of the enclosure. The B.M. 395.9 is indicated on the western pier of the entrance to the passage to the graveyard.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.15) depicts the ruins as L-shaped with a short east wall and longer south wall and is placed centrally in the enclosure.

The extract from RMP 1995 map (Fig. 5.16) appears to be based on the 1914 map except that the word *Cave* has been replaced by the word *Southern*. The modern extension to the graveyard does not appear in any of the O.S. maps.

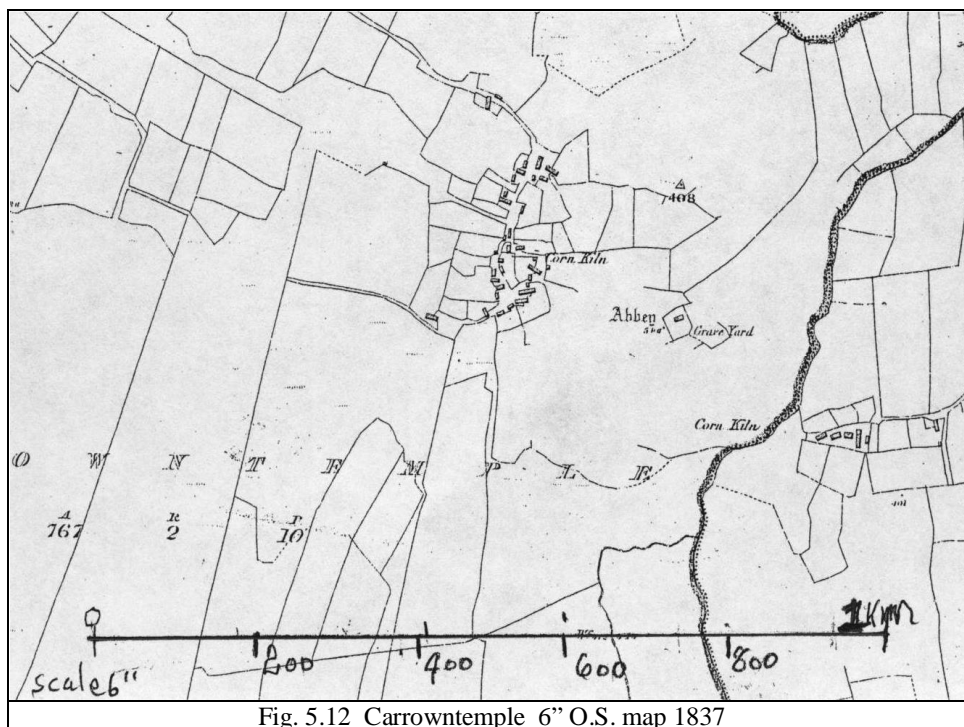


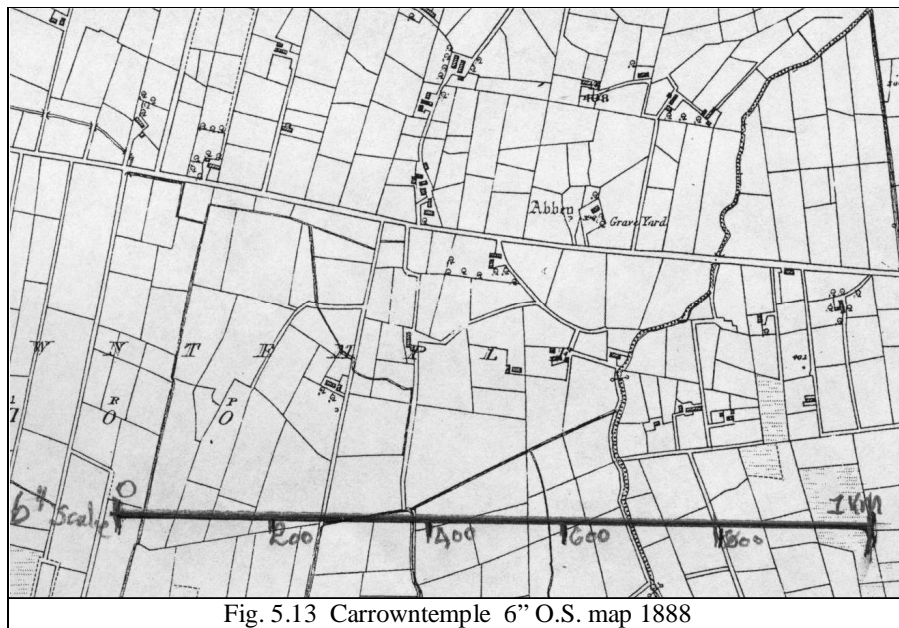
Fig. 5.12 Carrowntemple 6" O.S. map 1837

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monuments at Carrowntemple are:-

- the two arc-shaped *valli* of earth and stone covered with shrubs. One of these *valli* extends in a northerly direction outside of the present west wall of the enclosure and the other shorter *vallum* on the other side of the field ends in a slight bend and spur into the adjoining field north of the enclosure. From the 6" O.S. map 1888 and the aerial photographs it is clear that these had been continuous and part of the *sanctissimus vallum*
- a semicircle of a narrow road with drystone walls of c. 1m in height provides access to farm yard and nondescript farm buildings. This arc forming a boundary of both field and townland strongly suggests that it was the *sanctior vallum*
- the narrow road of *sanctior vallum* is not shown on 6" O.S. map 1837
- the 12 replicas of the 13 inscribed grave slabs of early medieval period and the design on some suggest pre-Christian origin

- comparison of Fig. 5.14 RMP map extract and Plate 5.3 shows where removal of fences and *vallum* portion has taken place

Visits to the site: 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011



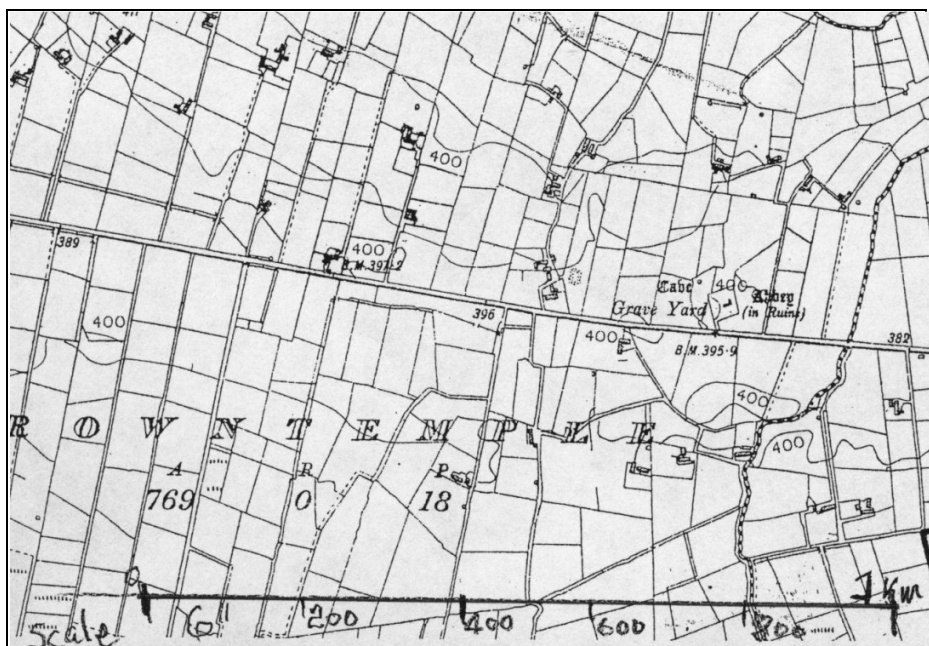


Fig. 5.14 Carrowntemple 6" O.S. map 1914

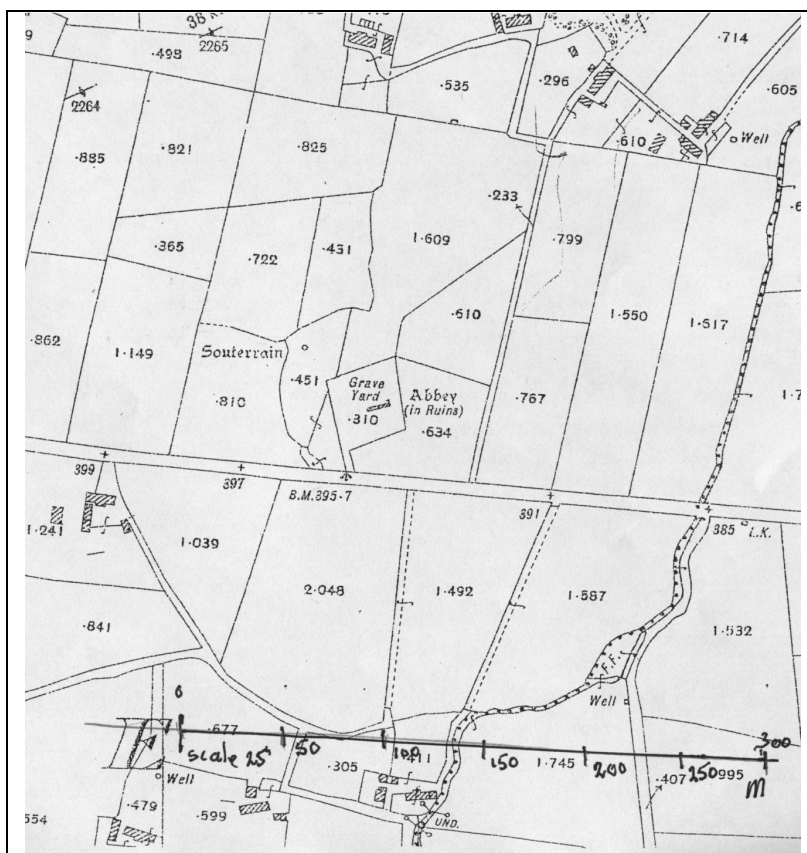


Fig. 5.15 Carrowntemple 25" O.S. map 1913

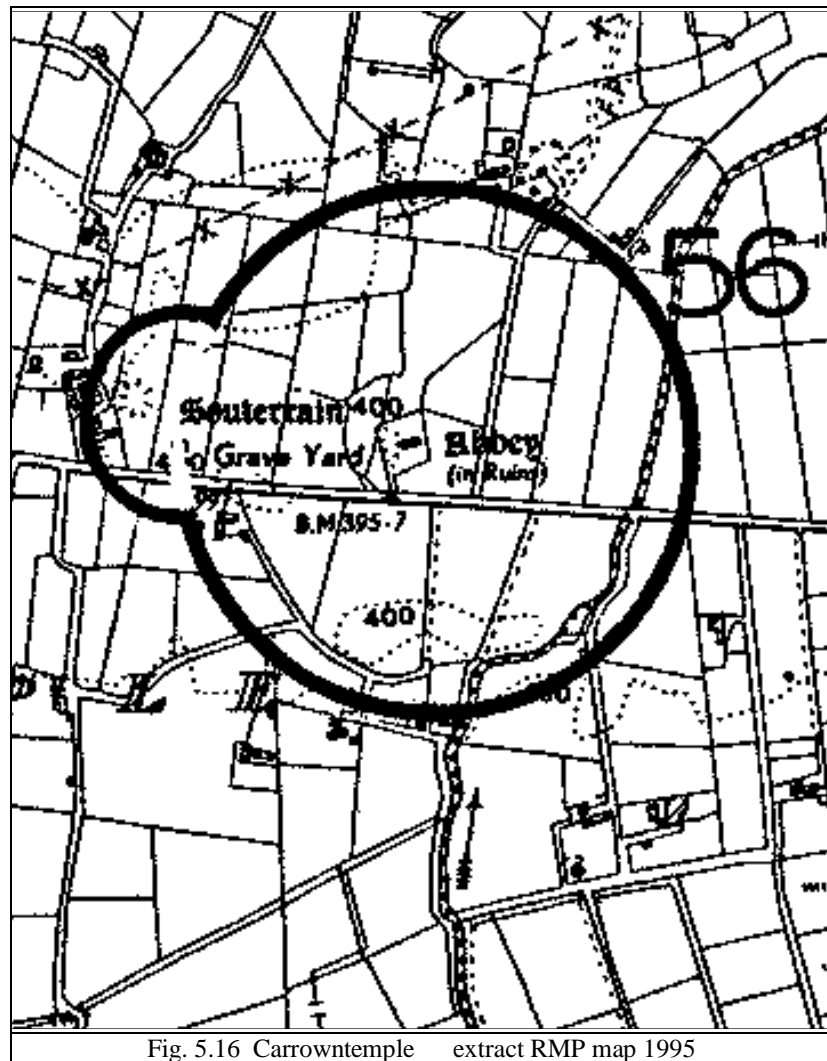


Fig. 5.16 Carrowntemple extract RMP map 1995



Plate 5.3 Carrowntemple GOOGLE Earth November 2010

5.8 Church Hill

Townland: Church Hill *Parish:* Cloonaghill *Barony:* Corran

National Grid references: 54°4'27.9847", -8°36'58.4196"; (159710, 314090)

RMP No.: SL032 – 195001

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical sites: *Church, Graveyard, Ecclesiastical enclosure*

OD: 71m

Index of Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland:

Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
214 ^a -3 ^r -39 ^p	Tobercurry	IV 225

The church ruins of the site are clearly visible from the narrow secondary road between Bunnanaden and Achonry. The approach to the site is on a right angled bend on the road near a bridge and through an outside farmyard. There is a three storey cut stone building which is now a farm outhouse and apparently built of stones from the church (Egan *et al.* 2005, 406). A not demanding slope of about 200m leads to the platform on which the ruins stand. From the north-east around through the east and south-east the land is rising pasture and well drained. In other directions the land is low lying and bog. From the south-west to the north-west the ground is low lying and wet and is now a modern forest. From that forest a strong stream emerges and having passed under the bridge near the farmyard, meanders through the low lying land to the north and disappears to the north-east to join Cloonacleigha Lough hidden from view behind high rising land east of the site. The site is on a bog-island (*ibid.*, 406). Muckelty Hill is visible to the west and Knocknashee Commons to the north and the more distant Sliabh Gamph with its ridge is high on the horizon to the north and north-east. Nearer over the river the bog yields to farm land. To the north lies a long valley with distant mountains visible.

On the pear-shaped platform, the fragmentary church ruins (int.19m east-west; 6.7m north-south) comprise the lower parts of the western wall with some short

segments of south and north walls. The walls are of roughly coursed stone and lime mortar (Egan *et al.* 2005, 406). Some the quoin stones and other dressed stones have been removed at the lowest levels. A search did not reveal the benchmark depicted on the O.S. 25" map. The aumbry, piscina and the limestone arch stone referred to in the *Archaeological Inventory of County Sligo* are not now in evidence. The bullaun stone situated *c.* 8m south-west of the gable corner referred to is prominent but the *southern* in the adjoining field is now obscured.

The outline of what was the north wall of the church ruins is discernible but is now covered with grass and moss. The interior space is now covered with fallen masonry also covered by grass, weeds and moss. The ruins are situated on a pear shaped earthen platform (55m east-west; 23m north-south) with a scarp (*c.* 1.35m H) and distant (*c.* 15m) from the west gable. Then a slight curve runs along side the ruins on the north and south sides. This scarp with decreasing height merges with the earthen bank which slightly curves around the east end of the ruins. This curved eastern *vallum* has hawthorn bushes along its length with occasional breaks and a dry ditch on its inner side. The dry ditch had been on the eastern side of the bank which runs up the slope from the north, changes to the western side of the bank on the edge of the enclosure and continues on to meet a stone faced structure running parallel to the south face of the ruins and outside the scarp, and meets another bank at right angles below the west end of the ruins. This other bank, which is parallel to the west end of the ruins, has a wet ditch on its upper side. There are no visible remains of the graveyard. The linear stone faced bank and ditch on the south side cuts through a curve of the south-east pear-shaped enclosure and is clearly visible on the aerial map though not discernable on the ground.

Local folklore includes references to links with Achonry and St. Finian, Capuchin monks, a font of water for cures, underground caves lined with cut

stone, a pattern on June 15th and cutstone artefacts in the John Benson collection in the National Museum (Gormley family - neighbours - *pers. comm.*).

O.S. Letters: 'There is a good portion of an old Church with a burial ground in the townland of Church Hill which is also called Cloonohill' (O'Keeffe 1836, 423).

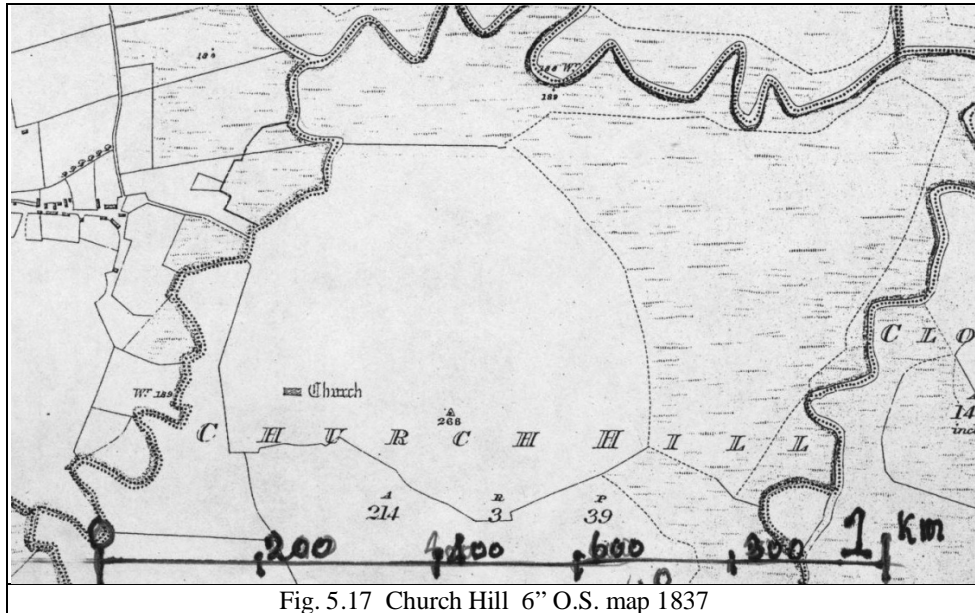
O.S. Name Book: '*Cloonohill, Cloon-g-hill* is situated in the barony of Corran in the county of Sligo two miles west of Ballymote: bawn of the Yew Wood – *Clún Eoórrill* Church, Church Hill, *Cnoc an teampill* – bawn of the Yew-wood, in the north of the parish of Cloonahill property of Richard Phibbs leased to Thomas Kine on 61 year lease. Ruins of an old church and burial grounds stand in the townland. *Clean Direagh* river bounds the land and there is also a bog. The remains are Romanesque on an earlier enclosure and there is a bullaun stone 8m to the south-west of the south-west corner of the building' (*ibid.*, 227).

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. 1837, 1887, 1913 maps and 25" 1913 map. Also studied were the relevant section of the RMP map and aerial view from National Monument Service Archives. The GOOGLE Earth depiction was not satisfactory.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.17) depicts the *Church* as a rectangle on high ground. A meandering river emerges from the south-west and encircles the hill on which the church ruins stand. There are very few roads depicted on the map. There is a depiction of low lying land surrounding the site which lies within a curvilinear space which suggests an enclosure which is divided by an unevenly linear fence from north to south. There is no depiction of the building which now exists at the foot of the height, near the bridge.

The 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.18) depicts more roads in the area and also more field boundaries. The approach to the site is shown as a farm track from the west and extending as far as the old building which now appears without label to the north-west of the church. The *Church* is again depicted as a rectangle and the

peak of the height of 268ft (82m) to the east. The curvilinear space is now subdivided into fields with linear fences. There is an expansion of good land particularly towards the river.



The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.19) map depicts the track now continuing past the old building and turning south past the foot of the scarp and the west end of the church. This track then divides in two with one branch going east of the church enclosure. The other branch continues to link up with the road system to the south. More of the field system is now depicted with the scarp of the platform delimited and the labels of *Church (in Ruins)*, *GraveYd*, and *B.M. 323.0* to the southern end of the west wall. There is an expansion of good land to the south.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.20) map depicts the building near the bridge, the rectangular church, the bench mark on the south end of the west gable, the western and southern parts of the scarp as hachured and the other limits of the platform as a simple curved line suggesting a field boundary.

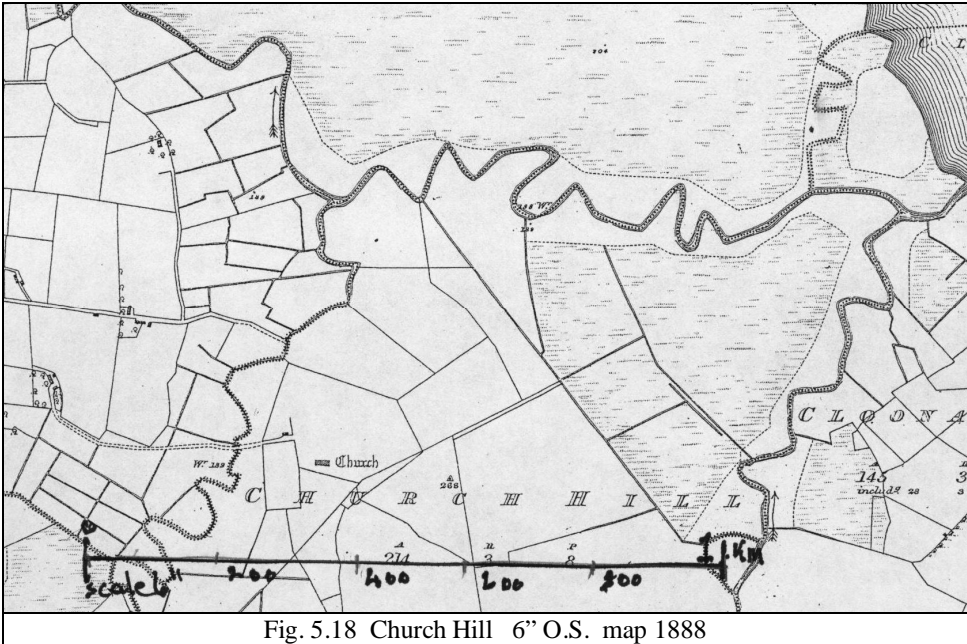


Fig. 5.18 Church Hill 6" O.S. map 1888

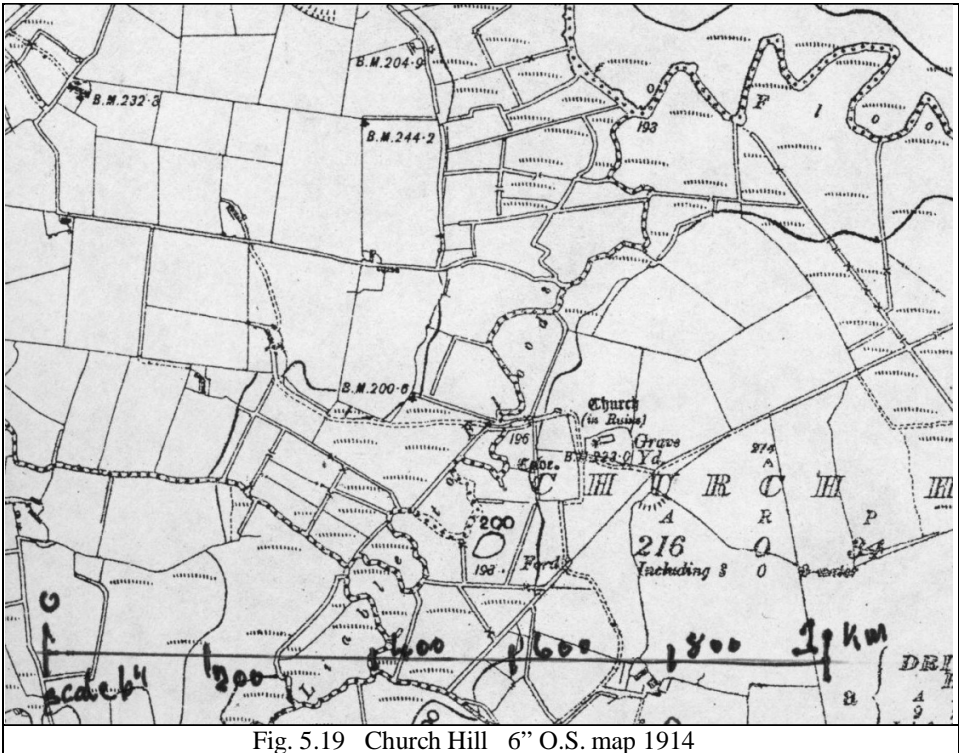
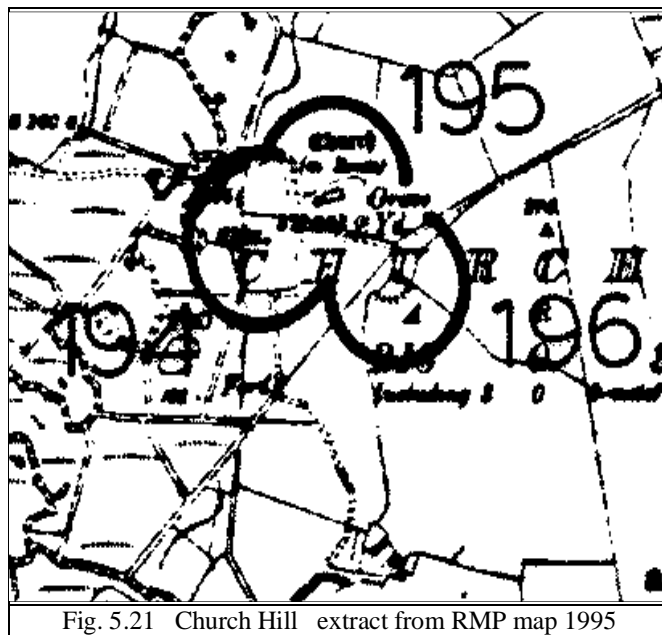
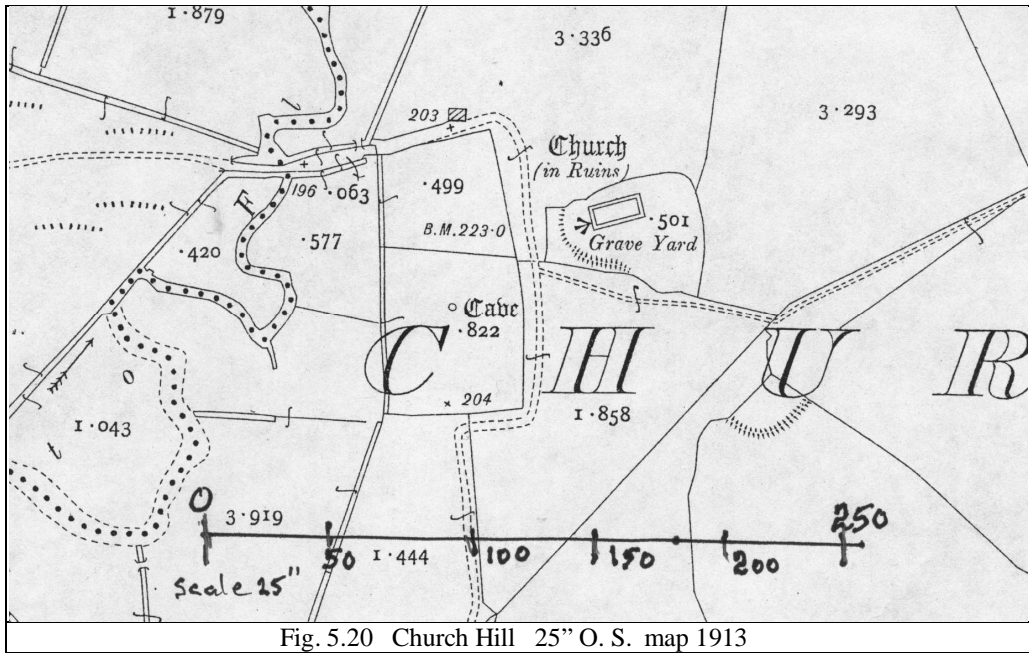


Fig. 5.19 Church Hill 6" O.S. map 1914





Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monuments at Church Hill are:-

- the pear shaped platform on which the ruins stand is a variation from the curvilinear or oval normally expected
- the dimensions of the scarp of that platform with its varying height, banks and ditches along the northern, southern and western faces of the ruins particularly from the 25" O.S. map 1913 map and aerial view
- the suggestion of an outer enclosure from the 6" O.S. maps particularly the first edition of 1837 and the north-south dividing wall
- the curve of the eastern *vallum*
- the curve on the *sanctissimus* south-east sector has been cut by a stone faced bank and ditch. This is discernable only from the aerial photograph
- there are no indications of a *sanctus vallum* which presumably lay along the river from south-east to north-west. The eastern boundary presumably lay on the lake shore behind the hill to the east.

Visits to the site: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011.

5.9 Cuppanagh (Templerooaun)

Townland: Cuppanagh *Parish:* Kilaraght *Barony:* Coolavin

National Grid references: 53° 57' 53.3568"; -8° 26' 10.2842", (171420, 301770)

RMP No.: SL 045 – 011001/3

RMP classification: Church, Graveyard, Ecclesiastical enclosure

OD: 60-92m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
356 ^a -2 ^r -7 ^p	Boyle	IV, 223

The site is found on a short branch to the south off the R294 from Gurteen to Boyle on the upper north-eastern shores of Lough Gara. The site is on pasture land which gently slopes to the rough steep slope with impenetrable trees and scrub along a height above the water. The lake dominates the scene from north-west to south-east. The distant Curlew Mountains are visible to the north-east with trees and rough land immediately north.

Within the graveyard are the ruins of the church (ext. 10.35m south-east to north-west; 6.3m north-east to south-west; max 2.4m H) and an early medieval date is suggested (Egan *et al.* 2005, 408). The rectangular graveyard (18m north-west to south-east) which is in present use, has stone walls and concrete walls on the recent extension to the east. Some graves date from the 18th century. The road curves away from the frontage which allows the space for a car park and access to the graveyard.

The ecclesiastical enclosure is indicated by curvilinear field boundaries on the north, east, south and west of the graveyard. The position of the *vallum* is clear from the later editions of the O.S. maps and also from the aerial photographs of GOOGLE Earth and National Monuments Service Archives. The southern drystone *vallum* is above the lake shore and curves to the west and north where it

meets the road. The arc appears on the north side of the road to curve to the east and almost completes the enclosure when stopping short of the farm yard to the east of the graveyard. From there the *vallum* is fragmented with occasional hawthorn bushes and is not now used as a farm fence. The enclosure appears to be almost circular (c.165mD).

O.S. Letters: 'In the townland of Killaraght, the modern church is built on the site of the ruins of an old church none of which now remains; burial is still continued in the graveyard'. 'St. Arraght's feast day is 11 August and stations used to be performed at *Tobar Athraght* in the townland of Killaraght' (O'Keefe 1836, 233).

O.S. Name Book: '*Cill ia Traçt, Leath Paróiste Cill Átraçt*; Half parish of St. Attracta's church. *Posag Cupranaig*, (handing in dock leaves (*sic.*)). Situated on the north side of Lough Gara'.

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps 1837, 1888, 1914 and 25" map 1913. Also studied were the relevant section of the RMP map 1995 and aerial views in GOOGLE Earth and in National Monuments files.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.22) depicts an almost square enclosure with a small rectangular enclosure centrally within, near the lake shore at the end of a road from the east. The captions *Vault*, *Ruins* and *GraveY^d* appear beside the enclosed space. There is no road from the north or west and the land to the north-west appears to be scrubland with occasional unconnected linear bounded enclosures. The land to the east has a regular pattern of linearly bounded fields.

The 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.23) shows a network of linearly fenced fields to the north and west and also a road network. The captions *Vault*, *Ruins* and *GraveY^d* appear beside the linearly shaped enclosure with the rectangular internal footprint. Also shown are the curvilinear boundaries surrounding the enclosure which is now cut by the new road. The shape of the suggested enclosure is oval and parallel with the lake shore.

The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.24) depicts the *GraveYard* and *Templerooaun* (*in ruins*) with the rectangular inset much smaller. The curvilinear field boundaries are very clear and in contrast with the rectilinear field boundaries which surround the site.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.25) shows with greater clarity the same features described from the other O.S. maps. The aerial photographs of GOOGLE Earth and National Monuments Service Archives (Fig. 5.26) appear to suggest a further enclosure outside those described (Plate 6.23).

The extract from RMP map 1995 (Fig. 5.27) is not very clear.

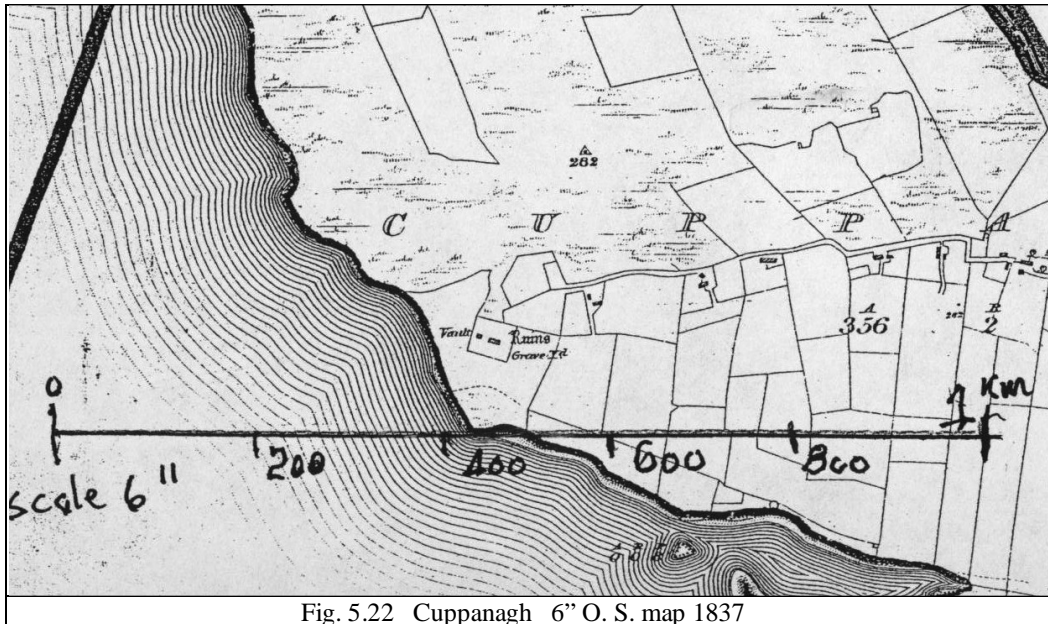


Fig. 5.22 Cuppanagh 6" O. S. map 1837

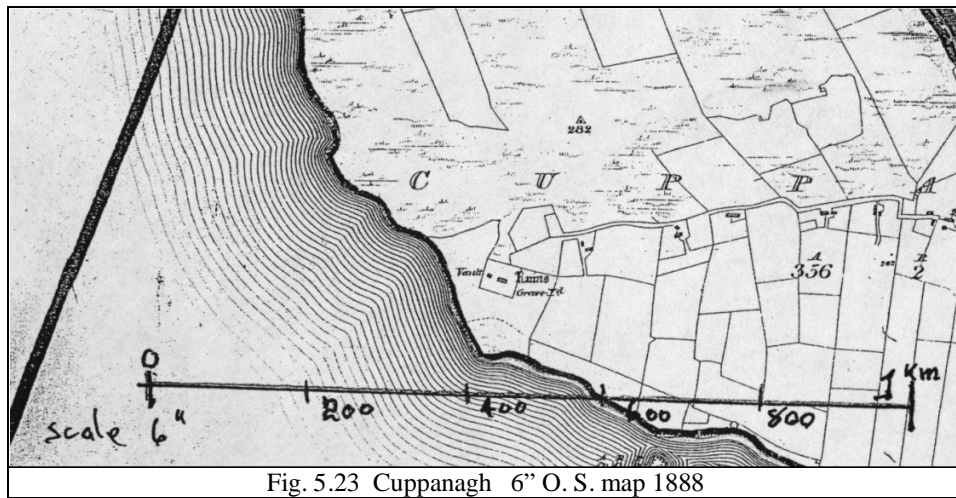


Fig. 5.23 Cuppanagh 6" O. S. map 1888

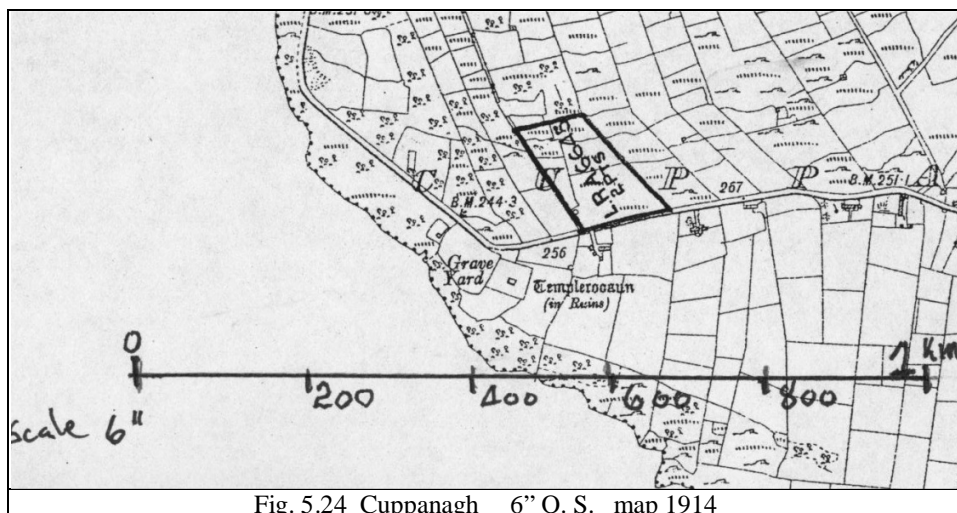


Fig. 5.24 Cuppanagh 6" O. S. map 1914

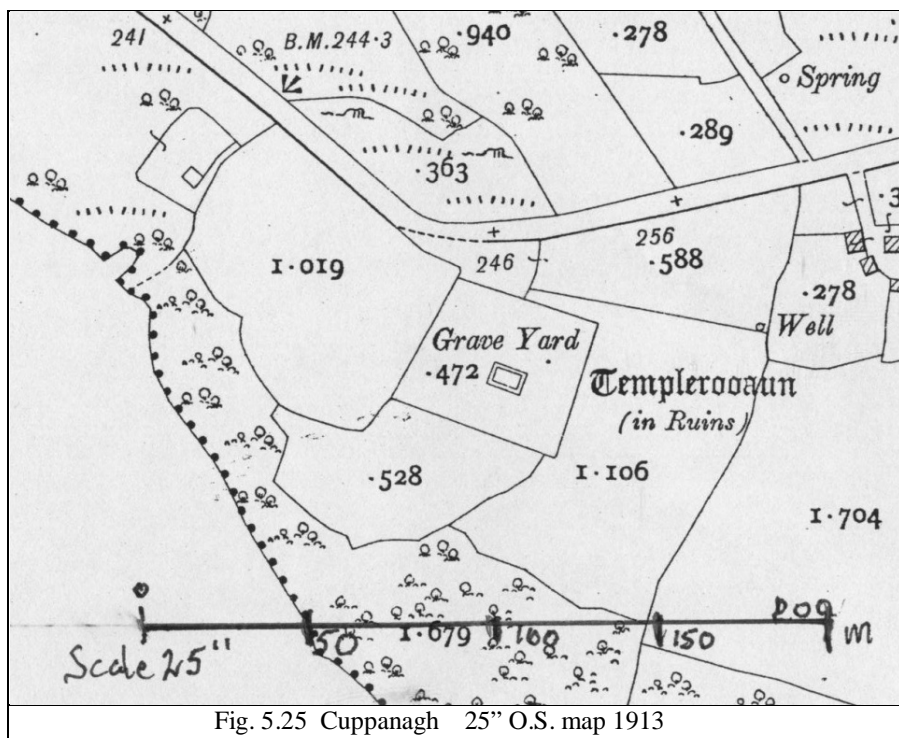
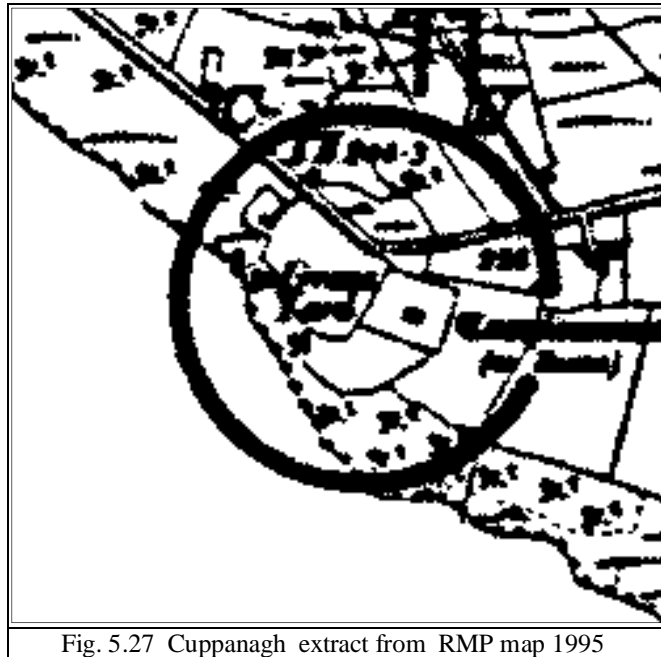


Fig. 5.25 Cuppanagh 25" O.S. map 1913



Fig. 5.26 Cuppanagh National Monuments archives (view from south-east)



Noteworthy elements of the early medieval site in Cuppanagh are:

- the footprint of the small medieval church
- a number of foundation walls 1 to 2 m in height in the central area of the graveyard
- inner burial area rectangular (medieval) has been extended to the east in recent years
- the rectangular enclosure of small dimensions
- the lake shore is outside the *vallum*
- a larger outer enclosure c.165m D.
- there is a distinct curve on east, south and west hedge on drystone
- large loose stones lie haphazardly along the hedge – a parallel with Ballydawley
- the curvature of the hedges on the north side across the road has been obliterated by housing developments

Visits to site: 2010, 2011



Plate 5.5 Cuppanagh eastern-southern *vallum*

5.10 Drumcolumb

Townland: Drumcolumb: *Parish:* Drumcolumb *Barony:* Tirerrill

National Grid Reference: 54°7'43.9649", -8°20'52.1418"; (177310, 320030)

RMP No.: SL027-141001/2-

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical Enclosure (Possible)

OD: 90-120m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
248 ^a - 2 ^r - 21 ^p	Sligo	IV 238

The site is approached by the unnumbered road east veering south-east of Riverstown. The monument is not visible from the road and is sited about 200m up a slope through rushy pastures. The remains of Drumcolumb church are on an earthen platform on an east-west ridge. Here, there is a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. Farmland lies beyond the rushy pasture and road to the north-east, a coniferous forest lies to the south and south-west. A wooded area of deciduous trees and farmland is seen to the south-west. A low broad valley of farmland lies in the distant west and north-west. Another ridge of more gentle appearance lies along the northern aspect with its lower pasture and farmland with coniferous trees beyond to the north-east, east and south-east.

The sparse ruined remains are of a small medieval church now consisting of part of the east end of the south wall of roughly coursed limestone blocks and greatly weathered. This section is about 3m in height and the rest of the south wall is covered by briars and whitethorn. The remains of the other walls now consist of collapsed stones and suggest dimensions roughly 12m by 4m. In 1836 it was suggested that this was the parish church (Egan *et al.* 2005, 408). A rectangular bank of turf-covered tumbled stones adjoins the west end of the church. M.A. Timoney suggests that the extension was a residence for the cleric, according to local information, and says that the church was thatched within recent memory and was approached by a bridle path from the south (*ibid.*, 409). There are two

thin rocks $c.1\text{m}^2$ vertically placed at a short distance from the eastern part of the church together with another thin rock of similar dimension which is not embedded in the ground and has four bullaun hollows.

On the north side of the church the ground slopes down $c. 15\text{m}$ to a bank $c.1.5\text{m}$ H with an east-west orientation. Now in segments, it is sporadically surmounted by hawthorn. To the west, the bank meets a field boundary of similar but sturdier construction of north-south orientation. From the north-west corner a bank with ditch on the upper side curves around the western end of the church ruins and runs linearly to the east parallel to the south face of the ruins. This is $c. 15\text{m}$ distant from the ruins with a sloping drop in height $c. 2\text{m}$ from the south wall of the church. The southern bank appears to have been constructed of stones or revetted by stones which are now collapsed and covered with moss.

The earthen platform, on which the church ruins stand, is thus defined by the curving *vallum* of bank and ditch from the north-west corner along the south and to the east and by the broken bank *vallum* along the north side. Only the field boundary to the west appears to be robust enough currently to act as a field boundary, as all the other banks are low lying and in collapsed condition. A probable ecclesiastical *vallum* system ($c. 350\text{mD}$ east-west) is indicated by a series of segments of bank and shallow ditch and particularly on the south-western side. The curved segment of field boundary on the south-east indicated on 6" O.S. map 1910/1 map has been levelled but is visible as a slight scarp (Egan *et al.* 2005, 408). Local tradition referred to the church site as a 'Giant's Grave' and also to an image of a man on stone (John Brehony – land owner-pers.comm.).

O.S. Letters (1836): 'parish *Drum Chollum*, and an old church in ruins said to have been founded by St. Columbcille', 'old well called *Tobar Collum (Cille)*'. Most vaguely there is a reference to a 'figure or an image of a man made of stone thought to be a figure of the saint'.

O.S. Name Book: refers to 'the ancient forts, the church ruins and the burial ground'.

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps 1837, 1888, 1914 and 25" map 1913. Also studied were the relevant section of the RMP map 1995 and aerial view in GOOGLE Earth. The site is positioned on the lower edge of the 6" O.S. sheet 25 and on the upper edge of 6" O.S. sheet 37.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.28) depicts the site *Drumcolumb Church* and *Stone Cross*. The site is enclosed by a straight boundary along the north, east and west with connecting field boundaries at the east, west and north-west. The southern boundary is shown by two straight segments joined by a curved segment. There are curves to the field boundaries to the north-west, north and north-east suggesting an outer enclosure.

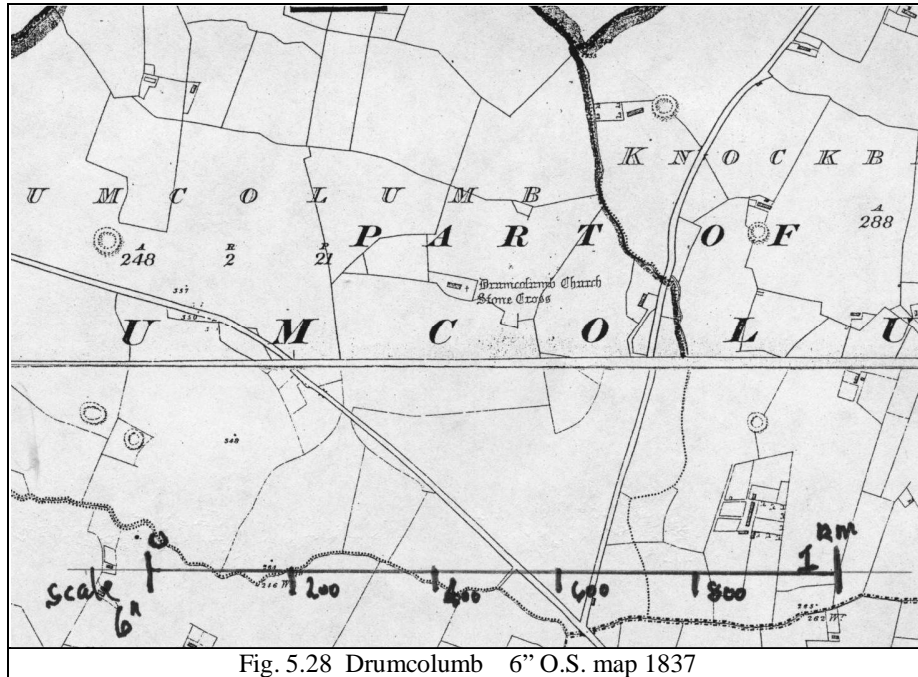
In the 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.29) the site is similarly annotated but the connecting field boundary to the east is not depicted. The curving boundary of the suggested outer enclosure to the north-west appears to be extended along the north and there is a similar segment to the north-east.

In the 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.30) more detail is shown of the field boundaries and curvatures of *valli* are more pronounced.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.31) depicts the site with labels *Drumcolumb Church (in Ruins)*, *Stone Cross* and *GraveYard*. Both monuments are again indicated with all the banks and boundaries. Of particular interest is the curving hachure showing the bank and ditch along the south and west. The curving boundary of the suggested outer enclosure mentioned above now appears to be extended further south on the western curve and has an unusual wedge shaped in the field line.

The RMP map 1995 (Fig. 5.32) appears to be based on the 25" O.S. map and the extract shows the curvature of the boundaries of the inner and outer enclosures.

Aerial photographs of: GOOGLE Earth (Plate 5.7) displays the site with the curvilinear hedge system, National Monument Services Archives (Plate 6.26) depicts the *sanctissimus* area.



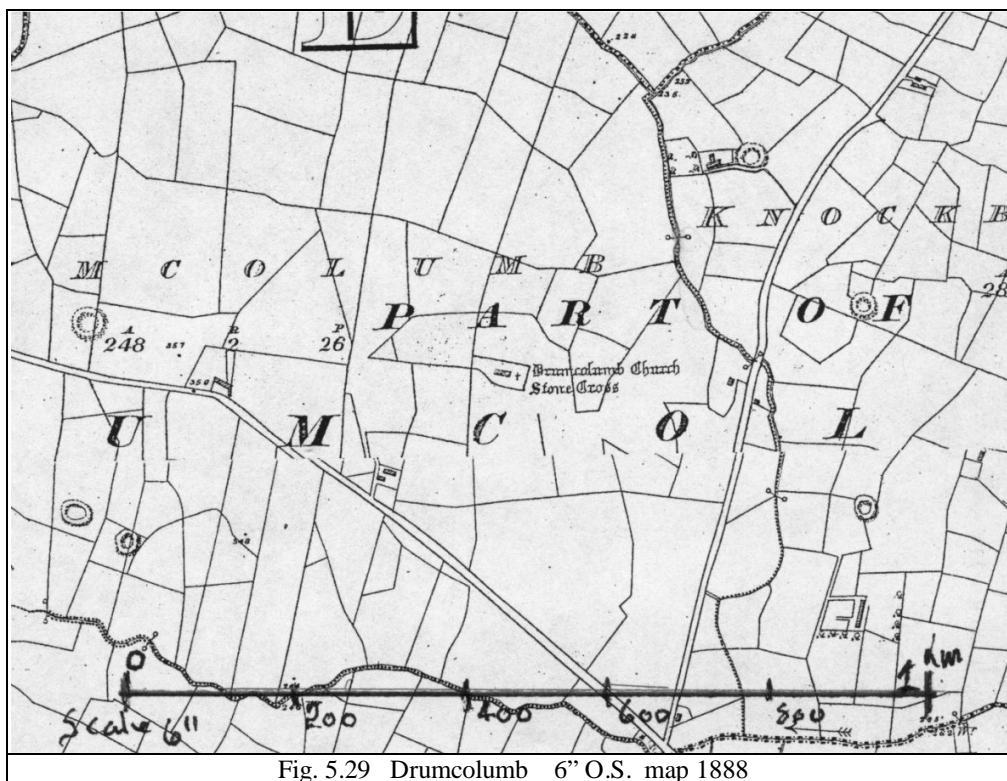


Fig. 5.29 Drumcolumb 6'' O.S. map 1888

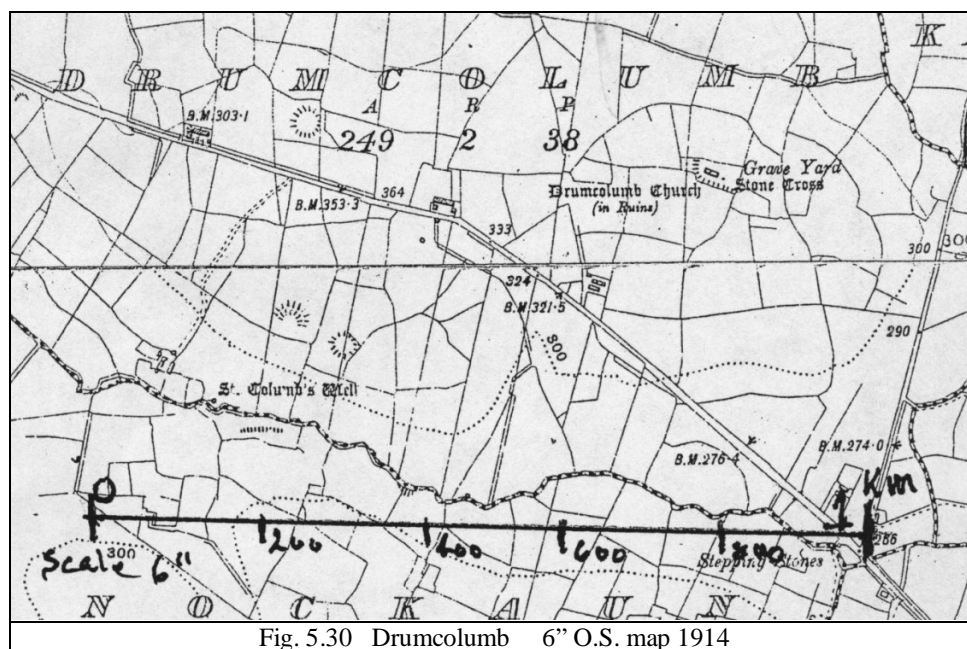
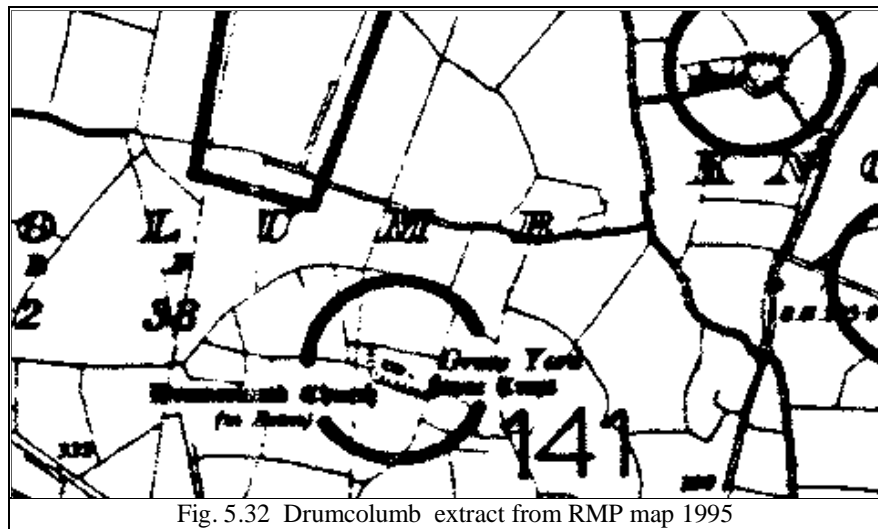
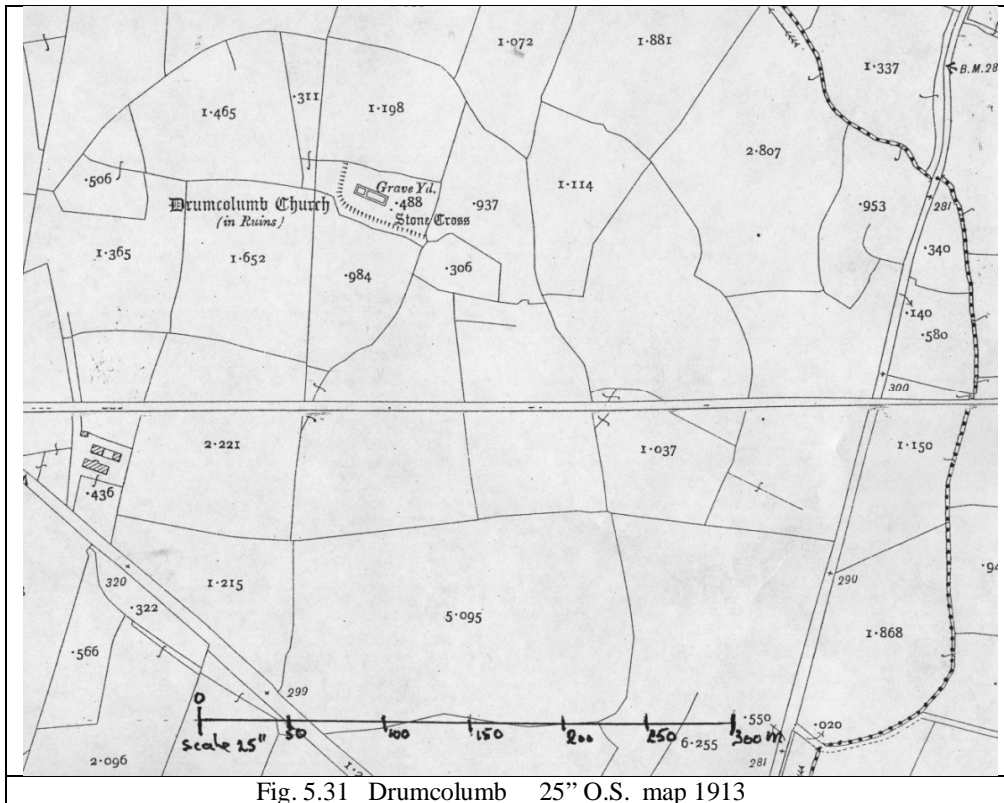


Fig. 5.30 Drumcolumb 6'' O.S. map 1914



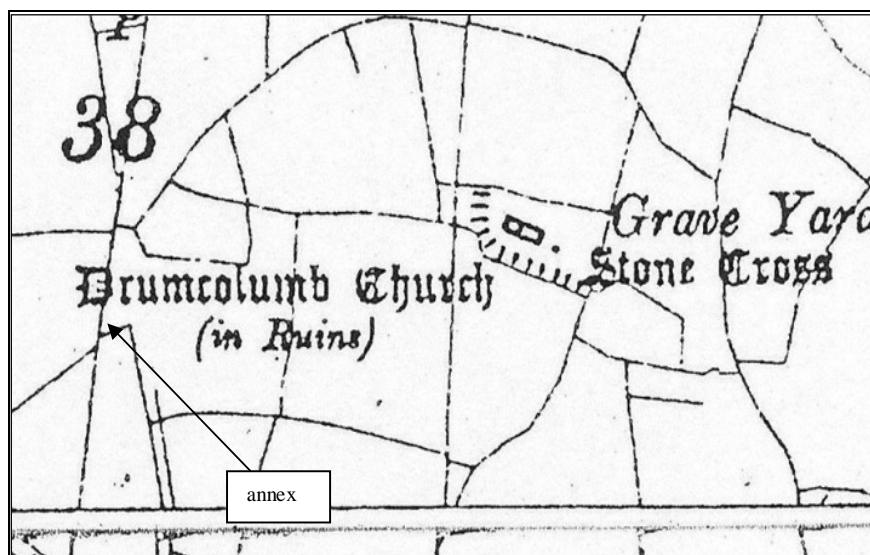


Fig.5.33 Drumcolumb 6" O. S. map 1914
Annexe on *sanctior vallum* and curving south-west corner of *sanctissimus*



Plate 5.6 Drumcolumb GOOGLE Earth 2007 from south-east

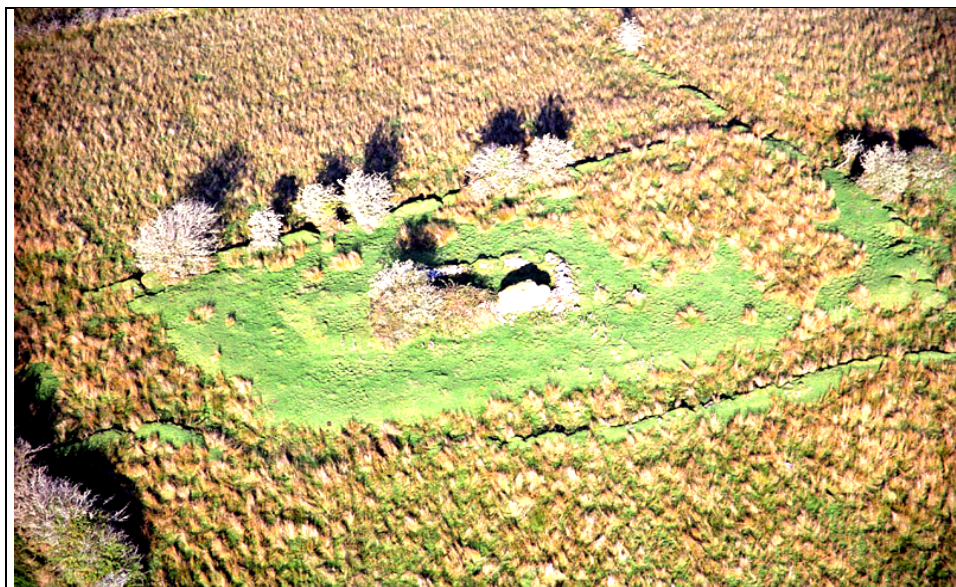


Plate 5.7 Drumcolumb National Monument archives

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monastery in Drumcolumb are:

- the former *sanctissimus* is almost fully enclosed by a rectangular *vallum* which consists of a slight bank and hedge with occasional hawthorn trees on the north side
- the south-west segment appears to be part of the original curvilinear *vallum* of the *sanctissimus*
- a connecting curving bank *vallum*, with water logged ditch on the upper side, runs along the south part of the site from the north-west corner to the curved south-west corner
- there is a complex of drains along the east and south-east sector
- an outer *sanctior vallum* is suggested by the curving field boundaries from north-east to the west (c. 380mD) and a further boundary (*sanctus*) is suggested by a curve further out (c. 150mD) to north-west and perhaps linking up with the north curving river to the east of the site.
- the wedge shaped break ('annexe') in the line of recent existing boundaries lying west of the church site. A similar shaped break in the boundary line is to be observed in the Ballydawley site (Fig. 5.33)

Chapter 5 Catalogue and field work

- although the original curvilinear *sanctissimus vallum* is discernable only at the west south west sector, the maps and GOOGLE Earth views (Plate 5.7) indicate an extensive field system of *sanctus* and *sanctior valli*.

Visits to site : - 2010, 2011

5.11 Kilboglashy

Townland: Kilboglashy *Parish:* *Barony:* Leyny

National Grid Reference: 54° 12' 51.9899 -8°30'49.0236"; (166540, 329620)

RMP No.: SLO20-109001

RMP classification: Church, Graveyard, Ecclesiastical Enclosure

OD: 0-30m

Index of Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland

Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
290 ^a – 3 ^r –20 ^p	Sligo	Pt 1, IV, 230

The site is on the west bank on a cliff overlooking the mouth of the River off the N59 c. 400m north of Ballysadare town centre. The ruined Augustinian *Abbey of Abbeytown*, now surrounded by extensive and encroaching quarry works, lies c.250m west of the church. The site is sheltered from Bay by high ground on the north, beyond which, to the north-west, Knocknarea is visible. To the south, a high ridge leads west to Slieve Gamph, whilst to the east Slieve Daeane, with Slieve Dargan, are visible in the distance. Farm land to the south and immediately to the west is good pasture. The site is dominated by the river, which acts as boundary for townland, barony and diocese, and is on a south facing slope being approached by a road which ends at the graveyard gate. The road is parallel to the river and encloses the fields east of the graveyard which are thickly covered with blackthorn on banks and ridges. There has been the recent development of a water purification plant further upstream to the east. On the opposite side of the road to the west, land has been developed as managed grassland over some time.

The former *sanctissimus*, now rectangular, includes a ruined church clothed in ivy (int. 19.38m east-west; 7.9m north-south) having a Romanesque doorway with two orders, eleven voussoirs, plain hood moulding, two heads, and a lintelled doorway surmounted by a rounded arch randomly infilled with uneven stone, rubble and plaster (Egan *et al.* 2005, 411). Architectural pieces of

Romanesque features have been found on the site which is that of an early monastery founded by St. Fechin of Billa who died in 665 or 668 AD (*ibid.*, 411). The ruins of two other buildings lie in the inner enclosure to the west of the church: one being c.20m north-west at the entrance to the graveyard, the other is smaller and abuts the enclosure externally at the north-west corner. Both are ivy and thorn clad and roughly aligned east-west, but not parallel with the church. The church, with graves interior and exterior along the south, is situated on the north-west section on a higher level and there appears to be an escarpment separating the remaining graveyard lying to the south and east. The graveyard has been extended in recent times and enclosed by stone walls with two gateways. There is very rough ground covered with scrub outside the graveyard to the east.

The arc of an ecclesiastical enclosure may be preserved in the field boundaries to the south and west of the church and graveyard (Egan *et al.* 2005, 411). The field system, suggesting a D-shaped enclosure with a straight side formed by the river shown on 6" O.S. map of 1913, was removed in the 1980s (*ibid.*, 411-2).

O.S. Letters: 'Parish is called Beul Starra (pron) *Beul Easa Dara* - (orthog) *Ostium vadi Quercus*'. A short distance to the north of the village of the same name and on the western bank of the River where it mingles with the sea is an old abbey in ruins. Patron day is 1st of February. There is a well in the townland called *Tobar Brighde*'. 'There are references in the annals referring to later times and battles' (O'Connor 1836).

O. S. Name Book: '*Baile Easa Dara*, the town of the cataract. Kilboglashy is situated in the north of parish of Ballisodare', 'Bishop's land; 8 tenths. at will at yearly rent of 40/= per annum, Community Cess 2/= per annum, Tithe 1/8 per annum; soil is very good crops are mainly Barley', 'size of farm from 2 to 4 acres', 'Kilboglashy is referred to in the Down survey as Kilboglasse Corhownagh' (*ibid.*).

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps of 1837, 1887, 1913 and 25" map of 1912. Also studied were the relevant sections of the RMP map and GOOGLE Earth view. All the O.S. maps have labels *Church* and *GraveYar^d*.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.34) depicts the enclosure as trapezoidal and situated at the end of the road from the town and shows the footprints of the three buildings within the enclosure and also two other buildings to the east of the church and graveyard. One lies west of the road and is aligned north-south, and the other lies east of the graveyard and is aligned north-west to south-east. There is one large rectilinear field with angular corners shown to the west of the road with wet or derelict ground pictorially depicted further east. On the other side of the road and bounded by the river the land near the graveyard is good but further east is wet or derelict.

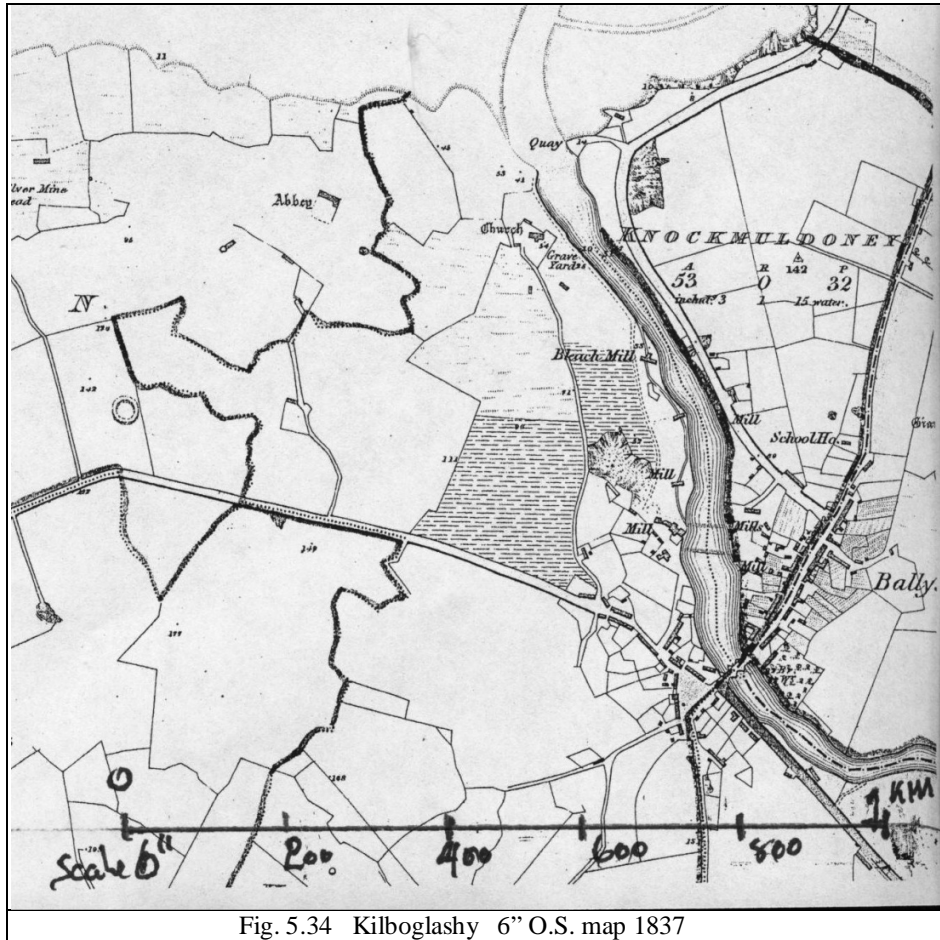
The 6" O.S. map 1887 (Fig. 5.35) shows *Church* and *GraveYard* with the three buildings within a rectangular enclosure. There are more field divisions on both sides of the field boundary referred to above. These fields are of irregular size and rectilinear and, with one exception, having angled corners. The land that had been cartographically depicted as waste is now depicted as good land with the same boundaries. On the east side of the road beside the river the building is no longer shown and the land is good.

The 6" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.36) depicts *Church (in Ruins)* and *GraveYard*, the enclosure with three buildings, the building west of the road and a complex of many fields with curved arcs of boundaries and contours which are difficult to interpret.

The 25" O.S. map 1912 (Fig. 5.37) shows a less complex arrangement of field boundaries and possible arrangement of enclosures.

The RMP 1995 (Fig. 5.38) appears to have been based on the 6" O.S. 1913.

GOOGLE Earth (Plate 5.8) view shows no signs of the field boundaries of the 6" or 25" O.S. maps indicating land clearance in the period after 1913.



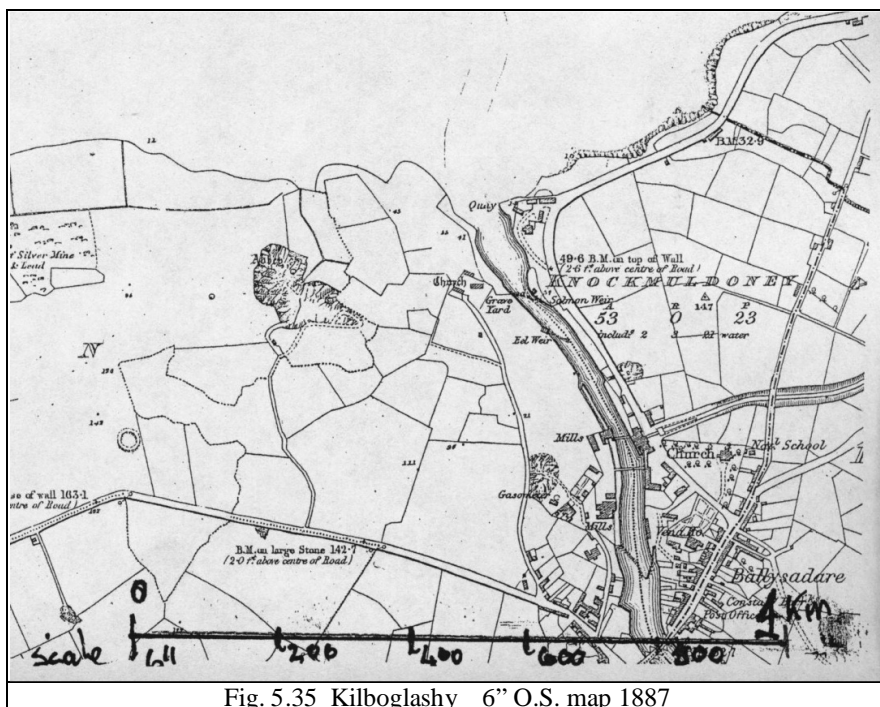


Fig. 5.35 Kilboglashy 6'' O.S. map 1887

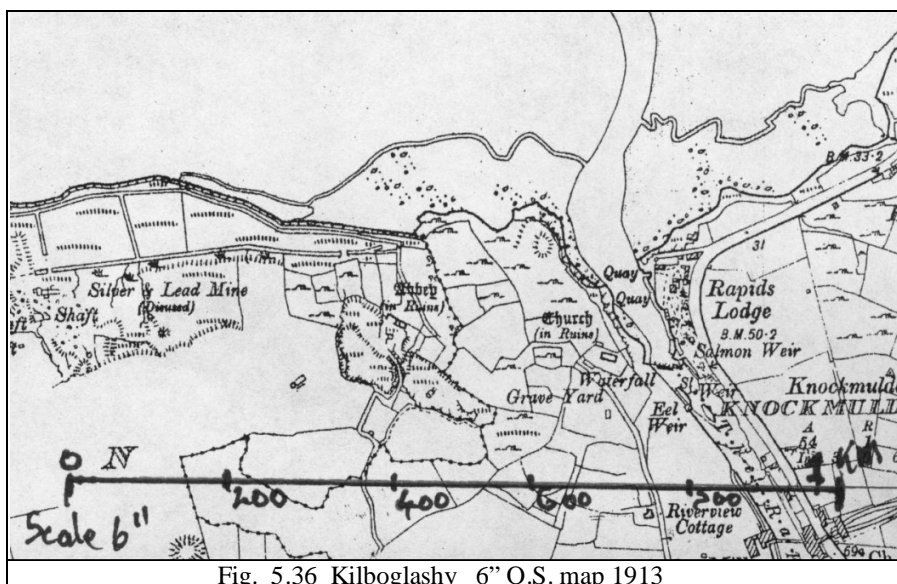


Fig. 5.36 Kilboglashy 6'' O.S. map 1913

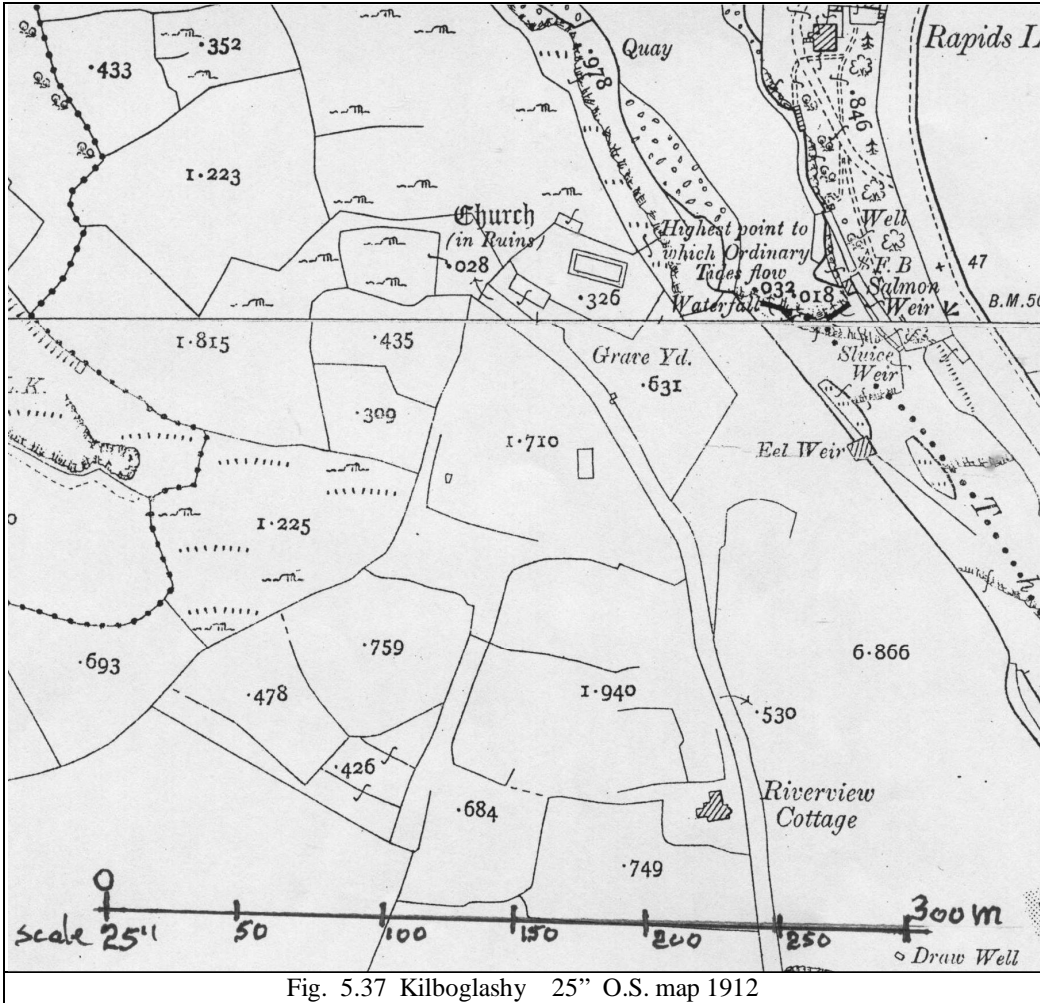


Fig. 5.37 Kilboglashy 25" O.S. map 1912

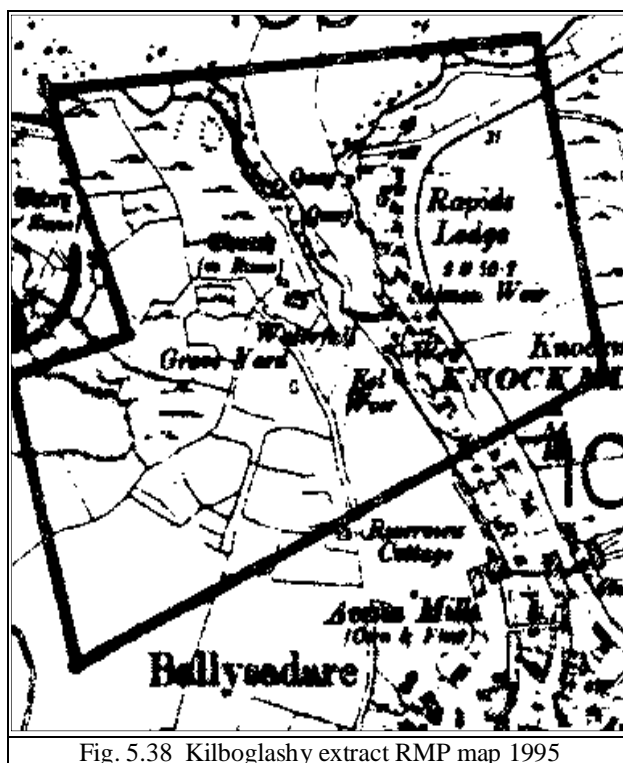


Fig. 5.38 Kilbroglasshy extract RMP map 1995

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monuments in Kilbroglasshy are:-

- the complexity of the site as shown on 6" O.S. map of 1913
- the present church ruins are on a raised area with revetment on the north-west corner and parallels with Carrowntemple
- the straight side of the river forming the D-shape of the monastic foundation
- the boundary aspect, as well as *vallum*, of the river
- the absence of field boundaries and *vallum* system across the road - the removal of the boundaries took place comparatively recently
- no trace of the original curvilinear *sanctissimus*
- The conjectural presentation of an Early Medieval site based on the 25" O.S. map of 1912 and suggests two outer concentric enclosures. Both are D-shaped with the river as a straight side on the east with the inner enclosure having c.160m D. and the outer c.200m D..

Chapter 5 Catalogue and field work

Visite to site: 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011



Plate 5.8 Kilboglasy GOOGLE Earth 2010 from the south

5.12 Kilcummin

Townland: Kilcummin *Parish:* Achonry *Barony:* Leyney

National Grid reference: 54° 6' 47.8939", -8° 44' 58.3024"; (151030, 318490)

RMP no.: S1 031-00500

RMP classification: Ecclesiastical enclosure (possible), Graveyard

OD 60 – 90 m

Index of Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland

Area	Parish	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
807 ^a - 2 ^r - 2 ^p	Achonry	Tobercurry	IV. 229

Kilcummin graveyard lies towards the south-eastern part of the elongated top-boot shaped townland which extends up the slope of Ox Mountain and on the east side of Stirabout road which runs in a northerly direction on the Cloonacool to Carroweden unnumbered road. The site is located a short distance north from the bridge which spans the river Moy. There is an open car park opposite the gate to the graveyard. The farm land immediately around the graveyard to the north, south and west is pasture of variable quality and with occasional trees. Immediately south of the graveyard the land slopes down to a large patch of wet pasture with banks and with better land beyond. Farm boundaries are comprised of stone walls and banks with or without trees. The Slieve Gamph mountain dominates the northern horizon from north-west to north-east. Knocknashee Commons flat height is separately prominent in the east and the partly tree covered dome of Muckelty Hill is distinctive in the southern horizon.

The graveyard is trapezoidal in shape (37m east-west; 36.8m north-south at west end; c. 30m north-south at eastern end) and enclosed by modern stone walls. Although well maintained and with winding paths the interior ground is uneven which suggests collapsed masonry particularly in the south-west corner. Immediately inside the gate a north-south scarp is apparent and on the same level as the remainder of the graveyard. Outside the north wall separate from and parallel to it there is a scarp (H c. 0.4m; L c. 22m) which curves to south-east (c.

9m) to meet the north wall of the graveyard (Egan *et al.* 2005,412) and appears to correspond with the raised ground inside the graveyard. In the field on the east of the site and parallel to the east wall there is a bank or scarp which curves towards the south. There are now no traces of the friary indicated on the O.S. maps.

Local folklore refers to a fifth century foundation and associations with the other nearby sites of Court and Kilvarnet North and the O'Hara family (Varnet O'Hara). Bert O'Hara - landowner *-pers. comm.*).

O.S. Letters:- 'There is an old abbey in ruins in *Cill Cumin* (now Kilcummin Parish)'.

O.S. Name Book: 'Situated in the north of the parish, owned by the Ecclesiastical Commission and leased. There is an old abbey here and a well called *Tobar Crimín*'.

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps 1837, 1888, 1914 and 25" map 1913 (sheets 31-4 and 31-8). Also studied were the relevant sections of the RMP map 1995. The GOOGLE Earth was not satisfactory.

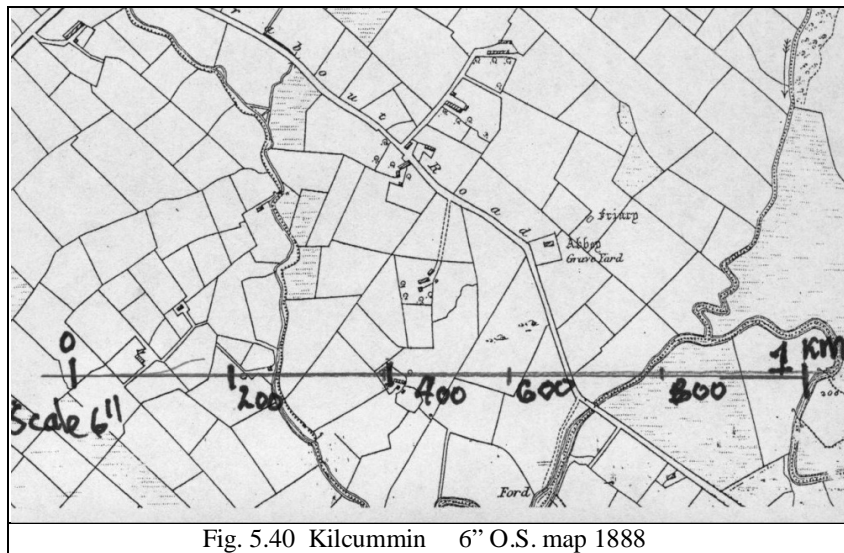
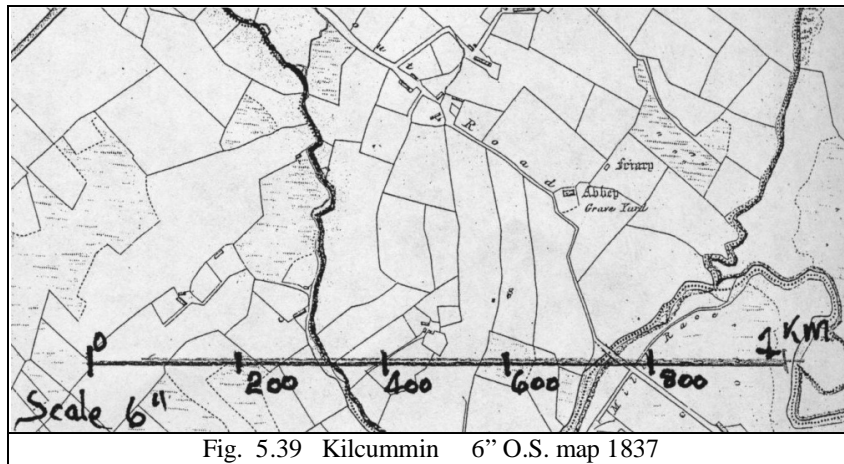
The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.39) depicts the enclosure as trapezoidal with an incomplete south wall. The words *Abbey* and *GraveYard* are beside the enclosure and the word *Friary* in the next field to the north-east. A shaded rectangle is depicted in the north-east corner of the enclosure suggesting a mausoleum. The site is in the southern part of the townland on the Stirabout Road and bordered by a loop in the river Moy.

The 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.40) depicts no differences from the 1837 map.

The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.41) depicts some changes in font and additions of labels. The labels are *Kilcummin Graveyard*, *Abbey (Site of)* and *Friary (Site of)*. Both friary and abbey are indicated by crosses. The land surrounding the site is

depicted as wetland. Some B.M. are indicated and Stirabout Bridge is labelled but not Stirabout Road.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig.5.42) is an enlargement of 6" O.S. map 1914 depicting field acreages and two wells some distance to the east of the enclosure. The poor quality RMP 1995 (Fig. 5.43) is based on the 25" O.S. of 1913 map.



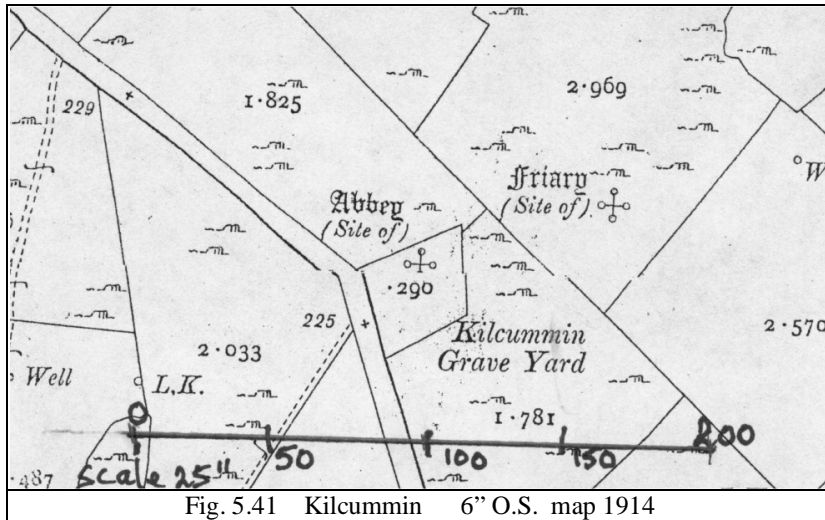


Fig. 5.41 Kilcummin 6'' O.S. map 1914

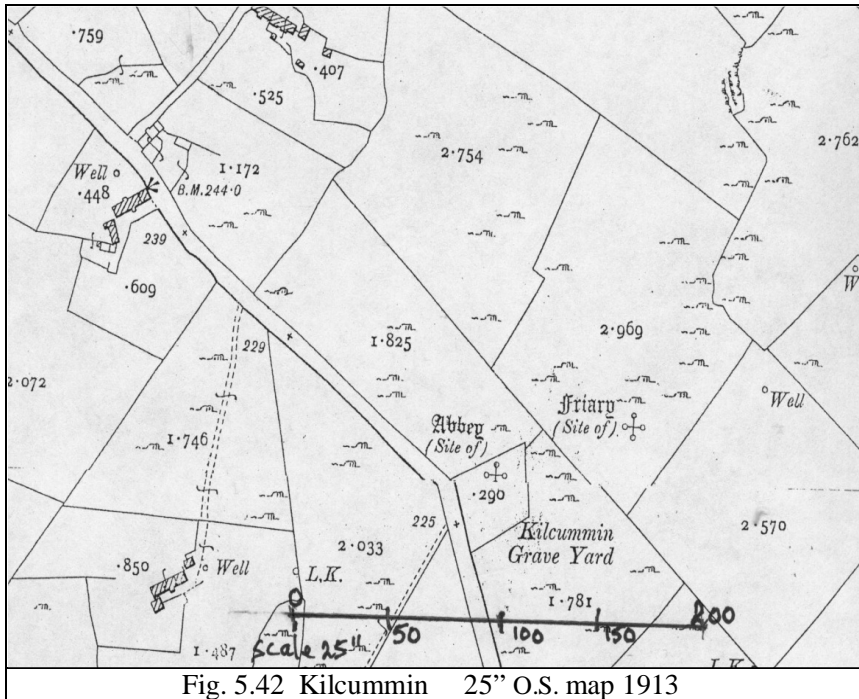
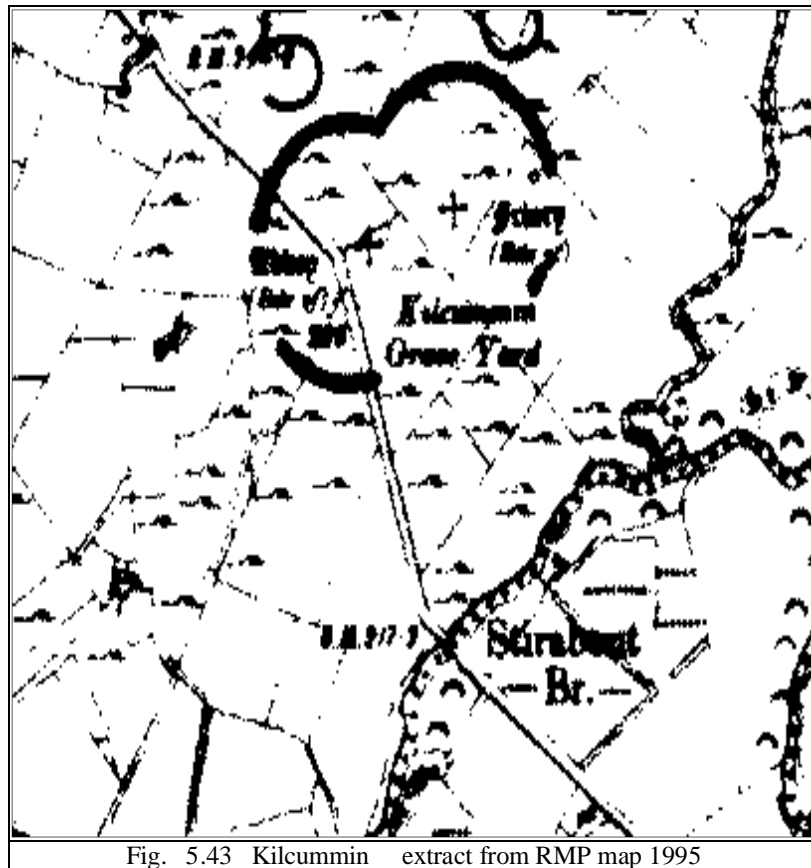


Fig. 5.42 Kilcummin 25'' O.S. map 1913



Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monuments in Kilcummin are:-

- the rectangular platform adjoins the wall in the field on the east of the enclosure
- what appears to be a continuation of the platform inside the graveyard
- the absence of curvilinear boundaries or possible *vallum* in the vicinity apart from the loop of the river Moy
- no visible trace of the friary shown in the maps
- the conjectural presentation has very little to support it

Visits to site: Autumn, 2009; Summer 2010; Spring, Summer 2011

5.13 Kilvarnet North

Catalogue

Townland: Kilvarnet North Parish: Kilvarnet Barony: Leyney

National Grid Reference: 54° 7' 40.2300, -8° 36' 32.6352"; (160230, 320030)

RMP No.: SL032-034001/3

RMP classification:- Church, Graveyard, Ecclesiastical Enclosure (Possible)

OD: 91-120m

Index of Townlands and Towns, Parishes and Baronies of Ireland

Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
234 ^a -0 ^r -24 ^p	Sligo	IV 238

The site is found on a roadside height off the N17 c.2km south of Ballynacarrow village and about a further 2km on the unnumbered road west of the ‘finger post’ sign. The roughly rectangular walled site is on the north-east end of a ridge and is surrounded by low lying land on the north, east and south. Slieve Gamph is visible to the west with Knocknashee Common intervening. Good land lies beyond the immediate surrounding bogs.

The walled graveyard, on the margin of the road, was extended in the last century when the north boundary was moved outwards c. 30m. The first burial in the new part of the graveyard was in 1941 (Josie McKettrick—land owner - *pers. comm.*). This was after the dates of publication of the O.S. maps. Cement walls now enclose the north side and parts of the east and west sides. The position of the old north wall inside the graveyard is identified by a scarp (c.1m H) (Plate 5.9) which lies parallel with the almost ruinous north wall of the church. There is a corresponding dip in ground level on the south side (Plate 5.10). The east end of the church has also fallen to its lower parts. The church (int.10.9mW east-west; 5.95m W north-south) was the medieval parish church, and founded by the O’Hara family of Annaghmore, and recorded as the parish church in 1302-6. Within this area beyond the east wall which is not enclosed, the ground

continues level for about 30m between two narrowing curves of shallow banks to the surrounding bog. The ground dips rapidly to an identifiable but shallow bank and the surrounding bog land on the north, east and south of the graveyard. Within this area, which is outside the graveyard, there are several discontinuous shallow banks or mounds (possibly cultivation ridges) that appear to run to the east down the slope petering out on the way. An aerial photograph (CUCAP, AVJ 22) of 1968 indicates a possible ecclesiastical enclosure (250m north-west to south-east; 200m north-east to south-west), coinciding with the extension and sweeping around outside the enclosure to the north-east and to the south and is not visible on the ground (Egan *et al.* 2005, 417). The land on the west side of the road has been much disturbed.

O.S. Letters: ‘The Irish name for the parish is *Cill Bhearnat*. There is an old abbey in ruins in the parish’ (O’Conor 1836, 387).

O.S. Name Book: ‘*Cille Barnát*, In the southern part of the parish and bounded by Lough Finlough’ (*ibid.*).

The cartographical material consulted included 6” O.S. maps 1837, 1888, 1914 and 25” O.S. map 1913. Also studied was the pertinent section of the RMP map. GOOGLE Earth view was not satisfactory. The site is positioned on the lower edge of the O.S. sheet 25 and on the upper edge of O.S. sheet 37.

The 6” O.S. maps 1837 (Fig. 5.44) show *GraveYard* and an almost square site set at an angle to the road and the footprint of the church as a rectangle close to the north-west corner. Only one field with angular corners and linear sides appears to the north-east and is not connected to the site. Some dotted lines that appear to be contours but without height indicators lie outside the site with north-east to south-west alignment.

The 6” O.S. maps 1888 (Fig. 5.45) depict *Church* and wet ground is indicated outside the contour lines. The graveyard is now aligned with the road. There are more rectilinear fields.

The 6" O.S. maps 1914 (Fig. 5.46) depict *G.Yd.* and *Church (in Ruins)*. A sinuous double dotted line labelled *Stepping Stones* and further east *F.P* (foot path) is shown starting at the road to the west of the graveyard, going north-east, around and close to the north-east corner of the graveyard. It then continues across the fields to meet another road to the north-east. Some of the lines on the maps are now shown as double indicating drainage works. One of the contour dotted lines to the south of the church appears to link up with the *Stepping Stones* and a section of drainage system to suggest an inner enclosure. There are not now any signs of these stepping stones. It appears that they have become overgrown. Local enquiries elicited the response that these stones had led from the church to a well of which there is now no trace as it was probably filled in or dried up resulting from drainage works. There was no known name for the well or its exact location. The extension of the graveyard obliterated that section of the stepping stones (Josie McKetrick-land owner-pers.comm.).

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.47) shows the enlarged details of the 6" O.S. map 1914. There have been some development activities west of the site on the other side of the road.

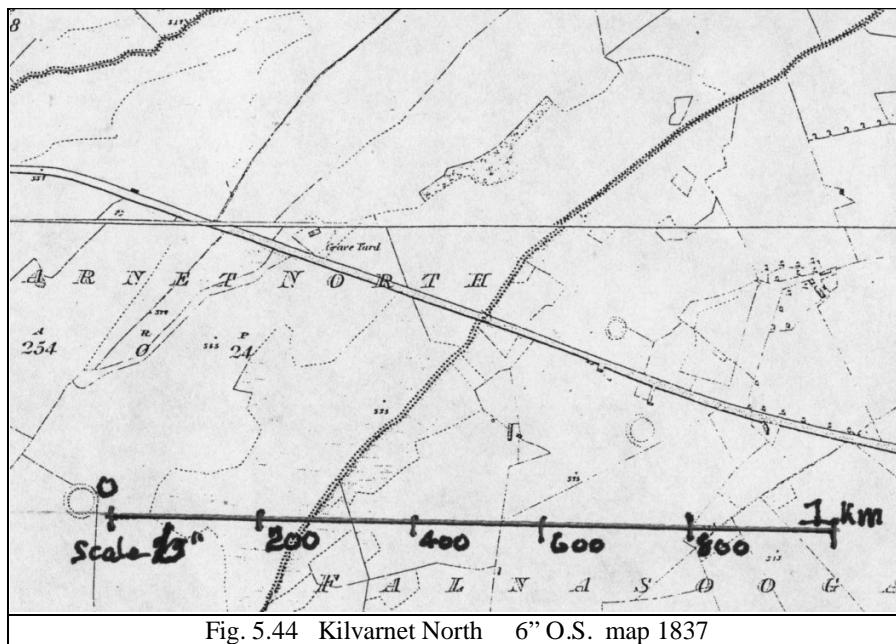


Fig. 5.44 Kilvarnet North 6" O.S. map 1837

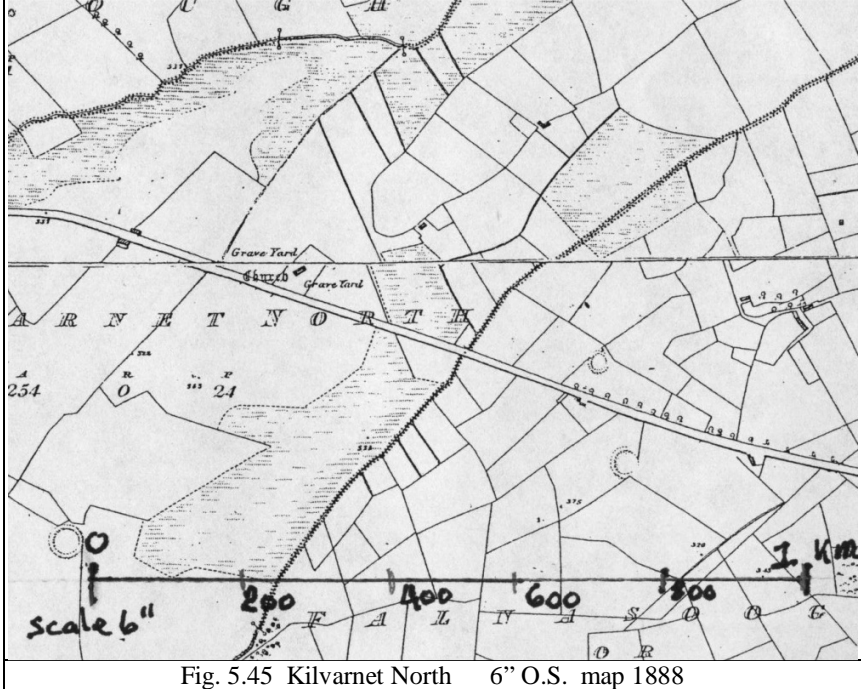


Fig. 5.45 Kilvarnet North 6" O.S. map 1888

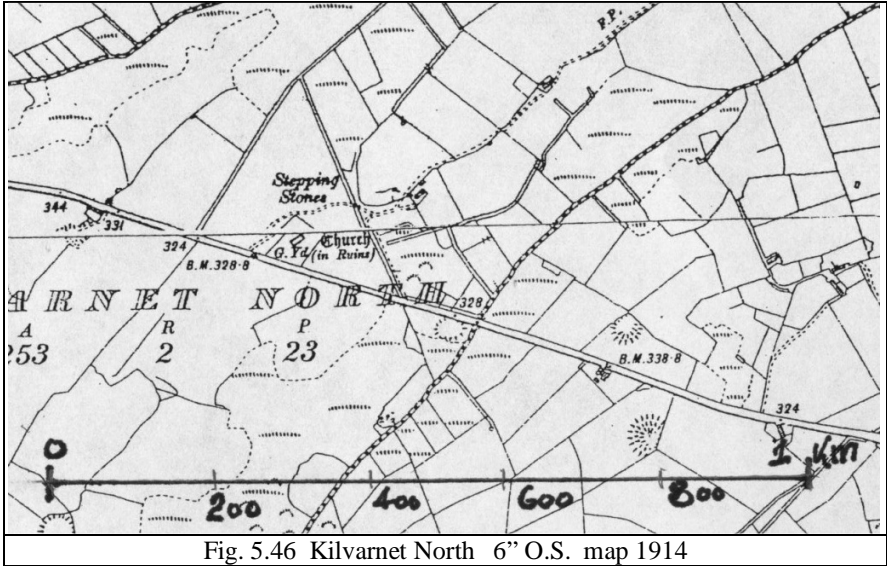


Fig. 5.46 Kilvarnet North 6" O.S. map 1914

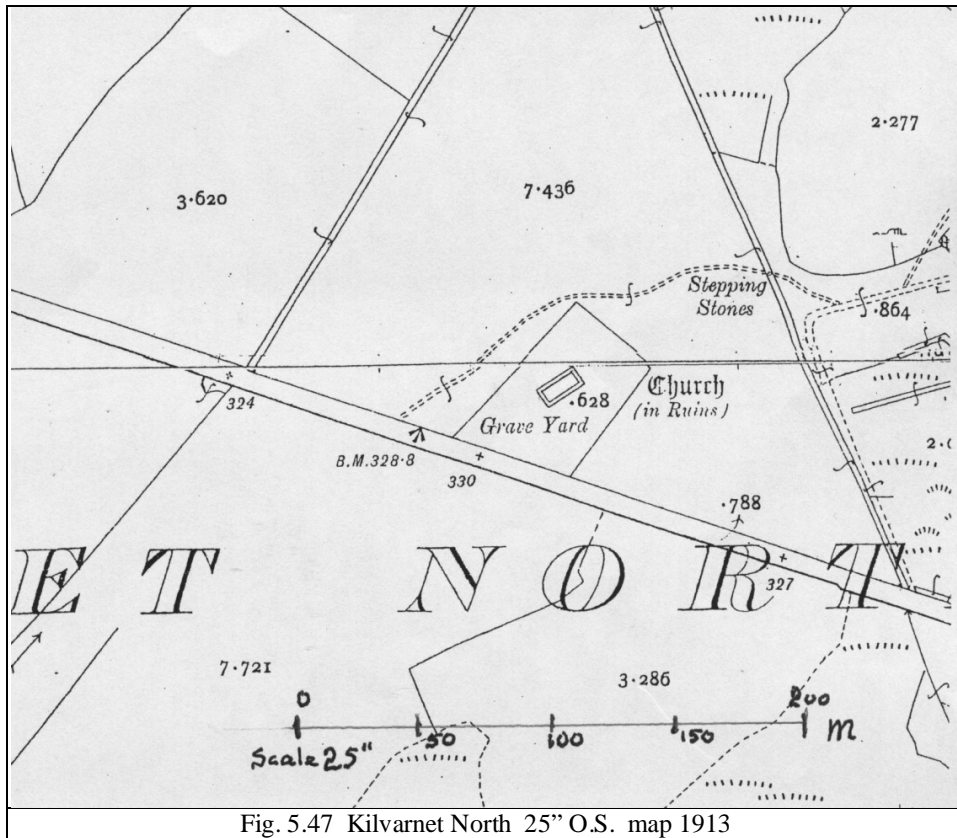
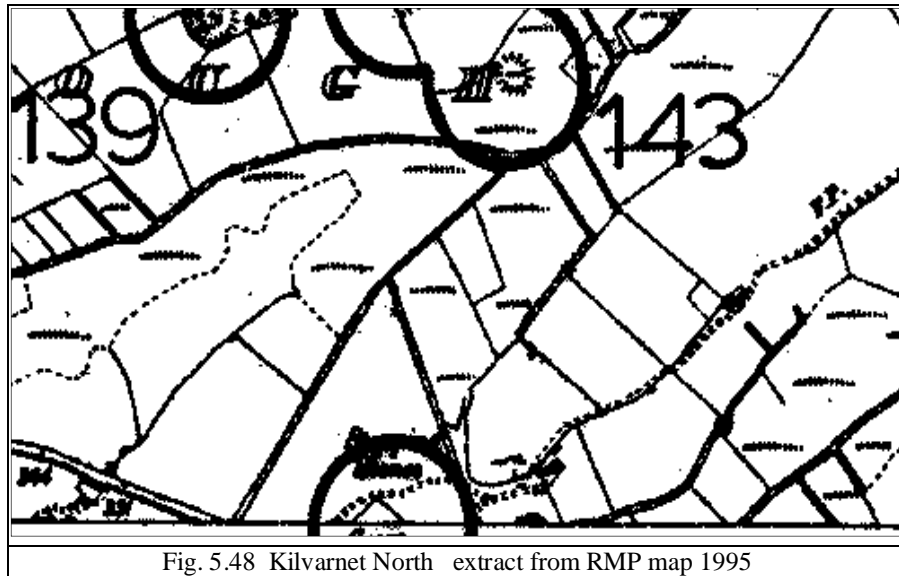


Plate 5.9 Kilvernet scarp on north

Plate 5.10 Kilvernet scarp on south



Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monuments in Kilvarnet North are:-

- a curving discernable bank system along the edge of a former marsh outside the eastern end of the graveyard. This presumably was the eastern part of the *sanctissimus vallum*
- the graveyard was extended to the north side in the 1940s, the scarp of the former wall is evident
- there has been great disturbance on the land on the west of the site across the road

Visits to site:- 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

5.14 Monasterredan (Cashelnamonastragh)

Townland: Monasterredan *Parish:* Kilcolman *Barony:* Coolavin

National Grid References: 53°56'27.9893"; -8°30'6.7736", (167090, 299190)

RMP No. SL 046 – 01400-1

RMP Classification: Church possible, Graveyard, Ecclesiastical enclosure

OD: 90-120m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
675 ^a -3 ^r -2 ^p	Boyle	IV, 223

The site, Monasterredan, lies south-west of the village cross-roads of Monasteraden on the unnumbered road to Ballaghaderreen. There is another site named Monasterredan which lies some distance to the north and yet another site similarly labelled south-east of the village. The graveyard site is visible from the road and is accessed by a short stone wall lined road and through a gateway under a single straight stone lintel which is surmounted by an cross on a base and dated 1883. The graveyard is surrounded to the east, south and west by rushy pasture on a gentle slope facing south-east. There appears to be better, well drained pasture to the north. Coniferous woods are visible to the north-west and south-west. Lough Gara lies in the distance to the south-east beyond the intervening low lying land of rush, scrub and the concealed disused railway line.

The site is enclosed by a mortared stone wall, is still used and well maintained as a graveyard. Some of the grave markers of stone are aligned in a slightly different orientation. During the graveyard clean up in 1985/6 a corn-drying kiln (not dated) was uncovered and the site is now marked by a stone bench (1.5m north-south 1.26m east-west; 0.45mH) near the wall at the west (Egan *et al.* 2005, 420). Also uncovered were, a *souterrain* in the north-east quadrant; a quern stone (not typified); and a bullaun stone outside the wall at north-east (*ibid.*, 420). The *souterrain* is now covered by several baulks of timber bound with security wire. There are indications that the wall of

“*Cashelnamonasteragh*” was built on low, flat topped sod-covered rise roughly circular (77m east-west; c.71m north-south; c.2mW; c.0.5mH). This sod base projects internally, under the wall-face at the north-west to north-east sector, externally, under the wall on north-east to south-east quadrant, and is truncated at south-east by a garden and the access road (*ibid.*, 421). The graveyard is depicted as polygonal on the 6” O.S. map of 1837 but as oval in shape (76.4m east-west; 68.7m north-south) in 6” O.S. map of 1914 (*ibid.*, 420). There are no traces of the church referred to in O.S. Letters in 1836 and it is not indicated on the 6” O.S. map of 1837.

O.S. Letters: ‘the ruins of an old church’ which are not shown on the 6” O.S. map 1837. *Cill Colmanis* called from a friar named *Cholmain* who lived here formerly. In the townland of Monasterredan (*Mainistir Reudan*) are the ruins of an old church and a burial for children, strangers and old people’. ‘I understand from the people that there is an old church (a good portion) and a burial in Kilcoleman townland. There is no such townland in the Name Book, so it must be some other townland in the parish or we must have misunderstood each other and confounded it with the old church of Monasterredan. The fair plan will decide this’ (O’Keeffe 1836).

O.S. Name Book: ‘*Caisil na Mainistreach: lapidus ambitus monasterii* lies in the extremity of the townland of Monasterredan. There is a graveyard where the monastery is said to have been but no trace of ruins now. There is a similar passage in Carrantemple in Kilfree parish. They bury in Kilcolman in Mayo’.

The cartographical material consulted included 6” O.S. maps 1837, 1888, 1914 and 25” O.S. map 1913. Also studied were the pertinent section of the RMP map, the aerial views in GOOGLE Earth and the National Monuments Service Archives.

The 6” O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.49) depicts the graveyard having three straight sides on the west, north and east and the south-west side curving with circular

arc and being part of the townland boundary. The labels are *Cashelnamonastragh*, *GraveYard*, *Cave or Covered Passage*. The road along the south yields access to the graveyard.

The 6" O.S. map 1888 (Fig. 5.50) depicts a more rounded enclosure on the west, north and east quadrants. The entrance to the graveyard is defined and the graveyard appears to be internally divided by foot paths. The labels are *Cashelnamonastragh* and *GraveY^d*. The townland boundary is not depicted. There are more field divisions shown in the surrounding area some of which depict curving boundaries with concave side towards the enclosure. The railway line is shown to the south skirting low wet lands.

The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.51) depicts the labels *Cashelnamonastragh* and *GraveY^d*. The B.M. 301.4 is shown near the road entrance. There are no internal divisions within the graveyard and the townland boundary coinciding with enclosure on the south-west is shown as a dotted line.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig.5.52) map depicts the same information.

The RMP map (Fig. 5.53) shows the same information as in the O.S. 25" map of 1913.

The aerial photograph of The National Monuments Service Archives (Plate 4.10) depicts the enclosure and a suggestion of a polygonal boundary. The GOOGLE Earth (Plate 5.11) aerial photo shows the enclosure and surrounding field system.

Some surrounding fields have curvilinear boundaries which when linked together with shorter sections on northwest, north-east, south-east and south-west strongly suggest an outer boundary (*sanctus?*) roughly circular *c.* 650m north-west to south-east; *c.* 450m north-east to south-west.

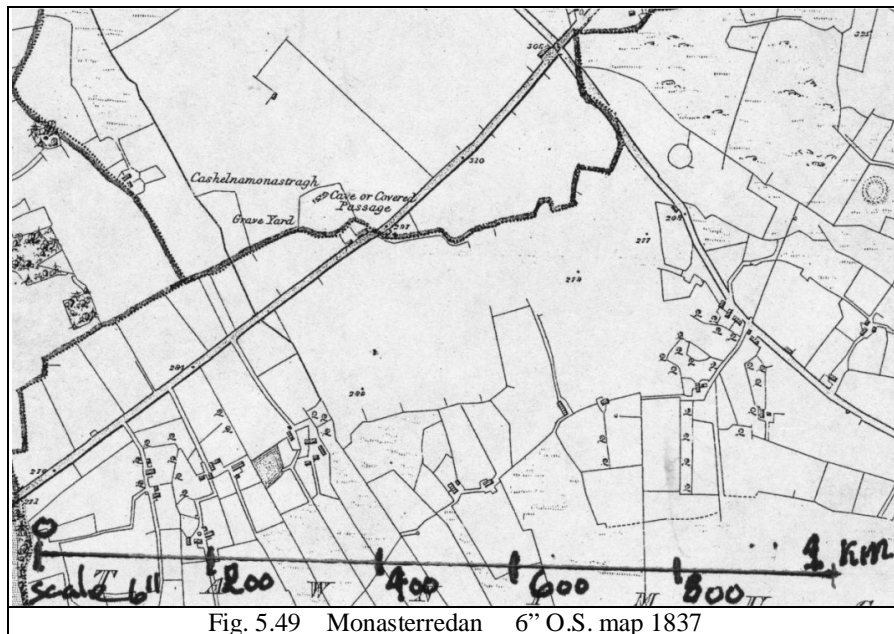


Fig. 5.49 Monasterredan 6" O.S. map 1837

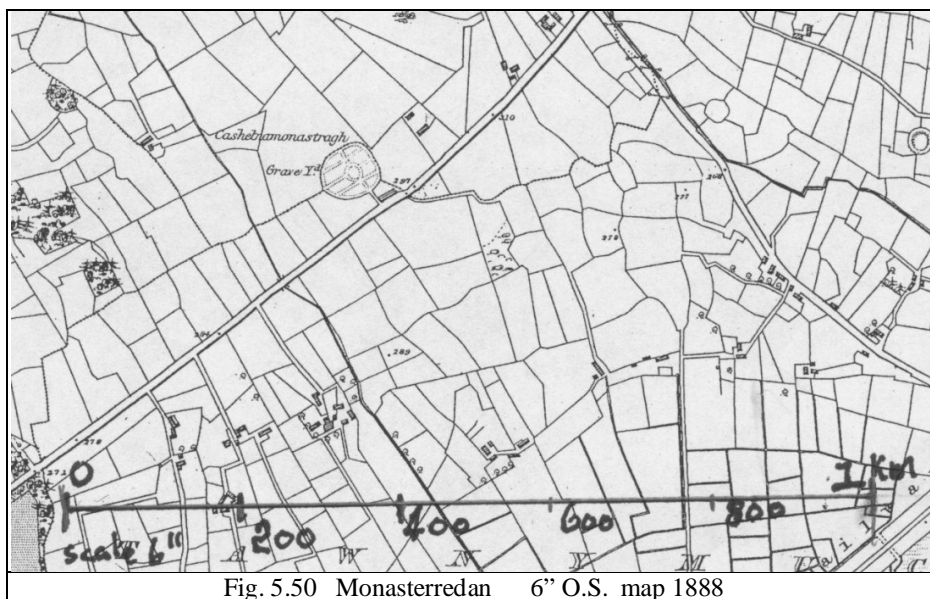


Fig. 5.50 Monasterredan 6" O.S. map 1888

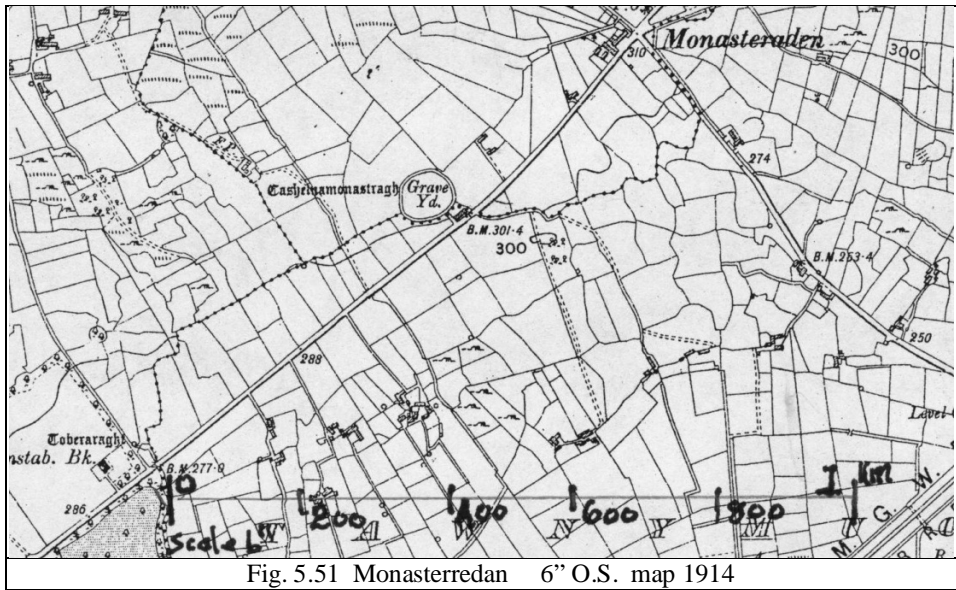
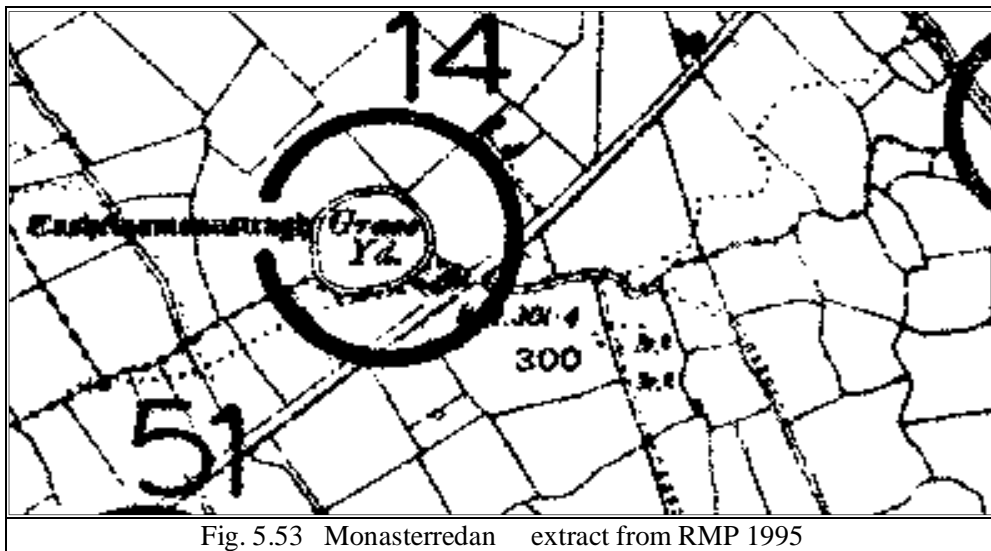
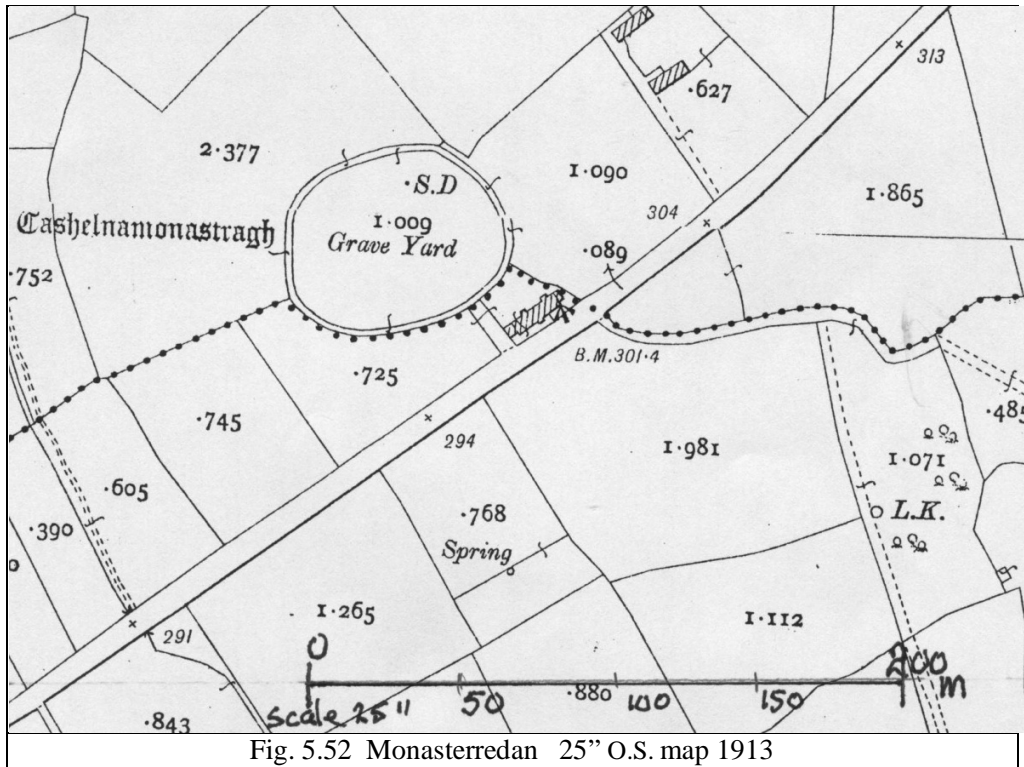


Fig. 5.51 Monasterredan 6" O.S. map 1914



Plate 5.11 Monasterredan GOOGLE Earth 2011



Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monastery in Monasterredan are:-

- the features of the sod base on which the modern wall was built
- the variations in dimensions of the enclosure wall
- the position of the corn-drying kiln, *souterain* and reported bullaun stone
- the conjectural outer enclosure links with dotted red lines the fences with concave curves north-west, east, south-east and south-west of the inner enclosure
- the location of the inner enclosure on the border of townlands

Visits to site: 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011

5.15 Shancough

Townland: Shancough (Tirerill B.) *Parish:* Shancough *Barony:* Tirerrill

National Grid Reference: 54° 5' 43.3953"; -8° 16' 14.33710"; (182340; 316280)

RMP No.: SL035-052001/4

RMP classification: Church, Ecclesiastical Enclosure

OD: 90-120m

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Area	Poor L. Union	Census 1851
146 ^a -3 ^r -15 ^p	Sligo	IV 238

The site is approached from R284, then south-west from Geevagh crossing the Feorish River, on first side road west for about 1 km, through a farmyard and a demanding climb to the church which is visible on a treeless height. Surrounded by pasture land, the roofless ruin, on a narrow north-west to south-east ridge, dominates the valley. From north-west to south-east, beyond the river plain, Carron Hill and the forested Carrowmore (scarred by recent land flow) dominate the skyline. There are parallel ridges, though not as high, to the south-east from north-west to south-east. From the south the site is overlooked by the road south-east from Lough Bo.

The monument has been identified as a late medieval parish church (ext.17.5m east-west; 7.6m north-south) having architectural features of that period (Egan *et al.* 2005, 423). There are two compartments, the smaller to the west is vaulted and all four walls are of equal height. The church lies slightly to the north-west within an interior rectangular enclosure (65m north-west to south-east; 40m north-east to south-west), which is defined by an earth and stone bank (0.4m int. H ; 0.85m ext.H) on the north-west and south-east and part of the north-east side. Elsewhere the remains of the banks are topped with drystone walls. The south-west side loops inwards at the west corner, otherwise the sides are straight. There are numerous breaks in the banks with traces of revetment, internal and

external, with limestone slabs especially on the north-west and north-east sides (*ibid.*, 423). The interior space is divided by a wall (north-east to south-west) incorporating the east end of the church (*ibid.*, 423).

The present enclosure straddles the summit and is roughly rectangular (115m north-west to south-east; 71m north-east to south-west) and is defined by an earth and stone scarp (1.7mH) on the south-east and south-west sides and by the remains of a bank topped by a drystone wall on the north-west side (*ibid.*, 423). The north-east side is defined by a steep natural slope and in the scarp on the south-west side, traces of external revetment made of three to four courses of limestone rubble are evident. On the north-west side three limestone slabs (c. 1.2mW; c.1mH; c.0.03mT) indicate remains of revetment. There are two *souterains* reported one to the north-west and the other to the north-east (*ibid.*, 423). The indications of the outer rectangular enclosure are identifiable even from a distance but are not depicted on the O.S. maps. They are however discernable on the GOOGLE Earth aerial photograph (Plate 5.12).

O.S. Letters:- ‘Pronounced Shan-coo-agh, in Irish *Sean Chuach*. In the townland of Shancough are the ruins of an old church which, they say, was removed by supernatural power in one night from *Carraic a’ Teampuill* where it was originally built and where, though there may be no old church, there is a burial place, no burial being at Shancough. Some of the stones which fell on the way (removal) are pointed out. The only Patron Day I could learn as being in the parish is 25th July, the Patron Day of St. James’s Well (*Tobar S. Seum*) a holy well in the townland Ummeraroe near Carrickatemple over which a large tree grows, stations are performed at it yet’ (O’Conor 1836, 184, 245).

O.S. Name Book:- ‘Shancough – Old Hollow’ (*ibid.*)

The cartographical material consulted included 6" O.S. maps 1837, 1887, 1914 and 25" map 1913. Also studied were the relevant section of aerial views in GOOGLE Earth.

The 6" O.S. map 1837 (Fig. 5.54) depicts the *Church* as a dark rectangle lying north-west to south-east at the north-east side of an enclosure with a straight south-east side and a curve on the west and south-west sides. This is part of a larger long polygonal shaped field lying from north-west to south-east with height markings of 333 and 338 at the north-west end and 392 at the south-east end in very small letters. These appear to demark the ridge on which the monument lies. Some four-sided fields surround the enclosure in a radial fashion to the townland boundary from north-west to south-east. To the south and south-west there is a curve of fences, forming almost a semi-circle, on the south-east and south, linking fences of the fields but without an apparent locus.

The 6" O.S. map 1887 (Fig. 5.55) depicts *Church*, the rectangle is now not filled in, the three peaks and the same field boundaries. The boundary to the south-west is now triangular rather than rounded.

The 6" O.S. map 1914 (Fig. 5.56) depicts *Shancough Church (in Ruins)*, with two compartments, *Cave* (to the north of the church) without height indicators.

The 25" O.S. map 1913 (Fig. 5.57) depicts the same information as the 6" O.S. map 1914. However, it would appear that, in addition to the two rectangular enclosures suggested, there is the possibility of another enclosure to the south-west, oval in shape (c. 350m east to west; c. 250m north to south) and conjoined with the other two rectangular enclosures at the south-west corner of both.

The GOOGLE Earth (Plate 5.12) map shows the soil marks which indicate intersecting curvilinear *vallum* system.

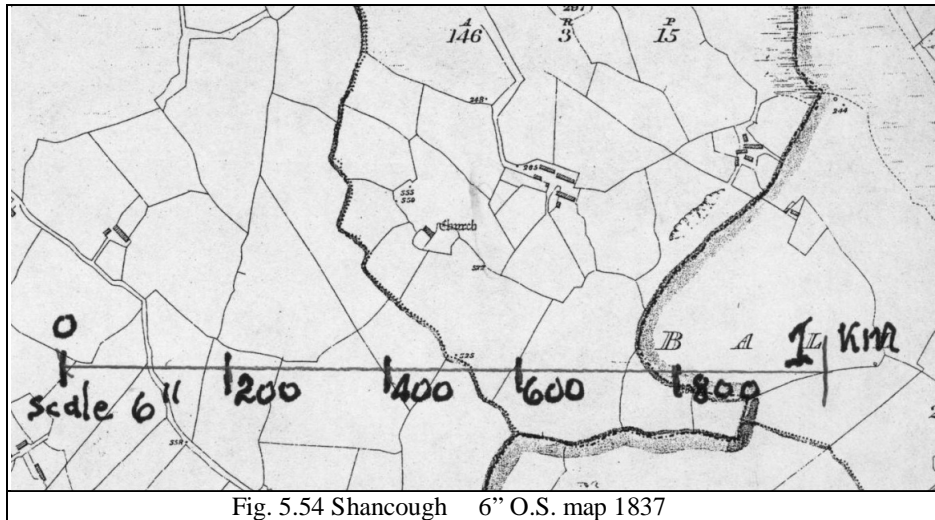


Fig. 5.54 Shancough 6'' O.S. map 1837

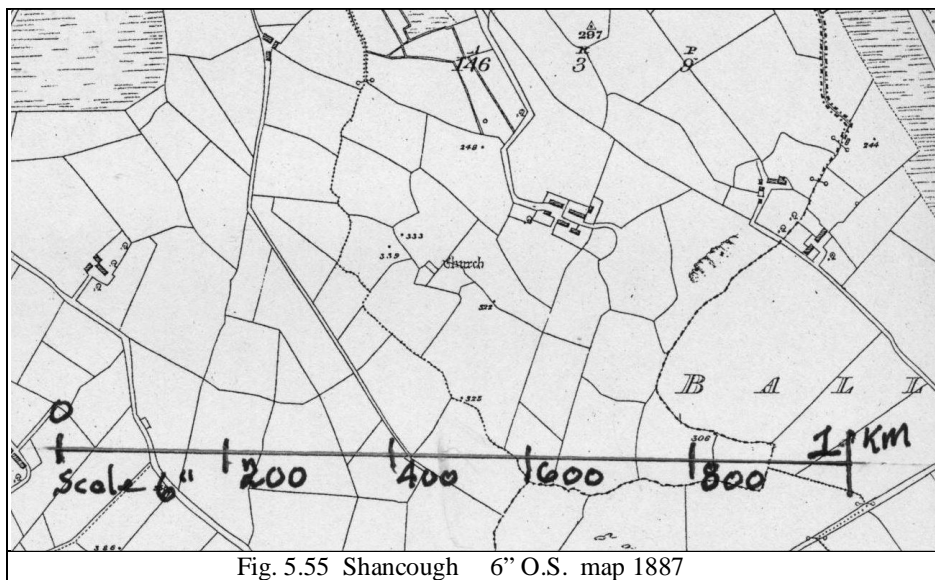


Fig. 5.55 Shancough 6'' O.S. map 1887

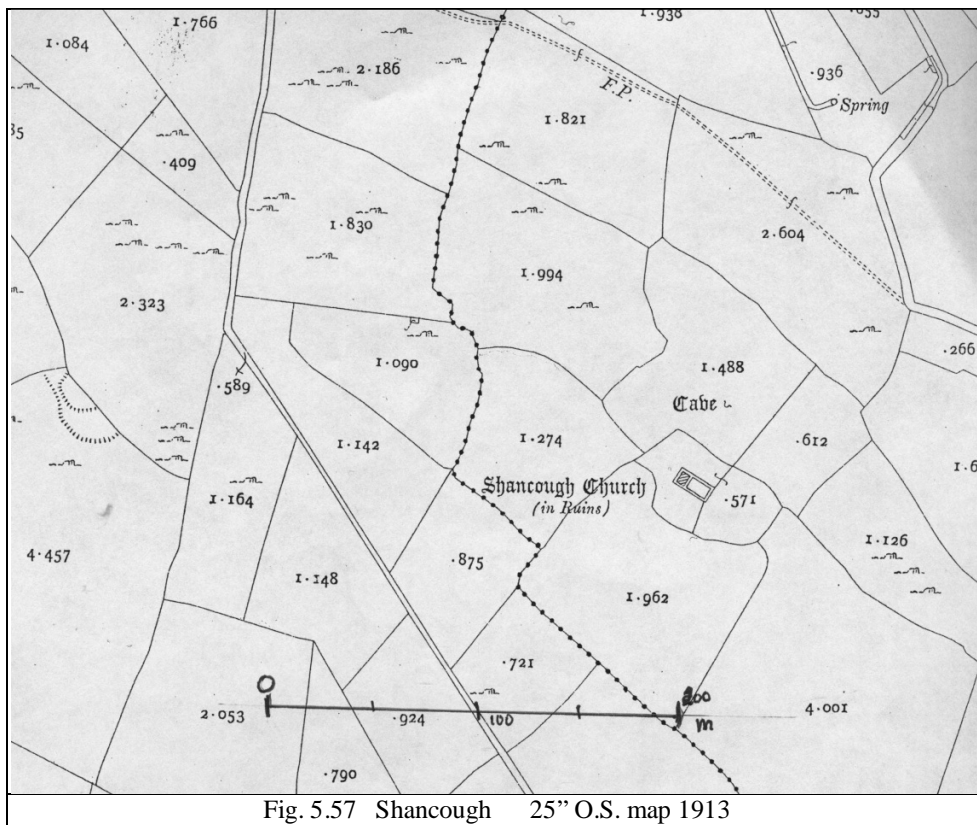
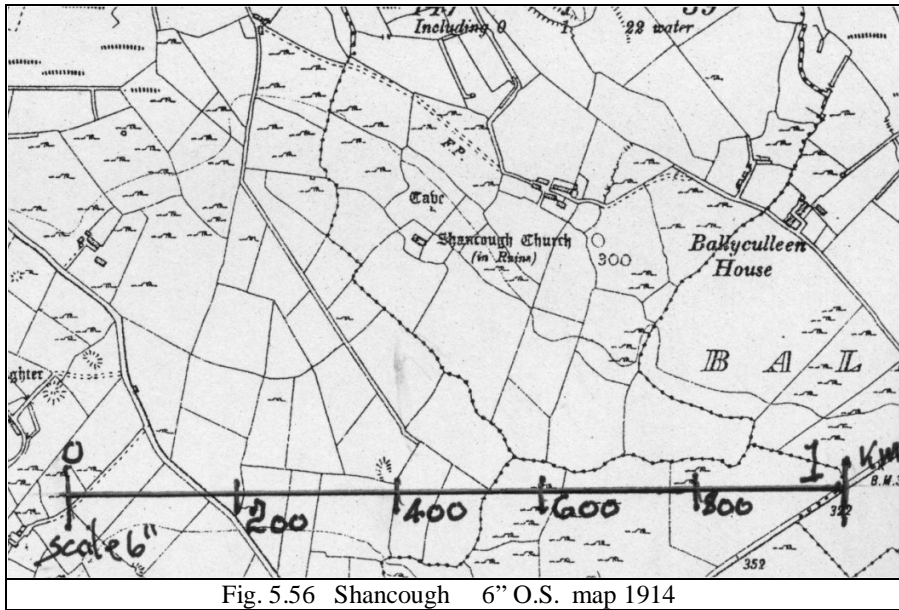




Plate 5.12 Shancough GOOGLE Earth 2011

Fieldwork

Noteworthy elements of the early medieval monastery in Shancough are:-

- the rectangular enclosure
- the curved eastern end of the enclosure
- the incursion into the south-western corner
- the indications from the O.S. maps of an outer curvilinear enclosure conjoined with the rectangular enclosures
- *vallum* sections of large stone cores of earth-covered banks to the west
- curved fence system
- oval soil marks indicating original *sanctissimus*
- the conflicting evidence suggesting intersecting *vallum* systems of at least three constructions

Visits to site: 2010, 2011.

5.16 Concluding remarks

The catalogue of features of each of the sites was a most important part of the study. The preparation incurred the acquiring of all relevant information and, implicitly, a thorough familiarity with the site and particularly with the *vallum* system. This aspect of the work could only be achieved from several relevant visits and thorough background preparation. The catalogue is a record of the current disposition of the site to be referred to in the future.

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6.1 The *Vallum* observed

Each of the sites is considered in terms of the list of Swan (1983) which he prepared according to frequency of features and is summarised in Table 6.1. Since the *vallum* system was the feature most frequent in Swan's thesis and is the central issue of this study it will be addressed for all the sites firstly after which the other features will be considered.

Ballydawley

The site has been altered on several occasions since the date of the first edition 6" O.S. map 1837. The *sanctor* and part of the *sanctissimus* of Ballydawley are clearly identifiable (Plate 6.3). A conjectural reconstruction of the site is also shown the O.S. map (Fig. 6.1).

The drystone *vallum* of *sanctor/sanctissimus* is *c.*1m in height and the enclosure is roughly oval in shape. A drystone internal *vallum* which divides the enclosure on the western side now indicates the boundary between two farm holdings. This internal *vallum* is in linear sections. A corresponding internal *vallum* on the eastern side is also extant (Plate 6.3). Beyond this, the eastern *vallum* arc of the *sanctissimus* has been removed but its former position is evident from the aerial photograph and from the O.S. maps. The former position is shown on the conjectural reconstruction (Fig. 6.1) and by a faint paler colour arc on the aerial photograph (Plate 6.3). It is possible that there was also a revetment which was removed with the *vallum* section. The formerly enclosed area is on curved raised ground including the field marked .360 and part of the field marked .436 (Fig. 6.1). The removed eastern arc in the past had enclosed the present remains of the children's graveyard with the

Sligo sites	Ballydawley	Carnyara	Carrown-temple	Church Hill	Cuppanagh	Drum-columb	Kilboglasy	Kilcummin	Kilvarnet North	Monasterredan	Shancough
Swan's list											
vallum: stone	√				√		√			√	√
earthen		√	√	√	√	√					√
burial area	<i>Ceallúnagh</i>		present	past	present	past	present	present	present	present	
placename: family or saint	Dawley	O'Hara	√			√	√	Caemon	Bearnat	√	
structural remains			inscribed slabs	√	√	√	√	√			
holy well	Dried								Dried		
bullau				√		√		√		√	
crossslab	√		√			√					
boundary nearby	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
southern		√	√	√						√	
ptron	√			√		√				√	

Table 6.1 Topographical features of early medieval monastic enclosures in Sligo (after Swan 1983)

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'Bishop's stone'. The walls between the fields marked .360 and .436, and .360 / 1.638 have been removed.

The entrance to the enclosure is on the north east corner and just north of the entrance there is the enclosure called the 'Cashel'. This enclosure has a *vallum* of drystone wall on a rocky plateau below the level of the inner enclosure and above the land to the west, north and east. The *vallum* all round is drystone (Plate 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7) *c.*1m in height and *c.*1.5m in width (Plate 6.5). There is a revetment and consequently a difference in height on the southern arc of the *sanctior vallum*. The internal height is at ground level with paling posts and wire (Plate 6.5). The outside is revetted to a height of *c.*1.5m with large stones (Plate 6.1). All the *vallum* walls have the lower courses of larger stones although in places the *vallum* has been repaired with varying workmanship (Plate 6.7).

An arc of the *sanctus vallum* in Ballydawley is still extant (Plate 6.2) and is of similar construction and dimension of drystone *vallum* with larger stones at the lower courses. This *sanctus vallum* arc extends from the north-east to the south-east at a distance of *c.*70m. The enclosed area (*sanctus*) generally slopes down to a lower level from the inner (*sanctior/sanctissimus*) enclosure to the east. The *sanctus vallum* is not complete but some of the missing parts can be traced by the present farm walls.

On the west side of the *sanctior vallum* there is an annexe of a walled widening gap extending outwards. It was not possible to photograph this enigmatical extension because of bushes and trees. The whole site had been at later times divided into smaller plots of land between large boulders and these boulders have largely been removed to the edges of both *sanctior* and *sanctus* enclosures. The site has parallels with other early medieval monasteries in Ireland especially Reask, Co. Kerry, with respect to internal divisions in the enclosure from north to south and conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* contained within a curvilinear *vallum*.

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Plate 6.1 Ballydawley revetment south face

The conjectural layout of the original monastery (Fig. 6.1) is based on the extant drystone walls and the scarp on the eastern side of the present structure. The existing walls are shown by a dotted red line and the conjectural missing parts are filled in with a continuous red line.

The aerial photograph (Plate 6.3) of the site clearly shows the above features with the exception of the *vallum* between the *sanctus/sanctissimus* on the east and the field divisions shown on the 6" O.S. maps 1887 and 1913 and the 25" O.S. map 1912.

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As a monument of such importance, it is relatively unknown. Swan (1983, Plate 9) included an aerial photograph labelled as Killeran graveyard. That aerial photograph is not included here because of the poor quality of reproduction. The site has been noted in a local journal (O'Brien 2006/7, 18–22). Other than that no attention has been paid to this important early medieval monastery.

It is clear that Ballydawley originally had a conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* enclosure within a concentric *sanctus* enclosure. All the *valli* are of drystone structure. Reask, Co. Kerry, is on a smaller scale and also has a conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* enclosure, however there is no visible evidence of a *sanctus vallum* in Reask.

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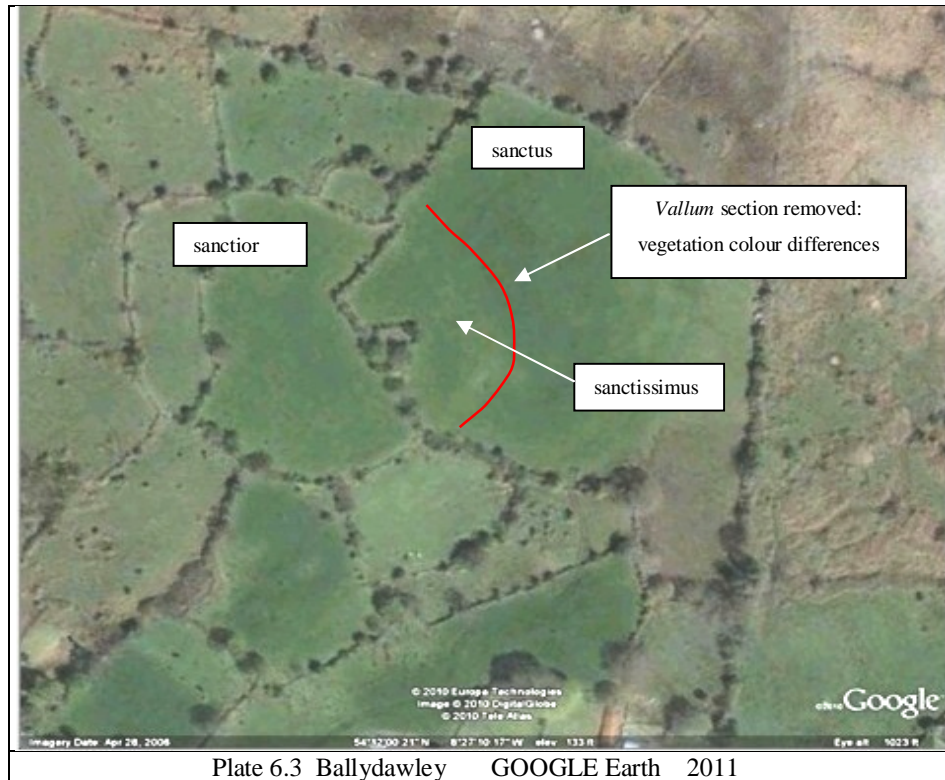


Plate 6.4 Ballydawley south *sanctor* vallum revetment outer face



Plate 6.5 Ballydawley south *sanctor* vallum top of revetment

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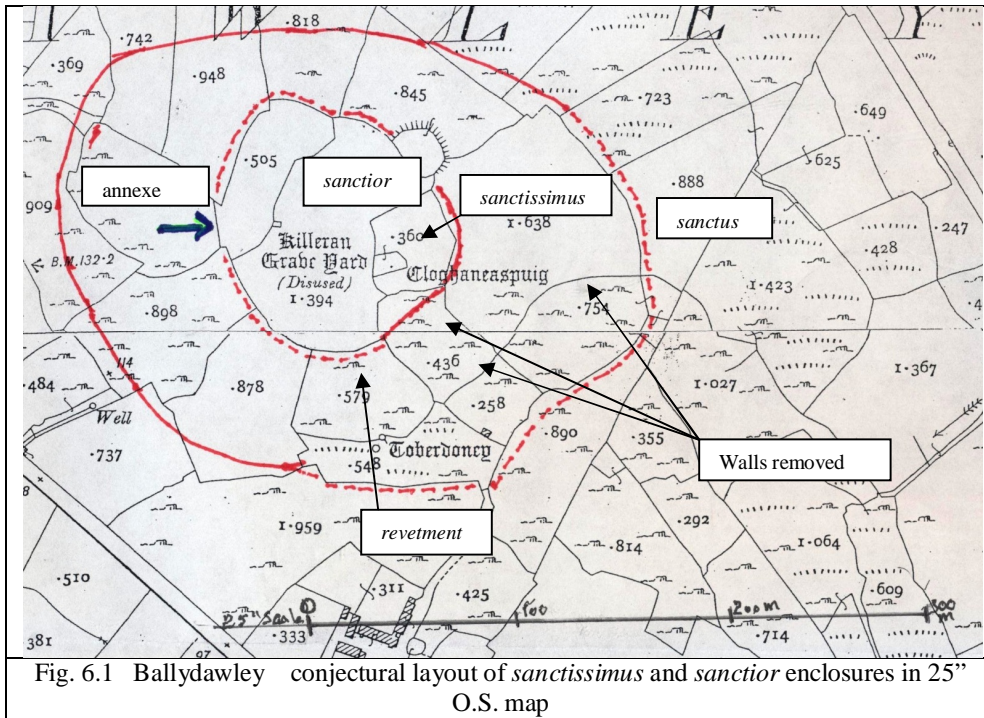
Plate 6.6 Ballydawley east sector scarp from where *sanctissimus vallum* has been removed



Plate 6.7 Ballydawley internal east face *sanctior vallum*



Plate 6.8 Ballydawley rocks moved from the interior of *sanctior*



Carnyara

In this site the field walls of the *sanctissimus* and *sanctor* are incomplete. Field fences that did coincide with the *vallum* system have been removed leaving some low banks. The banks are sod-covered and the occasional large rounded stones protrude from where the sod has eroded. The banks of c.1m. in height form two enclosed rectangles with rounded corners. The monument is a roughly rectangular enclosure c. 20m east-west by c. 15m north-south and consists of a discontinuous bank c. 0.5m in both height and width, composed of grass and moss over an occasional exposed large stone. Inside that area there is a bank which is roughly rectangular of similar dimensions but fragmented (Plate 6.9). To the west c. 2m distant there is a similar bank lying north-south.

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Plate 6.9 Carnyara rectangular enclosure

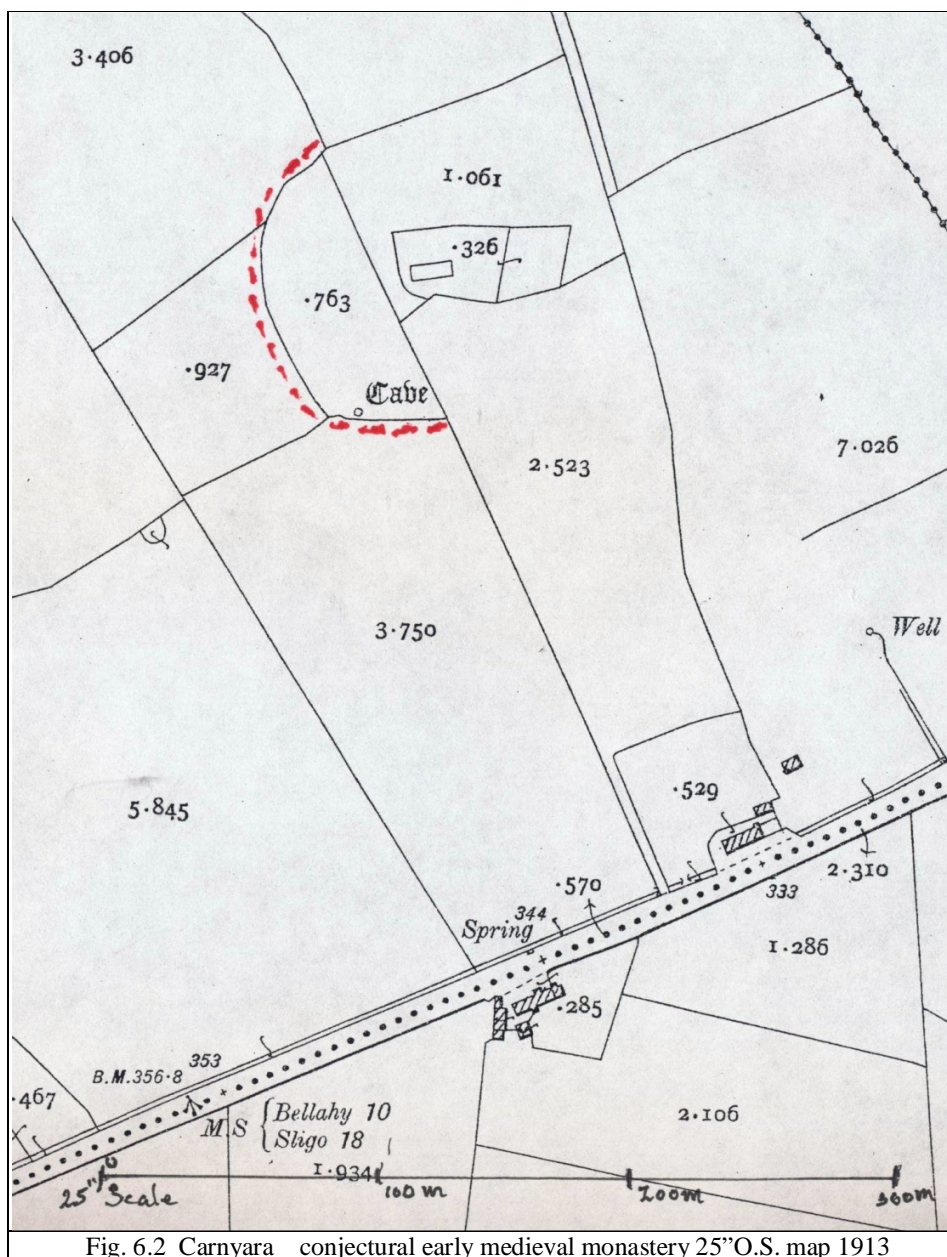
Beyond that lies a fragmented semicircular bank (Plates 6.10, Fig. 6.2).



Plate 6.10 Carnyara semi circle *sanctissimus vallum* at west

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It would appear that the semicircular arc is the only early medieval remnant. It is the only one of these banks that is curvilinear. It lies at a distance of c. 20m from and not enclosing the west end. It is a segment of an arc c. 0.5m high with a diameter of c. 65m.



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The rectangular structures have a medieval appearance and the *southern* is not visible having been filled in.

The 25" O.S. map of 1913 (Fig. 6.2) shows the site of the inner enclosures with the footprint of the church and graveyard not labelled. Also depicted is the curved western boundary of the enclosure.

There is very little surviving on this site. The segment of a curved bank appears to be all that is visible of the early medieval monastery and as such is important.

Carrowntemple

In Carrowntemple the *sanctissimus* lies in the rectangular, raised, terraced and revetted north-western area of the early medieval monastery where the ivy-covered medieval remains now stand (Plate 6.11).

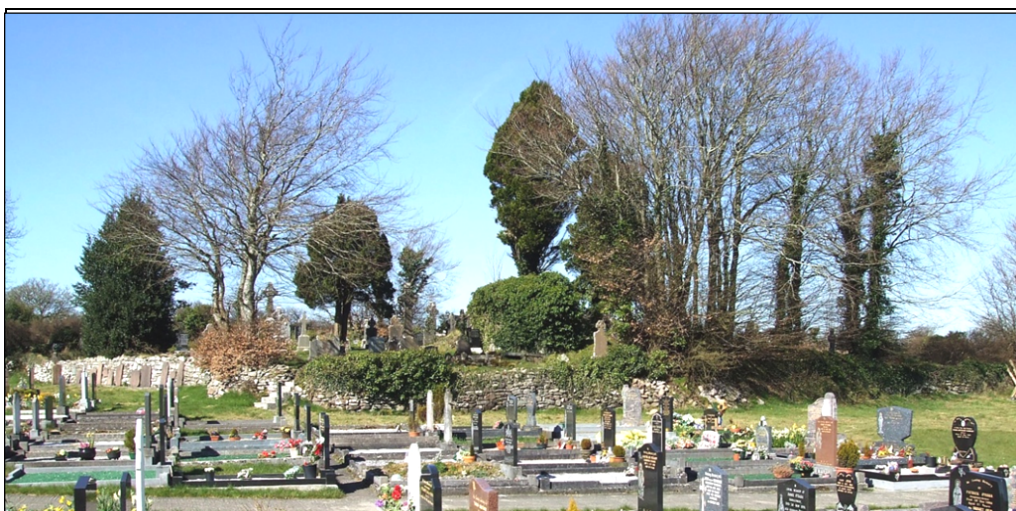


Plate 6.11 Carrowntemple north-west sector, terrace of *sanctissimus vallum*, stone faced revetment, with the inscribed slabs replicas amid the ivy-covered medieval ruins.

Segments of the former *sanctissimus vallum* around the enclosure are parts of a substantial earthen rampart which is now overgrown with thorn and bramble and part of the field system outside the graveyard to the west and north. There does not appear to be any ditch as shown in Plate 6.12. Recent farming

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activities removed some of the *vallum* on the north. The cross section that was revealed suggests a sod-covered structure of dimensions *c.* 2m in height and *c.* 2m in width with a core composed of water worn stones of various sizes mixed with earth and gravel (Plate 6.13). Conjecturally the *sanctissimus vallum* encloses *c.* 0.5h and a total of *c.* 9h is included in the *sanctissimus* and *sanctor* enclosure. To the south of the graveyard beyond the road the *vallum* enclosing the *sanctor* enclosure appears now as two parallel drystone walls (Plate 6.14, 6.15). These are now somewhat collapsed and are of negligible size and dimensions (*c.* 0.8m H and 0.5m W).



Plate 6.12 Carrowntemple *sanctissimus vallum* facing north-west

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Plate 6.13 Carrowntemple cut-away section of *sanctissimus vallum* north of site facing east



Plate 6.14 Carrowntemple *sanctior vallum* on the south farm road

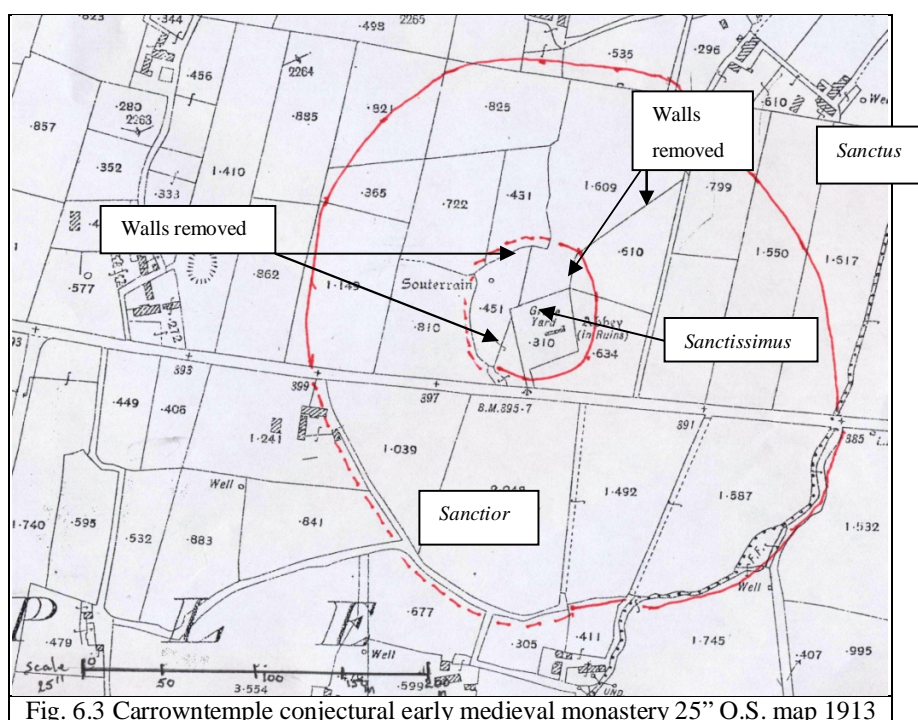


Plate 6.15 Carrowntemple *sanctior vallum* farm road

This almost semicircular *vallum* (*sanctior*) is now a narrow overgrown laneway to a farmyard. The townland boundary continues from the farmyard and joins the stream to continue to the north. Other field boundary arcs occur further from the site centre particularly to the north, where several curved field boundaries indicate a possible third enclosure (*sanctus*).

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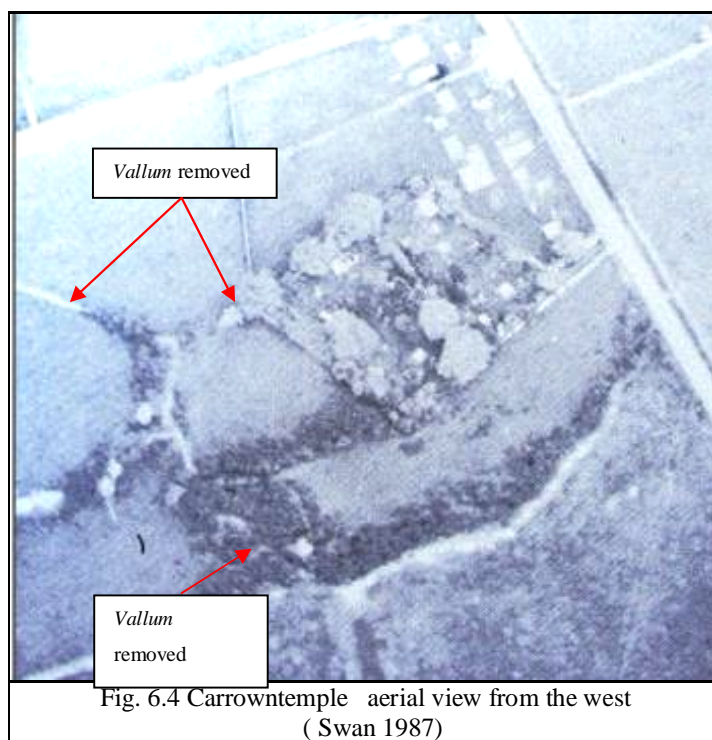
There are no indications of any road on the O.S. 1837 map. There was however a village to the west and north-west of the site and another cluster of buildings including a corn mill to the south-east. This *sanctor vallum* road or 'borheen' could very well have provided access between both. It is of interest to note that local tradition tells of funerals of parishioners from Gurteen town before the present road was built in the mid-19th century. Then the coffin was borne on shoulders and the cortege came along the esker on the north-east of the graveyard. Along the way there were recognised stops with stone platforms for resting the coffin while the cortege paused (Duffy family - land owners-*pers.comm.*). It is possible that the building material for the *vallum* was extracted from that esker. The *sanctor* encloses about c. 9h inclusive and is indicated by the river and edge of bog and slight bank c.1m in height and width.



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There have been some agricultural interventions in comparatively recent years. In Fig. 6.4; Fig. 6.5 the aerial photographs published by Swan in 1997 and 2002 show where parts of the *sanctissimus vallum* system had been intact. However the GOOGLE Earth 2010 (Plate 6.16) shows where they have been removed.

On the conjectural layout (Fig. 6.3) is shown the actual situation up to recently by the red dotted line and reconstruction by the red solid line. On the south-west the *sanctor vallum* (the farm road) is indicated by a dotted red line. The townland boundary completes that semi-circle on the south of the road and is shown by a solid red line. On the north side of the road the field system is modern with linear fences. Nevertheless a reasonable corresponding reflection of the south sector is drawn to suggest a conjectural layout of the *sanctor* area.



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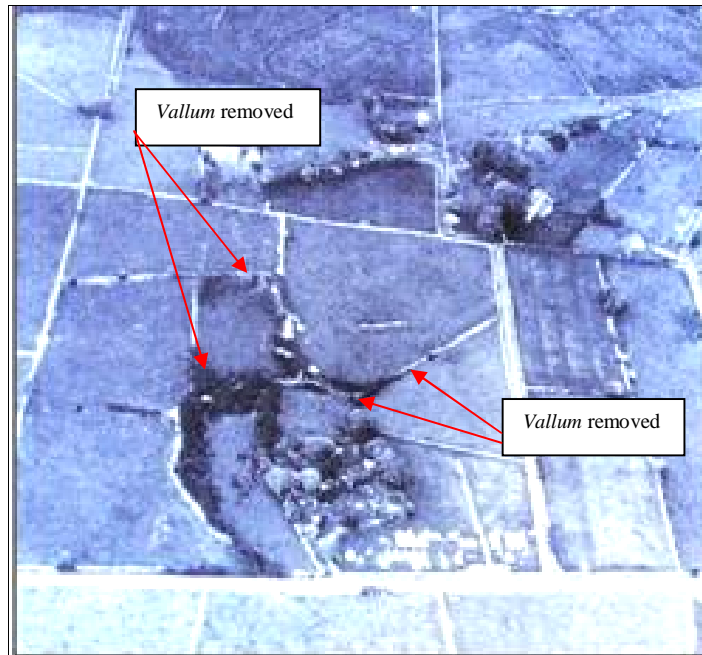


Fig. 6.5 Carrowntemple aerial view from the south (Swan 2002)



Plate 6.16 Carrowntemple GOOGLE Earth map February 2011

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Conjectural reconstruction suggests a concentric *vallum* system. The *sanctissimus* enclosure has been replaced by medieval linear *valli*. The semicircular *sanctior vallum* is evident but the *sanctus vallum* is not evident. There has been a lot of interference with the *sanctior/sanctissimus vallum* seen on the ground (Plate 6.13) and from the aerial photographs (Fig.6.4, 6.5, Plate 6.16).

Church Hill



Plate 6.17 Church Hill National Monuments archives from north-east

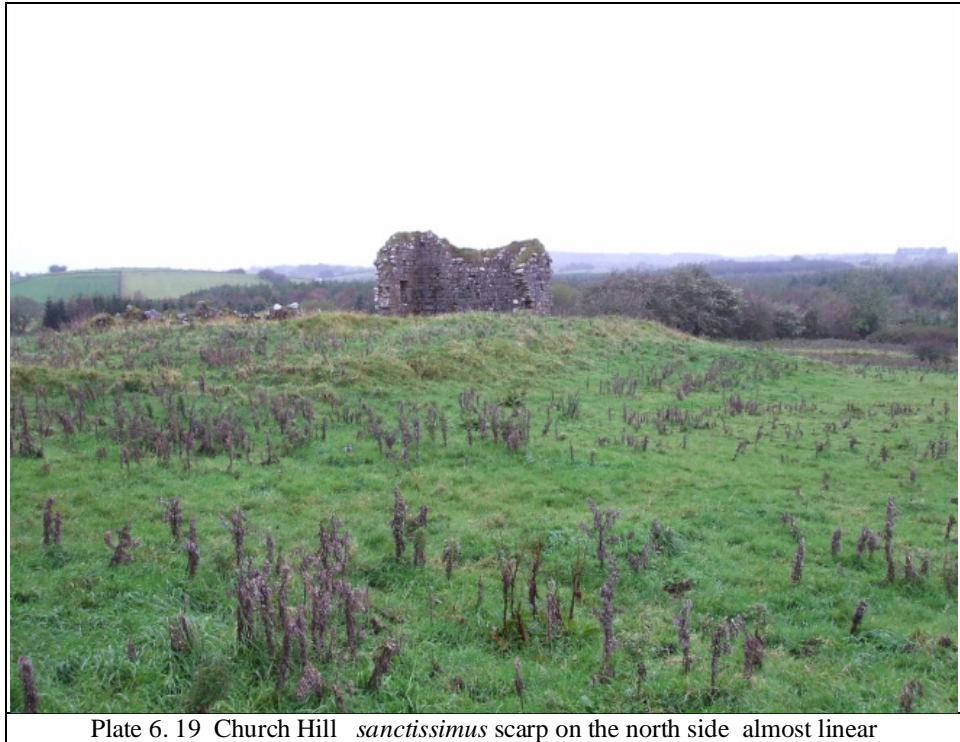
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Plate 6.18 Church Hill from the west

At Church Hill the enclosed pear shaped (*sanctissimus*) area of *c.* 0.1h lies within a scarp on the north and west side *c.*15mL and *c.* 1.5 mH (Plates 6.17, 6.18, 6.19). The scarp fades away before meeting a dry bank of *c.*1mH with a slight ditch on its eastern (outer side) edge on the east of the enclosure (Plate 6.20). The bank *c.*1mH continues on the south side of the ruins with a stone faced linear ditch developing on the outside (*c.*1m H and W) (Plate 6.21). This bank develops into a steep scarp without stone facing around the west face of the ruins from where it continues as the scarp along the north side (Plate 6.18).

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The outline of the *sanctissimus* is very well defined by the platform. The linear stone faced ditch and bank on the south side (Plate 6.21) cuts through the curve of *vallum* and this, although not discernable on the ground, is quite clear from the aerial photograph. The conjectural layout of the *sanctissimus vallum* is reasonably certain (Fig. 6.6) since it coincides with the scarp. The limit of the *sanctus* or *sanctior valli* cannot be traced visibly. The natural boundary of the swamp and river from the south-east to the north-west to the lake in the north is probably the *vallum*. The site was a bog island and was surrounded swamps, river and lake except for an arc on the south side.

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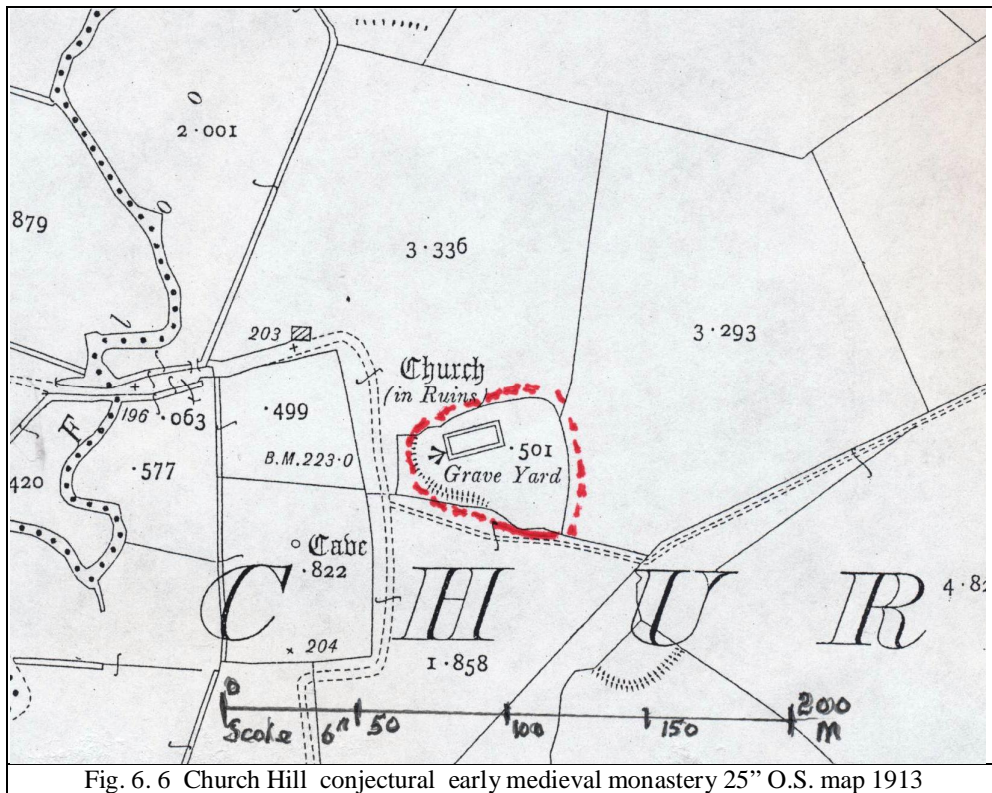


Plate 6.20 Church Hill eastern arc *sanctissimus*



Plate 6.21 Church Hill linear bank and ditch cuts through the *vallum*

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The north, east and south (cut by a linear modern stone faced bank and ditch) all indicate early medieval ecclesiastical site on what has been described as a bog-island (Egan *et.al.* 2005). Presumably the *sanctus vallum* was defined by the edge of the river, marsh and lake.

Cuppanagh

In Cuppanagh the curving arc of the *vallum* to the east and south-east enclosing the *sanctior* area appears to have been a slight drystone structure of dimensions *c.* 1mH by *c.* 1mW (Plate 6.22, 6.24). The *vallum* is at present covered with moss, brambles and hawthorn and is much collapsed (Plate 6.24).

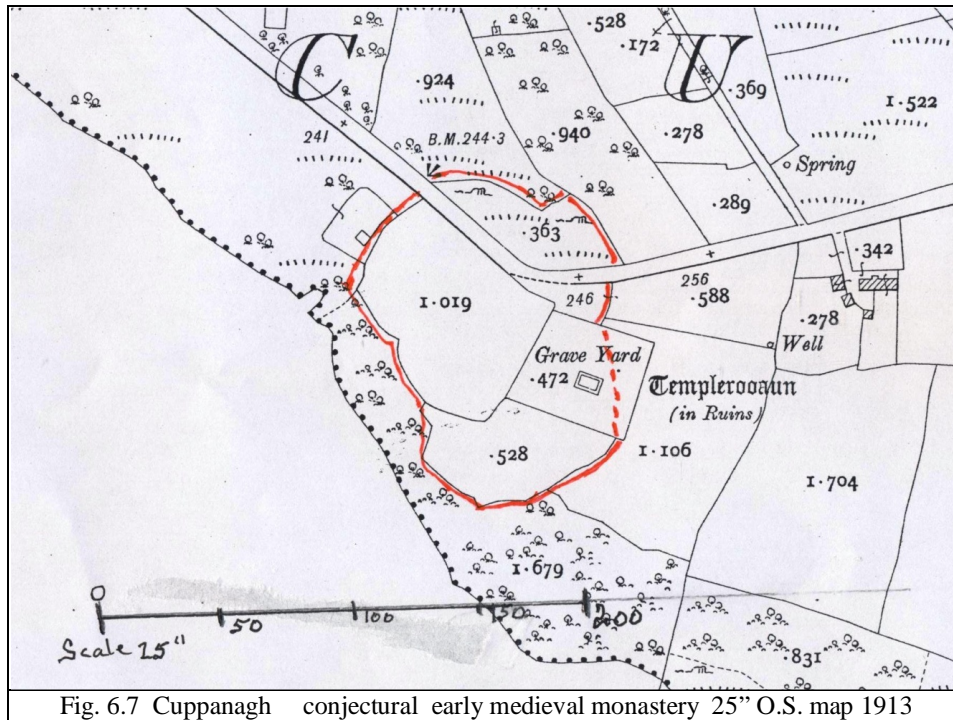


Plate 6.22 Cuppanagh eastern arc of *vallum*

In places some large stones or rocks have been placed along the internal base of the *vallum* as if these stones had been moved from the central area to the field headlands in a manner similar to developments in Ballydawley but at an earlier time. The removed stones in Cuppanagh are smaller and more moss-covered. Between the *vallum* and the lake shore the ground is very steep, rough, overgrown and impenetrable. The curved arc of the *sanctior vallum* south of the road is clearly defined (Fig. 6.7, Plate 6.23) The original *sanctissimus* area has been replaced by later rectangular developments. Recent housing developments on the north side of the road have obliterated the arced

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boundary or field walls on that side. The graveyard has been extended recently to the east and cuts through the arc of the fences shown on the O.S. maps.



The original *sanctissimus vallum* and enclosure have been replaced by medieval developments.

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Plate 6.23 Cuppanagh GOOGLE Earth November 2010



Plate 6.24 Cuppanagh *sanctor vallum* on the south

Drumcolumb

The ruins at Drumcolumb are of a later parish church, which was in use up to the 19th century (Egan *et al.*, 2005, 408-9), lie within a rectangular enclosure of bank, with irregularly placed hawthorns on the north side, with several disjointed ditches and drains, at a distance of c.15m on the east and south (Plate 6.25).

Only a small section of the original *sanctissimus* enclosure can be discerned at the west and south sector. This is shown in red dotted line (Fig. 6.8). The system of banks and ditches east and south-east is quite complicated (Plate 6.28). Quite a large part of the *sanctor vallum* can be identified all around the site by the line of the bank and ditch formation (Plate 6.27). This is also shown in a red dotted line.

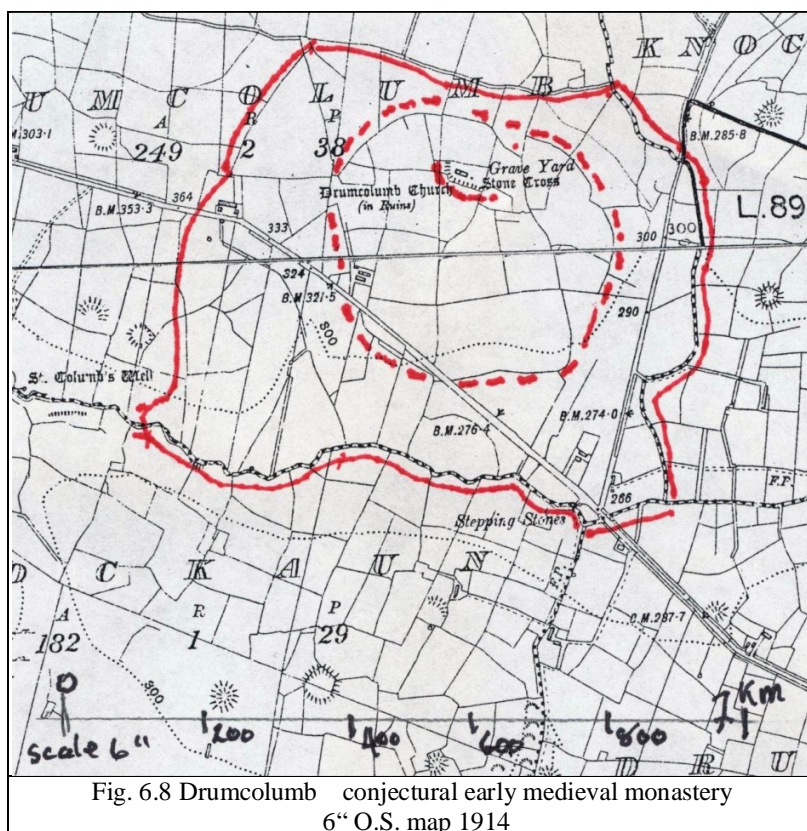


Fig. 6.8 Drumcolumb conjectural early medieval monastery
6" O.S. map 1914

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Some of the *sanctus vallum* can also be identified along the south and east on the present townland boundaries and is shown by a red continuous line (Fig. 6.8).

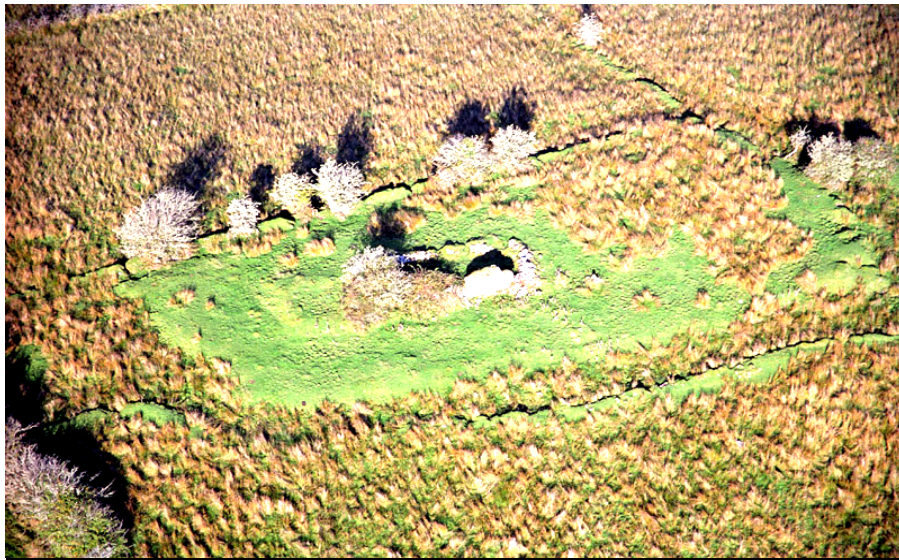


Plate 6.25 Drumcolumb National Monument archives



Plate 6.26 Drumcolumb GOOGLE Earth 2011 from the south-east

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Plate 6.27 Drumcolumb *sanctior vallum* bank and internal ditch on the north side facing east



Plate 6.28 Drumcolumb ditch complex south-east corner

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Medieval developments have obliterated most of the *sanctissimus vallum* and enclosure. The encircling field system indicate the *sanctior vallum* and the *sanctus vallum* is suggested by unevenly enclosing hedges.

Kilboglashy

In Kilboglashy the conjectural *sanctissimus* enclosure lies within the terraced area on the north-west of the site where the ruins of the Romanesque church with graves now lie (Fig. 6.9, Plate 6.29).



Plate 6.29 Kilboglashy ivy-covered ruins on north-west terrace (upper left) with rough ground *sanctior* on the east

This area now has some uncertain levels of terracing and is much overgrown but burials continue to this day. The outer *vallum* system, *sanctus* and *sanctior*, lay on what is now cleared pasture to the south of the road and east of the present graveyard which includes rough ground east of the graveyard, north of the road and bordering the river (Plate 6.30). The field boundaries shown on 25" O.S. map and referred to by Keeley (1998, Figure 3), have all been removed with the exception of the boundary around Riverview Cottage in the trees. One D-shaped enclosure is suggested by M. Timoney (*ibid.*, 4).

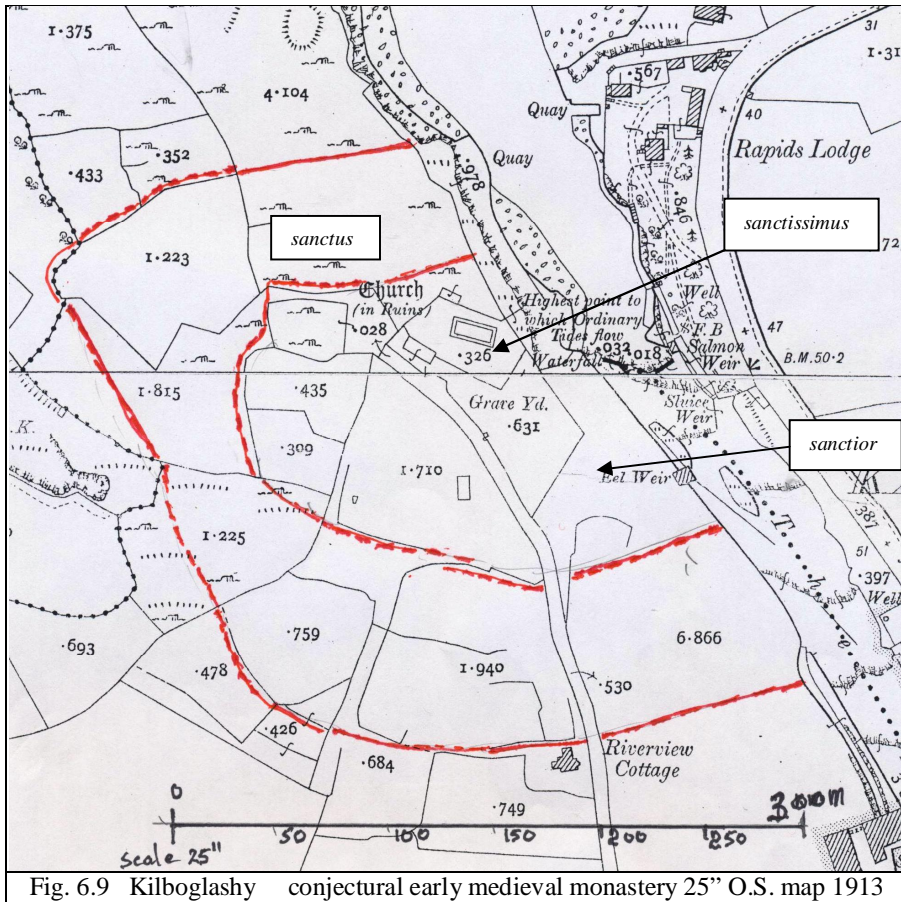
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Plate 6.30 Kilboglashy developed field south of site and across the road

Conjectural reconstruction of the *vallum* system to the south and west of the road based on the 25" O.S. map 1912 would suggest a *tri-vallum* concentric D-shaped foundation (Fig. 6.9) with the river with its steep banks forming the straight sided *vallum* system. There appears to have been a definable *sanctus vallum*.

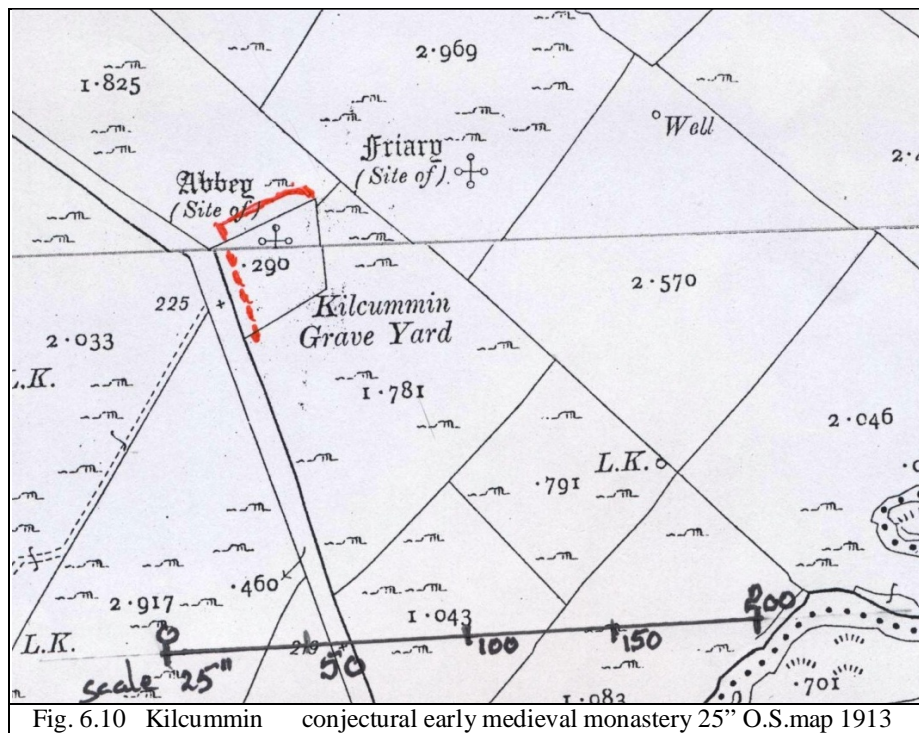
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Kilcummin



This is a small graveyard not fully square of *c.*40m with remnants of rectangular church foundations. There is a suggestion of a corresponding former building on the scarp outside and along the north wall (Plate 6.31). Otherwise there is nothing visible to suggest an early medieval monastic site.



Kilvarnet North

Kilvarnet North graveyard, on the eastern end of a north-south ridge, was extended in the mid-20th century by enclosing land on the north side. This extension encroached on ground that included a curved footpath shown on the O.S. 25" map (Fig. 6.11). It would appear that the removed wall lay along a scarp at a distance of *c.* 20m from the north wall of the church ruins (Plate 6.32). There appears to be a corresponding steep slope along the south side of the ruins (Plate 6.33).

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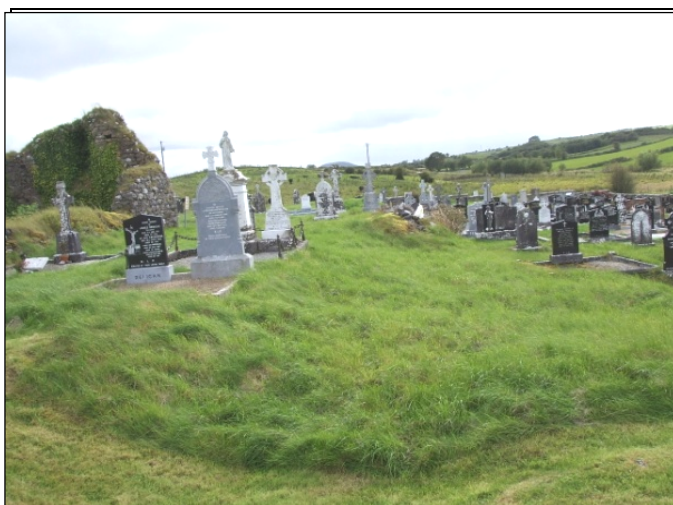


Plate 6.32 Kilvarnet North scarp along north side of ruins

The land to the east of the present churchyard wall forms a two sided curve to a distance of *c.* 75m enclosed by drains and wetlands at a distance of *c.* 20 m from the east wall of the church ruins (Fig. 6.10, Plate 6.34, 6.35).

There are barely perceptible curvilinear banks or mounds along the curve and also linear banks of similar dimensions running east down the slope which could be former cultivation ridges. The edge of the wetland to the north is the townland boundary (Plates 6.34, 6.35).

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Plate 6.33 Kilvarnet North scarp along south side of ruins

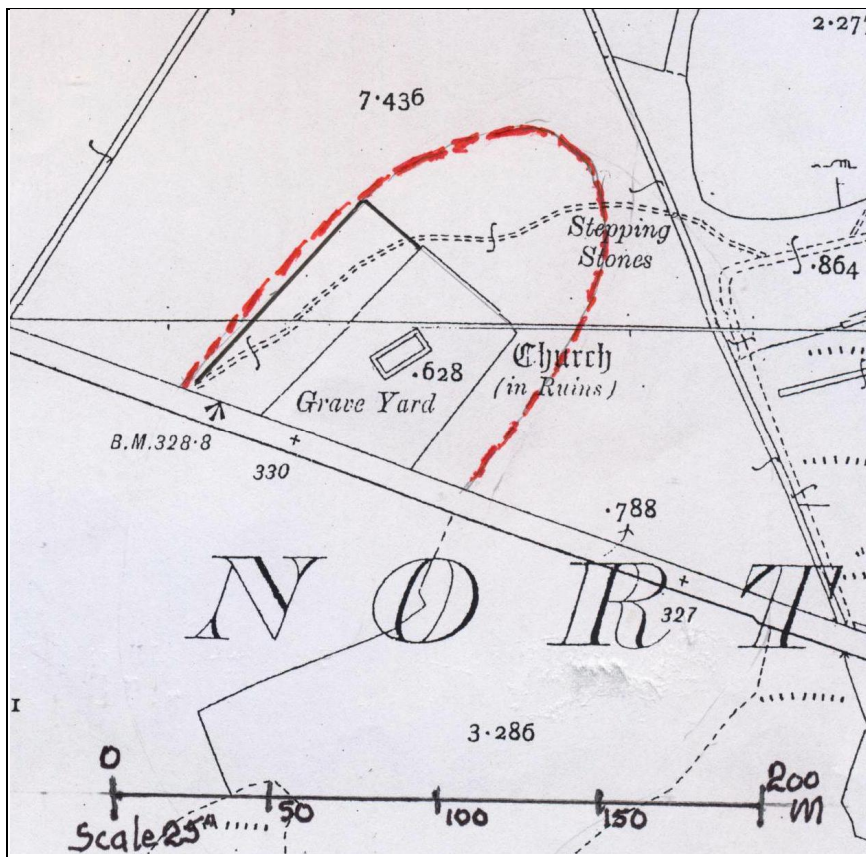


Fig. 6.11 Kilvarnet North conjectural early medieval monastery 25" O.S. map 1913

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Plate 6.34 Kilvarnet North sloping land with banks and ridges east of the graveyard

Since the land across the road on the west side of the graveyard has been greatly disturbed by recent developments, the only visible guide to the conjectural layout of the monastery is what lies to the east of the graveyard (Plate 6.34, 6.35, Fig. 6.11).



Plate 6.35 Kilvarnet North east end of enclosure

There is very little visible on this site to confirm early medieval monastic.

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Monasterredan

Monasterredan has at present a reconstructed *vallum* (*sanctissimus*) of modern stone built on an earthen or sod base which is visible under the wall in two sectors. This *vallum* is now curvilinear and almost circular in plan although in the earlier maps was depicted as polygonal. The name on some of the O.S. maps is given as *Cashelnamanaistreach* (stone wall boundary of the monastery) which strongly suggests an early drystone enclosure. The southern arc of the *vallum* is the townland boundary.

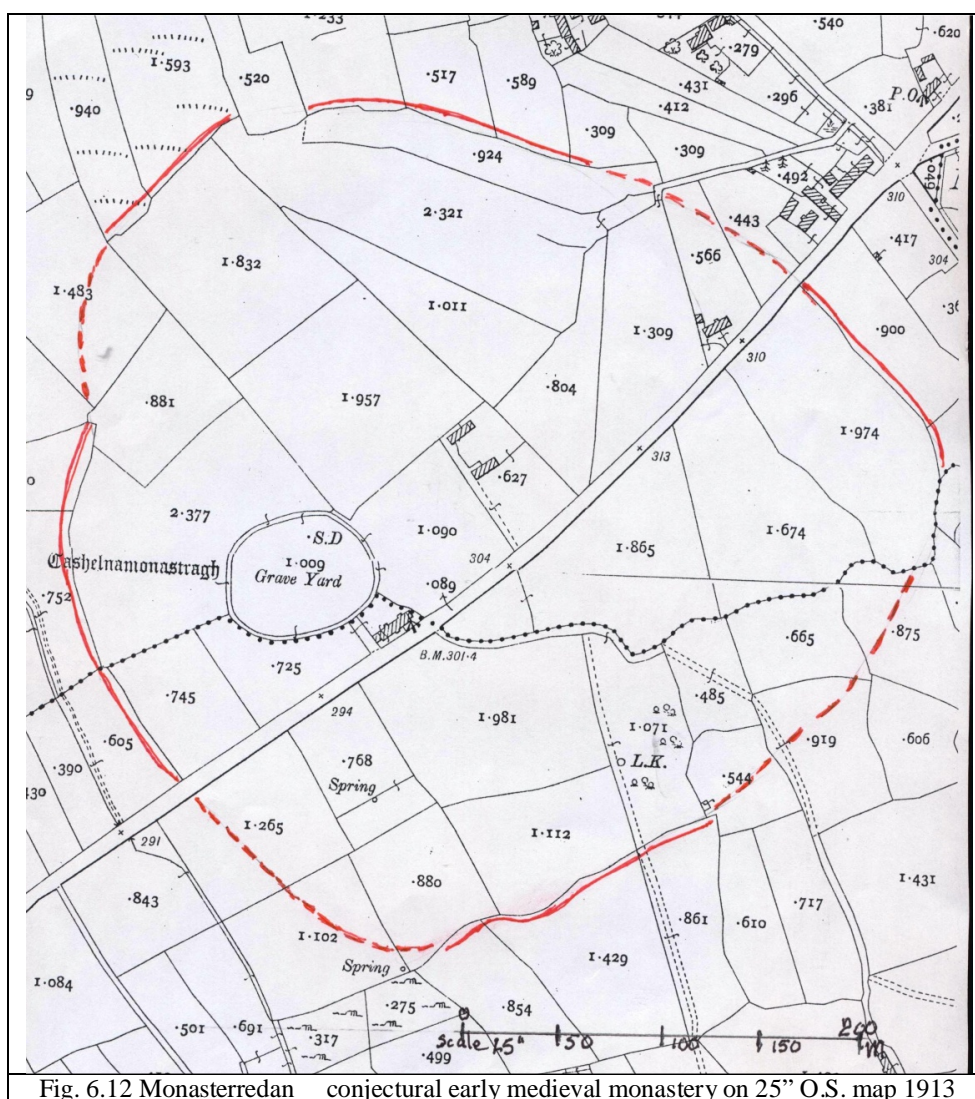
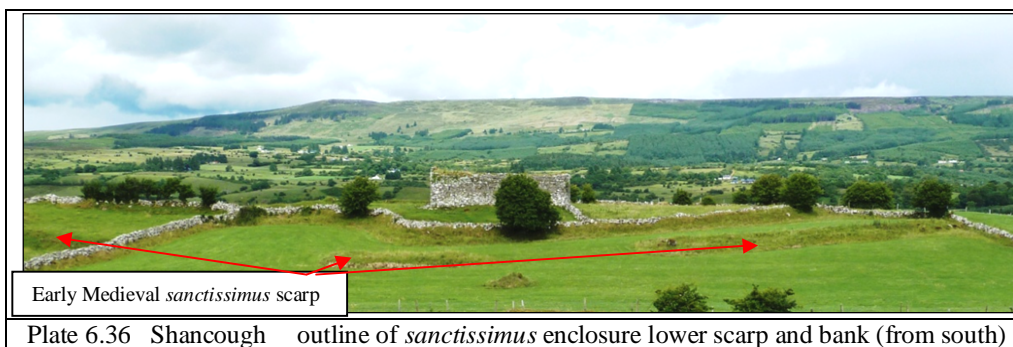


Fig. 6.12 Monasterredan conjectural early medieval monastery on 25" O.S. map 1913

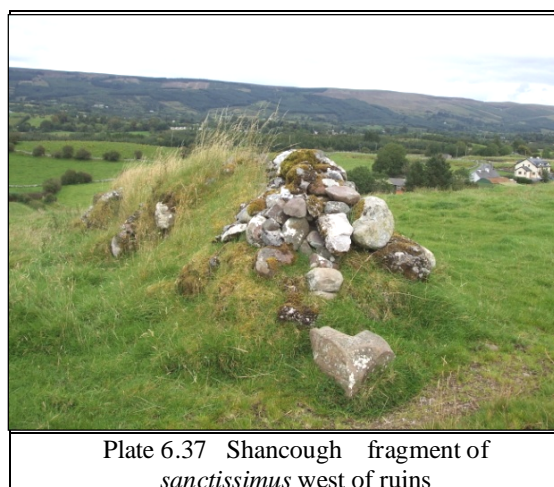
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It would appear that the *sanctior/sanctissimus* elements lay within the present drystone *vallum*. There is a curved field system around the site, particularly on the north-west, but there is also a fragment on the south of the site which suggests a *sanctus* enclosure. This has been indicated by a continuous red line (Fig. 6.12). The intervening parts are filled in by a dotted red line (Fig. 6.12). The conjectural reconstruction straddles the townland boundary which lies the south of the site and coincides with the *vallum*.

Shancough



In Shancough to the west of the site there are sections of walls and a revetment of very large stones arranged roughly in an inverted V-shape and covered with



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sod material. These form current field boundaries which curve down hill to the south and east (Plate 6.37, 6.38). This has been breached to form a field gap (Plate 6.37). To the south of the ruins these are prominent linear scarps that also suggest a *vallum* (Plate 6.36).



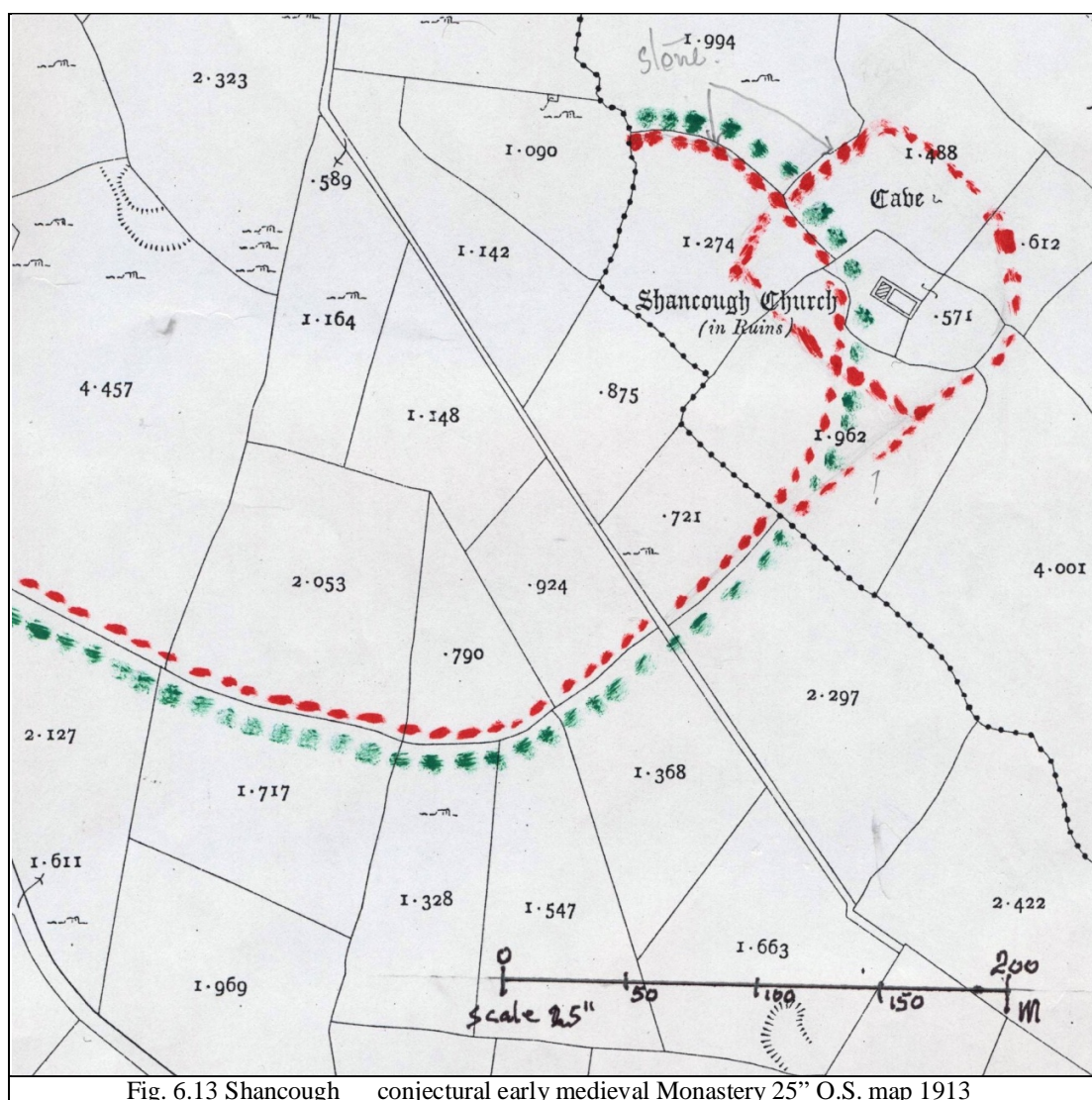
Plate 6.38 Shancough section of *sanctissimus* west of ruins



Plate 6.39 Shancough GOOGLE Earth 2011 from the south-east

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It appears that there was an oval shaped enclosure which includes the present site (Plate 6.39). The present medieval enclosure has a rounded east end and an in-curved south-west corner.



The soil marks on the aerial photograph indicate an oval shaped early medieval *vallum* (Plate 6.39). The curvature of the field system suggests there were three enclosures in successive developments on this site. The more recent enclosure is the present medieval construction which is not coloured. The

south-west corner respected the large curvilinear enclosure and did not cut into the south-west which is shown by the double dotted red and green curve. (Fig 6.13). It also suggests that the earliest enclosure was that which is revealed by the aerial photograph and shown by the red dotted line. All indications are of an original concentric *vallum* system of an early medieval monastery.

6.2 Observations on the vallum system in Co. Sligo

Norman and St. Joseph (1969) through their pioneering work on aerial photography, showed the possibilities of identification of the smaller early medieval monasteries whose features were not observable at ground level but were discernable from a height. This approach was adopted by Swan who combined both aerial photography and Ordnance Survey map work which led to his particular method of identification of early medieval monastic sites on the ground. Swan (1983, 274) identified 12 features that are consistently associated with early medieval monastic sites in Ireland. Hamlin (1992, 138-9) also considered the problem and having referred to the importance of annals and hagiography commented that identification of sites on the ground was largely a matter for archaeology. Rynne (2005, 88) added four other features to Swan's list which are indicative of early medieval monastic sites i.e. the high cross, sundial, round tower and stone cell. None of the Rynne additions apply to the Sligo sites in this study. All but two of Swan's features, namely founder's tomb and pillar stone, are in evidence in these sites and these are shown in Table 6.1. There are also other features emerging from observations of the Co. Sligo sites. These have not been considered by Swan or Rynne. These extra features are shown in Table 6.2. At present the structural remains of buildings on the Sligo sites are later than the early medieval period. There are no traces of a founder's tomb, pillar stone, high cross, sundial, round tower, or stone cell in any of the sites studied in south Co. Sligo.

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When enumerating features to identify early medieval monastic sites, Swan headed the list with ‘evidence of *vallum*’ of the ‘curvilinear enclosures’ and also the ‘various forms’ (Swan 1983, 269) but not all of the features appear on any one site. These are presented in Table 5.1. Neither the ‘pillar stone’ nor ‘founder’s tomb’ are evident in any of the sites and so are omitted from Table 6.1. Swan referred to ‘lines of field fences’ and ‘soil mark or vegetation pattern’ (ibid., 273). Both fence lines and vegetation marks have been used in this study of the Sligo sites.

Interpretation of the early medieval monastic site must include also a consideration of the *tri-vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*. Swan did not refer to this. The *sanctus* was important for the maintenance and self-sufficiency of the monastery and the *vallum* was not as important spiritually or physically as the *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*. The *sanctus vallum* is not much in evidence and quite often is absent. The *sanctissimus*, on the other hand, was the most important area and consequently the focus of attention when medieval developments took place. In the medieval developments the curvilinear *vallum* was replaced by a rectangular one and in many sites only fragments remained of the original curvilinear *sanctissimus*. The rectangular enclosure now marks the position of the former *sanctissimus*.

The main indication of an early medieval monastery is a curvilinear pattern of field boundaries and these have been observed in Ballydawley, Carnyara, Carrowntemple, Church Hill, Cuppanagh, Drumcolumb, Monasterredan, Shancough. Discernable distinctions of the *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* are not always clearly visible. There is no evidence of curvilinear system in Kilcummin and very little in Kilvarnet North (Table 6.1).

The following forms of *vallum* have been observed :-

- drystone in Ballydawley, Carrowntemple (*sanctior*)

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- stone and rubble covered by earth in Carrowntemple and Shancough
- internal ditch with bank and thorn, Church Hill and Drumcolumb
- low stone wall with scrub, Cuppanagh
- scarp with ditch, Church Hill
- simple curving fragment of low bank, Carnyara
- the field system has been removed in recent times in Kilboglasy but scrutiny of O.S. maps strongly suggest D-shaped *vallum* system of drystone
- some terracing with revetment is evident in Ballydawley, Carrowntemple and Kilboglasy

In Ballydawley there are substantial parts of a conjoined *sanctor/sanctissimus* system still in existence. There is no visible evidence of medieval developments even though there are references to Killeran Graveyard in the O.S. maps. The eastern arc of the *sanctissimus vallum* has been removed but the scarp is visible on the ground. The former position is depicted on the O.S. maps and the soil/vegetation marks are evident in the aerial view. In Carnyara, the rectangular enclosure was built but left a segment of arc almost enclosing but a distance apart from the enclosure. This was part of the *sanctissimus vallum* and is now a shallow bank. In Carrowntemple the re-development left substantial parts of the *sanctissimus vallum* to the west and north although these have been interfered with in recent times. In Cuppanagh the present graveyard is positioned where the *sanctissimus* was. A fence line of the curvilinear *sanctus/sanctor vallum* remains.

In Drumcolumb the medieval developments included a fragment of the original *sanctissimus vallum* which is now evident in the south-west corner. In Kilboglasy there are no traces of the *sanctissimus vallum*. Presumably it lay

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beneath the Romanesque church now in ruins. There are no traces of the *sanctissimus vallum* in Kilcummin. Arguably there are traces of the *sanctissimus vallum* outside the east wall of the graveyard in Kilvarnet North. In Shancough a section of the *sanctissimus* remains as a farm wall to the west and some sections of scarps are evident along the south of the medieval enclosure. At Church Hill the site was not changed when the later (Romanesque) church was built on the existing platform. The scarp and ditch is visible in the south-west, west and north sides of the platform. The east side has a bank with thorn.

Identification of sections of the *sanctissimus vallum* parts are reasonably clear in Ballydawley, Carnyara, Carrowntemple, Church Hill, Drumcolumb and Monasterredan. Because of the destruction of the *sanctissimus*, the *sanctior* and *sanctus* fragments are important in identification at Cuppanagh, Drumcolumb, Kilboglasy where there is cartographic evidence only. There is also evidence of the concentric arrangement of a *vallum* system (Carrowntemple, Church Hill, Drumcolumb, Kilboglasy and Shancough) and of conjoined (Ballydawley).

vallum fabric

The fabric of the *vallum* varies from the substantial to the slight. The fragments of the *sanctissimus vallum* in Carrowntemple indicate a large earthen structure with mixed rubble core (Plate 6.12, 6.13).



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Plate 6.40 Drumcolumb curving *vallum* of *sanctor* bank and ditch

Plate 6.41 Drumcolumb *sanctor* *vallum* bank and ditch

In the other sites in Sligo where the *vallum* is not drystone, the banks are slight structures being less than *c.*1mH and *c.*1mW (Church Hill Plates 6.20, Drumcolumb 6.27, 6.40, 6.41) where there are only traces of a ditch except where drainage appears important and is functioning as in Drumcolumb (Plates 6.40, 6.41). It is of course possible that future investigations would reveal evidence of a ditch as excavations have done in Killederdadrum, Co. Tipperary (Manning 1984), Millockstown, Co. Louth (Manning 1986), Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath (Simpson 2005) and Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, (Murphy 2003). One could reason that when a ditch was dug a bank was built from the dug-out material which then settled to a corresponding dimensions of *c.*1m to 2 m in height and width and in the course of time becomes silted in or back-filled. The excavated ditch in Clonmacnoise (Fig. 3.17) had dimensions of 3.7 m in depth and 6m-1.5m W (Murphy 2003, 13).

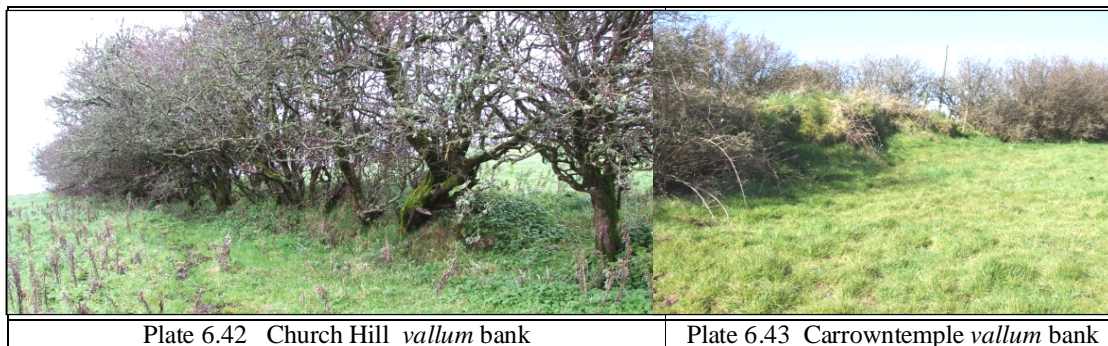


Plate 6.42 Church Hill *vallum* bank

Plate 6.43 Carrowntemple *vallum* bank



Plate 6.44 Church Hill *vallum* stone faced bank on south side

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In Ballydawley the *sanctior/sanctissimus vallum* is comprised of drystone walls with, in the main, the larger stones in the lower courses and there is a strong revetment on the south sector (Plates 6.1, 6.4, 6.7). There is a slightly less substantial *sanctus vallum* also of drystone construction.

Extent of the enclosed area within vallum

Some indications of the extent of the internal area within a site and the number of concentric enclosures are shown in Table 6.2. The conjectural inner enclosure (*sanctissimus*) varies from 4.3h at Ballydawley to 9h at Carrowntemple, 18h at Monasterredan. Conjecturally in Carnyara the *sanctissimus* enclosure could be 2h. The *sanctior vallum* in Drumcolumb is clearly identifiable as concave arcs in the field boundaries which are built of slight earthen banks with hawthorn trees interspersed with modern wooden paling and wire. The enclosed areas of

Site \ feature	Ballydawley	Carnyara	Carrown-temple	Church Hill	Cuppanagh	Drum-columb	Kilcummin	Kil-boglashy	Kilvarnet North	Monasterredan	Shancough
Raised ground	√	√		√		√		√	√		√
Aspect	S	S	S	SE	S	S		SE	SE	S	S
Ridge	EW					EW		EW	NS		EW
Internal terracing			√					√			√
Revetment	√		√					√			
Annexe	√					√					
Medieval activity			√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√

Table 6.2 Some additional features observed to be common in south Sligo early medieval monastic sites

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Feature \ Site	Bally-dawley	Carn-yara	Carrown-temple	Church Hill	Cupp-anagh	Drum-columb	Kil-boglashy	Kil-cummin	Kilvarnet North	Monast-erredan	Shan-cough	Innish murray	Killeder dadrum	Nen-drum	Reask	Moyne, Galway
Ridge				√		√			√		√					
Drystone <i>vallum</i>	√				√					√		√			√	√
Large boulders in lower course	√										√	√		√		
Bank		√	√	√	√	√					√					
H, W			2; 2												2; ?	2; 2
Ditch: H, W													1.8; 2.8.			
Enclosure-h	4.3	2	9	9		68	13		1.3	18	8			4	0.2	1.3
Burial: current, past	p		c,p		c, p		c	c	c	c			p			
Saint (native)				√		√		√						√		
Boundary;Td.			√		√		√	√		√						
Patron day	√					p										
<i>Leacht</i> (Mass stone)	√				√											
Internal division	2		1			2	2					√				
Terrace, faced	?		√				√		√							
Ceallúnach	p															
Field system	√		√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√					
Radiating	√										√					√
Medieval banks		√	√	√		√	√				√					
Medieval ruins		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√				
River nearby				√	√			√								
Annexe	√					√							√			
Pear shape				√								√		√		

Table 6.3 Check list of characteristic features of early medieval ecclesiastical sites in Sligo and other counties

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sanctissimus, *sanctior* and *sanctus* in Drumcolumb are calculated as *c.* 68h. In general the area enclosed by the conjectural *sanctior vallum* varies from 1.3h to 68h. The estimates for the 11 sites include all of the conjectural enclosures e.g. *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* whereas only the *sanctissimus* enclosures are generally included in reported sites elsewhere in Ireland.

In Table 6.3 some comparisons are made between the Sligo sites and elsewhere in Ireland

- earthen banks are more frequent in Sligo
- the enclosure size is more varied in Sligo
- post medieval burials are more common in Sligo
- more medieval ruins and enclosures in Sligo

Some details of 16 sites outside Co. Sligo are shown in Table 6.3. Nendrum, encloses *c.* 3h, Millockstown, Moyne and Kiltiernan *c.* 1.6h. The rest vary from 0.1h to 0.4h. The areas of the enclosures in Co. Sligo appear to vary from 4.5h to 9h. However the outer curved fragments are not easily correlated and conjectural areas are not reliable. This compares with Co. Kerry where Ó Carragáin (2005, 129) reported that of 66 Early Medieval monastic sites in Dingle and Iveragh, the majority had an earthen *vallum* enclosing on average 0.1h. O'Sullivan and Sheehan (1996, 246) reporting on the Iveragh peninsula reported that 25 sites with either earthen or stone *vallum* enclosed an average of < 0.1h.

The average enclosed *sanctissimus* area in the 11 Co. Sligo sites is *c.* 0.2 h. This could be accounted for by the poor quality of land which was made available and its location on an island in a marsh. The location and limited resources meant a subsistence existence with help from elsewhere perhaps its mother house. The resources were certainly very limited and the soil poor. The communities were undoubtedly small. It is also possible that the regional or local norm was that of smaller monasteries. There were however some large developed monasteries at Ballydawley, Carrowntemple and Kilboglashy. When

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considering area enclosed by *vallum* one should be aware that some calculations could be of *sanctissimus* alone, whilst others were of both *sanctissimus* and *sanctior*.

Burial Area

Eight of the 11 sites in south Co. Sligo have evidence of burial whether continuing at present, up to recently, or have associated memories of children's burial. There is no surface evidence in any of the sites of early medieval burials. Swan (1985, 274) in his list of features of early medieval monastic sites does not enlarge on the times or periods of burial. Of the sites only Carnyara and Shancough have no evidence of burial. Although at Carnyara there is a rectangular mound (c.300m distant to the north of the site) which is said to be the remains of an O'Hara mausoleum (Owen Lee-land owner-*pers. comm.*). In Ballydawley the O.S. maps have the label *Killeran Graveyard* with the word (*Disused*) in all but the 1837 edition. There is now no trace of this graveyard. In the *sanctissimus* area there are references to children's burials.

Placenames and native saint

The Drumcolumb entry in the O.S. Letters (c.1836) reads:

‘parish *Drum Chollum*, an old church in ruins said to have been founded by St. Columbcille’

‘there is old well called *Tobar Collum (Cille)*’

‘a figure or an image of a man made of stone thought to be a figure of the saint’, and ‘there is a tradition of reverence to St. Colum’

(O.S. Letters (c.1836); Egan *et.al.* (2005, 408).

There is local lore of a ‘giant's grave’ (John Brehony-land-owner *pers. comm.*). Perhaps Kilcummin refers to St. Caeman or Coemgen but that is not at all clear (Egan *et.al.*, 2005, 412). The placename Ballydawley refers to the family Dawley (J. Collery-land owner-*pers. comm.*) and Carnyara refers to the burial place of the family O'Hara, e.g. *Carn-í-Ára* (Bert O'Hara - land owner-*pers.*

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comm.). Kilvarnet North could refer to someone called Bearnat or Varney of the O'Hara family but that is not clear.

The word element *Kil* or *Cill-* appears in Kilcummin, Kilboglashy and Kilvarnet North thus indicating a church association. Similarly *Temple* and *Monaster* the placename elements in Carrowntemple and Monasterredan (*Teampeal*, *Manistear*) also indicate a church association. Church Hill was referred to as *Cloon-o-hill* (the cleared space of the Yew) and it is also called *Cnoc-an-Teampuil* (the hill of the church). The present name is clearly a later appellation. Shancough (the old hollow) has an earlier non-ecclesiastical name. There are very few saints associated with the studied sites or the placenames. The lack of associated saints could perhaps suggest that the monasteries in question lacked in prestige or influence where there had never been an abbot or scholar of renown or relics to attract pilgrimage. It could also be the case that the foundation was a daughter house corresponding to the modern 'chapel of ease' to provide communal or *paruchial* services to the laity within the recognised or accepted zone of influence (*termon*) of an unnamed mother house. The foundation could have been an eremitic monastery or hermitage of the type which intrigued Henry (1957, 154-8). The absence of a saint's name could also be explained simply by the fact that modest monks in turn were replaced by others equally modest. It is also possible that a site, having been abandoned through falling numbers through plague or lack of vocations, passed into lay occupancy where there were no interests in maintaining a monastic tradition, given that it is easy to forget or ignore a remote or inaccessible bog island.

Medieval developments

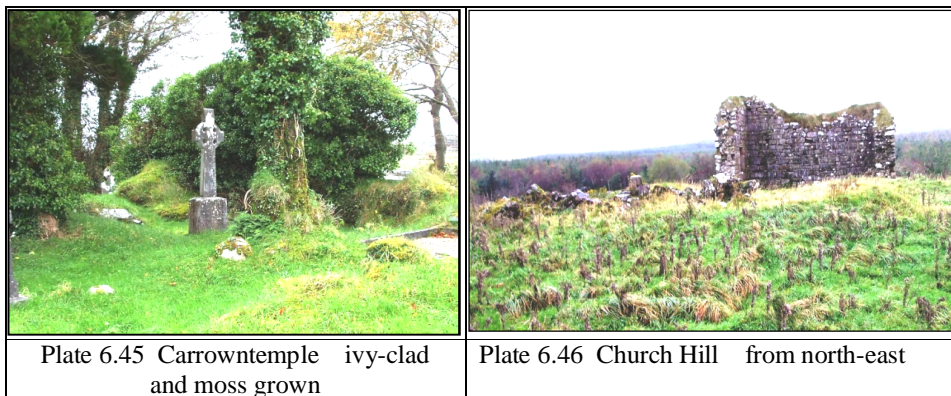
Medieval developments of rectangular stone church and *vallum* have taken place in all but one of the sites i.e. Ballydawley. In turn these medieval developments have been removed in more recent times in Carnyara and Monasterredan. In some sites parts of the medieval developments remain as traces or ruins as in

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Carrowntemple, Church Hill, Cuppanagh, Kilcummin, Kilboglasy, Kilvarnet North and Shancough.

Structural remains

There are no early medieval structures above ground in any of the sites under study. The structural remains that do exist are medieval rectangular enclosures of stone with mortar or ashlar. These now consist of structural ‘palimpsests’ which conceal or replace the early medieval developments. In such circumstances tracing the earlier curvilinear *vallum* poses difficulties. The church ruins found in Carrowntemple (Plate 6.45) are ivy-covered in the north-west corner *c.* 3m in height of uncoursed limestone with mortar. This is thought to be the old parish church of Kilfree (Egan *et.al.* 2005, 405). Later medieval developments left a platform with scarps which are now revetted on both east and south sides of the present ruins. In Church Hill (Plate 6.46) there are remains of the west wall (*c.* 7m in length) with remnants of the north and south walls of ruins considered to have been Romanesque. In Cuppanagh an almost complete rectangular structure (*c.* 10m in length, *c.* 6mW and *c.* 2mH) of coursed sandstone is greatly concealed with ivy and briars. In Drumcolumb the remains of a small church are crumbled and covered with ivy and briars (Plate 6.48). Larger building stones of limestone are visible at the lower course.



The ivy-covered ruins of Kilboglasy (Plate 6.47) having an interior length *c.*20m and interior width *c.*8m are on a terraced height on the north-west corner

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of the riverside site. There is a Romanesque doorway of two orders which has 11 voussoirs with eroded faces and a rubble filled semi-circular space over the lintel resting on the capitals. The ruins of the medieval parish church Kilvarnet North (interior length c.11m, interior width c.6m) are in a dangerously dilapidated condition (Plate 6.49). The south wall has a gargoyle and a round headed doorway which is not ashlar. The ruins lie within a graveyard which has been recently extended. This was a parish church and associated with the Knights Templars (Egan *et.al.* 2005, 417). Shancough (Plate 6.50) rests on a platform on a crest of an east-west ridge. The two chambered roofless ruins (interior dimensions c.18m by c.8m) were a late medieval parish church (*ibid.*, 423).



Faint traces of buildings are found in Kilcummin, Carnyara and are only reported in Monasterredan. There are no visible building remains in Ballydawley.

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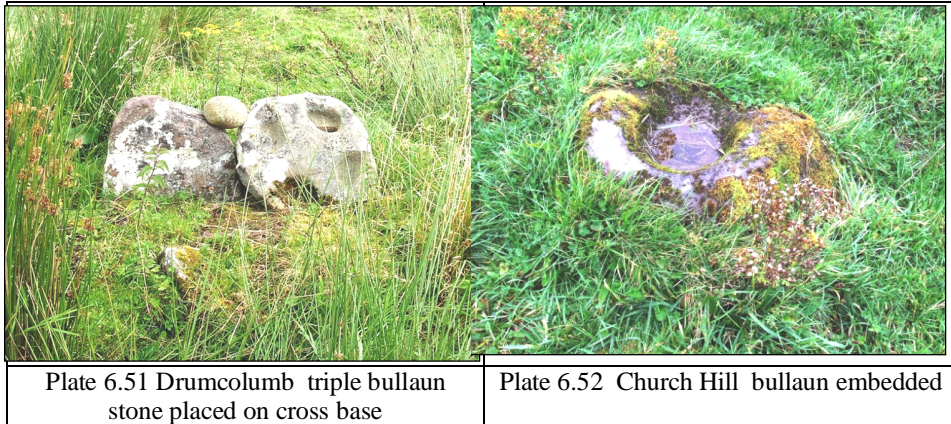
Holy wells

Only Ballydawley and Kilvarnet North have references to holy wells and both are dried or filled in. In Ballydawley the drying up of the well followed the knocking of an adjacent ash tree in a storm in comparatively recent years (J. Collery-land owner - *pers. comm.*). In Kilvarnet North the site of the well had been noted to the north-east in early maps but not later. There are now no visible surface indications of the well site (Josie McKettrick - land owner - *pers. comm.*).

Bullaun stones

Bullauns are particularly associated with early medieval monastic foundations. A single bullaun stone is found in Church Hill and a triple bullaun stone in Drumcolumb both inside the *sanctissimus vallum* (Plates 6.51, 6.52). The Monasterredan bullaun is outside the *sanctissimus vallum* and the Kilcummin bullaun is referred to (Egan *et.al.* 2005, 412).

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Inscribed slab

Inscribed slabs 13 in number have been uncovered in normal graveyard activities in Carrowntemple and are now in the National Museum of Ireland. Facsimiles of 12 are fixed to the revetment of the *sanctissimus vallum* (Plate 6.53, 6.54). The significance of the number of the slabs has not been explained

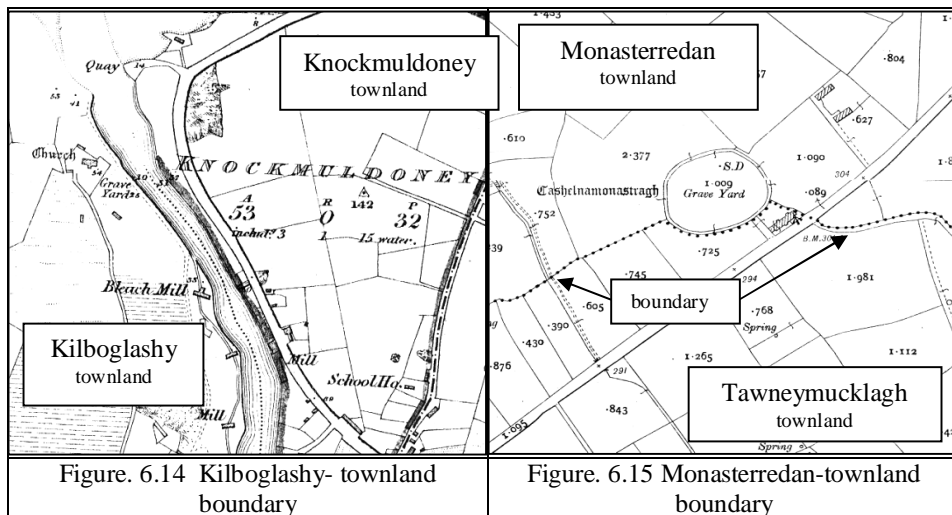


or an interpretation of the designs. The present belief is that they are associated with early medieval burial (Wallace and Timoney 1987, Timoney 2002). They had been discovered in the *sanctior* enclosure on the south side of the *sanctissimus* area. A base of high cross is to be seen in Ballydawley and also in Drumcolumb. The ‘Bishop’s Stone’ at Ballydawley is not inscribed.

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Proximity to townland border

Most of the early medieval monastic sites are not far from what were in a later period designated as townland boundaries. However some of the *valli* are part of the townland, or county boundary such as Kilboglashy on the south bank of the river which is the boundary for townland, barony and diocese (Fig 6.14); Monasterredan (Fig. 6.15) where the boundary of the townland Tawneymucklagh is part of the *sanctissimus vallum*; Carrowntemple borders the Doon townland on the east, Co. Mayo west and south and Co. Roscommon on the south-east. The townland boundary lies on the *sanctor vallum* on the south-east of the site (Figure 6.16). Cuppanagh is on lake shore (L. Gara) and is bounded by Co. Roscommon and the Sligo townlands Poobala and Cultydangan are to the north and east.



The other sites are not too far from boundaries of some kind: Church Hill is close to and surrounded by the river Clearagh and is hemmed in by the six townlands Moyrush, Clooncase, Cloonaclogha, Brackloonagh, Cloondarraga and Lisnagore; Kilcummin is on the lower south-east end of the townland which stretches high up the mountainside and is within a loop of the river Moy on south-east, south and west.

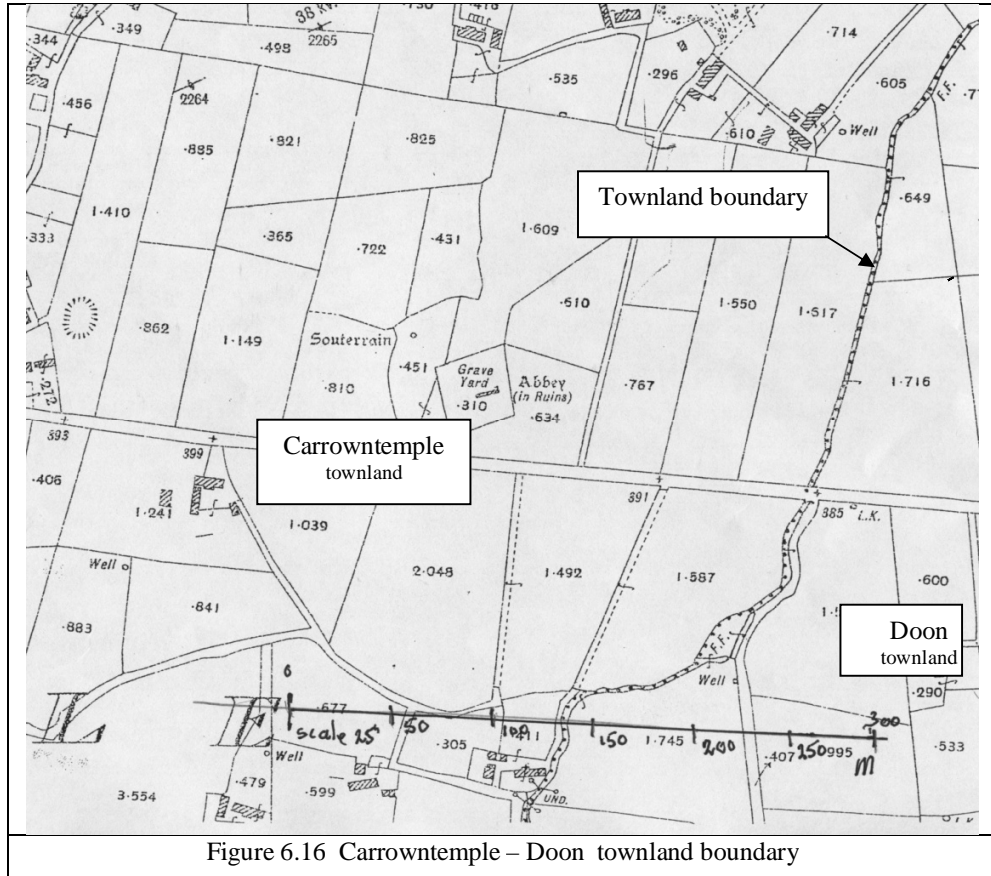


Figure 6.16 Carrowntemple – Doon townland boundary

The proximity of the early medieval monastic site to a defined current boundary could be interpreted as a lingering recognition of a border of some kind which existed in early medieval times (Ó Ríain 1972). Hurley (1982, 311) has pointed out that tribal boundaries were not defined and were ‘notoriously fluid’. An interpretation of the phenomenon of the proximity of early medieval monastic sites to modern townland boundaries could be explained by the existence of a boundary in the past however vague being at a distance from the centre of activity of the area which was later to be defined as a townland. It is also possible that monks sought solitude at a distance from the centre of activity and

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that these sites had been undervalued because of remoteness. It is also possible that in these uncertain areas the monasteries had an aura of sanctuary and were automatically protected from harm. It must also have been clear that they were not worth interfering with as they were obviously poor.

Souterrains

The feature *souterrains* appeared in Swan's list. The word *souterrains* derives from the French words *sous* and *terrain* meaning respectively under and ground. They are usually referred to as 'Cave' in the O.S. maps. It is now accepted that *souterrains* date from the second part of the first millennium and manuscript text references date from the beginning of the second millennium (Clinton 2001, 22-3). The functions could have been storage of valuables or food, habitation or refuge (*ibid.*, 15-6, 59). *Souterrains* have in the past been associated with church sites (*ibid.*, 47-8). Although this close association has been tempered by recent discoveries of *souterrains* in non-monastic locations, the link between monastic site and *souterrains* still exists (Clinton 2001, 18, 45-6).

Souterrains have been uncovered in Carnyara where there were two openings in the field boundary (National Monuments Archives). The word 'Cave' appeared in the O.S. maps from 1888 and is noted in Egan *et al.* (2005, 404). The opening is now filled in (Owen Lee - land owner - *pers. comm.*). Egan *et al.* (2005, 406) report two *souterrains* in Carrowntemple, one inside and the other outside the *sanctissimus vallum* and these have also been examined by Wallace and Timoney (1987). A *souterrains* was reported in Church Hill in a field to the west and there are also reports of a possible *souterrains* in a pasture to the east at Kilcummin (Egan *et al.* 2005, 412). Several heavy baulks of timber cover the entrance to the *souterrains* in Monasterredan (Plate 6.55). Two *souterrains* are reported in the north-east and north-west sectors at Shancough. Shancough was associated with St. Patrick through the *Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Clinton 2001, 149-50). There are no reports of *souterrains* in Ballydawley, Cuppanagh or Drumcolumb. There are to date 243 *souterrains* discovered in south Co. Sligo

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(Egan *et.al.* 2005, 313). Of these 56% are associated with ringforts, a further 20% with cashels and 16% in isolated positions. The remaining 8% possible associations with ecclesiastical sites. It is possible that Swan, at the time, was misled by the reported occurrences near early medieval monasteries. It is now



clear that souterrains are largely secular in origin.

Patron day observances

Holy Well observances have until recently been held in Ballydawley (P. O'Brien – local historian - *pers.comm.*) and at Church Hill on the 4th or 5th of June, (K. Gormley - local resident - *pers. comm.*). At Shancough the Patron Day 25th July at St. James's Well (*Tobar S. Seum*) was observed in the past (P. McDonough – land-owner - *pers. comm.*). There are no reports of a standard ritual at any of the sites but one does get the impression that only the laity are involved. Presumably some customary expressions of devotion were observed. It appears that the occasion was regarded as an outing for the extended family and community with games and entertainment.

6.3 Sligo features extra to Swan's list

It has already been noted that 10 of the 12 features that Swan associated with early medieval monastic sites have been reported at the sites under this study. Of this list only two have not been encountered and these are the founder's tomb and founder's pillar stone. Swan has been vindicated in that the findings of this survey in south Sligo support his list. There are however other characteristics emerging from observation of the 11 sites in south Co. Sligo which could be considered. These were not noted by Swan (1983) or Rynne (2005). These are shown in Table 6.1 and include:-

- all sites raised above surroundings
- five sites on ridge or hill above bog or marsh
- two sites on occurs at bog island
- internal terracing occurs at two perhaps three sites
- revetment occurs at the two sites with terracing
- a funnel shaped intrusion (annexe) in the *vallum* occurs at two sites
- evidence of post - early medieval developments is found at nine sites.

Site location on ridge

Some sites are located on a ridge, bog island or hill, on ground which is at a higher level than the immediate surroundings. The siting raises the question whether this is a phenomenon relating to Sligo alone or was it simply a response to availability of suitable land. In the catalogue of sites the height above sea level have been converted to metres. This information however is of limited value in understanding the site in terms of the proximate terrain where the important issue is the height above the natural outlet of river or stream. The early O.S. maps show apparent empty spaces or indicators of former lakes. Later editions show linear field divisions and linear (not meandering) drains which suggest land drainage schemes in the intervening times. There are also anecdotal references to wells 'drying up'. This could suggest that early medieval monastic sites were surrounded by marsh, bog or water with varying degrees of access to good land such as Kilcummin. Some of these sites are on ridges such as

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Drumcolumb, Kilvarnet North and Shancough or a bog-island like Church Hill. This could suggest deliberate siting on places known to be consistently above water level, even though surrounded by periodic flooding or marshes. This could also suggest the deliberate policy of choosing such sites in order to ensure privacy. Perhaps these were the only sites available in the locality. However, if isolation was a major factor in selecting the site then placenames like *Disert-* or *Inis-* might be expected. Shancough is unusual in that being on a ridge the site is looked up to from mid-distance but is looked down at from the high road on the south. The land ridge sites are mainly east-west except Kilvarnet North which has a north-south orientation with the site on the northern end sloping to the east and must have been cold.

Aspect of site

Other sites are not placed on ridges but are on south facing slopes with good land such as Ballydawley, Carnyara, Kilboglasy, Carrowntemple and Cuppanagh. Most of the sites under study have a south or south-east aspect. There is an old farming tradition that south facing slopes are warmer, have earlier growth in Spring and consequently are more productive. Site location suggests that some deliberation was involved in the selection or granting of land.

Internal divisions or terracing

In this study the early medieval monastery at Reask, Co. Kerry (Fanning 1981, 71) is regarded as a paradigm consisting of a single *vallum* enclosing both *sanctissimus* and *sanctior* where an internal division by a wall or a bank separates one from the other. In other sites on difficult territory, such as at Skellig Michael the internal divisions are by means of terracing with supporting revetment. In Ballydawley lower south part of the conjoined *sanctior sanctissimus vallum*, is revetted. The internal divisions are achieved by the use of internal walls similar to Reask except that there are two internal dividing walls in the west and the east sectors. Partial terracing occurs in Carrowntemple and Kilboglasy. That the east sector was the *sanctissimus* is indicated by the

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present monuments. There is also an outer *sanctus vallum*. In Carrowntemple the north-west section of the site is at a higher level by *c.* 2m and is revetted now on the southern and eastern margins by linear stone faces. In Kilboglashy where the site is on a slope there is a similar arrangement of perhaps three terraces supported by inconspicuous revetment on the north-west sector. In Kilcummin there is a scarp *c.* 1m in height outside the present north wall and this seems to continue around the east side and to the south. A similar scarp occurs inside the present graveyard on the same height and appears to correspond in height and continuity. All of this suggests an earlier rectangular enclosure larger than, and not exactly corresponding with, the present graveyard and resting on a natural rock platform which had been exploited. In Kilvarnet North there is a scarp running east-west in a position corresponding to the former straight line of the north wall of the enclosure. There is a corresponding steep slope on the south side. The significance of this feature is not clear. In Drumcolumb and Shancough there appear to be stones buttressing the upper side of the bank on the south side of the ruins. However these two sites have been subjected to developments of a later period when this feature occurred. The conclusion that one can reach is that the internal divisions and/or terracing that had been built according to the site could have been removed over the years.

Annexe

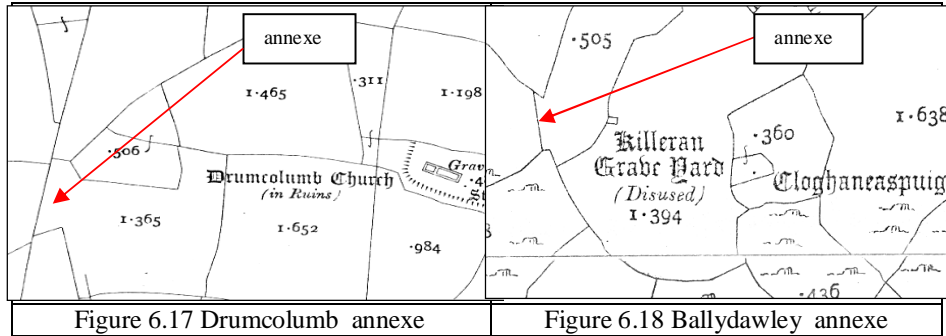
On the O.S. maps there is a depiction on the outer *vallum* to the west of Ballydawley and also to the west of Drumcolumb of a feature rather like an opening out of a modern entrance to property (Figures 6.17, 6.18). In both instances closer inspection on the ground was not possible because of shrubs and briars. The significance is not apparent.

Early medieval monasteries in Sligo and elsewhere in Ireland

Table 6.2 compares some early medieval monastic features of Sligo and some of the rest of the country. The estimates of the enclosed area are unreliable because

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of uncertainty about what was being measured or estimated whether it is *sanctus*, *sanctior* or *sanctissimus* and whether the *vallum* system is concentric or conjoined.



High crosses do not have an even geographic spread throughout the country. There are none in the counties of Limerick, Kerry, Cork or Waterford. Apart from Drumcliff, Co. Sligo, two in Co. Galway and a cluster in Co. Clare, high crosses are found mainly in a broad band from south Tipperary to north-east Co. Donegal and east of the country (Harbison 1994, 110-1). High crosses in Ireland date from two phases in the later part of the early medieval period (*ibid.*, 13). It would appear that high crosses are found on what were considered to be wealthy and well endowed sites. At Ballydawley there is the ‘Bishop’s Stone’ which is plain upright rough surfaced slab c.1.5m in height and at Drumcolumb there is the stone said to be part of a small high cross.

Additional commentson on the Co. Sligo sites.

Features not commented on by Swan or Rynne are shown in Table 6.2. At present the structural remains of buildings on the Sligo sites are later than the early medieval period. There are no traces of a founder’s tomb, pillar stone, high cross, sundial, round tower, or stone cell in any of the Sligo sites. Regional or zonal differences in the layout and inclusions of monastic foundations may occur where different traditions of building early medieval monasteries had developed or were adopted in different parts of the country. Some people have argued that the layout of early Irish monasteries did not adhere to a fixed *schema* whilst

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others have acknowledged this and in so doing have accepted the possibility of zoning (Jenkins 2010, 5). Whilst the Ballydawley layout in general corresponds with that of Reask variations in other sites also occur. The sacred (*sanctissimus*) area in Reask was in the eastern sector defined by the arc of the *vallum* and one curving internal dividing *vallum*. The *sanctior* was the western sector and west of the internal dividing *vallum*. In Ballydawley the sacred area (*sanctissimus*) was also defined by an internal drystone *vallum* and like Reask in the eastern sector where the ‘Bishop’s Stone’ stands, the base of a high cross and children’s graveyard are now sited. There is however another internal dividing *vallum* in the western sector in Ballydawley. The outer part of the eastern *sanctissimus vallum* has been removed in recent times.

At Carrowntemple the sacred area was within the *sanctissimus* on a terrace on the north-west sector and in Kilboglashy the sacred area was on the raised north-west sector. It is clear that local considerations regarding terrain and resources were considered. The issue of regionality has also been addressed briefly in the discussion on drystone churches and regional identity in Corcu Duibne, Co. Kerry (Ó Carragáin 2010, 49). An implicit ‘canon of planning’ is not accepted by all scholars (Jenkins 2010, 5). Drystone structures, other than the *vallum*, have survived in large numbers in south-west Ireland (Henry 1957) but there are no references to any in Egan *et al.* 2005. There are several references to ‘clochan’ in Byrne *et al.* (2009). Neither are there references in south Co. Sligo to corbels or corbelling or to founder’s tomb or pillar.

Concluding remarks

Firstly the *vallum* system of each of the 11 Sligo early medieval monastic sites was considered in turn and the features of that *vallum* system described and commented on. A conjectural ground plan of each was drafted. After that section all of the remaining features on Swan’s list was discussed in relation to its occurrence on the Sligo sites. Other features not in Swan’s list were also

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described and discussed. All of this material was presented in Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4.

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Features Site	Vallum drystone.	Vallum bank	Vallum earth & drystone	Site excavated	Drystone H; W	Ditch; D; W	Bank H; W	Area h	Souter- rain
Ballyallaban		1		√			1	0.2	
Caherlehillane			1	√	0.5			0.1	
Church Is.				√	1.5; 1.5			0.3	
Clonmacnoise				√		3.7; 6-1.5			
Dunshaughlin				√		2.3; 4.5-1.2			
High Island	1				1; 3			0.1	
Illaunloughan	1				0.5				
Illauntannig									
Innishmurray.				√	2,4				
Killederdadrum				√		2.8; 1.6	?; 3	0.2	√
Kilmacoo		3		√					
Kiltiernan	1			√				1.6	
Millockstown 1				√		0.6; 1.4		0.3	
Millockstown 3				√		1.4; 3		1.7	
Moyne	1			√	1.6; 2			1.5	
Mulling			2						
Nendrum	3			√	3; 2			0.3	
Reask			√	√	1.5; 2.2			0.2	
66 majority (Ó Carraigín 2008.)		√						0.1	
25 typical (Fanning 1981(b))	√	√						0.1	

Table 6.4 Features of some early medieval monastic sites outside Sligo

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Introduction

This minimal technology work is a study of published materials on and topography of the early medieval monastic *vallum* system in Ireland. It draws largely on the experiences of others such as Henry (1957), O’Kelly (1958), Fanning (1981), MacDonald (2001), Jenkins (2010), Manning (1984, 1985, 1986, 1987), Sheehan (2001), O’Sullivan and Ó Carragáin (2008), O’Sullivan and Sheehan (1996) and Ó Carragáin (2005, 2010). Of particular influence was Swan (1983) who identified the characteristic features of early medieval monastic foundations in the modern Irish landscape. That work is the core of this study. The list of 12 features characteristic of the early medieval monastery was headed by the *vallum* which was identified by curvilinear nature of extant field boundaries which were shown by O.S. maps and also by soil and vegetation marks. Norman and St. Joseph (1969) and Mould (1972) had through aerial photographs drawn attention to the importance of soil and vegetation marks as well as the curvilinear nature of boundaries. This study has particular reference to the *vallum* system and Swan’s thesis on the identification of the early medieval monastic sites by the curvilinear nature of field boundaries and also to the other features in that list. Swan (1983) emphasised that not all sites have all twelve of the features. His work has been upheld by this study which found the curvilinear nature of field boundaries as well as all but two of the other characteristic features in the Sligo sites.

MacDonald (2001) and Jenkins (2010) drew attention to the presence and importance of the three-fold *vallum* system. The *vallum* as a sign of liminality has been of importance in the social and religious mores through the ages. The *vallum* having a symbolic function did not need to be, and was not in general, a massive structure. The function of the *vallum* was to indicate to all, in a recognisable manner, a boundary or liminality between sacred places and

profane which was to be respected by all. In the desert the cenobitic monastery was enclosed by a slight rectangular *vallum* of earth and stone that could be easily stepped over. The essential nature of the monastic system moved from Egypt through Gaul, and when noted in Ireland in the century after St. Patrick, the now familiar curvilinear monastic *vallum* system had been developed. This is comprised of the outermost enclosure - *sanctus* (holy), the in-between enclosure - *sanctior* (holier) and the innermost enclosure - *sanctissimus* (most holy). The most common form of the three-fold *vallum* system is that of Iona and described by Adomnain, which consisted of concentric spaces either circular or oval. There were variations of the three-fold *vallum* system guided, apparently, by local conditions. Such a system was revealed in Reask, Co. Kerry where the *sanctus/sanctissimus* spaces were conjoined within a curvilinear *vallum* and separated from each other by an internal *vallum* which was either linear or curved. Quite often the outermost *sanctus vallum* has disappeared or perhaps never existed originally.

Access to the *sanctior*, and particularly the *sanctissimus*, enclosures was reserved for privileged persons and denied to those without permission. It was in the innermost area - the *sanctissimus* - that the church, the founder's tomb and, in later times, the high cross and round tower were situated. The *sanctissimus* enclosure was the sacred locus. Access to the *sanctior* enclosure was reserved for those less privileged who carried out the less onerous duties of the monastery. The *sanctus* or outermost enclosure was the area for those who carried out the mundane duties of maintenance, farming and animal and crop husbandry. Each area was enclosed by a *vallum*. The *sanctissimus vallum* was the most impressive structure of the three although not necessarily massive. The *sanctior vallum* was less impressive and the *sanctus vallum* was the slightest and sometimes only hinted at by strange arcs at a distance from the site as in Carnyara and Carrowntemple. The remnants of the *sanctissimus valli* of Carrowntemple and Ballydawley are impressive, the former of a high and wide earthen bank surmounted by thorn and the latter of drystone construction.

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Henry (1957) had been puzzled by the many instances of small monastic foundations in the environs of south-west Kerry and considered that they were offshoots or daughter houses of larger monasteries. Having noted that ‘As a rule there is a wall around the main group of buildings’, she continued that the wall was in a crumbling state and not thicker than an ordinary fort. Although Henry, like others, was concerned about the features within the enclosed space and the overall size, she did not give dimensions or advert to a *vallum* system, she did however refer to the commonality of the occurrence of a dividing wall within an enclosure (*ibid.*, 154).

Fanning’s report (1981) on Reask, Co. Kerry, is also core to this study. His work revealed two enclosures (which can be identified as *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*) within the *vallum* and separated from each other by an internal S shaped drystone *vallum*. The conjoined system was also adopted in Ballydawley. There were variations. In very steep terrain such as Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry, the sacred areas were abutted by separate conjoined buttressed terraces. There were variations of both approaches in Sligo in Ballydawley (conjoined), Drumcolumb (concentric) and there were also semi-terraced (Kilboglasy and Carrowntemple) where the ground is sloped.

This study also draws attention to the importance of the *vallum* itself, its morphology and particularly its significance as a boundary which marked a sacred area. The structure of the *vallum* could be an internal ditch with external bank surmounted by a hedge. Such a structure could be large as in Carrowntemple or commonplace as in Carnyara and Drumcolumb. The *vallum* could also be a drystone structure without ditch. In Ballydawley this structure was large and in Cuppanagh slight.

The origins of the curvilinear nature of the *vallum* are not clear but it was adopted in the whole island of Ireland. Perhaps there was some folk memory of former practices. There is not full agreement among archaeologists on the issue of an accepted *schema* of monastic layout for the whole country. Complications

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of interpretation do occur particularly where previously existing developed sites had been adapted for monastic uses. Certainly some variations occurred perhaps locally or according to the site. In most of the Sligo developments subsequent to the early medieval period have obscured the original site. In most of the Sligo sites later medieval developments replaced the original curvilinear *sanctissimus vallum* to some degree.

This study on the *vallum* has identified fragments of the *sanctior vallum* in 7 of 11 early medieval monastic sites. Fragments of the *sanctus vallum* are vaguely identifiable in two sites and surviving in one only. In several instances the original *sanctior/sanctissimus vallum* system has been replaced by a later rectangular enclosures. This has caused present day problems of plotting the original curvilinear site and a degree of dependance on soil/vegetation marks in Ballydawley and Shancough. Nevertheless sections of early medieval *sanctissimus vallum* have survived in three sites and in other sites only scattered fragments can be traced.

Hitherto the focus of attention of archaeologists has been on the monuments within the innermost enclosure with very little attention to the *vallum*. Such notice that the *vallum* has received has been cursory and then only with reference to its function as the enclosing element of the important monuments within. In most of the published reports it is not possible to identify a *vallum* in terms of the enclosures of *sanctus*, *sanctior* or *sanctissimus* and the area enclosed is not easy to clarify especially when there is not a complete surviving enclosure. In some sites fragments of one *vallum* only are evident.

The sites in south Co. Sligo were small and often located on isolated bog islands or at the ends of ridges. The impression gained is that the sites were from the earlier part of the early medieval period and that in the main they were small settlements. The exceptions were the large foundations in Ballydawley, Carrowntemple and Kilboglashy. The inscribed stone slabs of Carrowntemple suggest a possible late Iron Age transition to Christian influence. Two of the

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sites investigated, Carrowntemple and Shancough, have only surviving fragments of an earthen stone cored *sanctissimus vallum* and the ditch is not discernable. Mostly in Sligo the bank element of the earthen *vallum* was not at all large and, where cleared of thorn, could easily be stepped over rather like the original stone and clay *vallum* of the Desert Fathers. The sites convey an image of simplicity without round towers, high crosses, high gabled buildings with antae or any other indications of the later early medieval period. At Carrowntemple the *sanctior vallum* is semicircular in plan and composed of two drystone walls. This is now a farmyard access facility and was not depicted on the 6" O.S. map 1837.

This study has revealed the frequent occurrence in south Co. Sligo of the *vallum* system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus*, which has not hitherto received much attention. Also revealed is the Reask paradigm of conjoined *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* within the curvilinear *vallum*. Through the years there appears to have been a disassociation of the outermost *sanctus* from the *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* and consequently the association with the *sanctissimus* central elements was lost. Also lost had been the continuing reverence for the *vallum* system but which has been maintained for the *sanctissimus* enclosure of the monastery.

The *vallum* system despite its frailties has overcome all the vicissitudes of time, weather and turmoil and has survived through the ages to illustrate the existence of the way of life from the early medieval monastic system. The *vallum* is of importance as a monument worthy of study in its own right for many reasons.

Implications of this work

- much can be learned from research and topographical studies
- the pioneering work of Swan (1983) is more relevant than ever and indicates the continued relevance of research based on the O.S. maps

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- Swan's list of characteristic features of early medieval monasteries has been vindicated with perhaps the exception of the souterrains
- the aerial photographic pioneering work of Norman and St. Joseph (1969), Mould (1972) and of Swan himself continue to be the basis of current archaeological investigations not only in early medieval monasteries
- the three-fold enclosure system of *sanctus*, *sanctior* and *sanctissimus* appears to be country wide with the significance of the *sanctus* on the main diminished
- variations of monastic layout vary with requirements and local topography. Revetment and terracing occur where regarded as necessary
- the Reask arrangement of conjoined *sanctior/sanctissimus* is also employed in Sligo
- the established concentric system was also employed in Sligo
- a 'canon of planning' does appear to have been employed countrywide
- This study has vindicated the work of Mould, Norman and St. Joseph and Swan also the work of the excavators since W.W. II
- the 11 early medieval monastic in Sligo were studied topographically as well as from maps and aerial photographs

Suggestions for the future

The following issues could usefully be considered

- non-invasive investigation might reveal dividing *vallum* in conjoined single enclosure monuments
- the importance of research and topographical studies of sites
- the preparation of the catalogue of features of any site.

Bibliography

Abbreviations of names of periodicals cited

- DIAS Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
EMAP Early medieval Archaeological Project; www.emap@ucd.ie/emap
INSTAR Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research, Making Christian
Landscapes
JIA Journal of Irish Archaeology
JRSAI Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
NMAJ North Munster Antiquarian Journal
PRIA Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy
RIA Royal Irish Academy

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