Deer and identity in medieval Ireland

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Introduction
The concept that identity is inextricably linked with places, landscapes and objects has become familiar in archaeology (Thomas 1998, 80, 90; Bradley 2000, 155-61; O'Keeffe 2001). It is only recently however that this idea has been extended to animals and their interaction with human society (Crabtree 2007, 237). This paper examines how deer hunting was used to maintain identity in medieval Ireland, a country in which two very different cultures co-existed. Until the twelfth century Ireland was predominantly Gaelic with the coastal cities such as Dublin and Limerick having been founded by the Vikings. This changed with the coming of the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century when they settled in Ireland and introduced their own culture (Barry 2003, 35-6). The paper will discuss the different arenas in which hunting took place in Gaelic and Anglo-Norman society before providing an overview of what is known about fallow deer and deer parks in Ireland. To illustrate the differences in approach between the cultures two case studies based on the author's analysis of the faunal assemblages are presented, with Kilteasheen being a Gaelic site and Greencastle being Anglo-Norman.

Historical Background
In 1166 Dermot MacMurrough the king of Leinster found himself out of favour with the new high king of Ireland Ruairí O'Conor, and as a result Dermot lost his lands so that in August 1166 he left Ireland (Otway-Ruthven 1993, 41). Dermot sought help from the English king Henry II, and received letters authorising the king's subjects to assist him so that from 1169 onwards various Anglo-Norman mercenaries came to his aid and he regained his lands. Late in 1171 Henry himself landed at Waterford with several thousand men and over the next few months received the fealty of a number of Irish kings, although not, apparently of the High King Ruairí O'Conor. Subsequently Henry granted large tracts of land to Anglo-Norman lords and so began the Anglo-Norman period of Irish history (Otway-Ruthven 1993, 48-50; Frame 1998, 16-17).

Hunting theatres There were important differences between the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman cultures in the type of deer hunted and the location in which this took place. Two species of deer inhabited Ireland during the medieval period. Red deer (Cervus elaphus) were present in Ireland since at least the Neolithic, whilst fallow deer (Dama dama) were introduced by the Anglo-Normans (Woodman, McCarthy et al. 1997; McCormick 1998).

Before the coming of the Anglo-Normans the native red deer seem to have been hunted and trapped on the undivided mountain, bog and woodland owned by the tuath or clan (Kelly 2000, 272-81 406-8). Neeson (1997, 138) believes that much of the woodland was generally privately owned during the early medieval period so that it may not have been available for hunting without the landowner's permission. This private ownership of land was strengthened with the coming of the Anglo-Normans who introduced the idea of forests, chases and deer parks to Ireland.

Medieval forests were land where the hunting of game was reserved for the king. Forest land could include woodland, unenclosed land, farmland and villages (Rackham 1987, 130). Irish medieval forests included Glencree, Co. Wicklow (Le Fanu 1893) and Cratloe, Co. Clare (O'Conor 2004) shown in Figure 1. Chases were similar to forests except that they were under aristocratic rather than royal control (Watts 1996) and Irish examples include Ross and Taghmon in Co. Wexford (O'Conor 2004). These forests and chases could be used for hunting wild red deer as well as fallow deer that had been deliberately released from deer parks prior to the hunt. Deer parks were relatively small areas of land, usually stocked with fallow deer and often also used to confine other grazing animals and to supply timber for construction (Rackham 1987, 125). Very little fieldwork has been carried out on deer parks in Ireland, however extensive studies have been carried out on those of medieval England (e.g.Cantor and Wilson 1962-1980) where they usually consisted of an enclosed area of thirty to five hundred acres surrounded by a high, wide bank with an internal ditch.

Deer parks and fallow deer in Ireland
Whilst a number of authors have considered different aspects of the archaeology of deer parks and fallow deer in Ireland, (McCormick 1991; Reeves-Smyth 1997; McCormick 1998; Murphy and O'Conor 2006) to date no review of both archaeological and documentary evidence has been carried out.

Reeves-Smyth (1997, 198) identified 317 Irish deer parks of various dates in the Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape, but due to a typographical error these were incorrectly labelled, so that fourteenth and fifteenth century examples were incorrectly shown as dating to the nineteenth century, whilst seventeenth and eighteenth century parks were labelled as medieval (T. Reeves-Smyth pers. comm.). Allowing for this, his work identified a total of eight medieval parks, all of which were east of the Shannon apart from a single example from Loughrea, Co. Galway. Murphy and O'Conor (2006) recently reviewed the documentary evidence and identified fourteen medieval parks

with a similar geographical spread, although they noted that some of these may have had functions other than the keeping of deer.

Fallow deer remains have been found during excavations at a number of archaeological sites, with a preliminary listing shown in Table 1. The medieval sites fall into two categories: Anglo-Norman castle sites and urban sites and all are located in the east and south of the country. When the archaeological evidence is compared with the documentary evidence discussed by Murphy and O'Conor (2006) four castle sites feature in both. Balydonegan, which is modern Bestfield or Dunganstown lies slightly to the north of Carlow town and is mentioned in documents of 1305 and 1333 (Murphy and O'Conor 2006) and the castle at Carlow yielded fallow deer elements (O'Conor 1997). Similarly, a park at Maynooth Co. Kildare is documented in 1328 (Murphy and O'Conor 2006), and twenty-eight fallow deer fragments were found during excavation of Maynooth Castle (Murray Undated). At Ferrycarrig Castle, just north of Wexford town, excavation yielded six fragments of fallow deer. Ferrycarrig lies at the corner of the chase at Taghmon (McCormick 1997, 837) whilst a park at Wexford town is documented in 1275 and again in 1324, presumably associated with the main Wexford Castle. There is also documentary evidence of a park at Trim Co. Meath (Murphy and O'Conor 2006) and excavations at Trim Castle yielded fallow deer remains (McCormick and Murray Undated).

All of the documented medieval deer parks are associated with Anglo-Norman lordships (Murphy and O'Conor 2006), a feature that is borne out by the archaeological evidence from Table 1 since no fallow deer remains have been found associated with Gaelic sites. As regards the case studies Greencastle Co. Down has yielded both red and fallow deer bones but there is no record of a deer park in the area. By contrast Kilteasheen was a Gaelic site where only red deer remains were found.

Greencastle
The Anglo-Norman lord, Hugh de Lacy II built the royal castle at Greencastle Co. Down in the 1230s with the aim of protecting the southern approaches to the Earldom of Ulster. In 1260 the castle was attacked and partly destroyed by Aedh O'Conchobhair (Hugh O'Conor) and between 1280 and 1326 it was the home of Richard de Burgh, Earl of Ulster (McNeill 2000, 88; O'Baoill 2007).

Greencastle lies on the northern side of the mouth of Carlingford Lough, opposite the medieval castle of Carlingford. Originally Greencastle consisted of a two-storey tower surrounded by a curtain wall with corner towers and a rock-cut ditch although the structure was modified over the centuries. A number of excavations have taken place in the castle since 1951(Waterman and Collins 1952; Lynn 1971; Lynn 1972; Lynn 1973; Gaskell Brown 1979; Lynn 1987/88; Lynn 1989/90), however this was the first excavation to be carried out in the area immediately outside the castle. During this excavation deer remains were found in deposits dating to each of the first three phases. Phase 1 was a thirteenth century occupation level possibly relating to the construction of the castle, Phase 2 was infill relating to the construction in the thirteenth century, Phase 3 probably represents thirteenth to fourteenth century remains of the lost

medieval village surrounding the castle and Phase 4 is indicative of the downgrading of the status of the castle in the period to the seventeenth century (McNeill 2000, 88-91; O'Baoill 2007).

The remains of both red and fallow deer were found at Greencastle (Beglane 2007). Red deer are relatively common in small numbers on Irish sites of all periods (McCormick and Murray 2007, 17-36) and examination of the sites in Table 1 suggests that the presence of fallow deer at Greencastle was also not unexpected. Interesting chronological differences were noted in the results. The earliest phase yielded two deer teeth, which could not be identified to species. The remains from Phase 2 consisted of three red deer elements and a single tooth that could not be identified to species. By contrast, Phase 3 produced twelve red deer elements, five fallow deer elements and two that could not be identified to species. Both front and hind limbs were present in the assemblage. Between Phases 2 and 3 the proportion of deer bones rose from 1.2% to 6.1% of the total, thus deer made up 13% of the individual animals identified in the Phase 3 material and it is estimated that 6% of the meat consumed during this period was venison, compared to 2% mutton, 10% pork and 82% beef. The discovery of a very large humerus and scapula from a probable wild pig in the Phase 3 deposits provided more evidence for the importance of hunting to the inhabitants of the castle. Additionally, very large dog bones were found in deposits from Phases 1, 2 and 4. It is not possible to reconstruct breeds based purely on size but it is feasible that these may have been specialised hunting dogs (Beglane 2007).

Kilteasheen
Excavations have been conducted for the past three years at Kilteasheen, Co. Roscommon. The excavation has uncovered a high status ecclesiastical site associated with the O'Conor kings of Connacht (Finan and Read forthcoming). The site lies on the western shore of Lough Cé and was identified during research by Dr Thomas Finan as the location of Cil-tSeisin, or the 'Church of Seishin' which is mentioned in the Annals of Lough Cé on a number of occasions between 1243 and 1258. According to the Annals a court, which may have been judicial or residential, was constructed there in 1253 by Tomaltach O'Conchobhair (Thomas O' Conor), Bishop of Elphin and was demolished in 1258 by his kinsman Aedh O'Conchobhair (Hugh O'Conor) to prevent the strategically important court falling into the hands of the Anglo-Norman de Burghs who had been granted the lordship of Connacht. Excavations have identified a substantial masonry structure, a walled and ditched enclosure, a medieval graveyard and some evidence for prehistoric activity. The current interpretation (Finan and Read forthcoming) is that the masonry structure is a type of thirteenth or fourteenth century fortified building known as a hall house and represents the remains of the bishop's court, whilst the walled and ditched enclosure surrounds the medieval graveyard.

A partial red deer skull and six fragments of red deer antler were recovered from the fill of the enclosure ditch along with cattle, pig and horse bones that have been interpreted as mixed butchery and food waste (Beglane in press). Again these findings were not unexpected, since the site is of high status and it has been shown that venison was particularly important for ecclesiastical consumption during the Gaelic early medieval

period prior to the coming of the Anglo-Normans (Murray, McCormick et al. 2004; Soderberg 2004) and McCormick and Murray (2007, 192-5) have shown that red deer were present at twenty-nine out of forty-one early medieval assemblages reviewed by them . The ditch is believed to be medieval, however it may date either to the time of the hall house or predate this feature (Finan and Read forthcoming).

The partial red deer skull had been chopped and cut and the antler had been sawn off at the base of the pedicle (Beglane in press). The remaining six deer elements were all antler fragments, and based on their size and form they represent at least three individuals, one of which may be the individual whose skull was found. There was one small fragment of sawn beam, while the largest piece of antler consisted of a palmate crown containing four whole tines as well as the basal stumps of two further tines. Red deer antlers are not usually palmated but this feature is associated with genetic factors, size and condition of the animal and these deer were highly prized during the medieval and Tudor periods (Hartl, Zachos et al. 2003; R. Carden pers. comm, F. McCormick pers. comm). Hunting an animal such as this would have been a prestigious event but unfortunately the burr of the antler was not recovered so that it was not possible to determine whether the deer had been hunted or the antler had been naturally shed. The evidence for sawing, cutting and chopping of the skull and antlers and the absence of substantial pieces of beam suggest that these were craftwork off-cuts disposed of after suitable pieces of beam had been selected for working (Beglane in press).

Deer and the creation of identity
Throughout medieval Europe a love of hunting was an important part of elite culture and the creation of aristocratic identity (Pluskowski 2007). Hunting, riding and military skills were an essential part of the education of every young nobleman. These skills complemented each other so that by taking part in regular hunting the aristocracy could develop their horsemanship and use of arms as well as practicing tactical manoeuvres and keeping fit (Schlag 1998, 19; Almond 2003-17; Thomas 2007). These activities helped in avoiding what Edward, Duke of York described as 'ymaginacioun of fleshly lust and plaisir'(Almond 2003, 14). Just as much modern business is conducted on the golf course, so in the past hunting provided an opportunity for the aristocracy to undertake social and political networking and cement relationships in an informal setting.

In the high medieval period Ireland was essentially a land of two dominant cultures based on the existing Gaelic society and the incoming Anglo-Norman society. Political alliances were often cemented by marriages so that over time the two communities became genetically linked. This connection also extended to cultural assimilation which was unwanted by the English crown so that the 1367 Statutes of Kilkenny were designed to prevent further integration of the two communities (Otway-Ruthven 1993, 290-94). The archaeological evidence shows that the European emphasis on hunting as a symbol of aristocratic identity was also true in Ireland but that there were important differences in the approach taken between the two cultures. The most significant of these differences was the maintenance of fallow deer and deer parks by the Anglo-Normans, a fashion that was not adopted by the Gaelic aristocracy.

At Greencastle both red and fallow deer remains were identified. Interestingly it is not until the Phase 3 occupation level deposits dating to the thirteenth to fourteenth century that fallow deer are positively identified and that the proportion of deer bones rises to its maximum. The earlier phases date from prior to and during the construction of the masonry castle so that the evidence suggests that a currently unidentified deer park may have been incorporated into the landscape after the building of the castle and that it was then stocked with fallow deer, so making venison more accessible for the aristocrats. This highlights the cultural and social importance of hunting and of venison to the elite inhabitants of the castle. They expressed their lordly status by the act of hunting and by the provision of such valued foods. Furthermore the presence of a deer park would have expressed their ability to control the landscape, limiting non-elite access to the land and controlling the natural resources. The timescale shows that the fallow deer were associated with the elite use of the castle as a home rather than its use as a purely military fortification. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were turbulent times and Greencastle was repeatedly besieged, taken and retaken (O'Baoill 2007), despite which the inhabitants may have maintained herds of fallow deer as well as hunting for red deer and wild pig in the wider landscape.

At Kilteasheen there is evidence for at least three red deer represented by antler as well as a red deer skull, which confirmed that hunting took place rather than merely the collection of shed antlers. This deer may have been killed during a hunt sponsored by the bishop or one of his predecessors, or may have been a gift from a local member of the aristocracy. Although European and Irish medieval clergy were not encouraged to hunt, most high ranking ecclesiastics were from aristocratic backgrounds so that they would have hunted in their youth and many of them continued to indulge this habit (Thiebaux 1967; Cummins 1988, 10). In the case of Ireland three out of fourteen medieval parks identified by Murphy and O'Conor (2006) were owned by archbishops and the abbot of St Mary's in Dublin was accused of poaching in the royal forest of Glencree in 1291. It was common for medieval lords to give gifts of venison to their peers, subordinates or high-ranking members of the clergy (Cummins 1988, 260-65; Murphy and O'Conor 2006). Both hunting and gift exchange demonstrated power and were used to cement alliances in the medieval period so that either potential interpretation of the zooarchaeological evidence stresses the status of the inhabitants of Kilteasheen.

The most significant finding from the comparison of these case studies was the difference of attitude between Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lords to the hunting of deer. All known medieval deer parks are associated with Anglo-Norman lordships (Murphy and O'Conor 2006) and, as shown in Table 1, all archaeological fallow deer remains come either from Anglo-Norman castles or from urban sites. By contrast, to date no fallow deer remains have been recovered from any medieval Gaelic site. Over time other aspects of culture became shared between the two groups through intermarriage and political alliances so that for example, the Gaelic lords adopted aspects of courtly love into Irish literature (Leerssen 1995) and also adopted the use of stone castles (McNeill 2000, 157-64) and many of the Anglo-Normans adopted the Irish language and dress (Otway-Ruthven 1993, 290-94). By contrast, the Gaelic lords do not seem to

have developed an interest in deer parks or the keeping of fallow deer, a difference that may reflect differing views of the landscape and land ownership.

To the Gaelic lords with a tradition of cattle-raiding and successional disputes, the mountains, woodlands and bogs were an integral part of the landscape and the ability to range over these was vital in the petty warfare that was endemic in the medieval period (O'Conor 1998, 84-7, 97-101). In these struggles it was primarily the taking and holding of livestock, not land or buildings, that conferred honour and nobility upon the participants (Kelly 2000, 28) and it has been noted in this context that few masonry castles were built by the Irish prior to 1400 (O'Conor 1998, 97; McNeill 2000, 164), so that the Anglo-Norman concept of the castle with its associated military and domestic features would have been alien. By contrast, for an Anglo-Norman such as the clergyman and chronicler Giraldus (Leerssen 1995) these open landscapes needed to be tamed and civilised by being brought into the agricultural arena. Mileson (2007) has argued that the introduction of deer parks to England resulted in the landscape becoming physically divided, reducing access for the lower orders and providing a visible sign of the status of the landowner. This would also have been the case in Ireland. The enclosure of parks tamed the landscape, both by directly enclosing wilderness and common land and by pushing agricultural activity further out into previously unused land. The importance of taming the landscape in gaining control of the country was recognised in 1619 by Sir John Davies, the attorney-general in Ireland for James I, who wrote that if the original conquest of Ireland had been followed up with more development of 'Forrests, Chases, and Parkes' then Ireland would have been long since subdued (Leerssen 1995).

A similar situation arises with the animals within the landscape. Throughout European culture red deer were a symbol of wildness as they ranged over the open countryside, but they also had connotations of nobility, courage and authority. By contrast fallow deer being kept in parks were neither wild nor domesticated, having attributes of both (Cummins 1988, 68; Soderberg 2004; Morris 2005).

It can be suggested that for the Anglo-Normans, hunting red deer across the unenclosed countryside was both part of the taming of the wild and a noble pursuit whilst hunting fallow deer within parks provided exercise in a civilised environment. For the Gaelic aristocracy hunting the wild red deer was also associated with nobility and honour. Deer parks by contrast would have been associated with masonry castles and with Anglo-Norman culture and landholding so that the development of parks would have had negative connotations and the hunting of fallow deer would have been of little symbolic importance.

Conclusions
Landscape has long been seen as integral to the creation and maintenance of identity and more recently the importance of animals within that landscape has been recognised. In medieval Ireland the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman cultures both valued hunting as an attribute of nobility and honour. The Anglo-Normans hunted red deer but also created parks to enclose imported fallow deer for sport and table. By contrast the Gaelic Irish

took no interest in deer parks and continued to concentrate on hunting the wild red deer. The zooarchaeological results from Greencastle and Kilteasheen are typical of high-status medieval Anglo-Norman and Gaelic sites respectively. They demonstrate that despite a shared love of deer hunting and venison the differing approaches to how and where this was carried out are indicative of differences in the self-perceptions of the two cultures and in the maintenance of their separate identities.

Acknowledgements

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Table and Figure Captions
Figure 1: Sites mentioned in the text
Plate 1: Fallow deer bucks
Table 1: Irish medieval and post-medieval sites with archaeological evidence of fallow deer

Site	County/city	Dating	Zooarchaeologist and Reference
Medieval castles			
Ferrycarrig Ringwork	Wexford	13th-14thC	F. McCormick (McCormick 1998; McCormick Undated)
Ferns Castle	Wexford	13th-14thC	B. Whelan (Whelan 1979)
Maynooth Castle	Kildare	14-15th C and 15-17th C	E. Murray (Murray Undated)
Greencastle	Down	14thC	F. Beglane (Beglane 2007)
Trim Castle	Meath	13-15th	F. McCormick and E. Murray (McCormick and Murray Undated)
Carlow Castle	Carlow	13th C	E. Murray (O'Conor 1997)
Carrickmines Castle	Dublin	Medieval	E. Murray (Pers comm. S. Denham)
Medieval urban sites			
Arran Quay	Dublin City	Late 14th-early 15th	F. McCormick (McCormick Undated)
Peter St.	Waterford City	13thC	F. McCormick (McCormick 1997, 837)
Post-medieval castles			
Newtonstewart Castle	Tyrone	17th C	F. Beglane (Beglane 2005)
Glanworth Castle	Cork	Post-medieval	P. Crabtree and K Ryan (Crabtree and Ryan 2006)
Post-medieval urban sites			
Cornmarket St	Dublin City	16th C	McManus (McManus 1995)
Railway Square	Waterford City	17th C	V. Butler (Butler Undated)

Table 1: Preliminary listing of Irish medieval and post-medieval sites with archaeological evidence of fallow deer