

Barony Index of Cork Souterrain Discoveries up to 1977.

Barony	Number of Sites Thesis B	Number of Sites Thesis A	A + B Summary
Duhallow	45	8	53
Orrery and Kilmore	2	3	5
Fermoy	15	9	24
Condons and Clangibbon	4	3	7
Muskerry	113	51	164
Barretts	1	3	4
Barrymore	15	10	25
Kinatalloon	4	1	5
Bear	15	6	21
Bantry	2	2	4
Kinalmeaky	11	4	15
Kinalea	1	0	1
Imokilly	5	3	8
Carbery	50	38	88
Ibane and Barryroe	5	3	8
Courseys	1	1	2
Kinsale	1	1	2
Kerrycurrihy	13	1	14
Cork	0	3	3

In 1977 I compiled a corpus of site data created by several County Cork fieldworkers over a period of about 250 years. Some of the data gave detailed site information, some of it did not. To select site data which had sufficient data for the purposes of site classification and comparative description I organised the corpus data in to 2 sections i.e. an A Section and a B Section. The A Section, to a large extent, contained the more detailed and more workable data. It is interesting to note that those baronies which retain their tribal territory names, except for Barrymore, have the largest number of souterrains. Was Barrymore originally a land area which was partly *Fir Maighe* (Fermoy) territory and partly *Muscraige* (Muskerry)? How comprehensive is the fieldwork? It is difficult to answer this question. The Imokilly work is largely that of Rev Canon Patrick Power. The work for the eastern part of Muskerry was undertaken by P.J. Hartnett for his MA thesis. The work on Kinalmeaky was done by Sean P. O Riordáin for his thesis and work in Duhallow was done for M.J. Bowman's thesis. All were University College Cork archaeology postgraduate students during the first half of the 20th century. In this timeframe more of

such fieldwork was done by Col. James Grove White in mid to east North Cork and by others at individual parish level, some publishing in the Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society. All of this older work was absorbed by the Archaeological Inventory of County Cork through its desk and its fieldwork, undertaken from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

What was the east to west distribution density of Cork souterrains known up to 1977? West of a notional north/south boundary line from the eastern side of Duhallow to that of Ibane and Barryroe a total of 347 sites had been found. East of that line 98 had been discovered. Knowing that there was a prehistoric to early historic period boundary ditch (*Cliadh Dubh* i.e the Black Ditch) running north / south in what is now Cork County I wonder how close my notional boundary, as above, would be to it? Did it represent two distinct archaeological cultures, and if so to what extent, if at all, might the above souterrain density distributions have been affected by, or are reflective of, this?

It is worth analysing the barony data further and studying it at civil parish level within each barony. Some civil parishes will have a high concentration of sites and also a concentration of more than one souterrain architectural form. Some high density civil parish souterrain areas will cluster together, others will not. I suggest that what one is looking at in such circumstances are the remnants of both large monastic demesnes, consisting of their social focal points and farming areas, as well as their hermitages and cell lands as well as their tenant farmer lands, *drishanes* (thorny places), green deserts and other wilderness spaces, scattered, perhaps strategically, across differing zones, perhaps according to how the natural resources of the demesne were exploited across ploughland areas, grazing areas, orchard areas, quarries and mines, and laneways interconnecting them. When one thinks of large Greek monastic communities and their landscape settings, such as at Mount Athos, how interesting it is to look for similarities in the early christian archaeology of South Munster's peninsulas and in the proliferation of cell names (*Cill* i.e. Kil in English and usually associated with a saint's name) surviving as townland and civil parish names. One thinks of the story of *Muintir Barra* (the community of Barry) on the Sheep's Head peninsula and those followers of Cork's St. Finbarr (Barry) said to have established a religious community there in early medieval times.

From an other perspective they may represent early bishopricks, and the definition of such landscapes as their elements and attributes might have come together, combining cell lands and hermitage lands to form each paruchia, morphing in some cases perhaps in to bishopricks with the progress of time and patronage; a bishop leader with hermit/monk/priest in cells and hermitages within each tribeland, the clans of the tribe their internal social hierarchies from slave to lord becoming the 'faithful', hereditary chieftains becoming bishops, princesses becoming nuns, the founders becoming legendary saints as monastery scribes wrote of their histories and their journeys during the subsequent Middle Ages. In the earliest days how many of such 'bishops' were seen as prophets? How many were deacons and presbythers, priests and scholars? How many were designated as Ireland's apostles? How many had had a druidic education? What was the Gaelic world of Ibar, Erc, Molana, Ciaráin, Declán, Abbán and Gobnait, like? How did their visitations and prosletising at fairs and festivals traverse it and what routeways brought the surrounding populations, perhaps in great numbers, to hear them? Did their focal points grow up around the cashels and cahers of tribal kings? Did their *cluains* and deserts abut cahers and cashels? Did some clans and tribes absorb them while others rejected them?

