

Anglo-Saxon / Recycled Roman Glass and Early Medieval trade imports in Gaelic Munster.

[Needs editing and some information checks. Is some of it repetitive? Yes, reworking, rethinking, re-contextualising!]

There is an interesting lecture currently on Utube (2020) by Professor Ian Freestone entitled **The long 'Roman' glass industry.**

In the course of the lecture there is an image of a range of 6-7th century glass beads (and glass sticks) found at Eriswell Cemetery in Britain which have been researched and studied by James Peake.

It would be interesting to see a comparative scientific analysis of these items in the context of both the beads/glass material from the ringforts (both triple ramparted excavated by Prof. Sean P O Riordáin at Garranes and Ballycatteen Co. Cork during the 1940s and those discovered beneath Dunworly Head along the West Cork coastline in Southern Ireland. The number of "beads" recovered during the mid-19th century amounted to somewhere in the region of 800 pieces, though in reality some may have been chips or chipped beads and cylinders. (sticks), multi-coloured, suggesting them to have been woven of different colour strands of glass. At least some of the "beads" (i.e. Rev. Neligan's beads due to a pamphlet he wrote about them) were accessioned to the British Museum Collections and given a classification of Romano-British many years ago.

History and hagiography speak of the Garranes ringfort as the seat of a tribal people known as the Uí Eachach (Horse tribe of the horse ... cavalry?). They were within the lands of the larger more dominant Corcú Laoidhe tribe of West Cork/Carbery. In the 7th century AD or there about a newly expanding tribe moved southwards from the Fermoy locality and were known as the tribe of Eoghan (the Eoghanacht). The Muscraige people, old allies of the Corcú Laoidhe changed sides. They together intruded southwards towards

Garranes and the Bandon River. Garranes was a tribal century known as Rath Raithleann. Hagiography says that the father of Saint Finbarr (the fair headed) was a metalworker at Garranes. Archaeological work at Garranes in the 1940s revealed evidence of metalworking. Glass beads and fragments were founded at Garranes. This was an age when some of the finest inlaid ecclesiastical metalwork was undertaken in Ireland; a time when a degree of transition from Hibernian Monastic Christianity to Roman/Anglo-Saxon Christianity was taking place. It resulted in much turmoil, in a Culdee (Céile Dé i.e. people of God) major revolt and was brought to a climax at the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD at which the Hibernian Church lost 'the debate'. Perhaps it was sometime either before or after Whitby that an area of land beside what is now Kinsale Harbour (Co.Cork) came to be associated with something which would subsequently crystalise into the townland known as TiSaxon. In Gaelic it means Tí (tigh of teach meaning house ... monastic house?) of the Saxons. Was it also around this time that St. Berihert, some say was an Anglo-Saxon prince, arrived in the landscape of North Cork resulting in the formation of a tuath (petty kingdom) known as Tuath Saxon? Did something like 800 Saxon 'monks' arrive with him? Why so many? Were some military if his purpose was conquest and to establish an Anglo-Saxon Christianity (i.e. Roman faction) community? How many remained once the Tuath came to be? What was its original extent? In search of more land did Berihert and some of his followers move eastwards to the Glen of Aherlow in Co. Tipperary? Did they seek to conquer a Hibernian monastic settlement there beside 'Berihert's Pool'? If so, with what outcome? What happened subsequently?

The townland of TiSaxon abuts a townland known as Dunderrow. In Gaelic Dunderrow is *Dún Darú*. what does *Darú* mean? Is it a corruption or a misremembering of the Gaelic word for 'forgotten' or was it Dair, Deir, Dar, Der are all variations of a word used in Egyptian, Syrian, Greek Christianity to

denote a monastery? If so was this another example of a Dair / Dar 'Hiberno' monastery, similar to that on the island of Darinish on the Blackwater by Youghal? A place where early Canon Law was written down? In the case of Dunderrow did it mean the monastery located at the Dún or within the ramparts of the *Dún* i.e. the ringfort?

Alternatively, was the *Dún* forgotten, this being stated in the *Darú* suffix of the placename? In Gaelic (Munster Gaelic) was 'forgotten' loose enough a word to encompass the meaning 'abandoned'? If so, was such a process the reason why a creepway within its souterrain was blocked with two ceramic tiles (floor tiles?) each bearing the image of a cock? What was the symbolism, if any, in this motif? Was it Christian i.e. 'before the cock crows...'? If Dunderrow was once a subdenomination of a monastic property and its supporting lands, then was that how the ceramic tiles came to be in the souterrain? Did they come from the floor of a monastic house at TiSaxon? Did the settlement of TiSaxon begin at *Dún Darú* using a ringfort as its initial ecclesiastical precinct before support patronage allowed the construction of something larger erected in stone? Further west St. Fachtna (Rosscarbery monastery) began his preaching to the local community at a ringfort in the vicinity of his holy well and Burgatia townland/Bohonagh Townland. Was there a Hibernian monastery at *Dún Darú* before the arrival of the monastic community of TiSaxon? If so, with whole support and protection did they arrive? On ships from where and where did they disembark in the Kinsale locality?

There have been many interpretations speculations regarding the Dunworley "beads". Since the time of Ptolemy's Geography written in Alexandria and the 'ora maritima' about the island of Ireland contained in it, the Old Head of Kinsale was known to the Mediterranean World of Rome's Empire. Its eastern side leads into Kinsale Harbour where TiSaxon Townland is located.

The large west to east flowing inland river known as the Bandon enters the sea there. A short distance from the southern bank of the river and close to Kinsale lies Ballycatteen. A short distance (in Kilometers) from the northern bank of the river (and further westwards) lies Garranes ringfort. Was the Bandon River the conduit by means of which both Garranes and Ballycatteen received amphorae as well as glass fragments (including remelted Roman glass in beads and sticks) from abroad? The amphorae shards were either of Gaul or Roman Britain. It is of interest to note that one of the container types was used for the recycled glass trade and export, was amphorae.

On the western side of the Old Head of Kinsale lies Courtmacsherry Bay within which at its western side lies Timoleague Bay, a locality in which 6/7th century Saint Molagga founded a cell. Timoleague in Gaelic is Tí (house) of Molagga! just as Tí Saxon is Saxon House or House of the Saxons ('monks')? A great monastery would grow up at Timoleague in later centuries ... remembered in a great Gaelic poem. If *Sean Nós* (old way) singing echoed from the cell (Lyra (?) and its Community) of Molagga in the 6/7th century was it a sound familiar to the half-tones of semi-tones musical scales of what would later become the Arab world as the 7th century progressed, as its cultural antecedents from the southern Mediterranean, or more widely moved their Christianity elsewhere and perhaps towards the Atlantic as Alexandria fell? Or were such musical scales, and their ornamentations, already a part of the remnants of a Western Empire then collapsing How many ships upon these seas to Ireland's Southern shores at this time; to its monastic settlements along them and the rivers which led from them? What ship ferried *Colmán* to enable him to debate on behalf of the Hibernian 'Church' at Whitby in Northumbria?

Was he *Colmán* (*Mac Léníne* i.e. the son of *Léníne*) of Cloyne's great monastery / monastic city in East Cork or just a namesake or was it just a common personal name (see Dr. Paul Cotter's biography of *Colmán* of Cloyne) ? Was he baptised by St. *Declán* of Ardmore monastery among the people of the *Déise* tribe? What is being said in the stone frieze on the old abbey wall there? Is it just a preaching parable or was there another story locally known? Did the king of the neighbouring tribe to the west of the *Déise*, known as the *Uí Mochaille* invite *Colmán* from his cell at Muskerry Mitine near Donoughmore on the Lee to come found a great monastery among them? Did the bell of his *Cloigtheach* (bell house, round tower) ring out across the ridge of Barrykilla, Lurrig (*Lugh Ríocht?...Lughaid Lámh* (i.e. Lugh of the Long Arms... of the sun's rays), Lugh the great Celtic god of Gaul and Atlantic Europe?) the great menhir of its pagan past at the tribes *aonach* site falling to the ground...a subsequent folk tale saying *Colmán* leapt from the tower once built and levelled the menhir at the tribal meeting place leaving the imprint of his knees upon the stone! Was it an *aonach* site? At a holy well and medieval parish church by the western foot of Barrykilla ridge a well attended fair day continued up to the 19th century? When did it begin? How old its tradition? Were other *aonach* sites also places of significant interaction between early Christianity in Ireland and secular society, its lingering pagan traditions and associations? Might such explain the presence of that example of a Blackwater / Funcheon rivers type beehive and passage souterrain discovered at Carrignagroghera (Rock of the Crosses, Calvary or Gallows) at the western, tail, end of the ridge upon which Carn Hillfort prominently situated lies just to the south of the modern town? If that architectural type of Cork souterrain indicates that it was constructed for use by a Christian religious person, then would it be logical to assume that the reason for its presence had to do with the functions assigned to the hillfort by the local tribal people i.e. the *Fir Maighe*? In south

east Limerick was something of a similar nature taking place at Cush (excavated by O Riordáin) during the 6th or 7th century or earlier?

If many ships of cargo, as well as passengers, plied the sea routes from the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic shores of Spain/Portugal, Morocco (?) Gaul as well as southern Britain on a regular basis, then what landing posts, trading posts jetties, wharfs, quays, beacons, settlements, fishing villages etc. awaited them? Were some strongly stated defences? Was piracy an issue or a threat of something larger, an imminent or potential danger of a fleet landing? Was it economic maritime, defence or other reasons which caused so many headlands along the Southern Irish coastline to have *Dún* placenames, some with promontory forts, from Waterford to the southern shoreline of the Dingle Peninsula? Was a defensive statement being made in many cases? Was there a fortress mentality as piratic raids took place in a socially collapsing Roman Britain? Or were things more relaxed than that?

In Gaelic Dunworley/Dunworly is *Dún Úrluinge*. I take this to mean the *Dún* of the Ships Defensive Wall. Why? Fr. Dinneen's Irish-English Dictionary gives a defensive wall as one of the meanings for the word *Úr*. It is interesting to speculate that it may be a corruption of the Latin word *Murus* (wall) translated into Gaelic and surviving over the centuries in the language up to the 1920/30s when Fr. Dinneen recorded its meaning. The word *Luinge* I take to refer to ships! Though modern spelling is slightly different.

If my interpretation of the placename is accurate then the headland and townland which carry this name remembers something to do with a defensive wall, and ships, i.e. ships from abroad as well as from home. The headland has a promontory fort which in its relationship to the coastline and later defensive features connecting to the mainland are somewhat, similar, in

some ways miniature, to that at the seaward end of the Old Head i.e. a place called *Dún Cearmna* which is the once fortified tip of the promontory. On the Old Head, on a windy stormy day it can be difficult to withstand the wind when a gale blows. Beneath the Old Head there is a sea tunnel from east to west which brings one into Courtmacsherry Bay. Perhaps, in a flimsy vessel under sail, it would be easier and safer to use the tunnel (lighter, small craft) to transfer cargo into Timoleague Bay and monastery from the Bandon River side of the Old Head? and berth the larger ocean going vessel at Sandy Cove?

In strong gales how many ships expecting to enter by Kinsale were blown off course and around the Old `head into Courtmacsherry Bay? How many might have attempted to reach for land or the nearest cove in blown further along the coast? How many wrecks across the centuries, through to the 18th century AD, and how many cargoes scattered against the rocks? Did this happen to a cargo of Roman recycled glass, perhaps sometime in the 7th century AD? Glass for structures at TíSaxon or for metalworkers along the Bandon River? If so, was that event the origin of Rev. Neligan's "beads"?

Since the time of their discovery along a particular part of the beach at Dunworley many have interpreted the beads as being part of the cargo of a pirate shipwreck or something similar. Some have written about such events and indeed that part and west of it of Cork's southern shoreline was a haven for 16th and 17th century pirates who made the annual 'pirate round' to Barbary (Morocco to Tunis). It was also the place of a shipwreck of African slaves found for America 18th century. All and other scenarios are potential explanations for the origin of the Dunworley "beads".

But, why Romano-British as a classification in the British Museum accessions register? Was this correct and more accurate than any other

explanation or interpretation offered at the time? Have they been reassessed? Might they be Merovingian i.e. Frankish, in origin?

Given the expertise of current scholarship and scientific ability today, would such questions i.e. were they Roman Anglo-Saxon or later, be answered? Could the primary sources for some of the glass be determined; from not only the Dunworley items but also the Garranes and Ballycatteen material in conjunction with them? If the outcome was that all are of 7th century origin and of recycled Roman glass, then what potential knowledge discovery regarding contact in terms of trade and the movement of people and ideas, lies within these items, the ringfort/dún monuments associated with them and the geographical area which connects them together?

References: Sean P. O Riordáin = See my Bibliography under Data Tables.

Queries:

1. What is the history of glass making along the Barbary coastline? What is known of the 18th century African slave trade, of glass beads and tribal peoples there? If the Dunworley beads were part of the cargo of a slave trading vessels on its way to America colonies, having called at Cobh for provisions before making the Atlantic crossing, does this explain the discovery of the beads? Were they part of a cargo from a 17th century, or earlier, pirate ship. During the 17th century Cork Harbour was a haven of piracy until a Dutch fleet resolved the problem for a time in order to allow Dutch trading ships to frequent the quays at Cork City. Also during this century the Pirate Round from West Cork to Barbary in Africa was an annual event. About 100 pirate ships blockaded the mouth of Cork Harbour for a short period during the 17th century. The First Earl of Inchiquin (later of Rostellan on Cork Harbour) and his son were captured by Algerian pirates after leaving the harbour. Was the carrying of a cargo of beads and slaves a common practice at this time?

2. The world of *pobals* and *muintirs*, how did these people group names survive and how old are they? Did the *muintir* of *Muintir Barra*, Sheep's Head peninsula, West Cork, begin as a hermitage founded by a group of monks dedicated to St. Finbarr of Cork who died circa 610 AD? How long genetically do such groups, along with their landscape identities and associations, survive?
3. In the 7th century AD the power of the *Corcú Laoidhe* went into decline. Hibernian Christianity is in upheaval and Anglo-Saxons appear in South Munster?
4. In thecentury Emperor Justinian fails to re-unite the East and West parts of the Roman Empire. In thecentury the southern part of the Italian peninsula is Byzantine.
5. The 16th century saw the end of the Medieval Millennium which had begun with the fall of Rome. It ended its great age in Ireland with the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII.
6. St Finbarr's father: What did metalworker/artisan or smith mean in practical terms in his day? Did he make specific items in metal for the church as well as jewellery, weapons and tools? In the case of jewellery and religious artefacts were they inset with glass or gemstones and other coloured stones semi-precious or not?
7. What other exotica in terms of materials sourced from very far afield e.g. originating within trade contacts during and after the days of the Empire's floruit? Did materials often arrive as part of cargos landed at the Old Head or a cove nearby? Did they come from the remnants of Roman Britannia along with recycled glass at the request of artisans along the Bandon River?

Was Egypt the origin or source of some items? Was Egyptian faience and Afghan lapis lazuli, used to give colour and lustre to important metalwork

pieces? Did such items originate in Roman Egypt, at Alexandria in Egypt where Ptolemy composed his Geography circa 150 AD and referencing the Old Head?

How did the breakdown, disassembly of the Empire in the West and in North Africa and in Britannia unfold? What connections between the Old Head and Garranes or Ballycatteen by the late 6th or early 7th century AD?

Was contact and trade direct, or was it via various trading stages across the Mediterranean? How old, well known and well established were the sea routes travelled from the Eastern Mediterranean including north west Africa to the Atlantic and its islands? What ports in both seas welcomed mariners en route? If items found in South Munster originated, for trading purposes, in the workshops of the city of Alexandria, that great port of the Roman, Greek and Egyptian worlds, did other elements of that world, such as persons connected with mystery and cargo cults (see research by Dr. Richard Carrier?) of the Mediterranean, travel as passengers in the trade vessels of the Roman Sea and indirectly or directly connect through early monastic foundations along its coasts to Western Europe, the Atlantic and its islands? Did the early Christian monasticism of Egypt's Sketis desert travel such routes?

As the 7th century AD unfurled did Berber Christians leave for Atlantic shores? Had other sects left in earlier times, as missionaries or otherwise, and become noted by the Berber bishop and writer Tertullian at Roman Carthage? Did Alexandrine Christians do the same, some flooding into the Byzantine lands of the southern of the Italian peninsula along with members of the Jewish faith? In the hagiographical details one reads of early Irish saints how many arrived en route to Rome by ship at ports similar to Otranto and if so how influenced by the Byzantine world and its Christianity as it then was, its focal points and ultimate destinations for those seeking the lands where Christ once walked? How did the expansion of the Arab world

spreading across the Mediterranean Sea to its northern shores affect all this and its the maritime realities of its trade as well as the religious circumstances arising in relation to travel? Was it no longer possible as this happened in the mid 7th century to travel to the Holy Lands, to Antioch in Roman Syria Maritima, to Constantinople, to Alexandria, as a major portion of Spain gradually came under Muslim rule, a land of emerging gardens and alcasabas? How was maritime trade and access to and from the Atlantic affected by Muslim shipping? If it was, did this bring an end to imports of certain types of recyclable glass (and perhaps faience and lapis lazuli?) from the Mediterranean world? Did it change the sources of glass making and materials as used in the Atlantic early church and by its social elites?

Therefore, what was going on at the site (sites) in the years when the father of Finbarr, founder of the great monastery and demesne at Cork, was a metalworker? What kind of metalworker was he? Did he manufacture with his hands and with helpers religious items for the wealthier monasteries in the hinterland? If Finbarr himself died circa 610 AD then what was happening in the local Gaelic world of trade and importation during the life span of his father? What demand for jewellery and church plate / altar vessels, escutcheons, clasps etc to decorate the boards and panels of the bindings of hymnals and Gospel books, as well as other items of religious significance such as reliquaries or crosiers? What demand for rocks to grind down to create pigments to mix to vibrant colours to illuminate such books? How valuable was a pigment of lapis lazuli for religious iconography at this time? Was such material used in South Munster before the 7th century or was its arrival in any way connected to the arrival of Anglo-Saxon monasteries?

How wealthy were some of the Hibernian monasteries (pre and post Whitby) becoming as their pastoral/ community influence became deeply ingrained, and as seamless integration of the monastic with the secular took place

across several generations, children of the hereditary Gaelic elites becoming ecclesiastics, some travelling abroad for training, study and cultural influences before returning to found new temples and cells and hermitage communities in their tribal homelands, infusing the pagan with a new folk Christianity, one which would outlast a millennium and more, an infusion into the genealogies / DNA of the Gaelic world, its identity and psyche? How economically wealthy and culturally influenced from the Mediterranean, as well as Atlantic Western European worlds, in terms of material and conspicuous wealth goods, in terms of the cultural arts, were its elites and 'middle class' levels as a result of trade and multifaceted interactions? How much of a fusion and cultural moulding of old cultural elements from the centuries of the world of the Roman Empire had infused into what subsequently became 'distinctively' Gaelic and an unconscious part of the psyche of its language and identity as passed on from generation to generation?

Was he a specialised craftsman or someone who could his hand to anything or both? Was the Garryduff gold bird discovered in a Cork ringfort an example of the type and themes of work produced by such metalworkers? Were some *Monaig* (an artisan in lower monastic (monk) orders and with a family) and their sons and daughters raised or educated by the church of the time? What was the varying scale of intake into its hierarchy, what communities (what *muintir* or *pobal* groupvillage group?) sponsored a child for a religious vocation? How as this remembered? Was that child's life ever memorialised in some way and the *pobal* or *munitir* acknowledged in some way?

