

Rediscovering the composition of early monastic estates in South Munster, and their development or abandonment.

If one were to attempt to approximate the extent of an average size early medieval monastic estate/demesne in Cork or Waterford e.g. Ardmore, Lismore, Cork, Donickmore, Kinneigh, Roscarberry, Abbeymahon, what size, how many acres, what range of land use types, what geomorphology, what natural resources including rivers, streams, sea coasts, soils, geology, wildlife, vegetation would have been enclosed in any of the above estates /demesnes? What scale of awareness, of knowledge, skills, training was required to fully exploit these resources for the benefit and success of the monastery its members in religious orders, its rural community and field workers as well as any artisans and merchants in a 'township' (burgh and its *botháns*) attached to it? Burghs and Botháns? Roscarberry's Bohonagh and Burgatia?

Was the original size of the Kinneigh estate (West Cork) equivalent to the early medieval bishoprick which occupied this locality i.e. that of Kinneigh? Did the monastic lands wrap around, wrap together a clustering of ogham stones, souterrains (of varying architectural types and functions), *cluain* hermitages, lyras, deserts, drishanes, holy wells, cells and early oratories and places of worship and pilgrimage? Did each demesne have its own distinct man-made topography developed slowly over the centuries of its existence and did its landscape contain the heritage of that monastic landscape's history? From an age of the first clearance of woodland to an age of multiple farms (*farrans*) and their surrounding fields to hermitages specialising in certain types of agriculture or horticulture, milling, certain types of manufacture, certain types of construction work and quarrying etc., was there a distinct history in each demesne and how did it reflect the character, origins, composition and influences of its people groups? To what extent was it an economic, landowning corporate entity? How did it compare with its contemporaries in Britain and Western Europe of the time ...or of further afield to the east?

Using place names, if in a majority of cases their original meanings can be recovered from their Anglicised forms, how might one reconstruct a 'map', a 'plotting' of the social and economic landscapes within the boundaries of such demesnes? If one takes the view that such demesne landscapes, their internal land units, are a record of both the historical development of their society as well as of the landscape occupied by it, then to what extent can these demesnes be analysed by time layers of development? What existed before the first intrusion of early monasticism into one of these territories? How and at what rate did they acquire land initially, and what route-ways, what agriculturally worked, what foraging and fishing and hunting grounds, what habitation structures and their forms, what villages or focal points, what ritual and spiritual places, what folk traditions and local myths etc existed? How did the first cells and *cluains* impact on all this? How were they and their new religious teaching absorbed by all this? How much landscape and economic development had taken place by the 7th century and what was its character, its influences and orientation? What was the landscape like at this time if one travelled through it?

How might one travel? By boat along rivers and some tributary streams? By land across individual *tuatha* lands and with whose permission? Who made the roads and routeways and how linked and extensive were some of them? Was the *Rian Bó Phadraigh* from Ardmore to Cashel an ecclesiastical 'highway' built; as some have understood it? What branches connected to it and where did they run? How was movement around and across monastic demesnes achieved? If the central market place of the demesne was beside the burgh of the precincts of a monastic 'city', a gathering place for commerce as well as several other forms of social event such as festivals, fairs and law courts. Who made the bothars and bothareens and why? Were they a consequence of the land development schemes of the monastic demesne, the arteries of its daily social and economic activity? For a whole variety of historic and economic reasons, through many centuries, to what extent, once 'laid-in', did they remain as the principal routes for the movement of goods and people across old forgotten demesne landscapes / bishopricks in many a rural setting up to recent times? How may modern roads lie over them? How many abandoned or erased? To what extent did agricultural factors influence the original choices of locations for these bothars (means cow-ways) and bothareens (meaning little or lesser branch cow-ways)? To what extent did a network of bothars and bothareens link farms and their attached lands as well as 'outfarm' lands together? To what extent did the bothareens of a farmland link to the bothars which ran through a demesne to a cross-roads at the market place in the burgh of the precincts of a large monastic centre (e.g. Cloyne 'where four great roads of Ireland met'?) ? Who laid in these networks? Did

bothars lead from one monastic demesne centre to another, carts as well as cattle drovers very visible at certain times of the year? Did the bothareens link the interior infrastructure of each demesne? Did the annual movements of livestock and other agricultural products lead to the need for cow-ways, for the use of drovers? Did the movement of live-sock from one part of a farm to another necessitate the creation of bothareens? It is of interest to look at the configuration and shapes of field system boundaries on the first edition of the Ordnance 6 inch maps for Cork. To what extent do bothareens flank, in circular fashion, a hill or hillock; which may or may not have a ringfort on top e.g. Aghlish civil Parish or Rath townland north of Youghal. What bothars were they connected to and to where did the bothars lead? How many lost laneways are there with or without field traces? What little laneways to graveyards and to now abandoned medieval parish churches are lost or barely remembered locally such as where the hearse was shouldered along a lane followed by mourners; sometimes to follow the *Deiseal* (to the right hand side) tradition around the graveyard's inner perimeter before arriving at the gravesite? How many early graveyards were circular rather than square and why? How many remnants of trackways from ringforts to medieval churches? Rath townland (above Youghal)? Were some bothareens created in tandem with the creation of ringforts as a means of linking them to bothars for travel and communication as much as for economic purposes? What was the role of the travelling artisan on these bothars and bothareens? What Brehon Laws governed rules of hospitality at homesteads or hostelries along these highways and byeways? What news, stories and songs travelled along them in the minds of journeymen carpenters, tinsmiths, pilgrims and others?

Did all tracks and trails, all *bothars* (roads) and bothareens (laneways) ultimately begin and end at the precincts of the *cluain* hermitage or cell? Were these places initially situated beside the residences of local petty kings and local clan leaders? Did some *cluains* evolve as a consequence of wealthy patronage or inheritances of their members, of their secular patrimonies? Were some *cluains* places of artisans such as textiles and woodwork, others places of horticulturalists, others places of cattle or sheep or horse or goat or pig, of beekeepers, of fishermen, others of poets, musicians and law givers? How much forestry was cleared and to what Ordnance datum height? What mountain wasteland was made productive or developed for booleying, what extents of bog or marshland were reclaimed? What systems of 'field' enclosure were created and how constructed? Of soil and vegetation or drystone masonry? Was there a seamless absorption of *lios* or *rath*, whether ever used for habitation or not, into the land portfolio of the demesne? If such monastic estates were the social and economic engines behind the development of the Irish landscape, its extraction from nature, then was the naming and zoning of individual places within the demesne the outcome, to a large extent, of the activities of these corporate entities?

After the 7th century and the Whitby Synod what changed? Did a 'Golden Age' of monastic Ireland ('the holy land of Ireland' from the poem **lc am of Irland**, 'prey stranger come and dance with me in Ireland'...) really come into being? If so why and how? Did certain monasteries open up to incoming teachers and students, did its monastery schools develop significantly, did they acquire a reputation for learning and did their scholars and students return to many distinct roles in Anglo-Saxon Britain and at the royal courts of Western Europe? If so was there an increase in the land requirements, wealth and prestige of some of these monasteries, the ones which rose to prominence? Was there a need for accommodation for those seeking lodgings as well as those required to provide services and food supplies etc.? Was there a need for a managerial hierarchy, perhaps based on local royal legitimacy as bishop, ranging from occupiers of *Cill* lands, to *Cluain* (hermitage) lands, each incorporating *rath* and *lios* and other 'enclosure form' spaces? Was there an increase in demand for enclosed spaces across demesnes? If so then was it this demand which gave rise to a large scale increase in the number of 'ringforts' built from this time forward; if such an interpretation of 'ringfort' dating evidence can be interpreted in this way?

What impact did Viking raids and settlements have on these monastic estates? How many existing farms and homesteads were taken and occupied as Viking farms, their traditional occupants enslaved or killed or banished? How much destruction was done initially? How long did it continue? How much absorption of these traders and raiders and their settlements took place; and were relations tense at times? How many were welcomed by local chieftains and abbots as mercenaries and rewarded with local land? Did time bring a seamless absorption into the church as well as the society of the demesne lands? During the initial phases of Viking arrival

did the occupants of *cluains* and cell clusters retreat to the safety of the central monastic precincts and its burgh? Did some of these grow in size as a result? Did some become more cenobitic rather than semi-cenobitic? Did small coastal and riverine settlements migrate to the larger monastic centres for protection? What defences, what look-out places, and warning systems were needed? How many attacks did it take before precautions were taken? How did the monastic estate of Cloyne respond after several attacks?