This volume is concerned with making source-based comparisons to discover what is unique about urban places and what is generic, how those categories of urban life interacted and changed over time and why that might be so. It tries to broaden the ways in which the historic towns atlas might be used, to consider morphology as a social process in the making of urban Ireland. In this way it is an attempt to grapple with what Estyn Evans described, in another context, as the question of 'personality'.
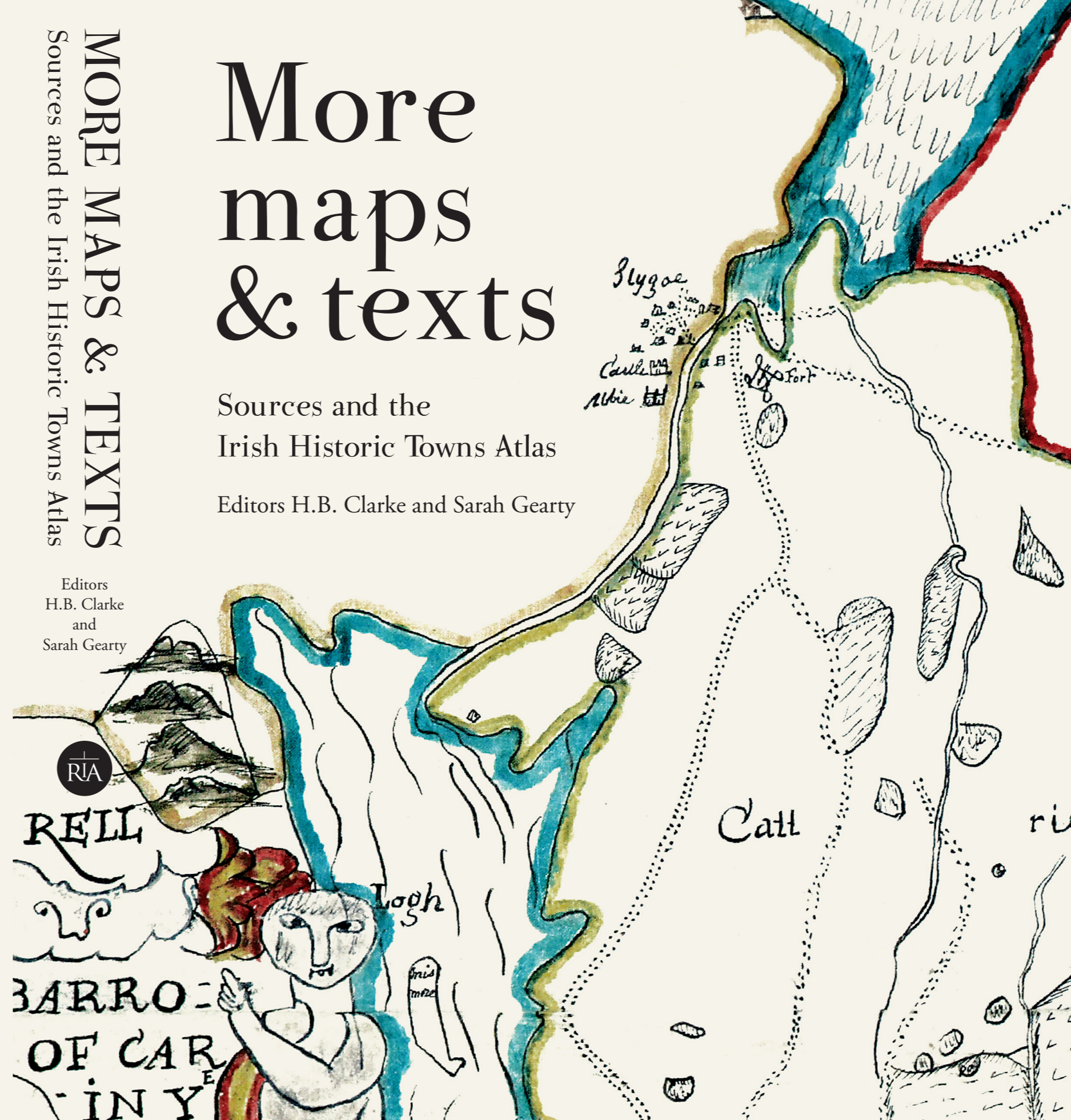
MORE MAPS & TEXTS
Sources and the Irish Historic Towns Atlas

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Editors H.B. Clarke and Sarah Gearty

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This volume is both similar to and different from its predecessor *Maps and texts: exploring the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (2013). Like the latter it is based on a series of annual IHTA seminars (2012 to 2014) and follows the same format. This collection of essays is different in that the emphasis is on cartographical and historical sources, their nature and utility. An introductory essay deals with a selection of standard sources used in the IHTA but is applicable for the study of Irish towns generally.

The bulk of the volume is structured into three chronological divisions. First come monastic proto-towns and Viking towns. Particular attention is paid to environmental factors favouring early urban development, to the meaning of placenames, and to the controversial topic of 'monastic towns'. Derry and Limerick have been chosen as case studies.

A second group relates to the formative period from the late twelfth to the early eighteenth century. Colonisation by foreigners originating mainly in the neighbouring island is a major theme of necessity, whether Anglo-Normans to start with or English and Scots in the early modern period. In addition there is an essay based on a sample of four gaelicised towns and another featuring the perspective of one of Ireland's most prominent historians of art.

Thirdly comes a selection of town-related developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the built environment was often revolutionised by improving landlords, by canals and railways, and by military barracks. For the mid-nineteenth century one of the most informative sources consists of valuation maps and accompanying data — sources that present technical challenges that are outlined with great clarity.

The contributors to this volume have used the IHTA as the basis for their studies, casting a fresh and, on occasion, a more critical eye over what heretofore has been achieved. *More maps and texts: sources* illustrates the potential of the atlas as a resource for further study, teaching and learning across several disciplines, while also making it own distinctive contribution to the wider field of Irish urban history.

4. Religion

Catherine Swift

In 2013, an important review of the literature on the monastic towns of Ireland by Howard Clarke was published, using the new data compiled and highlighted by the rolling programme of IHTA studies of individual towns. His conclusions were clearly stated:

> If the concept of proto-town can be accepted … the early Irish (Christian) ecclesiastical sites are best regarded as a species of that essentially intellectual construct, as Anngret and Katharine Simms classified them back in 1979 … the primary dynamic was of a religious nature, operating in some kind of ceremonial complex. The so-called Irish monastic town was not an isolated, purely insular phenomenon but an aspect of urban origins in many parts

of Europe and beyond. When we ask ourselves at what stage did the places in this sample of eight become primarily urban, the answer can be found in the relevant IHTA fascicles. A group of five located in the more forcibly colonized parts of the island were promoted as towns in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. These were Downpatrick, Kells, Kildare, Kilkenny and Trim. In every case, a powerful aristocratic family of foreign origin was the agent of change … The other two examples from Ulster – Armagh and Derry – became towns only in the early seventeenth century in a programme of plantation … This leaves Tuam as something of an exception… Just as at the Anglo-Norman colonial sites, the primary dynamic towards genuine urbanisation was the castle rather than the much older monastic and episcopal centre … The lesson of Tuam is that 'monastic town' is a contradiction in terms that should henceforth be excised from all archaeological and historical discourse.[1]

Irish 'monastic towns', however, have refused to die and the formulation has continued in use although the tone of conviction, apparent in earlier IHTA fascicles,[2] is now often absent. In 2010 for example, Tomás Ó Carragáin wrote: 'Whether or not modern scholars decide to categorise these settlements as towns, it seems clear that contemporaries understood them to be representations of the great cities of Christendom'.[3] More succinctly, a recent discussion of early medieval Irish archaeology concluded: 'While some have supported the idea of the "monastic town", it has also generated heated opposition'.[4] In this short paper, my aim is to provide a broad overview of certain themes that have marked this debate and the relevance of the IHTA data to these.

As noted by many, Irish scholars have tended to use a *Kriterienbündel* approach to processes of urbanisation, using up to twelve potential indicators of town status. I shall confine this examination of the Irish monastic town model to three of the most frequently attested: evidence for manufacturing, evidence for trade and evidence for large and hierarchically defined populations not engaged in full-time agrarian pursuits. Because of constraints of space, I shall not discuss the biblical and liturgical influences on the layout of Irish ecclesiastical sites, beyond noting that interesting new material on this aspect of the monastic town debate has recently been collated and analysed by Melanie Maddox and David Jenkins.[5]

The emphasis placed by Clarke on outside influence in town formation is particularly interesting given the views of an early author on the subject, the geographer R.A. Butlin, in 1979. Previous writers such as Kathleen Hughes and Donnchadh Ó Corráin had used the term 'monastic town' loosely to refer to large monasteries but without defining these in detail. Their descriptions appear to have been influenced by Counter-Reformation writers such as the seventeenth-century antiquarian, Geoffrey Keating, who could credit even the relatively minor site of Mungret in Co. Limerick with a population of fifteen hundred monks. Butlin, however, was concerned rather with the history of Irish town formation, the implications of British scholarship that sought to examine Anglo-Saxon contributions to urbanism and the 'general theory … of secondary urban generation resulting from primary diffusion of urban form and organisation'. He explicitly rejected what he described as the Irish 'imported urbanism only' thesis and highlighted instead the potential contribution of some of the larger monastic settlements to what he characterised as 'pre-urban nuclei or proto-urban sites' of pre-Anglo-Norman Ireland. In putting forward this hypothesis, he was predominantly concerned with population size, suggesting that such communities could have attracted 'quite substantial numbers of students and probably lay farmers and craftsmen'.[6]

Evidence for manufacturing

The existence or otherwise of craftsmen has been a constant theme in the discussion of Irish monastic towns by both proponents and dissenters. Charles Doherty, the scholar who did most to develop Butlin's original construct, concentrated on ideologies of celestial cities, but he also drew attention to documentary evidence for a tenth- or eleventh-century comb-maker who worked in antler at the side of a roadway in Kildare.[7] Excavated evidence for craft activity figures largely in the papers by the archaeologist John Bradley.[8] Contrariwise, the historian Colmán Etchingham, using exclusively documentary evidence, does not believe in the economic importance of artisanal activity in eleventh- and twelfth-century Kells and Armagh.[9] Different geographical foci have something to do with these varying perspectives, but they also reveal certain inherent characteristics of archaeological versus documentary evidence for church settlement in early medieval Ireland.

On the documentary side, as Anngret Simms pointed out, the contemporary records for individual church sites are typically made up of annals and genealogies, although these can be supplemented, to some extent, by prescriptive accounts drawn from legal texts.[10] Irish annals are, however,

generally brief and many (certainly prior to the tenth century) are simply the obits of church leaders or brief notices of raids and battles, providing little detail on settlement form. This explains the reliance by commentators on the later annals (which have more detailed entries), on eleventh- and twelfth-century transaction records inserted into the Books of Kells and Durrow, and on the narrative accounts of particular foundations provided in a variety of saints' Lives. (It is widely recognised, however, that an unknown percentage of these post-date the original foundations by a considerable margin.) Given this relative paucity of textual information, it is hardly surprising that documentary commentary is often generalised and that the classic historical view of earlier forms of Irish religious settlement is still largely derived from the lengthy seventh-century *Life of Columba* by Adomnán with its many references to daily life on Iona. The relevant detail was originally summarised by William Reeves:

> The monastery proper was the space enclosed by the *vallum* and embraced the *ecclesia*, *refectorium, coquina* and *hospitia*, lining the *platea*; the *armarium* and probably the *officina fabri*; together with the furniture and utensils belonging to the several departments of the institution. Its extent was not great and it seems incapable of receiving many strangers; yet a visitor might be in the monastery for several days without having been seen by the abbot … Within the enclosure was a *plateola* or *faithche* surrounding or besides which were the lodgings, *hospitia*, of the community. They appear to have been detached huts … There was a smithy, probably inside the enclosure; and in an institution where timber was so generally used, there must have been a carpenter's workshop. All of these buildings were embraced by a rampart and fosse, called the *vallum* which, in other Irish monasteries, was of a circular figure and was intended more for the restraint than the security of the inmates. It is doubtful whether the cemetery was within the *vallum* … Outside the *vallum*, were the various offices and appointments subsidiary to the monastery; as the *bocetum* with its cows; the *horreum* with its grain; the *canaba* with its appurtenances; the *molendium* with its pond and mill-steam; the *proelium* with its horse and cart; and the *portus* with its craft of various sizes.[11]

As Reeves remarked in a footnote to this account: 'the Four Masters at 1203 give the name *baile* "town" to this conventual establishment, in accordance with the practice which is observed in many ancient Lives, of calling a monastery *civitas*'. This is, however, somewhat deceptive as the closest analogue appears to be the agricultural unit known as a *baile feara-inn* or modern townland rather than a nucleated urban space or town. The first records of these townland units, in twelfth-century charters, contain names indicating that they were often occupied by extended families sharing a common ancestor and included associated farmlands, comprising individual holdings (which could be periodically re-allocated) as well as areas of rough grazing and other landscape features held in commonage.

In contrast to historical documents, which are often widely dispersed in time and space, archaeological research is invariably localised and, as the study of material remains, is inevitably much concerned with questions of manufacture. In recent years, craft activity has been noted on a number of ecclesiastical sites and Michael Ryan's 1988 view that evidence for fine metalwork is common on church sites still appears to hold true,[12] although the 1,300 fragments of lignite bracelets and associated manufacturing debris found in Armoy, Co. Antrim are something of a puzzle. If these indeed were produced in a monastic setting, it is hard to understand why religious authorities would have permitted production of such items within (apparently) its central religious core. (It is not, however, entirely clear that Armoy was necessarily an ecclesiastical establishment at this particular stage in its history.)[13]

A more recent excavation at Clonfad in Co. Westmeath produced 1.5 tonnes of metallurgical residue, found between two large concentric ditches and linked to them by C14 dating. Analysis suggests that this represents large-scale and highly specialised brazing and iron-working, involved in the creation of multiple iron hand-bells, used to call people to community prayer. A religious site at Clonfad is recorded sporadically in annals from the sixth to the later ninth centuries and the placename is used for a parish church in the fourteenth-century taxation lists. The excavator has concluded that this discovery represents strong evidence for specialist production on religious sites on a scale sufficient for trade and exchange.[14]

Such striking evidence has not been found on the larger, defended settlements seen as potentially having an economic impact on their hinterlands, which were originally identified as the characteristic pre-Anglo-Norman monastic town.[15] However, there has been little extensive excavation of religious sites within the urban confines of most Irish towns and it is hard to imagine that situation changing in the medium term.

Irish archaeologists generally avoid digging on functioning religious sites where Christian burials might be disturbed. As a result, research on church settlements tends to be focused either on abandoned sites or, in recent years, on previously unknown discoveries revealed by motorway or pipeline construction. Where excavation occurs in 'monastic towns' such as Downpatrick, Armagh, Kilkenny or Trim it is normally limited to relatively small areas in streets or buildings, which means that there is little information on original buildings or settlement layout.[16] At the same time, ongoing pressures on ecclesiastical income means that archaeological investigation of functioning religious buildings is often deemed a low priority. It is only when urban churches are seen primarily as tourist and heritage sites, as for example at Ennis friary,[17] that substantial and state-sponsored excavation has taken place. In such a context, it is hard to believe that Ireland will see a major programme of excavation such as has marked the investigation of the episcopal complex with associated graves at the south-western Scottish site of Whithorn.[18] It is noteworthy, indeed, that so much of the archaeological discussion on 'monastic towns' has concentrated on Clonmacnoise, where substantial work was undertaken in preparation for a state-run heritage centre and which, despite its national importance and apparent size in the early medieval period, entirely failed to become the nucleus of a later town.

Of course, all commentators acknowledge that craft activity must have taken place on larger religious sites, for monumental remains such as high crosses and graveslabs still remain visible and artefacts such as illuminated manuscripts and prestigious metalwork survive. Such items required skills to produce and their creation involved the movement of goods, often from far afield. At Armagh, for example, craftsmen produced 'reliquaries in iron and bronze along with amber, enamel and glass',[19] while vellum for the Book of Kells required the skins of some 175 calves, quite apart from the various plants, lichens and minerals to make the ink and paints.[20] The question is — what processes gave rise to the wealth necessary to create these items and what was the ultimate motivation of the manufacturers?

A valid criticism of monastic town proponents is that they treat craft on church sites purely in terms of commercial transactions. It seems equally likely, in fact, that it was understood by those involved as another way in which to glorify the God who was worshipped in communal liturgy up to nine times in every twenty-four hours (including three sessions during the hours of darkness). Their artisanship, while it clearly required resources, did not necessarily involve redistribution or even profits. When the king of the Cenél Conaill sent relics from Derry to Kells in 1090 for

enshrinement, along with twenty-seven ounces of silver, was he paying the craftsmen involved or merely providing them with the metallurgical means to create a thing of beauty, matching other reliquaries produced in the same era? In twelfth-century Tuam, royalty was clearly involved in sponsoring fine metalwork, sculpture and even church buildings; we have no evidence, unfortunately, as to whether the craftsmen involved were permanent residents of the settlement or whether the royal patron and/or the local church authorities paid them for their work.

This in turn raises the question: who were the people involved in the creation of manufactured goods on ecclesiastical sites? Were they, as Butlin surmised, laymen or were they professed religious, similar to those early members of the Lindisfarne community credited in a mid-tenth-century colophon as scribes, bookbinders and metalworkers?[21] The evidence of an addendum to the *Tripartite Life* at roughly the same date agrees that at least some Irish church craftsmen may have been ecclesiastics, for that text identifies members of Patrick's household as his three smiths (*gobaind*) — including, interestingly, one who made the handbell known as Finnfáidech — his three workers in bronze and other metals (*cerda*) and his three embroideresses (*druinecha*). The description adds that similar personnel existed in the tenth-century household of the leader of Armagh.[22] Another craftsman, Tuathal the *saer* (builder in wood and stone), was honoured with a cross-marked graveslab at Clonmacnoise of the type used by ecclesiastics,[23] while the Kells transaction records refer to a *cerd* called Mac Áeda who worked in gold and silver and was involved in a deal over a *leth lainded* or half a building, apparently at Kells itself. This does not specify whether Mac Áeda was a member of the community, although his inclusion in the settlement records may imply this.

The older model of a distinctive and insular 'Celtic church' has been almost entirely discarded by modern researchers and instead the Irish church is now seen, in similar fashion to other European churches, as an eclectic mix of Christian tradition and custom, influenced to varying degrees by local culture. The same could be said of Irish monasticism, although there has been little discussion by Irish medievalists to date on the various strands in European monastic ideology that might have influenced Irish practice. Far too often, the adjective 'monastic' is simply used in the historiography of early Irish urbanism as a synonym for religious practice in general. This is a pronounced weakness in the monastic town model and, given the wealth of IHTA material now available, should be discarded. It is noteworthy, for example, that all of the 'monastic towns' in Clarke's list cited at the beginning of this article were diocesan centres

during the twelfth century or earlier and this may well be an important factor in their later emergence as towns.

The involvement of monks in manual labour is something that varies considerably in different monastic communities and this, in turn, has major implications for our understanding of craft activity on church sites. Ninth-century Carolingian reforms made the Benedictine rule, with its concern that monks should work manually within self-sufficient communities, dominant in north-west Europe, although even that was not consistently applied. The popular Benedictine reform movement based in tenth-century Cluny, for example (which had its only known Irish foundation at Athlone),[24] increasingly favoured regimes in which monastic labour was limited to participation in ever longer and more elaborate liturgies. In trying to categorise the nature of monasticism in Ireland in the era of the Viking Age (when 'monastic towns' are now most commonly thought to originate), it is worth bearing in mind a description of the contemporary monasticism practised by its nearest neighbours in Anglo-Saxon England:

> In or about the year 970, at a great gathering modelled on that at Aachen, [King] Edgar and the bishops and the whole synod promulgated a set of constitutions for the English monasteries, the *Regularis concordia*, a 'monastic agreement' or agreed norm for the religious life, to be the basis for the practice in all the English monasteries. It is a nice mingling of influences from Lorraine and Burgundy with native traditions … The English church was becoming thoroughly monastic. Between the accession of Edgar and the Conquest, a high proportion of the bishops were monks: under Edgar and Ethelred II (died 1016) almost all … But the monasticising [*sic*] of the English church did not mean a separation of church and state: quite the contrary … In art and sacred literature the monastic reformation was tremendously fruitful. Close links between lay patrons and the monasteries: a powerful monastic influence at court and every kind of link between church and king; and a monastic tradition especially notable for its artistic creativity: these were the marks of the English church in the time of St Dunstan.[25]

There is no evidence that anything approaching the *Regularis concordia* was ever adopted in Ireland, although royal involvement in church affairs

was certainly a contemporary reality and a quasi-permanent royal presence can be detected at Armagh, Kildare, Kilkenny, Kells, Trim and Tuam as well as at Cashel. For earlier periods, the Benedictine rule was clearly known in Ireland, for quotations from it can be found in Old Irish poetry, but so too were a number of the regulatory alternatives common in the Late Antique monasteries of the northern Mediterranean littoral. These were influenced by, amongst others, the cenobitic tradition represented by the Pachomian communities of Egypt and the *Regula Basilii,* originating in Cappadocia but translated into Latin in the later fourth century. In the Egyptian tradition, monastic communities supported themselves weaving cloth and baskets from plaited reeds as well as working in fields outside the monastery enclosure. In the *Regula Basilii*, manual work was valued as a way of providing income for the needy but also as a method for focusing the mind in prayer. (John Cassian, a writer much revered in early Irish monastic circles, wrote approvingly of the abbot Paul who burnt his baskets as soon as he had made them.) In the monastic tradition of St Augustine of Hippo, on the other hand, monks were clerics who laboured in church foundation and preaching rather than in craft.[26] It is this last model that appears to have most strongly influenced Pope Gregory the Great and, through him, the earlier English churches.

The IHTA fascicles indicate that Augustinian teaching was also highly influential in Ireland. One striking feature, almost invisible until the comparative evidence was compiled, is the consistency with which 'monastic towns' were founded on eminences within their own particular district (a possible exception is Tuam). This uniformity in chosen location suggests a very clear understanding of these settlements as foci for missionary activity and involvement with the people of the surrounding district, for it implies that their founders were actively following the exhortations of the Beatitudes:

> A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket but on the lamp-stand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Native Irish monastic rules associated with figures such as Ailbe of Emly or Mochuda of Rathin, however, indicate that Irish communities drew from the entire gamut of European monastic tradition[27] and, at this

preliminary stage, it seems safest to infer that attitudes to manual labour amongst Irish monastic communities were never uniform, either chronologically or spatially. In considering the role of manufacture in 'monastic towns', therefore, future scholars must evaluate the possibility that goods were produced by churchmen who may have used, on occasion, resources donated by secular patrons. Whether such goods were intended entirely for ornamentation of their own churches or for transfer to third parties, either secular or ecclesiastical, and whether such transactions involved profit for the craftsmen involved or for the settlement authorities remain open questions.

The involvement of monks in labour has implications for our understanding of the *manaig* or agricultural workers who were attached to Irish ecclesiastical settlements. Drawing on vernacular legal texts in particular, Etchingham has attempted to differentiate between what he defines as 'para-monastic dependents' and what he sees as monks:

> Sources sometimes group these other elements together loosely as 'monastic' or sometimes portray them as two distinct sub-categories. One comprised monks, under a more-or-less conventional regime of self-mortification — including those withdrawing permanently or temporarily to the solitude of a hermitage — headed by an abbot. A second group comprised a body of 'para-monastic' dependents, who had families, farmed the church's lands, paid regular rents or dues and were subject to an ecclesiastical governor or manager. While some sources differentiate sharply between the 'para-monastic' dependents and the 'real' monks, the distinction is more commonly blurred, as illustrated by the use of Latin *monachi* and Irish *manaig* for both categories, for all were united in obedience to a superior. In keeping with this, the title 'abbot' could denote both the governor of 'para-monastic' dependents and the 'true' abbot.[28]

Elsewhere he writes:

> While *manaig* seemingly comprised several socio-economic sub-categories, they can be described as bondmen of their churches and were, essentially agrarian producers. The ecclesiastical elite appropriated the surplus product

of *manaig*, in a mix of stipulated direct labour and cus-
tomary payments, the latter sometimes cast as religious
dues such as tithes and first fruits of their produce and
livestock.[29]

It is unclear whether this model categorises 'para-monastics' as an Irish
variant of what the later Cistercian order termed lay brothers or simply
as secular tenants who were practising Christians. A simpler formulation
would interpret the blurred evidence provided by the sources by allowing
for variability in the chosen monastic ideology on labour as outlined above.
The distinction drawn here between para-monastics who have families
and monks (who seemingly do not) appears somewhat forced, especially
in the light of the many monastic communities in which monks took
clerical orders. Until the Gregorian reforms forced a change — a process
that was particularly slow in Ireland and lasted in some regions until the
Reformation — clergy could and apparently frequently did marry and
produce offspring. This is often seen, particularly in Ireland, in terms
of a degenerative laicisation following the Viking wars. Certainly the
careers of particular individuals such as the eleventh-century Amalgaidh
of Armagh, *comarba Patraicc ocus abb n-Gaidhel* — heir of Patrick and
abbot of the Irish — seems to stray far from modern notions of monastic
celibacy. Appointed by church and laity to his office in 1020 according to
the *Annals of Ulster*, Amalgaid's son Domnall was born in 1049, another
son Mael Ísu (tonsured one of Jesus) took the abbacy in 1068, while his
daughter Dub Esa died in 1078 as the wife of the local king of the Airthir.
What may be yet another son, Findchad, died as chief of Clann Bresail in
1082. This same Amalgaid is also recorded as an abbot with a particular
interest in Danish horses in a fascinating praise poem describing Armagh
personnel. All of this serves to highlight the extent to which the elev-
enth-century Irish church (including monasteries) shared the common
western European phenomenon of familial domination and secularisation
of ecclesiastical office in the period before the Gregorian reforms.

On the other hand, while the universal church valued celibacy from
the later fourth century, Pope Leo the Great in the mid-fifth century spe-
cifically decreed that churchmen ordained to the lower diocesan grades
should simply abstain from sexual activity with their wives once they were
ordained to the rank of deacon or above. Members of the lower church
grades (who might therefore be legitimately married) were often involved
in teaching in church schools such as existed at Derry, Armagh, Kells and
Tuam. Famously, the English pope, Adrian IV, was the offspring of one

such ecclesiastical family. In Ireland, an early genealogy of the first ruler of Trim specified the existence of both his secular and his ecclesiastical *progenies*, with the latter including both bishops and *principes*,[30] while at Kells the late transaction records indicate the existence of a number of high-ranking church families.[31] In short, there seems to be little historical justification for separating 'para-monastic' from 'true' monks on the basis of their sexual activity alone and it seems simplest to view the *manaig* working on church property as members of a wider monastic community that also included those teaching in the schools, manning the guesthouses and as officials running the settlement or 'obedientiaries'. This interpretation fits with Adomnán's early testimony that monks worked in the fields in Iona and Clonmacnoise. Such an approach has the effect of widening the 'several socio-economic sub-categories' of *manaig* involved on church sites and thus producing clear evidence for a hierarchically defined population whose primary role was not agrarian production. This has been seen by some as one of the criteria for identification of 'monastic towns'.[32]

It follows from the evidence for monastic marriages that, quite apart from the child oblates who are attested in the (often undated) saints' Lives and from the young students whose presence is attested in sixth-century penitentials and elsewhere, women and children may well have been present on church settlements in some numbers. It seems unnecessary to conclude, therefore, that mixed cemeteries, such as existed outside the enclosure ditch at Downpatrick, necessarily represented a lay population even if the same area also produced jewellery and gaming boards.[33] The entry of 1129 for *seoid* (treasures) stolen from the altar at Clonmacnoise, after all, included such non-religious items as a drinking horn ornamented with gold, the gift of a north Tipperary king.

Evidence for trade

It is apparent that, for Etchingham, much of Irish church wealth was generated by the work of the *manaig*, particularly in producing agricultural surpluses and in transferring these to their leadership. (He sees the levy of church tithes, which all laymen are required by canon law to pay, as being in reality limited to this group.) Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically in works refuting the validity of the monastic town concept, he also suggests that in Viking Dublin, 'trading in agricultural and subsistence produce predominated, rather than trade in goods manufactured by specialist craftsmen'.[34] If the Irish church leadership did not simply consume the entirety of the surplus produce of their *manaig*, therefore, they must have been engaged in its redistribution and consequently in

some form of trade analogous to that in operation in the coastal Viking towns. In fact, the existence of churches on ecclesiastical sites implies that they must have done so, for a basic requirement for the celebration of the Eucharist is a supply of wine. Either the early Irish churchmen (heretically) celebrated the Eucharist with blackberry or elderberry juice or they had transferable assets that could be used to pay continental producers. The fact that we have only one documentary reference to such a wine trade, in a later life of Ciarán at Clonmacnoise, probably says more about the limited nature of our sources than it does about the realities of early medieval Irish commerce.

In fact, as noted by Stephen Royle,[35] the combined evidence of the IHTA fascicles over the last thirty years makes it clear that commerce in agrarian produce has been the lifeblood of Irish towns throughout much of their existence. In more recent periods, this activity took place on urban fair greens, shambles and markets;[36] the evidence for the early medieval period is far more exiguous but a Germanic loanword, *marggad*, is found in late Viking-Age documentation and is seen by all writers as indicating trade. A pre-Anglo-Norman *marggad* existed at both Dublin and Limerick, and at Athlone the word is used to refer to a market established in 1221.[37] A *marggad* also existed on at least some ecclesiastical settlements — at Kells, for example, a *marggad* is attested between 1106 and 1153, in which cattle could apparently be kept secure,[38] and another existed at the archiepiscopal centre at Cashel in 1124, which may have influenced the subsequent plan of the market place at Fethard.[39] (Pre-Anglo-Norman crosses, later linked to markets, also exist at Tuam and Armagh as well as at Glendalough — whether these marked earlier *marggad* sites remains unproven.) A Middle Irish homily on Jesus's actions in the Temple at Jerusalem describes the people there as 'purchasing and bargaining and buying [of] their goods and their market also' — *oc creic ocus oc cúnnrad ocus oc ceannaigecht a n-indmais ocus a marcaid ár-chena.*

In an Irish context, it has been unanimously assumed that such goods were the produce of artisan craftsmen, but this is unwarranted. The famous description of *óenach Carmuin* finishes with an account of three *marggaid*, including the *marggad bíd* (market in food), the *marggad beócchraid*, the market in livestock and the *marggad mór nan Gall nGrécach i mbíd ór is ardd étach* — the great market of the Greek Foreigners in which there was gold and fine clothing.[40] Another reference in the *Book of Leinster* is to the *marggad beochruid bó ocus ech* — a market in live cattle and horses.[41] Thus, though the word *marggad* was a novel import with either Norse or English origins and could be used of later urban markets, it seems clear that many of the transactions that occurred at them in pre-Anglo-Norman contexts
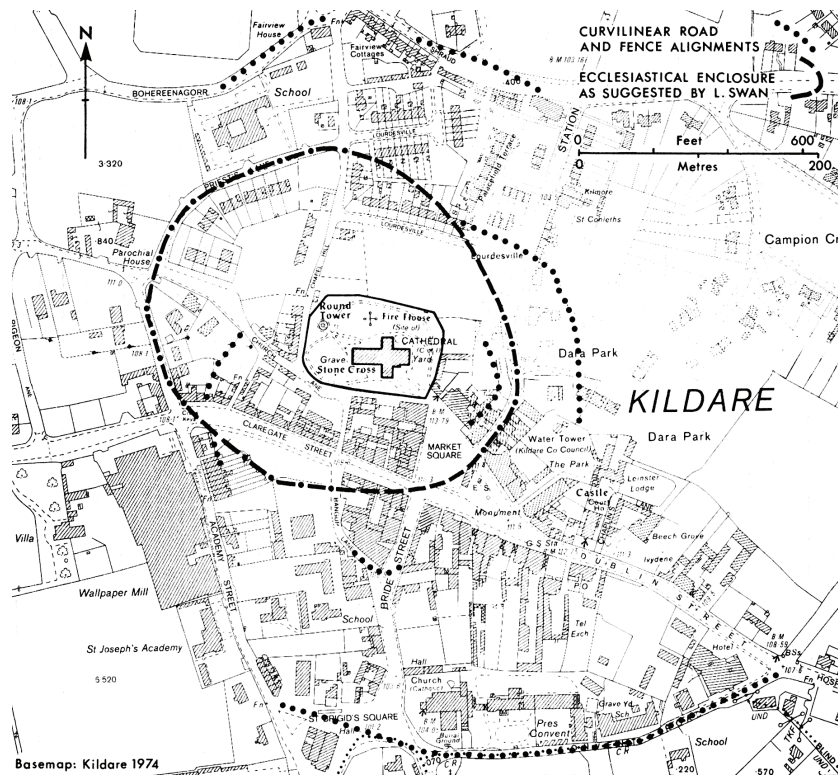
involved traditional Irish surpluses in agrarian goods. Whether or not there was more centralised control of these transactions, with either ecclesiastical or secular lords levying tolls or other taxes, we do not currently know. It is clear, however, that they were a feature of both the coastal towns and some ecclesiastical settlements in pre-Anglo-Norman Ireland.

Evidence for populations

While much of the forgoing evidence for craft and trade can be gleaned from the relevant fascicles of the IHTA, a primary focus for their authors and editors has been the respective topographical analysis of individual settlements. A number of points arise from the data when evaluating the case for 'monastic towns'. The influence of Leo Swan's 1980s aerial research into enclosures surrounding ecclesiastical sites which, in many cases, are represented by circular street patterns, is obvious. Authors of town atlases not seen as 'monastic', in contrast, have referred to circular street patterns in terms of their underlying geology, as, for example, at Dundalk, which the author identified as having secular pre-Anglo-Norman origins (Fig. 2.2).[42] Paul Gosling has recently praised the author of the Kildare fascicle for his caution in underlining the degree of interpretation required to produce clear statements from ambivalent evidence (Fig. 4.1).[43]
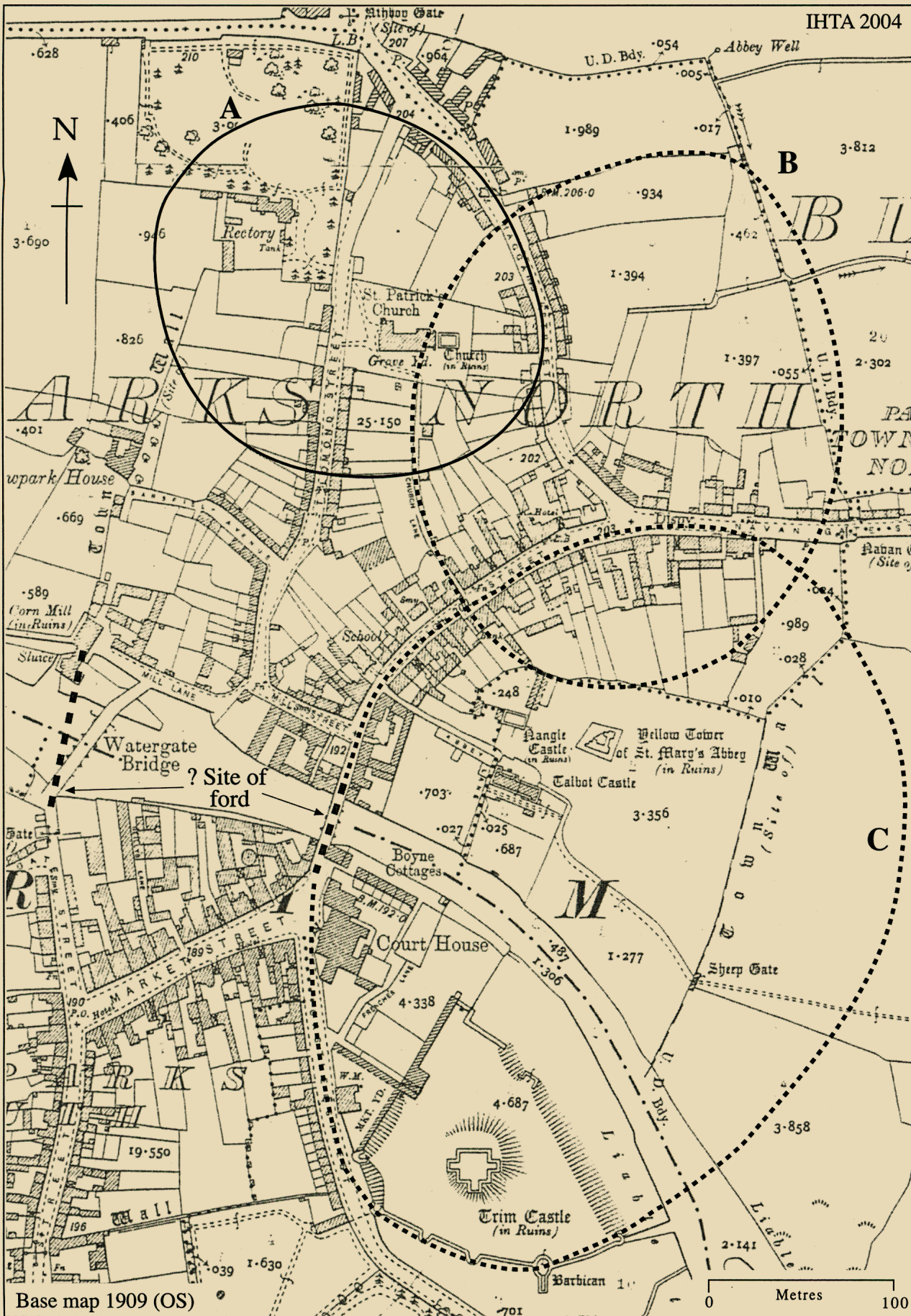
Fig. 4.1 *Kildare*, fig. 2, curvilinear road and fence alignments.

Opposite: Fig. 4.2 *Trim*, fig. 1, possible sites of the early ecclesiastical enclosure.

N

A

B

.628

.210

Athboy Gate
(Site of)

L.B.

207

P.

964

U.D. Bdy.

.054

Abbey Well

.005

.017

3.812

.406

3.01

204

1.989

.934

.462

3.690

.946

Rectory

Tank

P.

B.M.206.0

203

1.394

St. Patrick
Church

Grave Yd.   Church
(in Ruins)

B

1.397

.055

2.302

.825

25.150

ARKS NORTH

202

PA
TOWN
NO

.401

201

.669

owpark House

203

TRIM GATE

Navan G
(Site of)

.989

.589

Corn Mill
(in Ruins)

School

Sluice

.248

.028

.010

Mangle
Castle
(in Ruins)

Yellow Tower
of St. Mary's Abbey
(in Ruins)

MILL LANE

192

Watergate
Bridge

? Site of
ford

Talbot Castle

3.356

.703

.027   .025

.687

C

Boyne
Cottages

M

Gate

189 STREET

R

1.277

Sherp Gate

4.338

Court House

487

1.306

3.858

190

P.O. Hotel

MARKET STREET

B.M.192.0

W.M.

ARKS

19.550

4.687

196

Wall

Trim Castle
(in Ruins)

.039   1.630

2.141

Barbican

701

Metres

0   100

The map contains the following labels:

River Nanny

Burial mound

Wonderful Castle

Templenascreen

Abbey of the Holy Trinity

GALWAY ROAD

Temple Jarlath

HIGH STREET

Market cross

BISHOP STREET

SHOP STREET

St Mary's Cathedral

Market

MALL

DUBLIN ROAD

St John's Priory

'Clad in renda'

'Cashel-like wall'

VICAR STREET

CIRCULAR ROAD

Legend:

······· Conjectural enclosure

- - - Conjectural cathedral enclosure, c. 1127

⚭ Cathedral

☧ Church

Religious house, site known/uncertain

■ □ Other buildings, site known/uncertain

—39— Contours in metres

– – Barony boundary

0   Metres   100

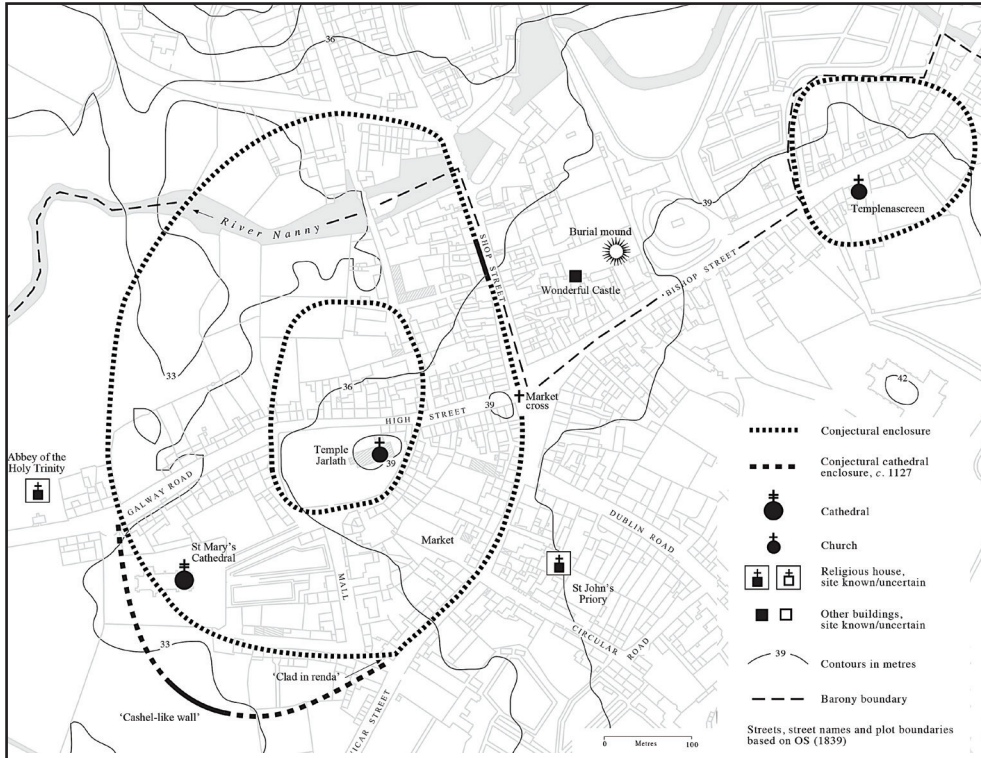Streets, street names and plot boundaries based on OS (1839)

Fig. 4.3 *Tuam*, fig. 1, medieval Tuam.

An equally strong and related early influence on individual authors has been Charles Doherty's use of material from the *Collectio canonum Hibernensis* compilation of church law and, in particular, the division of church sites into zones of graded holiness, culminating in a central sacred core.[44] This has led to struggles in a number of atlases with empirical data that indicate that, on the eve of the Anglo-Norman invasion, there were in fact a number of different ecclesiastical foci within the ground plans of the later towns at Derry, Armagh, Trim, Tuam, Kilkenny and Kells, often each with their own precinct (Figs 4.2, 4.3). Such 'sacred cores' as exist are generally represented by cathedral sites that tend to be depicted as overlapping spatially with what the authors most frequently term 'Early Christian monasteries' (drawing on terminology used in an earlier 1970 survey by Gwynn and Hadcock).[45] The strongest evidence for such a spatial overlap is the existence of round towers on later cathedral sites, although the precise function of these monuments is still debated. This is clearly an area where further research is required. Does it indicate that transfer of power and land from monastic to episcopal control during the twelfth-century reforms is key to understanding which church sites became later towns, or

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Fig. 4.4 *Armagh*, map 4, 1602, by Richard Bartlett. National Library of Ireland, MS 2656 (3), extract.

does it represent more complex interactions between monastic and diocesan structures in earlier eras (Fig. 4.4)?

The situation at Kells and Tuam highlights some of the difficulties and draws attention to the under-researched links between Augustinian canons, cathedrals and earlier monasteries. Twelfth-century Augustinian foundations are often dedicated to SS Peter and Paul, as at Armagh and Trim (and indeed Ennis), indicating strong ideological affiliations with the patron saints of Rome. Augustinian houses can be found on the edge of putative enclosures as at Kells or Armagh but often, to infer from the

IHTA maps, with streets apparently linking them directly to cathedral precincts. At Kells, Maurice Sheehy pointed out that properties granted to the Columban monastery by Tigernán Ua Ruairc were later transferred to the canons and a similar transfer pattern has been identified by Tony Claffey at Tuam (Fig. 4.3).[46] Why would estates owned by a monastic community be transferred to an incoming order of what were probably priests living in community (for this is the commonest role of canons), who may or may not have acted as chapters for their local cathedral as they are known to have done at Dublin and Limerick? If they did so, did they replace the earlier monastic priests such as the Ua Breslen family from the Kells transaction records? Certainly in Limerick, we can detect some local Irish clerical families taking office as cathedral canons in the early years of the Anglo-Norman colony, while the individual prebends that provided the canons with their income appear to derive (at least in part) from older church settlements such as Mungret.[47]

The IHTA fascicles have thrown up many questions for future scholars while providing rich and complex data to help them in their searches. Rebecca Wall Forrestal has recently written that:

> At this stage, the debate stimulated by Doherty's monastic town hypothesis is at an impasse. It seems that almost everybody accepts that the largest ecclesiastical centres were more than just monasteries or churches but the vocabulary does not exist to explain their role in Irish economic networks, as Doherty set out to do.[48]

I have argued here that one potential way out of such an impasse may be a more systematic depiction of what we envisage monasticism to be, how it may have evolved, both chronologically and spatially, and whether the monks in individual settlements could also be craftsmen and farmers, family men and/or priests. Clearly their settlements were sinks absorbing local resources. Monastic communities, whose primary role was to pray, needed also to be fed and clothed, and accessories for their worship, including buildings, would have had to be manufactured. The complexity of monastic organisation was such that these communities included men labouring in fields as well as priests, teachers and overseers. At the same time, they probably functioned as hubs for the redistribution of agrarian produce and the importation of foreign substances such as wine. In the generations before and immediately after the Anglo-Norman invasion, the areas in which church sites exchanged such goods are called by

the same imported term, *marggad*, as was used in Viking coastal towns. Whether all this makes such church sites towns, proto-towns, villages or cult centres depends ultimately on the viewpoint of individuals, but undoubtedly it helps to explain why some, and in particular those with multiple foci, became the nuclei around which later Irish towns coalesced.

NOTES

[1] H.B. Clarke, '*Quo vadis?* Mapping the Irish "monastic town"', in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Princes, prelates and poets in medieval Ireland: essays in honour of Katharine Simms* (Dublin, 2013), pp 277–8.

[2] Andrews, IHTA, no. 1, *Kildare*; Simms with Simms, IHTA, no. 4, *Kells*.

[3] Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in early medieval Ireland* (New Haven and London, 2013), p. 219.

[4] Aidan O'Sullivan *et al.*, *Early medieval Ireland AD 400–1100: the evidence from archaeological excavations* (Dublin, 2014), p. 175.

[5] Melanie Maddox, 'Finding the city of God in the Lives of St Kevin: Glendalough and the history of the Irish celestial *civitas*', in Charles Doherty, Linda Doran and Mary Kelly (eds), *Glendalough: city of God* (Dublin, 2011), pp 1–21; David Jenkins, '*Holy, holier, holiest*': *the sacred topography of the early medieval Irish church* (Turnhout, 2010).

[6] R.A. Butlin, 'Urban and proto-urban settlements in pre-Norman Ireland', in R.A. Butlin (ed.), *The development of the Irish town* (London, 1977), p. 22.

[7] Charles Doherty, 'The monastic town in early medieval Ireland', in H.B. Clarke and Anngret Simms (eds), *The comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe* (2 pts, Oxford, 1985), p. 67; Andrews, *Kildare*, p. 1.

[8] John Bradley, 'The monastic town of Clonmacnoise', in H.A. King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise Studies 1* (Dublin, 1998), pp 42–56; John Bradley, 'Towards a definition of the Irish monastic town', in C.E. Karkov and Helen Damico (eds), *Aedificia nova: studies in honour of Rosemary Cramp* (Kalamazoo, 2008), pp 325–60.

[9] Colmán Etchingham, *The Irish monastic town: is this a valid concept?* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 27. Much of the same material is reproduced in Colmán Etchingham, 'The organisation and function of an early Irish church settlement: what was Glendalough?', in Doherty, Doran and Kelly, *Glendalough: city of God*, p. 38.

[10] Anngret Simms, 'Frühformen der mittelalterlichen Stadt in Irland', in *Würzburger Geographische Arbeiten*, lx (1983), p. 33; see also Brian Graham, 'Beyond fascicles: spatial form and social process', in H.B. Clarke and Sarah Gearty (eds), *Maps and texts: exploring the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (Dublin, 2013), p. 261.

[11] William Reeves (ed.), *The Life of St Columba, founder of Hy, written by Adamnan* (Dublin, 1857), pp 257–361.

[12] Michael Ryan, 'Fine metalworking and early Irish monasteries: the archaeological evidence', in John Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1988), pp 33–48.

[13] Eiméar Nelis *et al.*, *Data structure report (no. 044 part I): St Patrick's Church, Armoy, Co. Antrim* (Belfast, 2007).

[14] Paul Stevens, 'Clonfad, Co. Westmeath: an early Irish monastic production centre', in Christiaan Corlett and Michael Potterton (eds), *The church in early medieval Ireland in the light of recent archaeological excavations* (Dublin, 2014), pp 259–72.

[15] Helmut Jäger, 'Entwicklungsphasen irischer Städte im Mittelalter', in Helmut Jäger, Franz Petri and Heinz Quirin, *Civitatum communitas: studien zum europäischen Städtewesen. Festschrift Heinz Stoob* (2 vols, Cologne and Vienna, 1984), i, pp 71–95.

[16] See comments by Avril Thomas in IHTA, no. 15, *Derry~Londonderry*, p. 2.

[17] Ó Dálaigh, IHTA, no. 25, *Ennis*.

[18] Peter Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian: the excavation of a monastic town 1984–91* (Stroud, 1997); Christopher Lowe, *Clothing for the soul divine: burials at the tomb of St Ninian: excavations at Whithorn Priory 1957–67* (Edinburgh, 2009).

[19] McCullough and Crawford, IHTA, no. 18, *Armagh*, p. 1.

[20] Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London, 2012), pp 219–24.

[21] Janet Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (Ithaca, 1981), p. 7.

[22] *Bethu Phátraic: the tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. Kathleen Mulchrone (Dublin, 1939), p. 155.

[23] Catherine Swift, 'Sculptors and their customers: a study of Clonmacnoise grave-slabs', in H.A. King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise studies 2* (Dublin, 1998), pp 110–11.

[24] Murtagh, IHTA, no. 6, *Athlone*.

[25] Christopher Brooke, *From Alfred to Henry III 871–1272* (London, 1969), pp 67–9.

[26] T.G. Kardong, *Pillars of community: four rules of pre-Benedictine monastic life* (Collegeville, 2010), pp 57–8, 96, 107–8, 156.

[27] Uinseann Ó Maidin, *The Celtic monk: rules and writings of early Irish monks* (Kalamazoo, 1996).

[28] Etchingham, 'Organisation and function of an early Irish church settlement', pp 27–8.

[29] Etchingham, *Irish monastic town*, p. 25.

[30] Hennessy, IHTA, no. 14, *Trim*.

[31] Bairbre Nic Aonghusa, 'The monastic hierarchy in twelfth century Ireland: the case of Kells', in *Ríocht na Midhe*, viii (1990–91), pp 3–20.

[32] Brian Graham, 'Urban genesis in early medieval Ireland', in *Journal of Historical Geography*, xiii (1987), p. 10.

[33] Buchanan and Wilson, IHTA, no. 8, *Downpatrick*, p. 2.

[34] Etchingham, *Irish monastic town*, p. 29.

[35] S.A. Royle, 'Manufacturing', in Clarke and Gearty, *Maps and texts*, p. 168.

[36] Colm Lennon, 'Trades and services', in Clarke and Gearty, *Maps and texts*, pp 183–96.

[37] Clarke, IHTA, no. 11, *Dublin, part I, to 1610*; O'Flaherty, IHTA, no. 21, *Limerick*; Murtagh, *Athlone*.

[38] Simms with Simms, *Kells*; Etchingham, *Irish monastic town*, p. 24.

[39] O'Keeffe, IHTA, no. 13, *Fethard*.

[40] Edward Gwynn, 'Carmun', in *The metrical dindshenchas, part III* (Dublin, 1991), pp 24–5.

[41] See further discussion in Catherine Swift, 'Follow the money: the financial resources of Diarmait Mac Murchada', in Emer Purcell *et al.* (eds), *Clerics, kings and Vikings: essays on medieval Ireland in honour of Donnchadh Ó Corráin* (Dublin, 2015), pp 91–102.

[42] Clarke, '*Quo vadis?* Mapping the Irish "monastic town"', pp 262–3; Catherine Swift, 'Celtic monasticism — a discipline's search for romance?', in *Trowel*, v (1995), pp 21–5; O'Sullivan, IHTA, no. 16, *Dundalk*, p. 2.

[43] Paul Gosling, 'Kildare and Tuam', in Clarke and Gearty, *Maps and texts*, p. 64.

[44] Doherty, 'Monastic town', pp 58–9.

[45] Gwynn and Hadcock, pp 26–46: 'Early Irish monasteries'.

[46] M.P. Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica: medieval papal chancery documents concerning Ireland, 640–1261* (2 vols, Dublin, 1962–5), ii, pp 106–7, §267, n. 1; Claffey, IHTA, no. 20, *Tuam*, p. 3.

[47] *The Black Book of Limerick*, ed. James McCaffrey (Dublin, 1907), pp lxi–lxxxiv.

[48] Rebecca Wall Forrestal, 'Studying early medieval Irish urbanization: problems and possibilities', in Vicky McAlister and Terry Barry (eds), *Space and settlement in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2015), p. 40.