GARRANES

AN EARLY MEDIEVAL ROYAL SITE IN SOUTH-WEST IRELAND

William O'Brien
Nick Hogan

with contributions from

Michelle Comber, Ian Doyle, Lenore Fischer, Kevin Kearney, Susan Lyons, Tim Mighall and Douglas Borthwick, Margaret Mannion, Ignacio Montero-Ruiz and Mercedes Murillo-Barroso, Róisín Nic Cnáimhín, Cian Ó Cionnfhaolaidh, James O'Driscoll, Edward O'Riordain, and Orla-Peach Power

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Front cover: The Garranes ridge from north-east. *(faded)* Extract from Bernard Scale's 1775 map depciting Lisnacaheragh and Lisnamanroe as 'Danes Forts'.
Rear cover: *(photographs top–bottom)* The Garranes excavation team photographed in 1937; excavation underway at Lisnamanroe in 2013 with students from University College Cork; aerial view of 2017 trench at Lisnacaheragh. *(faded)* Ó Ríordáin's plan of Lisnacaheragh (source: Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XII).

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Dedicated to the memory of Seán P. Ó Ríordáin, the first excavator of Garranes
and Professor of Archaeology, University College Cork (1936–1943)

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William O'Brien & Nick Hogan,
January 2021

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GARRANES: AN INTRODUCTION

This publication is a study of an early settlement landscape in south-west Ireland, long regarded as a minor royal site of the early medieval period (AD 400–1200). The focus is a cluster of earthen enclosures ('ringforts') in the townland of Garranes, parish of Templemartin, some 15km west of Cork City (Figure 1.1). The central monument, Lisnacaheragh, is a large circular enclosure of 110m diameter, surrounded by three closely spaced bank-and-ditch combinations with a single entrance (Figure 1.2). Approximately 100m to the west is another enclosure, Lisnamanroe, 80m in diameter, visible today as a low-relief earthwork. To the north is a large sub-triangular earthwork called Shanawillen Caherkean, considered by some to be a formal entrance to the royal site. There are two small ringforts to the immediate east of Lisnacaheragh and other examples within one kilometre. Several of these are extant today, while others were levelled in the early modern era. One such site is Lisheenagreine to the south of Lisnacaheragh, where an ogam stone was discovered in an underground tunnel (souterrain) in the nineteenth century.

The significance of Garranes lies partly in the date of Lisnacaheragh, believed to have been built in the fifth century AD. That is early in the history of the Irish ringfort, the origins of which remain unclear. The evidence of specialist craftworking in metal, glass and enamel from Lisnacaheragh testifies to the importance of the site. The discovery of imported pottery there sheds light on connections between Ireland and the late Roman world at a time when Christianity was also introduced to Ireland. These developments at Garranes coincided with the emergence of the ringfort as the major settlement form of the early medieval period.

Though not directly comparable, Garranes brings that interesting alignment of archaeology, history and legend that is more often associated with Tara and other provincial royal sites in protohistoric Ireland. Over the past century this site has been regarded as a significant place in the political history of early medieval Munster, identified as the seat of an early tribal group known as the Uí Echach Muman. The latter are generally interpreted as a southern branch of the Eóganacht, a loose federation of dynastic groups who dominated political life in the Munster region from the fifth to the twelfth centuries. The Uí Echach are also recorded in medieval sources as the Eóganacht Raithleann/Raithlind, a name taken from Raithliu their royal seat and place of assembly. Lisnacaheragh ringfort at Garranes has been identified as Raithliu/Rath Raithleann based on its impressive size and defences, and the evidence of high status occupation found in excavation.

This monograph presents the results of archaeological fieldwork conducted in 2011–18 in the Garranes landscape. That included a survey of the individual monuments and the use of geophysical methods to investigate sub-surface archaeology in the wider landscape. Five earthworks were also excavated, the results of which are presented along with specialist studies connected to those investigations.

1.1 THE RINGFORT IN EARLY MEDIEVAL IRELAND

Ringforts are small settlement enclosures of the early medieval period. They are the most numerous archaeological monuments in Ireland, with the original number estimated at around 50,000, of which perhaps only half are now extant. Ringforts are found in every part of Ireland, with the greatest concentrations in western areas (Figure 1.3). This is reflected in the prevalence of modern place-names with elements relating to ringforts, such as *ráth*, *lios*, *cathair*, *caiseal*, and *dún*. A distinction is generally made between ringforts built predominantly of earth and timber, often termed raths, and those built of stone called cashels (Figure 1.4).

Most ringforts are small circular enclosures, with oval, D-shaped or sub-rectangular variants also known. The great majority are univallate enclosures, 30–60m in overall diameter, defined by a single bank with external ditch (fosse), or else a stone wall. In the case of earthen ringforts, a bank of dump construction was built using earth and stone extracted from the accompanying ditch. Early text sources contain references to this enclosing element as a *rath*, with the living area inside called a *les* or *lios*. The enclosing banks and ditches can be 2m or more in height and depth, with the banks in many cases reinforced by post palisades or lighter fencing. The univallate arrangement is typical of 80–90% of ringforts in most parts of Ireland. Multivallate examples are fewer in number, where two or three (rarely four) bank-and-ditch combinations are spaced together concentrically to create an enclosure with an overall diameter that can exceed 100m.

The majority of ringforts have a single entrance. In the case of earthen ringforts this is usually a causeway across one or more ditches leading to a gap in the inner bank(s). Most excavated sites have posthole evidence for a wooden gate at the bank opening, with several gates recorded in multivallate sites. Cashels also had

Figure 1.1 General location and topographic setting of Garranes.

Figure 1.2 Aerial view of Garranes (Lisnacaheragh) ringfort from the west, with Garranes House in the background.

a single entrance, often a narrow passageway roofed with stone lintels, with a wooden door. The internal width of most ringforts is 20–44m, extending up to 75m in larger sites (Stout 1997, 15–19). The interiors are generally flat, though examples with artificially raised interiors (platform ringforts) are known in some parts of Ireland (e.g. McCormack 2018). Most do not have visible internal features, though foundation traces of stone-built structures can be exposed. Excavation confirms that many cashels had circular or rectangular houses of stone wall construction, while roundhouses built of wood, mud and thatch were usual in raths. Underground tunnels known as souterrains used for storage and hiding are commonly found in ringforts.

The majority of artifact finds from excavated ringforts date to the later first millennium AD. This is supported by radiocarbon results that indicate most ringforts were occupied *c.*AD 600–900 (Stout 1997, fig. 2). The earliest secure dates for ringforts are from the fifth and sixth centuries, with later examples up to the twelfth century. There has been much debate on the origin of this settlement form, in respect of possible Bronze Age or Iron Age antecedents, or influences from the Roman world (Caulfield 1981; Lynn 1983). The later history of ringforts is also uncertain in respect of continued use and possibly construction in the later medieval period (Lynn 1975a; 1975b).

Several regional studies have examined the landscape setting of ringforts and the environmental factors that influenced their location. There is a tendency for ringforts to be built on hill slopes with a southerly aspect below 200–300m OD. That depended to a great extent on local topography, with regional studies demonstrating considerable variation across Ireland (reviewed by Stout 1997, 48–109). This lowland setting and a general correlation with good agricultural land is consistent with the importance of farming in the economy of the Irish ringfort.

While the term 'ringfort' has military connotations, this is misleading in respect of their primary function, which was to protect the occupants, their livestock and possessions. That was particularly important in a society where cattle raiding was prevalent (Lucas 1989, 125). Excavation of ringforts confirms they were residential sites, with houses, domestic areas and storage facilities located within and outside the enclosure. The majority of small univallate ringforts are generally interpreted as single family farmsteads, while larger sites with multivallation are associated with higher status residence (Figure 1.5). That applies more to earthen ringforts than their stone equivalents, which are generally distinguished by a single imposing wall than by multiple enclosing elements. Some excavated sites have little evidence of occupation, raising the possibility they were used as animal enclosures. This is often suggested where two ringforts are in close proximity, however such functional relationships can never be established without comprehensive excavation.

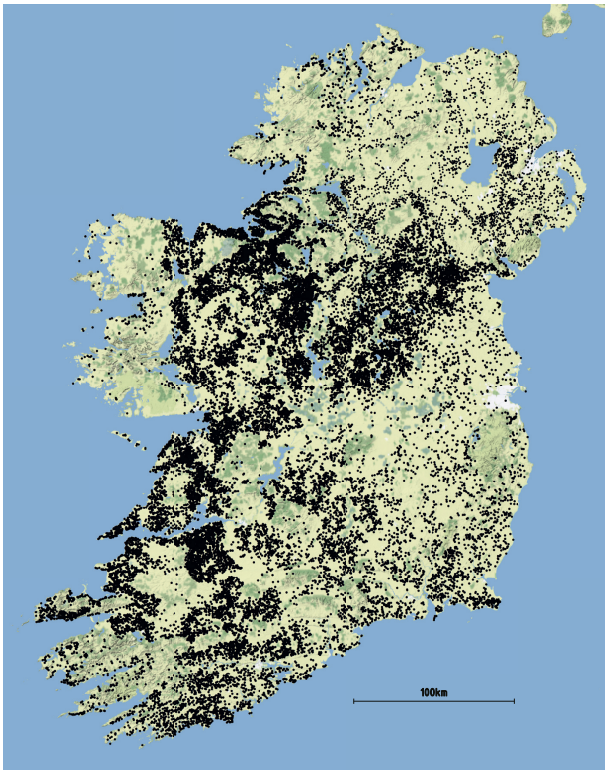


Figure 1.3 General distribution of ringforts in Ireland. Monuments recorded as 'rath', 'cashel' and 'ringfort-unclassified' are shown. (source: National Monuments Service, Sites and Monuments Record; Historic Environment Division, Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record; accessed 01/02/2020).

It is obvious from excavated finds, including tools, animal bone and plant remains, that farming was central to the economy of ringfort inhabitants (Proudfoot 1961, Stout 1997, Comber 2008, O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013). This is supported by early text sources, in particular those legal tracts dealing with regulation of property, inheritance, tribute and contracts (see Lucas 1989). In some instances there are indications of specialization, but mostly this agriculture was a mix of animal pastoralism and cereal cultivation. The latter included wheat and barley, with new crops such as oats and rye, flax and legumes. The importance of arable farming is indicated by the many grain drying kilns from the early medieval period (Monk and Power 2012), and by the development of the water mill (Rynne 2000). While cereals were important in many parts of Ireland, early text sources and archaeozoological evidence indicate that cattle pastoralism dominated farming in those centuries (Lucas 1989; McCormick 1983; 1992). McCormick regards the development of dairying as particularly significant, providing an '...opportunity to increase agricultural productivity with the accompanying increase of agricultural capital, i.e. land, which ultimately gave rise to an increase in population, general agricultural expansion and the development of a new settlement type, the ringfort' (McCormick 1995, 36). Sheep and pigs were also important farm animals, in terms of meat supply and secondary products. The importance of farming meant most ringforts were surrounded by field patterns, enclosures and trackways. Those fields do not generally survive in the modern agricultural landscape, though examples associated with cashels have been identified in the Burren, Co. Clare and other parts of western Ireland (e.g. Stout 1997, plates 12 and 13). The clustering of ringforts in areas of high agricultural potential is common, with a well-known complex of conjoined raths and small fields recorded at Cush, Co. Limerick (see below).

In a landscape of dispersed rural settlement, ringforts were important centres of economic activity and trade. Artifact finds confirm that most ringforts had some level of craft working, be it ironworking, woodworking or textile production (Comber 2008; O'Sullivan *et al.* 2013). Sites of higher status often have evidence for specialized crafts such as bronze and glass production. They also provide information on long-distance trade in raw materials and finished goods. That includes the exchange of raw materials and finished objects, and the importation of luxury goods from within and outside of Ireland.

Ringforts of higher status were significant as places of assembly, where over time they acquired a symbolic role in terms of group identity and political power. In some cases they were the location of the tribal *óenach*, a periodic assembly convened on royal land (*mruig ríg*) (Gleeson 2015). Though often presented as fairs or markets, sporting events and 'an occasion for general jollification' (Byrne 1973), these assemblies were central to the exercise of political and legal power. They had important ceremonial functions that included the inauguration of kings and the honouring of the dead. Some ringforts that ceased to be used for permanent residence may have acquired a special significance as *óenach* locations by virtue of their historical and legendary associations.

To summarize, the majority of ringforts in Ireland are likely to have been protected family farmsteads connected to dispersed landholdings in a rural agricultural landscape. The relative size and wealth of those settlements reflected the social standing of their occupants, with some ringforts acquiring greater significance as centres of political and economic power. For this reason, and on sheer numbers alone, they have been regarded as the most significant form of rural settlement in early medieval Ireland. This has been questioned by Fitzpatrick (2009) and Kinsella (2010), who emphasize the morphological variability within this class of monuments, and the uncertainty surrounding their significance in the later medieval

Figure 1.4 Aerial views of *(left)* Cusduff rath (CO082-042) and *(right)* Knockdrum cashel (CO142-070001), Co. Cork.

Figure 1.5 Aerial view of Cahirvagliair ringfort, Cappeen West, Co. Cork (CO094-060001).

period. The typical ringfort, so recognizable in the Irish landscape, can be viewed as a distinct settlement form within a broader range of medieval enclosure types. While some ringforts were occupied in later periods, this should not take from their significance in early medieval Ireland, when they were part of a complex and evolving settlement landscape (see O'Sullivan and McCormick 2017 for recent discoveries of other components of that landscape).

Ringforts and society

One approach to understanding the variability of form and wealth represented in ringforts has been to link these to the underlying social structure of early medieval Ireland. The *tuath* was the basic political unit in society, a term that literally means a 'people'. This had geographical expression as a form of petty or tribal kingdom. The latter must be qualified in that

a *tuath* was only tribal in the sense of a population group that formed a distinct political reality, and not an ethnic group with its own language, customs and religion (Byrne 1973, 8). Each *tuath* had its own sacred site where their king was inaugurated, a place often associated with a sacred tree (*bile*), stone or mound. Beyond these local kingdoms were larger *tuatha* and regional kingdoms, and provincial kingdoms known as *cóiceda*.

The basic social unit within the tuath was the family, defined as a *fine* or kin-group, of which there were immediate and extended forms. Each free man belonged to a *fine*, which was an agnatic kindred group in which were vested property rights and which partly determined legal standing (Byrne 1973, 28). Historical sources provide a picture of early medieval society in Ireland as aristocratic and hierarchical (Corráin 1972; Kelly 1988). A fundamental distinction was between people who were *nemed* (sacred), and non-*nemed*. Society was also divided into free (*sóer)* and unfree (*dóer) people* on economic and social grounds. These distinctions created four broad classes in society, namely *nemed* and non-*nemed* freeman, dóer or unfree, and slaves. Each person belonged to a particular grouping in society with different rights and privileges. Their social position was defined by legal status and by an honour price determined in units of cattle or female slaves (*cumals*). This reflected their position in the hierarchy, with each class in turn sub-divided on the basis of rank.

The noble *nemed* class comprised an aristocracy of lords and kings, as well as noble professions, learned castes and ecclesiastical figures. Their privileged position arose from their landholdings and the number of clients they held, which together were the basis of their wealth. The *Uraicecht Becc* text defined seven grades of *nemed* in order of status, each defined by the term *aire*, as follows: 1) *aire déso,* 2) *aire échto,* 3) *aire tuíseo,* 4) *aire ard,* 5) *aire forgill,* 6) *rí túaithe,* and 7) *rí ruirech* (see O'Kelly 1988). Clientship was central to the exercise of political power, creating reciprocal obligations that underpinned the upper classes, aristrocracy and kings, providing the lower classes with a certain measure of protection against military violence (MacNiocaill 1972, 60).

The central figure in political life was the king, of which there were three principal grades. The most important at a local level was the *rí túaithe* '('king of a *túath*') with an honour price of seven cumals (Kelly 1988, 17). Where these grew in power to control other *túatha* they are described as a *rí túath (*'king of *túatha')* or *ruiri* ('great king') with an honour price of eight cumals. The highest grade of king is the *rí cóicid* or provincial king, sometimes referred to as a *rí ruirech*, 'king of great kings', with an honour price of 14 cumals. In this hierarchy the standing of a king was defined by his relationship to other kings, by the number of subordinate *tuaths* he controlled and the level of that control (MacNiocaill 1972, 42). Byrne (1973) estimates there were as many as 150 kings in Ireland at any given time between the fifth and twelfth centuries. Each king ruled over his own tuath, while many were overlords of other tuatha.

The king was bound to the *tuath* in a type of wedlock often expressed as a form of sacral kingship (Byrne 1973, 14–22; Bhreathnach 2014, 48–56). The main role of the king was to serve as a leader in war and to represent the *tuath* in its external relations, including dealings with other kings. Within the *tuath* the king neither made or enforced law, neither was he the allodial landowner of the tribal territories. These were owned by the free families, (*fine* or *cenél*), who had a major influence in the internal workings of the *tuath* (Ó Corráin 1972, 28). On that basis the aristocracy of a *tuath* was divided between members of the ruling family and the nobles of other kin groups.

The second social class, non-*nemed* freemen, constituted a significant proportion of the population, who were either strong or small farmers. These were the *bóaire* and *ócaire* respectively, who probably occupied the majority of ringforts in early medieval Ireland. Beneath them was an unfree class of tenants, including the *fuidir* or *bothach* whose families occupied the same land for three generations and the *senchléithe*, a class bound to a lord who could not renounce their tenancy. Although not a slave, the *senchléithe* is sold with the land, which would make this group the equivalent of a serf class. It is not clear whether this tenant class lived in ringforts, though this is likely in many instances. Finally, there was a slave class with no legal rights or defined status, who were essentially the property of ringfort dwellers of various grades.

These divisions in social class are often related to differences in the size and design of ringforts in terms of the status and wealth of their occupants. Stout (1997) has argued for a close correlation of social and settlement hierarchy across Ireland in the early medieval period. These distinctions are supported by early law texts that idealize the size and layout of a royal residence, as in the oft-quoted extract from an eighth-century text, *Críth Gablach*:

> 'What is the due of a king who is always in residence at the head of his túath? Seven score feet of perfect feet are the measure of his stockade on every side. Seven feet are the thickness of its earthwork, and twelve feet its depth. It is then that he is king when ramparts of vassalage (*drécht giallnai*) surround him.' (MacNeill 1923, 305).

There is a suggestion here that the number of enclosing banks in a ringfort reflects the status of the occupants, with trivallate sites equating to high status (royal) residences.

This interpretation is taken a step further by Comber (2008a) in a review of excavated material culture from Irish ringforts. She identified a broad correlation between site morphology and economic activity, noting also that 'increasing size was not an exact correlation of increasing wealth' (*ibid*., 227). This is particularly true in the case of cashels, while the occupants of some univallate ringforts were wealthy. There is much variation at regional level, but most researchers agree that large multivallate ringforts were of considerable importance in their respective societies.

1.2 GARRANES: AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The following is a brief outline of the political landscape of Munster during the early medieval period, based entirely on a review of published secondary sources. This begins with the traditional narrative of Eóganacht supremacy in the province, and introduces the complex and shifting structure of its many kingdoms and sub-kingdoms. The absence of reliable historical sources before the eighth century makes it difficult to unravel the political relations of earlier periods. That uncertainty has important implications for an understanding of high-status settlement at Garranes in the fifth and sixth centuries.

A political geography of Munster, AD 400–1100

The later synthetic historians record that the Eóganacht were the leading political and military power in Munster during the early medieval period. This was a loose federation of genealogically related dynasties, reputedly founded by Corc the founder of Cashel *c.*AD 400, otherwise known as Corc mac Luigthig, Conall Corc or Mac Láire (Ó Buachalla 1952, 67–8). They were named after his ancestor Eógan Már, the son of Ailill Ólum, a mythological king of Munster in the third century AD (Ó Corráin 1972). The latter was the son of the legendary Mug Nuadat (also named Eógan), which connects Eóganacht origins in legend to the Milesian conquest

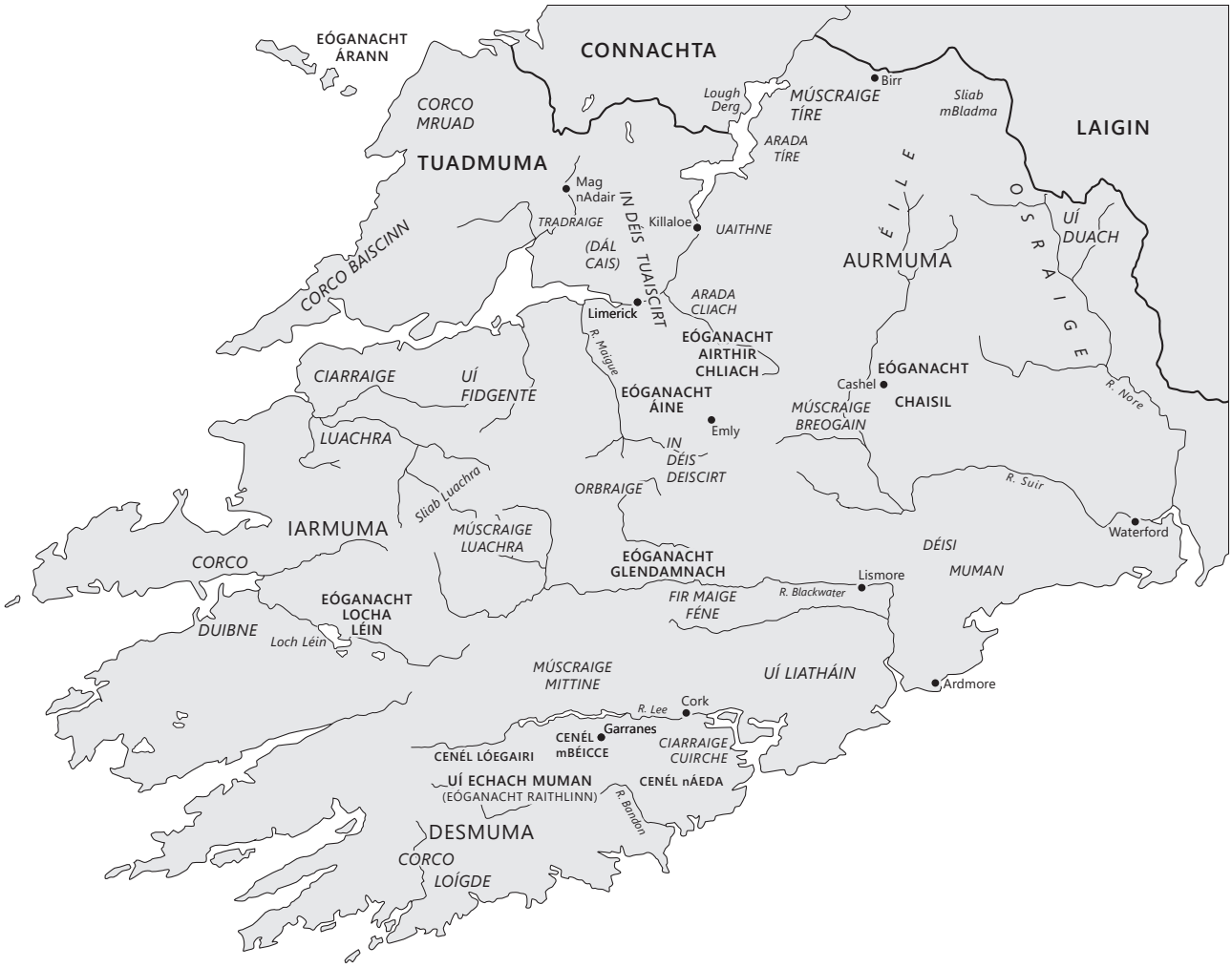


Figure 1.6 Political geography of Munster, *c.*AD 900 (re-drawn from Byrne 1973, 172).

of Ireland. Notwithstanding those associations, it has been suggested the Eóganacht name was in practice confined to those septs who claimed descent from Corc/Conall Corc, who established the Cashel kingship (Byrne 1973, 177). The earliest Eóganacht groups are sometimes named the Dergtine in early sources, which recall their early struggles with the older Érainn or Dáirine peoples during the fifth and sixth centuries. In the official genealogies, the Eóganacht are descended from Éber, son of Míl, while their Dáirine/Corcu Lóegde rivals are descended from Ith mac Breogain, and so of inferior status to the direct line from Míl (Ó Buachalla 1952, 71).

Ó Corráin (1972) observes that the early history of the Eóganacht is uncertain due to a lack of annalistic sources for the early history of Munster (see Byrne 1973, 184–9 for discussion of origin legends). Their origin legend states that the Cashel kingship was founded in the early fifth century by Corc on his return from exile in Britain. MacNiocaill (1972, 5) suggested this was connected to the expulsion in that period of some Irish kingdoms established in north Wales. While emphasizing indigenous roots, Byrne (1973, 182) links their rise to successful forays in Roman Britain, and possibly also to the early adoption of Christianity. Corc was the first of the Eóganacht kings to make Cashel his royal residence, though his power was limited mostly to that part of north Munster. MacNiocaill identified Oengus the grandson of Corc, as a key figure in the expansion of the Eóganacht from Cashel across east Limerick and south Tipperary. Farther expansion into south Munster occurred at the expense of the Érainn, with the assistance of a number of allies, including the Corco Baiscind, Corco Óche, Fír Maige Féne, Deisi, and various branches of the Muscraige. This helped to extend Eóganacht authority across the southern region, separating their various branches from Érainn and other non- Eóganacht peoples through strategic settlement and political alliances (Mac Niocaill 1972, 34). Ó Buachalla notes that while the Eóganacht and Dáirine had equal rights to the provincial kingship, the claim of the latter seems to have lapsed in later prehistory. This may also have been suppressed by linking important Dáirine septs, such as the Uí Fidgeinte, Uí Liatháin and Uí Duach, to the Eóganacht stem (Ó Buachalla 1952, 70), a later genealogical fiction designed to consolidate their power (Ó Cróinín 1995, 58). The time-scale of Eóganacht expansion is uncertain, with MacNiocaill emphasizing developments in the fifth century, while others have suggested a turning point as early as the third century 'when the Munster sceptre passed from the Érainn to the Eóganachta' (Ryan 1942, 145).

Most scholars agree that by the eighth century the province was divided into two broad political areas, Iarmumu (west Munster) and Aurmumu (east Munster), with the king of Cashel as nominal king of the entire province. During that period six dynastic groups enjoys free status, including the Eóganachta, Dáirine/ Corco Lóegde, Éle, Osraige, Deis Tuaiscert (early Dál Cais), and the Déisi (Ó Buachalla 1952, 85). For the first of those, Byrne (1973, 178) refers to a standard list of 'Seven Eóganachta' in the early genealogical tracts, namely the regional branches of Caisil, Áine, Loch Léin, Raithlind, Glennamain, Árann, and Ruis Argait. The dominance of the federation is indicated by their control of the kingship of Munster in that period. Their internal politics, however, was complicated by a division between two great and often hostile groups, namely the western Eóganacht who comprised the kingdoms of Loch Léin and Raithlind, and the eastern Eóganacht that included the kingdoms of Caisil, Aine Cliach, Airthir Chliach, and Glennamain/ Glendamnach (Figure 1.6).

The Eóganacht Loch Léin, also known as Uí Cairpre Lúachra, controlled the kingdom of west Munster (Iarmumu) from the fifth to eighth centuries, ruling over small groups such as the Ciarraige Luachra, Corcu Duibne, Corcu Baiscinn, among others. Ó Corráin (1972, 1) speculated that the Killarney base of the Eóganacht Loch Léin may have been the original homeland of these peoples, from where they spread east into the richer lands in north and eastern Munster, driving back the Corcu Lóegde, Osraige and the Leinstermen. Their dominance prevailed until the eighth century or so when the axis of political power shifted to their eastern cousins in the political territory of east Munster (Aurmumu). The Eóganacht Caisil in Tipperary was the most prominent of those groups, providing many of the kings of Munster, though with no prerogative claim to that title (Byrne 1973, 177). The Eóganacht Caisil were also known as the Ui Maic Láire, the latter being another name for Corc/Conall Corc (Ó Buachalla 1952, 68). Their close relations were the Eóganacht Glennamain/ Glendamnach based in the Fermoy/Glanworth area of north Cork, from where several kings of Munster came during the seventh century (*ibid*., 3). They were also connected to the Eóganacht Airthir Chliach and the Eóganacht Áine in east Limerick. Those branches of the eastern Eóganacht all claimed descent from Óengus king of Cashel (ob. 490 AD), son of Nad Fraich, son of Corc. In contrast, the two main branches of western Eóganacht (Loch Léin and Raithlind/Raithleann) claim direct descent from two other sons of Corc, namely Cairpre Luachra and Mac Cass respectively (Figure 1.7).

The Eóganacht kingship was unusual in its devolved structure, certainly compared to the consolidated rule of the northern and midland Uí Néill kings in the same period. While they controlled the provincial kingship over long periods, the Eóganacht Caisil exercised a loose hegemony over a complex and shifting geography

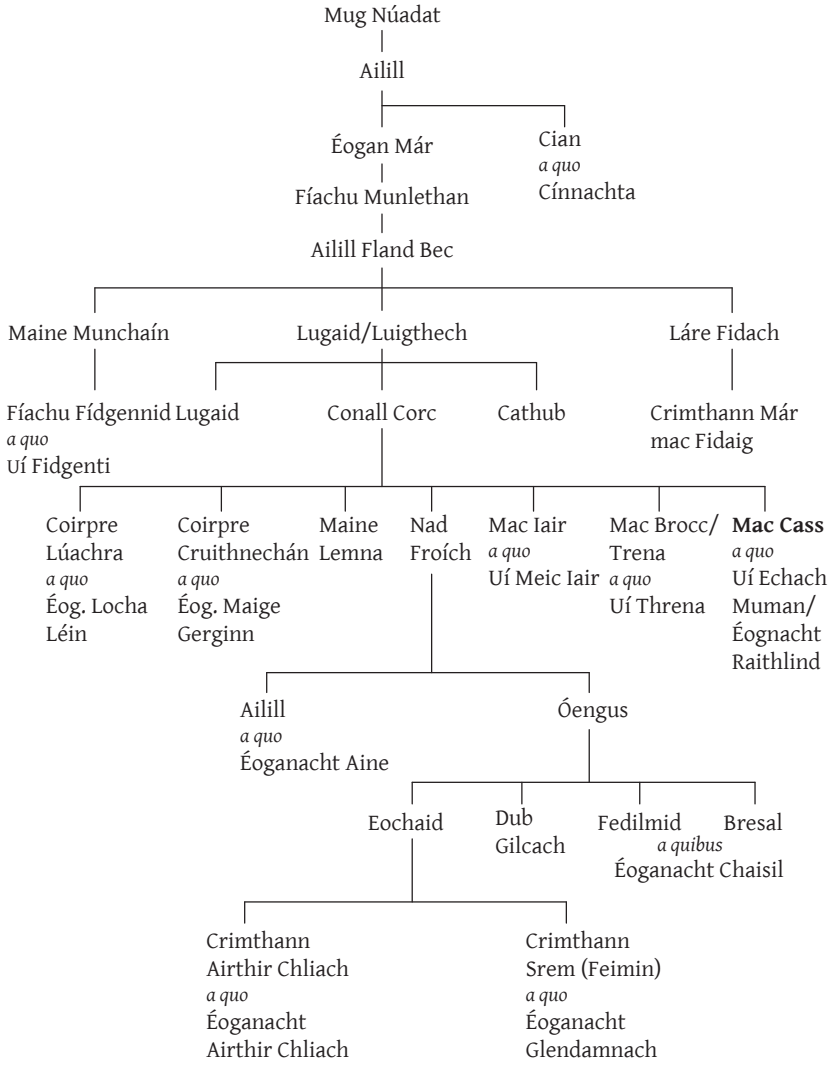


Figure 1.7 Early genealogy of the Eóganacht in early medieval Munster (after Charles-Edwards 2000, 610).

of sub-kingdoms comprising other Eóganacht groups, allies and subject peoples across Munster. Their power was based in part on military subjugation, but more often on political and economic connections. Ó Corráin observed that beneath the Eóganacht federation was '...a patchwork quilt of sub-kingdoms and minor local kingdoms in various degrees of subordination to each other and to the Eóganacht' (1972, 6). Many of these were ruled by dynastic stocks with different origins to the Eóganacht overlords. They included related and separate dynastic groups, as well as residual groups of the earlier Érainn peoples. Some of these claimed Eóganacht ancestry, such as the Uí Liatháin of east Cork, the Uí Fidgeinte of Limerick, the Uí Duach Airgetrois of north Kilkenny, the Uí Dedaid of north-east Tipperary, among others. This was a complex and shifting political landscape; for example, the Uí Fidgente controlled many smaller groups across much of what is today county Limerick. During the later ninth century their unified kingdom broke apart into the separate kingdoms of Uí Chonaill and Uí Chairbre, before fragmenting further into small petty kingdoms. The Múscraige were another group of related peoples, with sub-kingdoms in Tipperary (Múscraige Tíre), Limerick, and mid Cork (Múscraige Mittíne).

Other sub-kingdoms in Munster had an Érainn ancestry, including the Corcu Lóegde in west Cork, the Uí Liathain in the area of Cork harbour, and the Corcu Duibne in west Kerry, the Ciarraige Luachra in north Kerry, the Ciarraige Cuirche south and east of Cork harbour, and the Corcu Baiscind and Corcu Modruad in what is today county Clare. There were numerous other petty kingdoms along the northern and eastern borders of Munster (Ó Corráin 1972, 8). There is much uncertainty as to the historical origins of these groups, with Ó Buachalla (1952) suggesting many were of the Dáirine or Corcu Lóegde, one of the main branches of the Érainn or Erna who shared the kingship of Munster with the Eóganacht in earlier times. Ó Buachalla goes

on to speculate that the origins of the Eóganacht may be different to those presented by later synthetic historians. There may have been closer connections to their Érainn rivals, such as the fact that their divine ancestor, Eógan Már, is linked to ancestor deities of the Érainn in some early genealogies (1952, 72).

This is a theme taken up by Patrick Gleeson (2014) in a recent study of kingship and the early political history of Munster. He questions the existence of the Eóganacht as a federation of genealogically related dynasties, suggesting they were originally two distinct and rival polities, the Uí Maic Láire and Corcu Loígde who together ruled Munster in the period 500–800 AD. The Uí Maic Láire originally occupied a core territory from east Limerick to Cashel to south Tipperary, divided between a western branch (Uí Enna), based around Knockainy, and descended from Ailill mac Nad Froích, and an eastern branch (Cineol nÓengusso mac Nad Froích), based around Cashel prior to their move south into Cork. Gleeson believes the Uí Maic Láire considered themselves as descendants of the mythological Ailill Ólum who ruled Munster from Knockainy in east Limerick.

While Eóganacht origin myths proclaim they conquered Munster from the Érainn in late prehistory, Gleeson argues that the Corcu Loígde remained a powerful force into the seventh and eighth centuries. Their leading groups were the Uí Cairpre Luachra (later known as the Eoganacht Loch Léin) based around Killarney, and the Uí Echach Muman (Eóganacht Raithleann) in mid Cork. He suggests the Eóganacht conquest narrative reflects a struggle for supremacy that took place between Uí Maic Láire and the Corcu Loígde from the fifth to seventh centuries. He presents the Eóganacht origin myth as a late fiction designed to bolster the prestige of that federation. This was previously raised by Sproule (1984, 36) who suggests the Uí Echach Muman entered the new Eóganacht federation by artificially joining their genealogies to Corc mac Luigthig, founder of Cashel, while also retaining their original sept name.

While the traditional narrative suggests the Eóganacht had control of the provincial kingship by the fifth century, there was ongoing conflict in that period with their old rivals, the Érainn, that is with the Dáirine (Corcu Lóegde and Uí Fidgeinte) and the Osraige (Ó Buachalla 1954, 111–3). The Eóganacht established political alliances with Érainn groups such as the Muscraige, and others such as the Déisi, to consolidate their authority across the province. Through their various branches, but principally the Eóganacht Caisil, they controlled Munster until their eventual overthrow by the Dál Cais in the late tenth century. The latter were derived from the Déisi, a major kingdom stretching from the coast of Waterford through southern Tipperary into Limerick. This group subsequently divided into eastern and western branches, leading to the emergence of the Déis Tuaiscirt in Limerick, who by the eighth century had become the Dál Cais based in east Clare. The latter emerged as a major political and military power by the late tenth century, leading to conflict with the Eóganacht in the early eleventh century (see below).

In conclusion, the political landscape of Munster during the early medieval period was highly complex and dynamic. Ó Corráin connects the proliferation of petty kingdoms during the sixth and seventh centuries to widespread political upheavals across the province (1972, 8). He suggests that by the eighth century, if not earlier, the independent legal position of the tuath was being steadily eroded by the regional over-kingdoms (*ibid.,* 29). However, even when the emerging Eóganacht federation consolidated their power the indeterminate nature of royal succession, and the limited authority the king of Munster had over his sub-kingdoms, meant no settled power centre could develop within the dynasty. Ó Corráin concludes, 'Munster appears to me more a confederation of dominant dynasties rather than a kingdom in which one dynasty was paramount' (*ibid.*, 111–112). The possibility that the Eóganacht federation was not a political reality prior to the eighth century has important implications for the present study.

Eóganacht Raithleann

While the Eóganacht Locha Léin (Uí Cairpre Lúachra) were the dominant political power in Iarmumu, historical sources indicate that the southern kingdom of Desmumu in the Cork region was controlled by another branch of the western Eóganacht. As already stated, they were the Uí Echach Muman, otherwise known as Eóganacht Uí Eacac or Eóganacht Raithlenn (also Eóganacht Ua Néit; Ó Buachalla 1952, fn.5), a name derived from Eochu, grandson of Corc/Conall Corc, a king of Munster in the fourth/early fifth centuries AD (Figure 1.8). Corc's role in the foundation of Eóganacht Raithleann is emphasized by the medieval poem *Ráith Raithleann, ráith Chuirc is Chéin*, reputedly written by an eleventh-century bard, Mac Giolla Caomh (see below). Ryan interpreted this as referring to a southern expansion by Corc as King of Cashel, encouraged by his foster mother Raithleann, after whom a new fort in the southern territory was named (Ryan 1942, 146). He did question whether Corc was the direct founder of this new polity, noting the Uí Echach Muman traced their origin back to his grandson Eochu. Ryan suggests that this Eochu was probably the pioneer settler in this new southern territory, with the most prominent place in his small kingdom being a fort named Raithliu/Raith Raithleann.

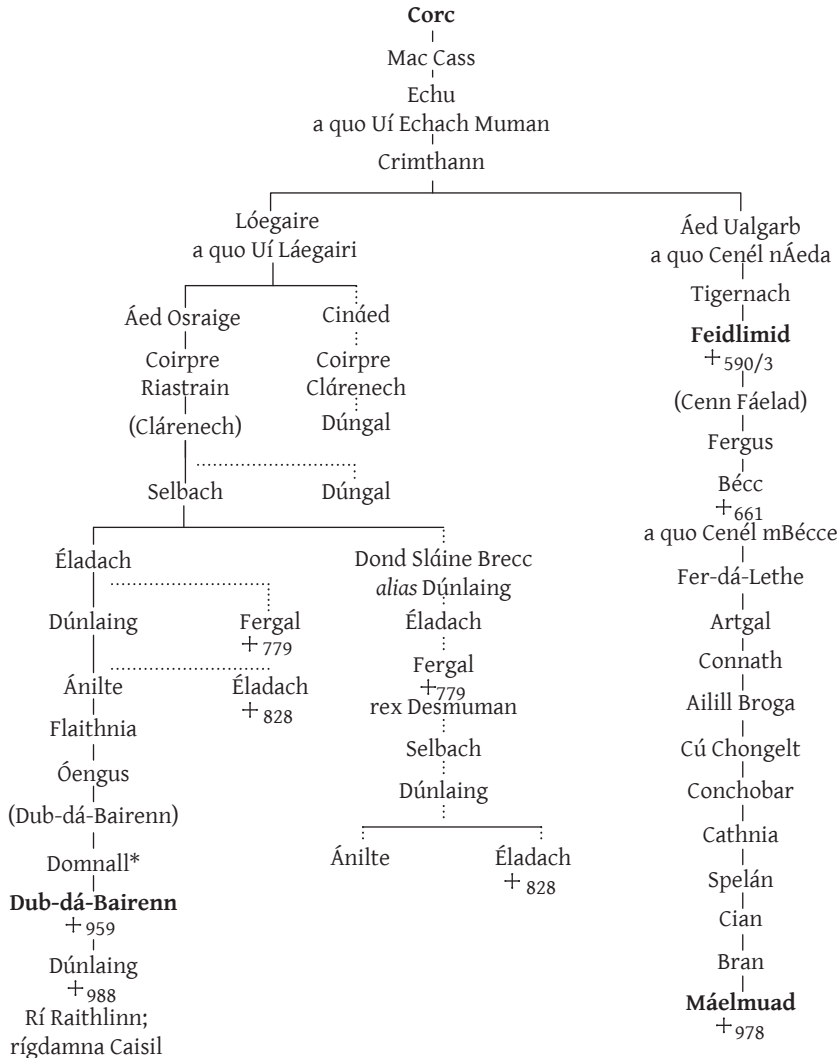


Figure 1.8 Genealogy of the Eóganacht Raithlind (after Byrne 1973, appendix II, 14)

The extent of the Uí Echach territory must have been considerable, representing one of the largest sept lands in the Eóganacht federation (O'Mahony 1906). The territory may have extended from Mizen Head as far as Cork harbour, centred on the baronies of Kinalea and Kinelmeaky in mid and south Cork, which are named after the two leading branches of the dynasty. Their lands extended to the southern coastline of Cork, where it is likely the Uí Echach were involved in maritime activity. O'Mahony (1906, 193) cites historical references to the involvement of the Uí Echach in a naval expedition led by Brian Bóruma in AD 979, and again in AD 1002.

By the sixth century, the Uí Echach/ Eóganacht Raithleann had divided into two distinct branches, the Cenél nÁeda and Cenél Láegairi, named after two sons of Criomthan, son of Eochu, with another branch, the Cenél mBéice, emerging out of the Cenél nÁeda at a later stage. The Cenél nÁeda, named after Aodh Uargarbh, was the stronger branch during that period, giving their name to the later barony of Kinalea, while the Cenél mBéice gave their name to the adjacent barony of Kinelmeaky. Aodh's son Tighernach was also Rí Raithleann, and his chief metalworker (*priomh gobha*) is reputed to have been Amargein/Amergin, the father of St Finbarr. Amergin is supposed to have married a woman in the royal household at Ráth Raithleann (Stanton 1893; O'Mahony 1907, 75; Ó Buachalla 1963). Popular tradition holds that the saint was born there in 570 AD, but that is not likely (see Ó Riain 1977).

Tighernach's son, Feidlimidh, rose to become the king of Munster in 580 AD. His death in 590/593 AD is recorded in the *Annals of Inisfallen* ('*mors Fedlimthe meicc Thigernaig, ríg Caissil*'; Mac Airt 1951, 78). He was the only *Rí Raithleann* to hold the kingship of Munster until Dubdaboirend mac Domnaill who died in AD 958 ('*mors Domnaill m. Oengusa, ríg Hua nEchach*; *ibid.,* 156). While the Eóganacht Raithleann had equal rights to the

kingship of Munster, the east Munster branches of the federation sought to exclude them from an early date (Ó Buachalla 1954, 119; Byrne 1973, 193). This is evident in the Laud genealogy text dating to the eighth or ninth centuries, which states that the Uí Echach did not take a share of the inheritance land of the Eóganachta, as their ancestor Mac Cass, son of Corc, did not claim it during the life-time of Corc. The latter reared Mac Cass' son, Eochu (ancestor of the Uí Echach) on his own lands and gave him the lands in mid Cork where the Uí Echach settled. This explains the old saying 'though each man of the Uí Eachach was king of Munster, none of them would rule from Cashel' (Ó Buachalla 1954, 120). It is notable that when Feidlimid mac Tighernach became king of Munster, he did not go to Cashel, but instead built a fortress at Bodumbir, thought to be near Cahir, Co. Tipperary (*ibid*.)

The early text *Frithfolaid ríg Caisil fri túatha Muman* outlines the mutual obligations of the King of Cashel to the sub-kingdoms of Munster, including that of the Eóganacht Raithleann. This lists the military services required of the kings of the western Eóganacht, while also asserting their free status within the federation (see Byrne 1973, 197–8). O'Mahony (1906) records that 'mighty Raithlenn' was exempt from tribute to the Cashel over-king, citing the following entry in *Lebor na Cert* ('Book of Rights'):

> There are three kings in spacious Munster
> who pay no tribute to Cashel,
> the king of Gabrán whose hostages are not taken,
> the king of Raithlenn and the king of Loch Léin.

The same text records the division of those stipends from the king of Cashel to the kings of tribes and territories according to their size and wealth, their ancestry, rank and nobility, with this reference to 'red Raithlinn':

> 'The prosperous king of Raithlinn is entitled
> To a very great stipend;
> Ten swords and ten drinking-horns,
> Ten red cloaks, ten blue cloaks.'
>
> (O'Donovan 1847, 67, 83).

In 957 AD Dubdaboirend mac Domnaill of the Eóganacht Raithleann was king of Munster, the first time since the sixth century that the Uí Echach had enjoyed such power (Ó Corrain 1972, 116–120). His death in 959 AD led to competing claims for the provincial kingship, between Maelmuad mac Brain of the Uí Echach/ Eóganacht Raithleann and Mathgamain mac Cennetíg, king of the Dál Cais, a rising power in north Munster. In 964 AD Mathgamain seized the Cashel kingship, occupying the lands of the Eóganacht Caisil. This lead to a regional conflict where the Uí Echach king, Maelmaud allied with the Norse of Limerick and the Ui Fidgeinte to revolt against Maghgaman's rule in Cashel. The latter was captured and killed by Maelmuad in 976 AD. That success was short-lived as Mathgamain's brother Brian Bóruma moved against Maelmuad in 978 AD, defeating him at the battle of Belach Leachta.

Brian subsequently made peace with Maolmuadh's son Cían, allowing him to succeed as Rí Raithleann and Lord of Desmumu, a political alliance strengthened though marriage to Brian's daughter Sadb/Saidhb. Cían was an important Eóganacht ally of Brian at Clontarf, before falling out with the Dál Cais in the succession stakes that followed the latter's death in that battle. The death of Cían later that year (1014 AD) led to infighting among the Uí Echach, which resulted in defeat of the Cenél Láegairi (O'Mahony 1907, 189). This left the Cenél nÁeda under Cían's son, Mahon or Mathghamhan, in control of sept lands that extended from Cork harbour to Mizen Head, and from the River Blackwater to the southern coast. The O'Mahony/Uí Mathghamhna clan of the later medieval period in Cork claim illustrious descent from this Mahon (obit. 1038 AD), the son of Cían mac Maol Muadh, one of the heroes of Clontarf, and Sadb, the daughter of Brian Bóruma.

Garranes and Raithliu

> 'On the northern limit of Templemartin may be seen the plan of an ancient tribal city. The chief's stronghold is in the centre, surrounded by a triple rampart, and probably once by a double. At present about a dozen garths lie around it. There were more formerly, but, as I learned from the workmen, they were levelled with the fields. The place is honeycombed with caves.' (Lyons 1893, 146).

This reference to a trivallate ringfort surrounded by smaller forts in the parish of Templemartin comes from a local historian, Rev. John Lyons. He identified this location in the townland of Gurrane (Garranes) as the chief stronghold of the O'Mahonys, lords of Kinelmeky, before they moved to the Bandon area in the later medieval period. He noted the central fort is known locally as *Caitir Céin na mbeann* óir ('the seat [or fort] of Cían of the golden [drinking] cups'), a legendary king whose hospitality is praised in the following unattributed verse:

> 'The fort of Cian of the golden horns,
> Whose store outlasted his life;
> Who never drove anyone (poor) from his house,
> And who was not driven from God's house.'
>
> (*translation by* Lyons 1893, 146)

In a subsequent paper Rev. Lyons reiterated that Cian was still honoured in the tradition of the district, mentioning a local man of 91 years who relayed his legend and that of the royal seat, *Rát Raitliu* (Lyons 1896, 449). Lyons went on to suggest the epithet 'of the golden [drinking] cups' refered to part of the annual tribute the King of Cashel was required to pay the king of Raithlenn (see above). He identified a large rath in the north-east corner of Gurranes townland as 'known by the old people as *Rát Raitliu*' (*ibid*., 451).

There are references in medieval sources to a royal residence of the Uí Echach variously known as Ráth Raithleann, Ráth Chuirc and Ráth Chein. The first two names are associated with the legendary foundation of the Eóganacht Raithleann by Corc, king of Cashel, in the late fourth/early fifth centuries AD (see above). The Ráth Chein association is later, connected to political developments in the later tenth century when Cían as Rí Raithleann, married Sadb, daughter of Brian Bóruma, in a forced political alliance. Cian and Sadb are central figures in poems written by two medieval bards, Giolla Caomh and Mac Liag, supposedly in the eleventh century but probably later (see Chapter 7.1). These are examples of onomastic texts known as *dindsenchas* ('lore of places'), a body of toponymic lore that connects place-names to some legendary or mythological figure or tradition.

The poems were published by Eoin MacNeill in the 1896 issue of the *Gaelic Journal*, with the following commentary:

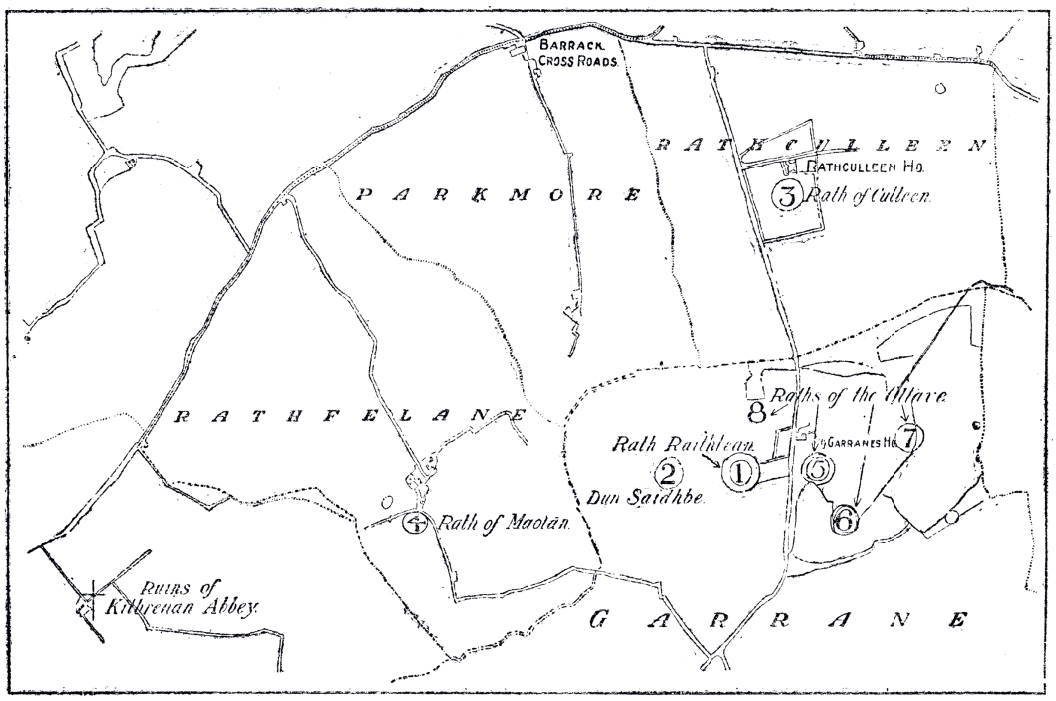
> 'O'Donovan does not identify the site of Raithleann, but there are surely remains sufficient to indicate its place. It must have been once of great importance. In Giolla Caomh's poem are enumerated among its features — the Road of the Chariots on the north, the Fort of Sadhbh on the west, the Ford of Spoils on the east, the Road of the Mules "below". Mac Liag further mentions the "cashels of the raths", the Rath of the Poets, the Rath of the Women, Ráith Chuain (i.e. of Cuan O'Locháin, the ollamh), Dun Draighnean (i.e. of Draighneán Ó Seicinn, the trumpeter), Raith Chuilcinn (i.e. of Cuilceann, the harper), the Rath of the Doirseoir (janitor or gatekeeper, Dubhthach): in all seven forts, in addition to the fort of Raithleann itself, also called Ráith Chuirc and Ráith Chéin' (MacNeill 1896).

Soon after MacNeill published the translation of these poems, Rev. John Lyons located these legendary places in relation to a large fort west of Garranes House in the northeastern part of Templemartin parish (Lyons 1896). Lyons identified this large earthwork as the principal fort of Rát-Raitliu, adding:

> 'Probably the small rath on its western side is the one called after Brian's daughter, Sadhbh, *Dun Saibh an dun ro tiar*, "Sadhbh's court is this western court". Rat Cuilcinn was called after Cuilcenn, Cian's harper; it still exists and gives its name to the townland lying north of Raithlenn. Dun Draigneáin, "Draighnean's Fort", was called after Cian's trumpeter; it stood on the limestone rock where Castlemore was afterwards built. The site of Dun Drinane church is still pointed out adjacent to the castle on the east side. A portion of the cemetery was lately discovered at the foot of the rock in clearing a farm yard. This place lies two and a half miles in a straight line north-west of Raithlenn. The Ford of the Spoils on the east must have been near where the public road now crosses the stream, north-east of the great rath. The Rath of the Poets, the Rath of the Women, the Rath of Cuan O Lochain (the ollamh), the Rath of the doorkeeper (Dubhthach), stood inside the grounds of Gurranes House, east of high road, and were levelled, and their underground chambers filled with clay within the recollection of the labourers I met there some thirty years ago' (Lyons 1896, 451).

Lyons went on to mention a large number of raths to the south and east of the main fort, speculating that they 'must have been the residences of the guards and military followers of the king' (*ibid*.). A note he published in the October 1896 issue of *The Gaelic Journal* observed that 'the district south and east of the Cathair is dotted with lisses. Some four or five of them were razed in laying out the grounds of Gurranes House'. He also mentioned a local memory of Rát-Raitliu, a name he first heard 50 years previously from the old Irish-speaking people of the area. Lyons placed this fort within a large territory centred on, but extending beyond, the barony of Kinelmeaky. He also made a connection to the patron saint of Cork, Finbarr, whose father, Amergin, was reputedly the chief smith to Tighernach King of Raithleann in the fifth century (Lyons 1896).

Some years later, another local historian, Canon John O'Mahony, compared those legendary places to place-names in the Ordnance Survey maps (O'Mahony 1907). Following Lyons' interpretation, he located the 'Rath of Culleen, the harper of the hill' in the townland of Rathculleen on the northern side of Garranes townland where there is a record of a levelled ringfort (CO084-52; Hartnett 1939, 249). He placed the Rath of Maolan, named in the poems as one of Cian's attendants, to the west of the principal fort in the adjacent townland of Rathfelane (marked as Rathnaglanne on Scalé's map of 1775), where there is also a levelled rath (CO084-050; Hartnett 1939, 250). O'Mahony also identified Dún Sadbh as the Lisnamanroe enclosure on the 1845 Ordnance Survey, considering this to be a corruption



(1) Rath Raithlean, called *Caherkean* at time of Ordnance Survey. Lisnacaheragh put down by the Ordnance Survey through mistake. "Caherkean," site of smaller fort lower down.
(2) Dun Saidhbe or Rath Saidhbe in the old poems. Called "Lisnamanroe" (a corruption of Lisnabanree), in Ordnance Map.
(3) Rath of Culleen, the harper (destroyed). In townland of Rathculleen.
(4) Rath of Maolán. (Rathphelane, Rathvolane, in Parish Register) [destroyed].
(5), (6), (7), (8) Raths of "the Ollave," "the Poets," "the Women," "the Doorkeeper" (these destroyed).
Dun Draighneán, too distant to appear in this map.

Figure 1.9 Identification of places mentioned in medieval poems in Garranes townland (from O'Mahony 1907, 29).

of Lisbanree ('queen's fort'), while noting a similarly named townland five miles away (O'Mahony 1907, 30). In an accompanying map, he identified the location of the Rath of the Ollave as the large earthwork named Shanawillen Caherkean on the Ordnance Survey maps (Figure 1.9). O'Mahony observed that 'these topographical poems have done for Raithleann, what other *dindsenchas* sources enabled O'Donovan and Petrie to do for the Raths of Tara' (O'Mahony, 1907, fn.25).

To conclude this review of historical sources, the foundation of Rath Raithleann is often associated with the legendary king Corc mac Luigthig, who established a new Eóganacht kingdom in mid Cork from his royal residence in Cashel. O'Mahony (1906) records that he bestowed the title Rí Raithleann on his second son, Cas, whose son Eochu is regarded by many as the true founder of the dynasty (Uí Echach Muman). O'Mahony went on to suggest Eochu may have been the first Christian king of that dynastic line in the fifth century. Ryan (1942) is of the opinion that Raithliu was a Uí Echach capital in its early history, but was abandoned as a royal residence by the seventh century. That may have been connected to division of the Eóganacht Raithlenn into several dynastic septs, including the emergence of the Cenél mBéice in the later seventh century. It is likely that Raithliu continued to be used as a meeting place of the Uí Echach and a symbol of their authority. Though abandoned for residence, the great forts at Garranes retained their significance into later periods, particularly for the O'Mahony clan of the later medieval period, for whom this location is regarded as the 'cradle of the race' (Lyons 1893; see Chapter 7.2).

The tribal connection to Garranes has been considered in relation to the discovery *c.*1851 of an ogam stone at the nearby ringfort of Lisheenagreine. The inscription, C[A]SSITT[A]S MAQI MUCOI CALLITI (Cassis, son of one bearing the tribal name of Calitos), is generally interpreted as a memorial stone of a local tribal group named the Calliti, dating to around the sixth century (Figure 1.10). The genealogies of the Eóganachta list one of their kindred as the Cenél Caíllaide, descended from Caíllaide mac Conaill, reputed grandson of Natfróech, son of Corc/Conall Corc (Bhreathnach 2014, 163). Gleeson links the Calliti name to a group known as the Caltraige living in the Garranes area (see Mac Niocaill 1972, 3 for discussion of such archaic population names). He suggests that the later Uí Echach either emerged out of the Caltraige or else attached

Figure 1.10 Ogam stone from Lisheenagreine, Garranes, Co. Cork. (UCC Collection)

themselves to an early kingship in that area (Gleeson 2014, 208). All this remains speculation in the absence of contemporary written sources.

1.3 INVESTIGATING THE GARRANES LANDSCAPE

This section examines the mapping of ancient monuments and the history of antiquarian and archaeological investigation in the Garranes landscape.

Historic mapping

The earliest record of ancient enclosures in the Garranes landscape comes from private mapping of the Devonshire estate, produced in 1775 by the cartographer Bernard Scalé at a scale of 20 perches to an inch (1:3960, assuming the contemporary English perch measuring 16½ feet). This survey shows a cluster of small and large enclosures, all labelled 'Danes Fort', in the northern part of the townland (Figure 1.11). These are depicted in a stylized manner, though their relative size is broadly conveyed. Some are no longer extant, with one site, Lisheenagreine, depicted by Scalé as an already levelled monument.

The Scalé mapping was followed by the first edition of the Ordnance Survey (Cork sheet 84), which was surveyed in 1841–2 and published in 1845 at a scale of six inches to one mile (1:10,560). The main ringfort at Garranes is depicted in hachures as a multivallate sub-circular earthwork named 'Lisnacaheragh' (Figure 1.12). This is recorded as site CO084-084 in the *Record of Monuments and Places* (RMP) produced by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (available at www.archaeology.ie). A univallate oval enclosure named 'Lisnamanroe' (RMP CO084-83) on the western side of Lisnacaheragh is also marked on the Scalé map. The Ordnance Survey map also shows 'Shanawillen Caherkean' (RMP CO084-082) to the immediate north of Lisnacaheragh, which is not depicted on the Scalé map. That monument is different to the ringfort enclosures, being sub-rectangular in form, with a narrow extension on the northern side connecting it to a stream. The enclosure is shown partly covered in trees, adjacent to a larger sub-rectangular copse of trees extending out of woodland bordering the townland boundary to the north (Figure 1.12).

The 1845 Ordnance Survey map depicts two smaller enclosures in the grounds of Garranes house on the eastern side of the road east of Lisnacaheragh (Figure 1.12). These are shown as small circular hachured enclosures (RMP CO084-085 and CO084-088), but not named on the six-inch map. Both are depicted as 'Danes Forts' on the Scalé estate map of 1775. The same map depicts a circular feature in the wooded grounds of Garranes House (RMP CO084-086), which cannot be verified as a ringfort (see Lyons 1896b comment above on four or five lisses 'razed in laying out the grounds of Garranes House').

Most of the monuments at Garranes are depicted on revisions of the Ordnance Survey mapping, published in 1900 and 1943 respectively. The 1900 twenty-five inch edition (1:2500) shows Lisnacaheragh as a hachured trivallate enclosure, with an entrance on the eastern side (Figure 1.13). The monument is depicted in similar fashion on the 1943 six-inch map (Figure 1.14). The 1900 edition records the 'site of' the nearby Lisnamanroe enclosure, the extent of which is represented by a dashed line on the 1943 map. There are also changes to the depiction of Shanawillen Caherkean, shown with hachures on both the 1900 and 1943 editions as a sub-triangular enclosure ('Caherkean') with an entrance on the south-west side. The small unnamed enclosure (CO084-085), adjacent to the road to the south east of Lisnacaheragh, is represented as a single hachured enclosure on the 1900 edition, while the 1943 map depicts a 'souterain (site of)' in the interior. The other two enclosures in the grounds of Garranes House (C0084-086 and CO084-088) are not marked on these maps. To the east a circular enclosure (RMP CO084-97) is not marked on the 1845 Ordnance Survey map, but

Figure 1.11 Northern part of Garranes townland on map of Devonshire estate produced in 1775 by Bernard Scalé at a scale of 20 perches to an inch. Four circular enclosures marked as 'Danes Forts', the large central example being the trivallate ringfort of Lisnacaheragh. (The map was originally draughted on an east–west axis, but has been reproduced here aligned and scaled to approximately reflect Figures 1.12–1.14).

Figure 1.12 Garranes monuments on first edition of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey map published in 1845.

Figure 1.13 Garranes monuments on 25-inch Ordnance Survey map published in 1900.

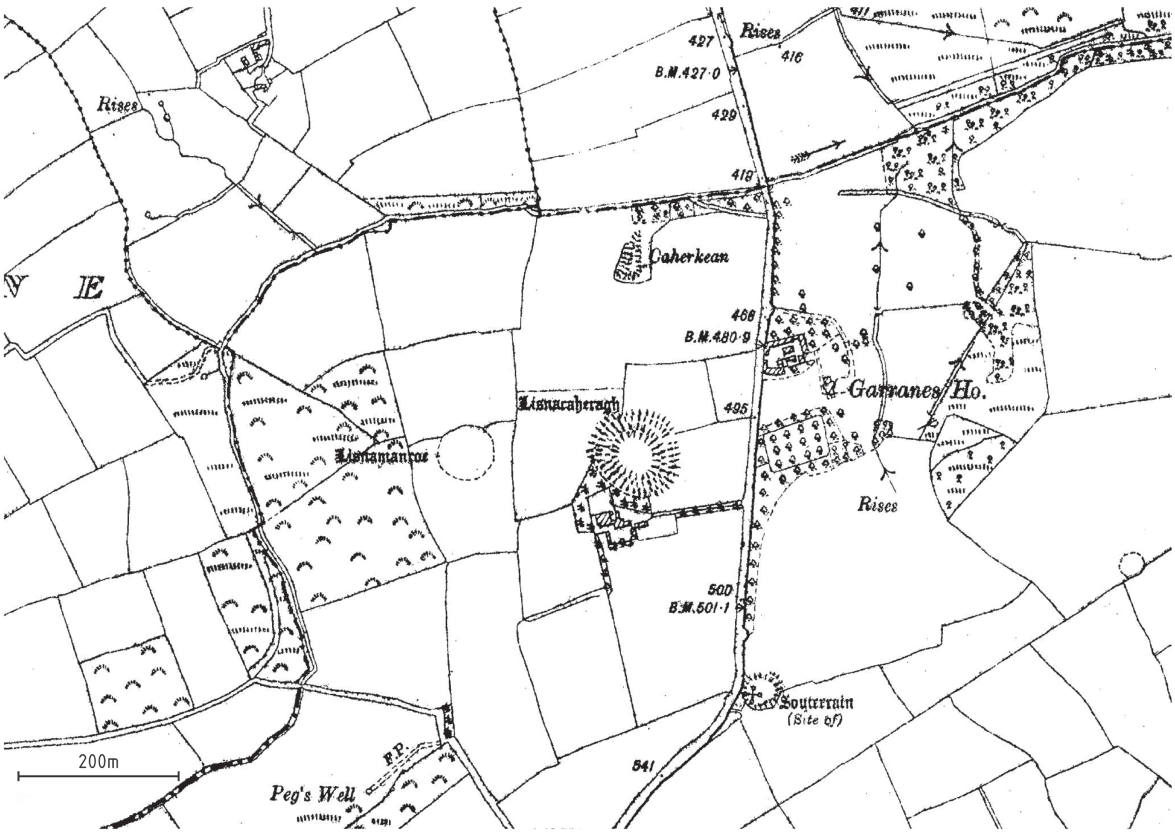


Figure 1.14 Garranes monuments on third edition of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey map published in 1943.

is shown on subsequent editions. Another enclosure (RMP CO084-136) to the south is not marked on any Ordnance Survey map, but is shown as a 'Danes Fort' on the 1775 estate map.

The naming of ringforts as 'Danes Forts' in the Scalé estate map of 1775 was common in Irish antiquarian tradition in the early modern era (Waddell 2005; see Chapter 9.2). This also influenced the early work of the Ordnance Survey whose Name Books make brief mention of the Garranes monuments. The focal enclosure is named as Lisnacaheragh, translated as 'the Fort of the Town'. The Name Books record a local tradition that 'the chief of the Danes lived there' and that 'the Danes had a town inside and about it'. The same entry states that 'the best ale in Ireland was made in Rathroroan (?) called on that account Victorious Ale', going on to mention that 'the chief's attendants stood in a line along the road that was from one fort to the other one handed them ale from one to the other till it was placed on the chief's table'. The entry mentions that part of this road is still traceable, before dismissing the entire story as 'a fine lie'. The Name Book entry also mentions a local tradition of a red-haired woman seen at 'Lisnamanrua'. It refers to 'Shanawillan Cahircain' as '..belonging to a Irish *táin* or chieftain called Cainanoughnu or Cainaroghnow (in the times of the Danes) his house was Cain Mahony'.

It is difficult to assess the currency of these folk traditions in the early modern era. There are few references to Garranes in the Schools Folklore Collection undertaken in the 1930s by the Irish Folklore Commission. A teacher in the local primary school, Nora O'Halloran, made the following observations in 1938:

> 'I regret I cannot get any folklore of this locality from the pupils. The greater number belong to parents who have lived here only a short time. The children of the migratory labourers say their parents cannot tell them any of these old stories, nor have they got them from their grandparents. The few farmer's children we have belong to parents who have settled here recently. With the exception of the Collins family all the landowners have come to live here in the locality within 20 or 30 years... Another child told us that she asked at home her people said "long enough we were believing in these old superstitions the people have more sense now and its time they were forgotten' (Schools Folklore collection S315, 61).

The same teacher added that 'Gurranes fort in the locality has been opened by Professor O Riordan and the children visited the place during the time it was opened'. The Schools Collection contains an essay titled *An Raitliú*, possibly written in 1937 by Domhnall Ó Cochláin, a teacher in Castlenalact primary school (Schools Folklore collection S315, 94a–g). Based largely on published sources, such as O'Mahony (1906–7), this essay illustrates local informed opinion about Garranes at the time the site was being excavated.

Antiquarians and archaeologists

There are surprisingly few references to the Garranes monuments in antiquarian literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Samuel Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* noted 'there are many Danish raths in the parish, one on the lands of Gurrane, including three acres, and surrounded by three ramparts and a fosse' (1837, 605). In a visit to Garranes in July 1856, the Cork antiquarian, John Windele, described the large enclosures of Lisnacaheragh and Lisnamanroe, as 'royal lioses' (RIA MS12I10, 584-594; information Joan Rockley). While confusing their names, Windele records the dimensions of both enclosures, also providing a sketch profile of the Lisnacaheragh defences. Rolt Brash (1868) recorded that about a half a mile to the north of Lisheenagreine there is 'an immense caher with subterraneous passages yet unexplored'. In a brief comment on that site, Canon Lyons (1893) noted that:

> 'On the south side of the inner rampart of the central fort [Lisnacaheragh] are several sepulchral mounds; these enclosed cinerary urns with bones, but they have been all broken, doubtless by people in search of treasure. The fragments lie mixed with the clay' (1893, 146)

He added that 'human bones and portions of arms have been found in the adjoining field, showing, probably, where fighting took place'. He also refers to the discovery of a 'cave', presumably a souterrain, in the same field, then visible on the surface as a cropmark (*ibid*.).

Seán P. Ó Ríordáin

Garranes ringfort is closely associated with Seán P. Ó Ríordáin (1905–57), an important figure in modern Irish archaeology and an early exponent of scientific excavation (Figure 1.15; Daniel 1960; Waddell 2005). A native of Monkstown, Co. Cork, he studied archaeology in 1928–30 in University College Cork under Professor (Canon) Patrick Power. The recipient of a travelling studentship in 1931, over the following two years he travelled extensively in Europe, visiting museums and excavations mainly in Britain, Germany and Switzerland (Wallace 2004). In 1936 Ó Ríordáin was appointed Professor of Archaeology in UCC, having previously worked in the National Musum of Ireland. That same year he conducted his first excavation at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, where he continued to dig different sites until

Figure 1.15 Sean P. Ó Ríordáin (O'Kelly 1957)

1954 (Cleary 2018; see also Carew 2018, 150–4). During those years he investigated other important sites (see below), including significant excavations on the Hill of Tara that continued until his premature death in 1957.

Ó Ríordáin acquired considerable excavation experience in 1931–3 during the tenure of his travelling studentship. He visited or worked on several excavations in England and Scotland, including a hillfort dig in Scotland directed by Gordon Childe. During that period he was in contact with leading excavators in England, working for Mortimer Wheeler at Roman Verulamium, and meeting other leading excavators, such as W.J. Hemp and G.C. Dunning (Wallace 2004). His travels in Holland in late 1932 led to experience with A.E. Van Giffen, another pioneer of modern excavation technique. In 1933 he visited museums and excavations in Germany, meeting many leading archaeologists, including Gerhard Bersu in Frankfurt who would go on to excavate in Ireland. Ó Ríordáin conducted his first excavation during that period, digging a prehistoric cairn at Curraghbinny, Co. Cork (Ó Ríordáin 1933). This was followed in 1934 by excavations at the Cush ringfort complex, Co. Limerick (Ó Ríordáin 1940; see also Carew 2018, 147–150).

His trips abroad in 1932–3 exposed Ó Ríordáin to some of the best excavation practice in Europe (see Wallace 2004). Another important influence on his training was the work of the Harvard Archaeological Expedition in Ireland during the period 1932–6. This team of American archaeologist, led by Hugh O'Neill Hencken, excavated 18 sites over five years (O'Neill Hencken 1941). Included were important early medieval settlements such as Lagore crannog, Co. Meath, the Ballinderry crannógs in Co. Offaly, and Cahercommaun stone fort, Co. Clare (Carew 2018, appendix 1). The work of the Harvard programme played a role in establishing the Unemployment Scheme, an initiative by the Free State government to alleviate rural unemployment (Waddell 2005). A total of 26 sites were excavated in 1934–7 under that scheme (Carew 2018, appendix 2), including Lisnacaheragh ringfort at Garranes. The Harvard programme did not excavate earthen ringforts (raths), which may have influenced Ó Ríordáin to dig at Cush in 1934–5 and at Garranes in 1937.

In 1940–2 Ó Ríordáin excavated another trivallate ringfort, located at Ballycatteen near Ballinspittle, Co. Cork (Ó Ríordáin and Hartnett 1943). This impressive earthwork is similar in size and design to Garranes, which lies 21km to the north-west. The defences are larger, but of similar construction, with rock-cut ditches and banks of dump construction with probable stone facing. The entrance passage was protected by at least two gates, the innermost of which was connected to a strong post-palisade on the inside of the inner bank, a feature not recorded at Garranes. As with the latter, no discernible house plans were identified, though the discovery of post-holes and hearths indicates built structures in the interior. Unlike Garranes, three separate stone-built souterrains were found inside the ringfort. The number of finds was considerably less than from Garranes, but enough to indicate occupation at Ballycatteen in the later sixth and seventh centuries AD, if not later. Ó Ríordáin connected the site to the Eóganacht expansion into south Cork at the expense of the Corcu Loígde, where it served as a fortified outpost in that conquered territory (*ibid*., 43).

In 1948 Ó Ríordáin excavated an earthen ringfort in Grange townland to the north of Lough Gur (Ó Ríordáin 1949a). He also excavated several stone-built ringforts (cashels) in the same period. These include two examples excavated in 1937–8 at Carraig Aille, Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, (Ó Ríordáin 1949b; see also Cleary 2018, 228–257), the same year he was digging at Garranes. This was followed by excavation in the summers of 1939 and 1940 of Leacanabuaile stone fort near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry (Ó Ríordáin and Foy 1941). Overall, he conducted an impressive number of ringfort excavations in the period 1934–42, all exemplary by the standards of the day and published to a high standard. The results of these and other excavations informed an overview of ancient forts in his influential book *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside*, first published in 1942.

Ó Ríordáin at Garranes

This may have first occurred in 1930, during fieldwork undertaken for a MA study on the place-names and antiquities of Kinalmeaky barony. In 1931 this thesis was submitted successfully for the Travelling Studentship in Archaeology offered by the National University of Ireland (Ó Ríordáin 1931a). The research was published in 1930–35 as a series of articles in the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*. These include a study of Templemartin (Ó Ríordáin 1931), in which he examined the ancient monuments, place-names and historical associations of that parish.

This survey records that the 'most remarkable of these monuments is the very large triple-ramparted lios in Crowley's land', recorded on the Ordnance Survey maps as *Lisnacaheragh (Lios na Catrac)*, translated as the *Fort of the Catair* (*or stone enclosure*). Ó Ríordáin interpreted this name as equivalent to *Catair Lios* meaning a mansion, seat, a chief city (*ibid*., 65). He records that the name *Lios na Catrac* is still in use locally, whereas the name *Rath Raitleann* is not. The latter he linked to a thirteenth-century poem '*Rat Raitleann [rat] Cuirc is Céin*', explaining how the fort was linked to those three individuals over time (see above). Ó Ríordáin went on to describe the fort, giving its dimensions and overall state of preservation, with a photograph of the defences included. He also discussed Canon Lyons' (1893) reference to the discovery of sepulchral mounds inside the forts, and of human remains, arms and a 'cave' in an adjoining field (*ibid*., 66).

Ó Ríordáin mentions an earthwork to the north of *Lisnacaheragh* named *Shanawillen Caherkean* (*Sean-Muileann Catair-Céin*; *Old Mill of Cian's Fort*) by the Ordnance Survey. He described this as 'a large irregular pit very overgrown on the sides and having what seems to have been a cart-passage leading from it to the west' (*ibid*.). He records that 'it is known locally as the *Sean-Mulleann* and was connected by tradition at the time of the Ordnance Survey with Cian' (*ibid*.). He added that 'it is not possible to be sure of its original use now—locally it is said that wine was made here!'. The latter is curious as some years later he would excavate imported wine vessels at nearby Lisnacaheragh. He also recorded a local story that St Finbarr was born at *Sean-Mulleann* and not in Lisnacaheragh.

The next monument recorded by Ó Ríordáin is *Lisnamanroe* (*Lios na mBan Ruad*; *Fort of the Red-haired Women*), citing a mention in the Ordnance Survey Name Books of 'red-haired women having been seen in it' (*ibid*.). He also questioned Canon O'Mahony's (1906) opinion that this name is a corruption of *Lios na Bainriogna* (*Fort of the Queen*), which he believed was motivated by the latter's wish to connect this site to *Dún Saidbe* mentioned in the medieval poems. Ó Ríordáin stated that local pronunciation still holds to *Lios na mBan Ruad*, and favoured the explanation given by the

Figure 1.16 Excavation team at Garranes, 1937 (Ó Ríordáin centre front row; O'Kelly third from right, front row).

Ordnance Survey (see above). He records that this lios is now levelled, but is visible as a low-relief enclosure, 68 yards (62m) in diameter (*ibid*., 67).

Ó Ríordáin also made reference to two or possibly three lioses in the grounds of Garranes House, to the east of *Lisnacaheragh*. One of these near the road has a fairly well preserved rampart and is 33 yards (30m) in diameter. The other to the east of that site is levelled, but is visible in a bend in a boundary fence. Finally, he added that 'it is said that Garranes House is built on the site of a lios' (*ibid*.). Ó Ríordáin also recorded a single-ramparted lios named *Liosnaboul* (*Lios na Buaile*; *Fort of the Cattle-place*) in the south-east part of the townland. The final ringfort recorded in this survey is *Lisìn na Gréine* (Little Fort of the Sun), a levelled enclosure to the south of Lisnacaheragh where the aforementioned ogam stone was recovered. His record of that site is essentially a reiteration of Canon Lyons' investigation (*ibid*.).

Finally, in relation to O'Mahony's (1906) identification of places mentioned in the medieval poems, Ó Ríordáin observed that 'one cannot commend his identification in some cases because its exactitude and fulness are not warranted by the scant information given in the poems' (*ibid.,* fn 6). He cited the examples of '*Rát na bFilead, Rát na mBan',* which O'Mahony attributed to two raths in the grounds of Garranes House for no obvious reason.

Excavation at Garranes

In March 1937 Ó Ríordáin proposed to excavate a 'very large earthen ring-fort with triple ramparts' at Garranes, which he considered to be of great historical importance:

> 'This is the site which has been identified at Rath Raithleann [...], the central site of the Ui Echach a branch of the Eoghanacht. It is said to have been founded in the 5th century [...] and still in occupation as late as the 11th century because Cian Mac Maolmuadh who fought at Clontarf was ruler of Raithleann' (letter to Inspector of National Monuments, H.G. Leask, 10 March, 1937; OPW F94/157/1).

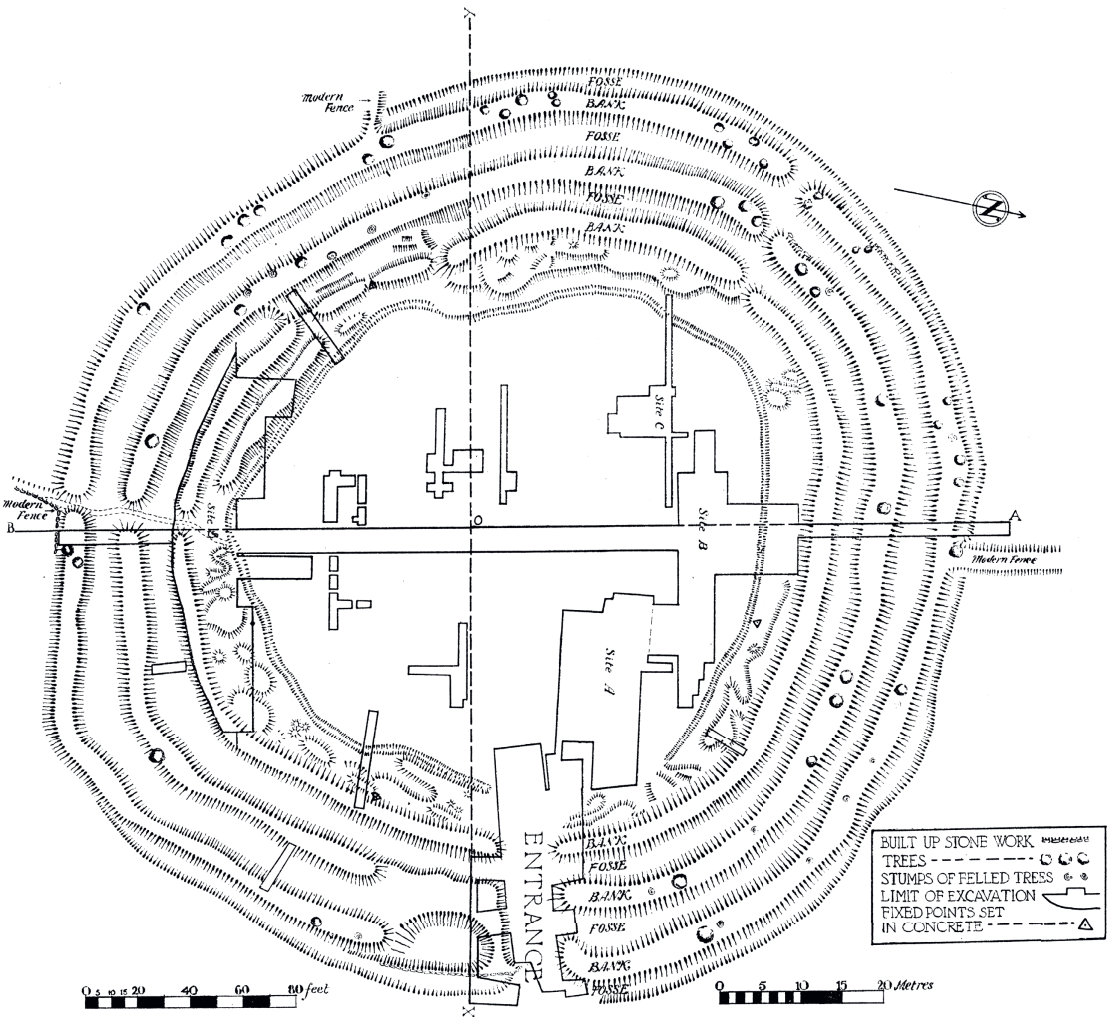


Figure 1.17 Plan of Garranes ringfort (Lisnacaheragh) with 1937 excavation trenches (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XII).

The decision to dig at Garranes came two years after Ó Ríordáin's excavation of the Cush ringfort complex in east Limerick (Ó Ríordáin 1940). He was involved in multiple projects in those years, having comenced his programme of excavation at at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, working there in 1936 at Circles O and P, and in 1937–8 at the Carraig Aille stone forts (Cleary 2018, 38; Carew 2018, 150–4). The results at Cush raised several questions about ringforts, not least because of the chronological problem created by the discovery there of Bronze Age archaeology (see Carew 2018, 147–150). Arising from this, Ó Ríordáin regarded ringforts 'as presenting one of the biggest problems in Irish archaeology and the excavation of a number of prime examples as a matter of prime necessity that we might know something of the everyday background of life in early times in Ireland' (National Archives file OPW 9/F94/157/1).

In deciding to excavate at Garranes, Ó Ríordáin considered that 'the excavation of a site such as this may have valuable results in giving information regarding the material conditions of life during the period of its occupation, particularly with regard to houses etc' (Letter of 10th March 1937 to Harold Leask, Inspector of National Monuments; National Archives file OPW 9/F94/157/1). He applied to the Office of Public Works for funding under the unemployment relief scheme, requesting a grant of £165 (eventually receiving £215) to hire 20 workmen and miscellaneous costs (*ibid.*). He hired O.J. O'Sullivan of Annascaul, Co. Kerry as foreman, two UCC engineering students to survey the monument, and an architectural student from Limerick, Michael J. O'Kelly, to work as charge-hand (Figure 1.16). The latter would succeed Ó Ríordáin in 1946 as Professor of Archaeology in UCC, and became well known as the excavator of Newgrange.

Having secured funding and approval from the Office of Public Works, the excavation at Garranes commenced on 5th April, and continued for eight weeks to 29th May, 1937 (*ibid.*). The following year a summary of the results was published in the journal *Antiquity* and the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* (Ó Ríordáin 1938a; 1938b). The full report was published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (1942), a paper that is still an important source for ringfort studies in Ireland.

Prior to excavation Ó Ríordáin surveyed the ringfort, producing a detailed hachured plan of the earthwork, its enclosing elements, entrance and interior (Figure 1.17). This is an important record as the survey was undertaken when there were relatively few trees along the enclosing elements in comparison to the present day (see photograph in Ó Ríordáin 1942, plate 9). There have been numerous tree-falls in the intervening years, along with rabbit damage and other erosion. The accuracy of the 1937 survey has been confirmed by recent fieldwork.

The conduct of the 1937 excavation is apparent from the 1942 publication, and from brief reports sent by Ó Ríordáin to the Office of Public Works. None of the original site notebooks or drawings are extant, which makes it difficult to review the published information. Ó Ríordáin excavated approximately half of the interior of the ringfort, as well as the entrance passage, and small sections across the defences. The interior was sampled by digging narrow trenches, which were extended into wider cuttings where evidence of occupation was found. The individual trenches are marked but not numbered on the site plan (Figure 1.17). This began with a ten feet (3m) wide trench across the interior in a north–south direction. That extended across the enclosing elements at both ends as a five feet (1.5m) wide cutting. This provided stratigraphic sections across the defences (Figure 1.18), with additional information provided by five small cuttings across selected parts of those banks and ditches. The entrance passage on the eastern side of the ringfort was excavated in its entirety, along with the ditch terminals on both sides.

There are no details in the 1942 publication as to how the excavation was conducted. The accompanying photographs suggest a combination of heavy spade

Figure 1.18 Excavation of defences, Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XIII, Fig. 2).

digging and coarse troweling with finer investigation of features. While the work team was inexperienced, Ó Ríordáin had considerable experience from the Cush and Lough Gur projects, and from his many visits in 1932–3 to excavations in Europe. He was part of a new generation of excavators who stressed the importance of recording features in the ground and not just the recovery of artifacts (see above). While the Garranes dig was undertaken to lower standards than the best excavations today, Ó Ríordáin only had limited support available in terms of scientific methods and specialist analysis.

Summary of results

Lisnacaheragh ringfort is enclosed by three concentric and closely spaced earthworks, each consisting of a bank-and-ditch combination. The stratigraphic section published by Ó Ríordáin (Figure 1.19) shows the ditches as flat-bottomed and near-vertical to steep sided, *c.*2–3m width with a central depth of 1–1.5m. The inner and middle ditches were rock-cut, while the outer ditch was apparently dug into subsoil. The latter was largely infilled with a slight depression visible on some sides of the enclosure. The inner and middle ditches are substantially infilled, with their position defined by the extant banks on both sides. The ditch stratification indicates a long period of primary silting followed by significant inward collapse of bank. Excavation revealed significant collapse on the inside of the inner back around the perimeter of the enclosure. Ó Ríordáin considered some of this interference to be connected to cultivation of the ringfort interior during the nineteenth century.

The construction of the Garranes defences is typical of earthen ringforts in Ireland, where 'the stratification of the banks gives evidence of their having been built directly by piling up the material dug from the fosses (ditches)' (Ó Ríordáin 1942, 88). This required careful planning due to the close spacing of the multivallation. The size of the earthwork helps to explain why it is not perfectly circular, which the excavator also attributed to separate gangs of workers in its construction. The sharp profiles of the banks today suggest they were originally faced with stone walling. A small ledge excavated on the upper inner side of the inner ditch was possibly a footing for one such revetment, stones from which were found in the adjacent ditch (Figure 1.19). No evidence of a bank palisade was discovered, though that may be explained by the narrow sections excavated across the enclosing elements.

The original entrance to the ringfort is located on the eastern side where excavation revealed a 4–5m wide causeway protected originally by up to four gates (Figure 1.20). These were defined by four pairs of rock-cut postholes, extending from the inner sides of the outer bank to inner back terminals. The excavator considered it to be 'the most elaborate fort

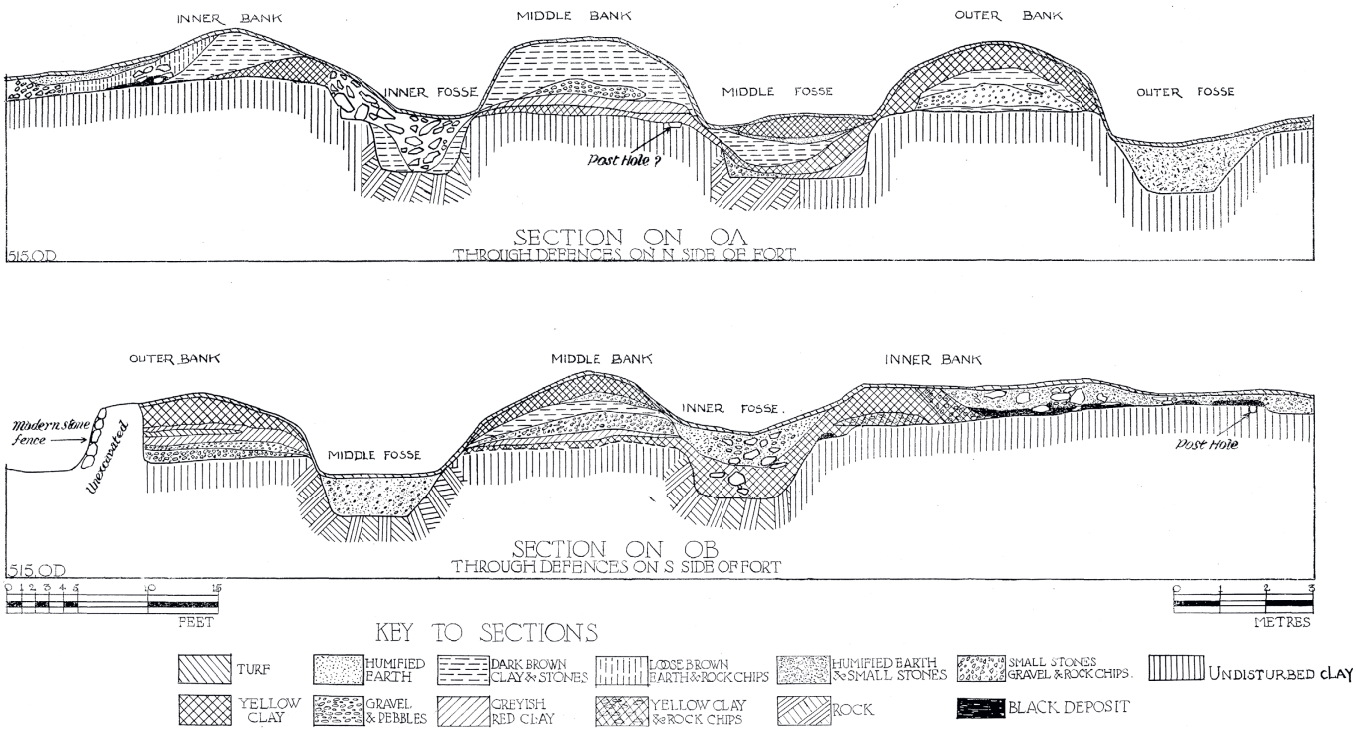


Figure 1.19 Stratigraphic section across defences of Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XIII).

Figure 1.20 Excavation of entrance to Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XX, Fig. 2).

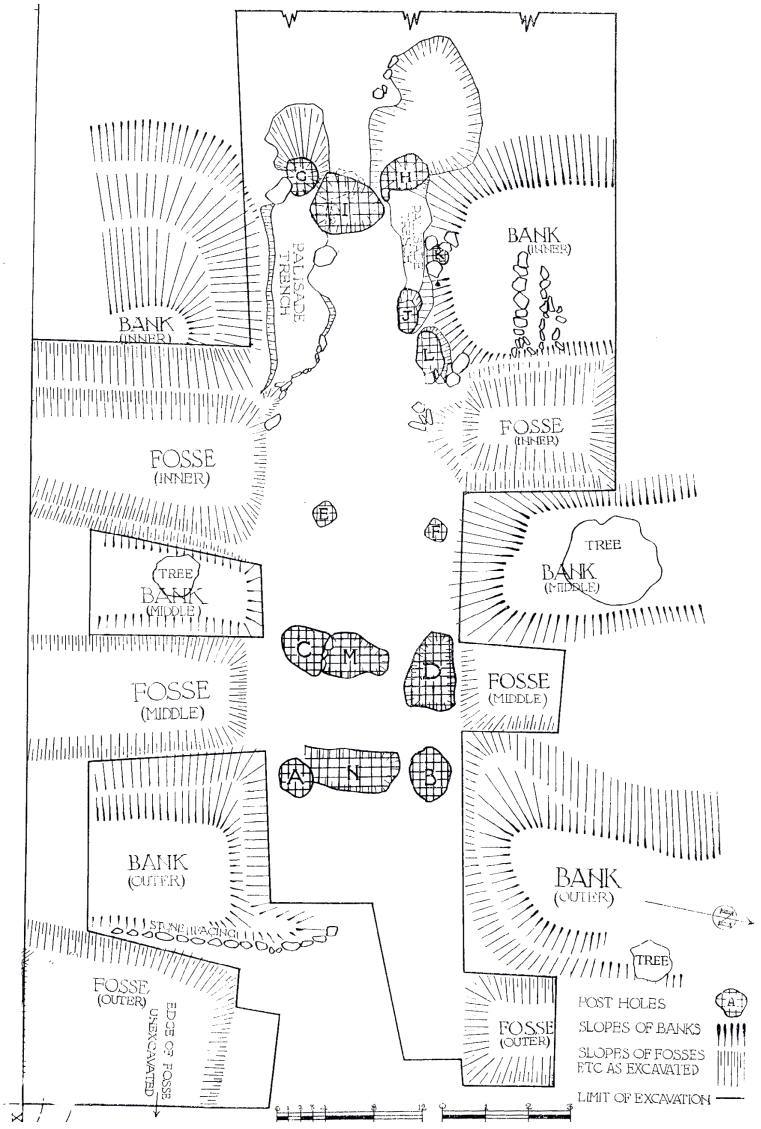


Figure 1.21 Plan of entrance to Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XIV).

entrance yet excavated in Ireland' (*ibid.*, 82). Three of the posthole pairs had shallow intervening slots or pits, believed to have been used for central stops in a two-part wooden gate. The inner gate was connected to two short trenches that served to line the inner entrance with wooden fencing. There is no evidence this was connected to a palisade on the adjacent banks. Two lines of stones under the end of the inner bank on the northern side, and two postholes (K and L; Figure 1.21), were interpreted as part of a short rectangular structure that either pre-dated the ringfort or were part of the original entrance. Whether those gates were used at the same time cannot be inferred from the excavation record.

Excavation revealed the archaeological stratification inside the ringfort has been very disturbed by cultivation, with a local source informing Ó Ríordáin that 'the fort had been tilled sometime in the last century' (*ibid.*, 85). The full extent of this disturbance was obvious, with the excavator struggling to understand the significance of large trenches crossing the interior of the fort in an east-west direction, now known to be related to lazy-bed spade cultivation. Where evidence of occupation was uncovered, the narrow excavation trenches were extended to investigate larger areas, labelled A to D in the final report (Figure 1.22). The most important of these were Site A, inside the ringfort entrance on the northern side, and Site D inside the inner bank on the southern side of the ringfort. A spread of charcoal-rich sediment ('black layer') was found in both trenches. Numerous stake-holes and post-holes were excavated in these trenches, 'but in no case was it possible to recover a plan of the houses which these post-holes represented' (*ibid.*, 84).

Ó Ríordáin uncovered important evidence of craft activities in Site D, where the 'black layer' was 15–40cm in thickness over an area of 34m by 7m (Figure 1.23). This was sealed by collapse from the inner bank. The 'black layer' contained numerous

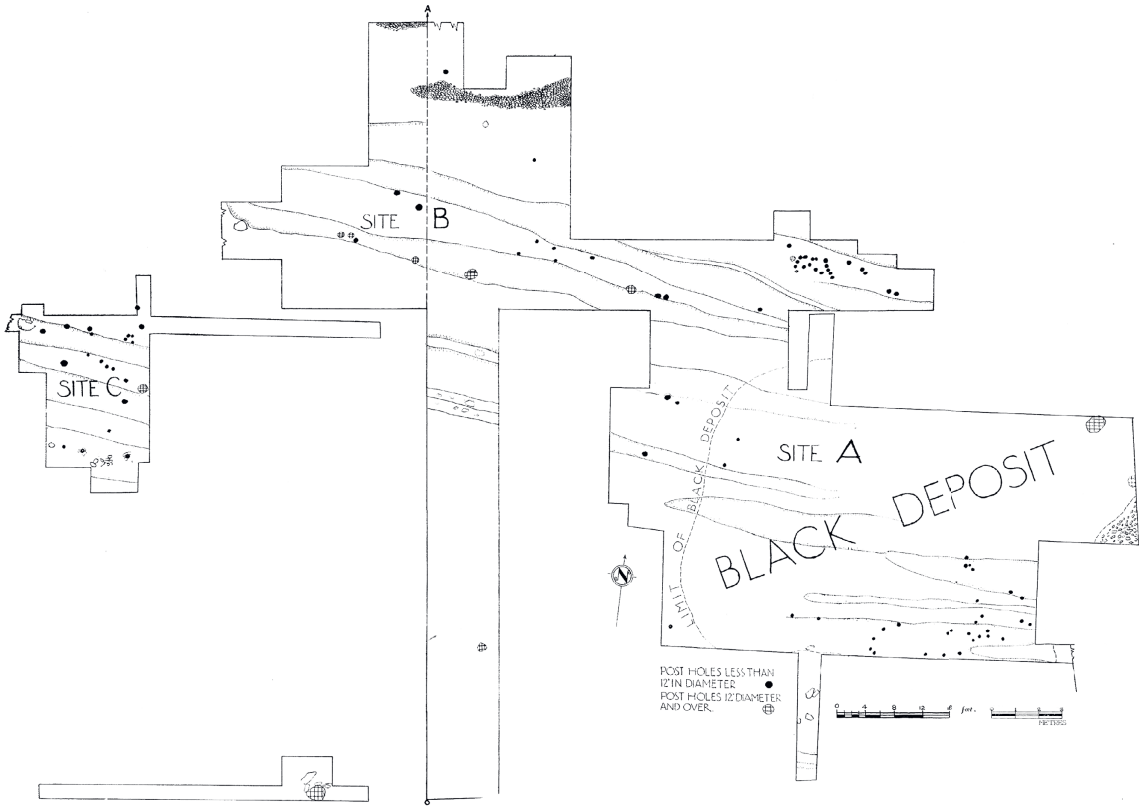


Figure 1.22 Excavation of Areas A, B and C, Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XV).

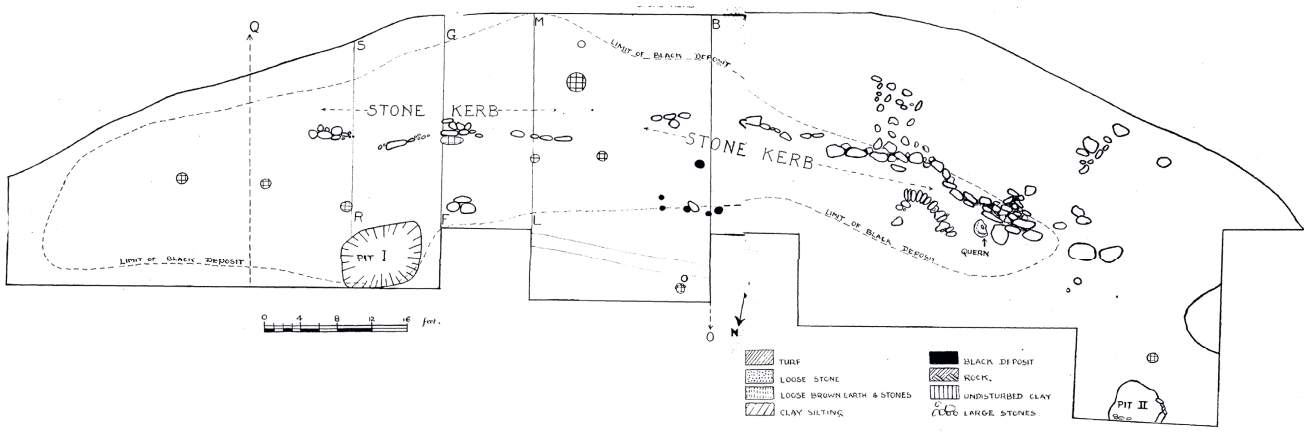
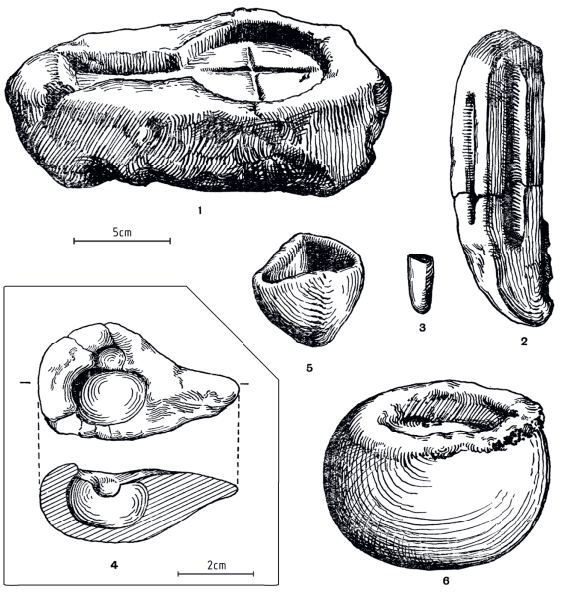


Figure 1.23 Excavation of Area D, Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1942, Plate XVI).

artifacts connected to the production of metalworking and other specialist crafts. These included 39 complete clay crucibles, some 2500 fragments of pyramidal and flat-bottomed crucibles, a clay tuyère, vitrified furnace clay fragments, 30 complete or broken clay moulds for rings and pins, at least six stone ingot moulds, and a possible stone crucible (Figure 1.24). Some 60 items of bronze were discovered, including a freshly cast bronze pin, unfinished bronze pin-head, unfinished rectangular bronze object, fragment of a bronze casting, a bronze casting jet, a length of bronze wire, a bronze ingot, and other items of waste bronze, as well as a lead ring and three pieces of tin. Iron implements were also used, including two pincers possibly used to handle crucibles of molten bronze, along with a shears and three awls. The discovery of some iron slag suggests that ironworking was also undertaken at this site.

Evidence of other specialized crafts was found, including rods of millefiori glass and fragments of red and green enamel. Based on these finds, Site D was interpreted as the location of an 'early metal and glass manufacturing workshop' (*ibid*., 86). The 'black layer' was considered to represent 'the debris left from such early workshop activities'. Several postholes and two large pits were excavated there, but there no obvious built structures, apart from an irregular arc of stones that Ó Ríordáin argued may have been part of a workshop.



FINDS AT GARRANES CO CORK

1 stone mould 2 stone mould for metal ingots 3 ingot cast from mould such as 2
4 clay lamp 5 clay crucible for melting lead 6 spherical crucible for enamel

Figure 1.24 Selection of finds from 1937 excavation of Garranes ringfort (Ó Ríordáin 1938b).

Ancient Metal Objects Found

COUNTY CORK DISCOVERY AMONG MOST IMPORTANT ON RECORD

YIELDING crucibles, moulds, blades, and brooches, a Co. Cork ring-fort just investigated by archaeologists shows traces of "intense" metal-working early in Irish Christian days, according to an official report.

The rath, at Garranes, Templemartin, is about 350 feet in diameter. St. Finbarr, a metal-worker's son, was born at Rath Raithleann, as the fort is called in early history.

"Taking as a whole the evidence for the art and metal-working carried on in the fort," the account declares, "it points to the discovery of one of the most important of such sites yet brought to light in Irish archaeology."

The site, it is reported, has yielded "more crucibles than were known from the whole country previously."

Metal finds include a small bronze button, an unfinished bronze brooch, a bronze pin, a pair of iron shears, small knife-blades, and a pair of pincers "that might have belonged to the stock of a blacksmith."

Pottery sherds found include "one or two . . . almost certainly Roman manufacture," and some "copies of Roman types."

The excavation has been notable, according to the report, chiefly in that it proves "an intense metal-working tradition on a site dateable to the early centuries of Christianity in Ireland."

It has been made by Dr. Seán P. O Ríordáin, Professor of Archæology at University College, Cork, assisted by Mr. M. J. O'Kelly.

Figure 1.25 Article on Garranes excavation, *Irish Press*, 11th October, 1937.

There were also finds connected to occupation in this ringfort. These include a range of imported pottery and glass used as tableware, stone mortars and whetstones, spindle whorls and loom weights, part of a rotary quern, and a small collection of animal bone, including those of cattle, pig, sheep and horse. The discovery of personal ornaments is a further indication of high status occupation. These include a bronze button with triskele design in champlevé enamel, an unfinished penannular bronze brooch, bronze pins, studs and decorated strips (*ibid.,* figs 3–6). A small collection of glass beads of different types was also found, as well as items of millefiori glass, enamel and amber (*ibid*., figs 14–15).

The results from Garranes attracted considerable attention in academic and media circles at that time (Figure 1.25). This was the first ringfort to be securely dated in Ireland (Ó Ríordáin 1942). This was based primarily on the discovery of wine amphorae and tableware that originated in the Mediterranean region and France, pottery that is securely dated from the fifth to seventh centuries AD (Doyle 2009). The excavator suggested the occupation itself lasted for a century or so, possibly during the later fifth and early sixth centuries (*ibid*., 141). Ó Ríordáin regarded the trade in luxury goods with the late Roman world as further evidence of high-status occupation. He argued this, together with the size and impressive defences of the ringfort, are consistent with its identification as the royal seat of Rath Raithleann. He did not initially regard this as a place of royal residence, citing the absence of house structures and evidence of permanent occupation. He suggested that 'the fort would serve as a refuge for the inhabitants of the surrounding area in time of danger and also would act as a meeting place on special occasions' (*ibid*., 141). The discoveries in Site D were explained by a specialist community of craftsmen engaged in bronze working and related crafts, '...who had trade relations and interchange of artistic motives with Gaul and Britain. (*ibid*., 143). Ó Ríordáin subsequently amended this view, agreeing with Christopher Hawkes' that the Garranes metalworkers may '...have been attached to the local Eoganacht kings...and therefore placed by them in their "capital" stronghold in the security and eminences of its defences and prestige' (Ó Ríordáin 1943, 42, fn. 61).

Further excavation

A second archaeological excavation was conducted at Lisnacaheragh in the summers of 1990–92, by Mary O'Donnell, an archaeology graduate of University College Cork. That project excavated four trenches in the interior of the ringfort over sixteen weeks (Figure 1.26). The excavation was not complete when work ended in 1992 and remains unpublished, though

stratigraphic reports (O'Donnell 1991; 1992; 1997) and a collation of post-excavation studies (Cleary 2009) are available. Compared to the 1937 excavation, there were few finds in this project. The most significant were two sherds of B-ware amphora, two glass beads and some 47 sherds of metallurgical crucibles and furnace refractory and a small amount of slag.

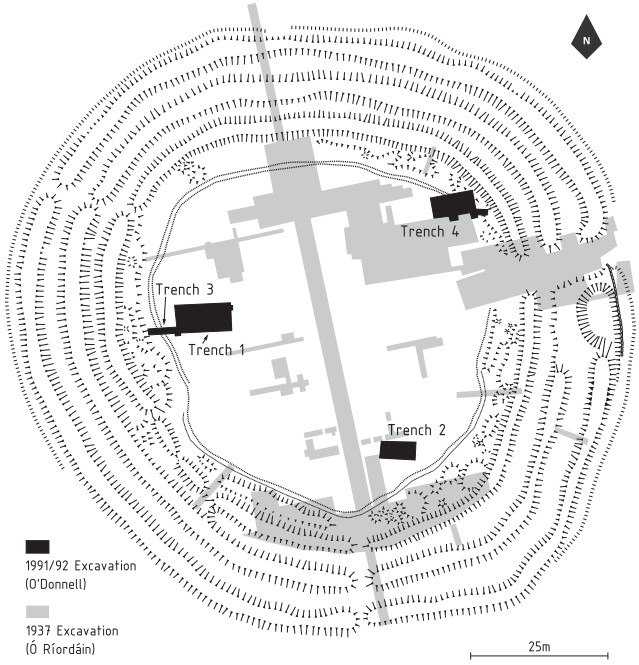


Figure 1.26 Location of O'Donnell excavation trenches in Lisnacaheragh.

One of the aims of the O'Donnell excavation was to investigate the apparent absence of residential buildings in the interior of the ringfort. This was successful as evidence of a built structure was discovered in Trench 1 on the western side of the interior. This comprised the northern arc of what was interpreted as a double-walled roundhouse with slot trench foundations, 9m in diameter (Figure 1.27). The structure was apparently burnt down, with evidence of charcoal deposits, charred wattle and burnt soils. The full extent of the building had not been investigated by the time the excavation ended in 1992.

The O'Donnell excavation provided the first radiocarbon results for Lisnacaheragh ringfort. This includes four dates from the roundhouse slot trench, with a range of AD 410–615 (see Chapter 3.4). Excavation on the western side of Trench 1 was extended to investigate the inside of the inner ringfort bank (Trench 3). This revealed several pits and charcoal deposits beneath bank slip, which contained fragments of crucibles, slag and other finds connected to metalworking. One of those contexts returned a radiocarbon date of 382–539 AD (*ibid.*).

O'Donnell's excavation of Trench 4 near the ringfort entrance revealed occupation that is broadly contemporary with that in Trenches 1 and 3. However, Trench 4 was not fully excavated and few conclusions can be drawn about the activity there. The earliest level of ringfort activity was represented by a metalled surface overlain by a series of occupation deposits.

Figure 1.27 Archaeological excavation at Lisnacaheragh, Garranes, 1990 (courtesy Mary O'Donnell).

These are dated by three radiocarbon results to the fifth and sixth centuries, consistent with the discovery of a sherd of B-ware in that area. More controversial is the age of charcoal found in an 'introduced clay layer' underneath the metalled surface, which is radiocarbon dated to the Middle Bronze Age *c.*1495–1425 BC (GrN-32680; 3180±30 BP). This has been interpreted as evidence of pre-ringfort occupation (Cleary 2009, 44). There are no other finds or features of prehistoric date recorded from the Ó Ríordáin or O'Donnell excavations.

1.4 THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Ó Ríordáin and O'Donnell excavations provide a wealth of information on the central ringfort (Lisnacaheragh) in the Garranes complex. This includes details of the design and construction of its defences and entrance, and the location of craftworking areas in the interior. The size and multivallate design of this ringfort, together with the range and quality of finds, and the evidence of specialist crafts, is consistent with Ó Ríordáin's interpretation of a high-status settlement. In the era before radiocarbon dating, excavators were very reliant on datable finds to understand the chronology of site occupation. In this regard the Garranes pottery is particularly important, coming as it does from historically dated contexts in the Mediterranean lands and western France. The A-ware and B-ware points to a fifth/sixth century horizon at Lisnacaheragh, while the presence of E-ware may indicate continued residence from the sixth to the seventh centuries. This is consistent with radiocarbon dates obtained by O'Donnell for activity in the interior. The pottery is also evidence of trade with Roman merchants, probably along the southern coastline of Cork. That trade may have been connected to specialist production of bronze, glass and enamelled ornaments at Garranes. Such contacts with the late Roman world may also have contributed to the rapid Christianization of this part of Ireland during the fifth century, which may be relevant to adoption of Latinate literacy in the form of ogam writing in this region during the same period.

Following those excavations, several questions remain in relation to Lisnacaheragh, connected to the history of occupation and the use of this ringfort as a royal residence in different periods. There are no secure dates for its construction, while the possibility of prehistoric activity and the significance of the site by the eighth century remained to be resolved. The latter is important to understand how Lisnacaheragh relates to the legendary Rath Raithleann of medieval bardic poetry. While the 1937 and 1990–2 excavations provide strong evidence of high-status occupation, the absence of built structures in the interior of Lisnacaheragh has raised questions on the nature of that settlement. O'Donnell's discovery of part of a roundhouse is significant, even if only a portion of that structure was excavated. Several questions remain concerning the organization of habitation space and activity areas over time inside the ringfort.

There has been little archaeological research on the wider settlement landscape at Garranes. The central ringfort has been studied in isolation, and not in relation to adjacent monuments and other elements of cultural landscape. The agricultural setting of this ringfort settlement has not been considered, nor has there been any examination of the environmental context of that farming. The wider connections of Garranes remain to be explored, in respect of political and economic connections across the wider Munster region, and long-distance trade with the late Roman world. Give its early date, the significance of Garranes for the origins of the Irish ringfort has not been fully explored.

This project

The current study was established in 2011 in University College Cork, to address these and other research questions concerning the Garranes ringfort landscape. The main aim was to investigate the cultural landscape setting of Lisnacaheragh ringfort over time. All relevant archaeological sites were visited and recorded within the core survey area. This involved library research, fieldwalking, descriptive site recording, aerial survey, with some digital mapping of archaeological sites on the ground. These site-specific investigations were expanded to a broader investigation of the Garranes landscape, through extensive geophysical survey carried out for this project by James O'Driscoll as part of a research masters in University College Cork (O'Driscoll 2010). A local bog was sampled for pollen analysis by Dr Tim Mighall (University of Aberdeen), to obtain a record of human activity and environmental change in this landscape.

The focus in terms of fieldwork was the excavation of five earthwork monuments over a seven-year period (2011-2018), with an average of five weeks of excavation each summer. The sites excavated include Lisnacaheragh (RMP CO084-084), Lisnamanroe (CO084-085), Shanawillen Caherkean (CO084-082), Lisheenagreine (CO084-090), and an unnamed ringfort (CO084-085). Those excavations sought to date the construction, occupation and abandonment of the individual monuments. They also investigated the form and function of their enclosing elements, including any entrance features. The history of occupation was examined in respect of built structures, artifacts and environmental material relating to activity areas in the interior. By establishing the temporal and functional

relationship of these different sites it was hoped to build a greater understanding of how the cultural landscape at Garranes evolved in the early medieval period.

The project was funded entirely by University College Cork, mostly through the training budget of the *MA in Archaeological Excavation*. The excavations were designed to provide experience for student trainees in that course. The work was directed by William O'Brien and Nick Hogan under excavation licences granted by the National Monuments Service and National Museum of Ireland.

This book

Following this general introduction, the next chapter presents the field archaeology of Garranes in its local landscape setting. This includes records of the extant and levelled monuments produced by conventional survey and remote sensing. The results of an extensive geophysical survey provide some insight into the sub-surface archaeology of this landscape. The next four chapters present the results of archaeological excavations conducted in 2011–18, beginning with Lisnacaheragh (Chapter 3), followed by Lisnamanroe (Chapter 4), Lisheenagreine (Chapter 5), Shanawillen Caherkean and an unnamed ringfort (Chapter 6). This is followed by a series of specialist studies in Chapter 7, variously dealing with medieval bardic poetry and its political context (Cian Kenneally and Lenore Fischer); Bayesian analysis of radiocarbon dates (Kevin Kearney); the imported Roman pottery from Garranes (Ian Doyle); scientific analysis of early medieval metalworking at Lisnacaheragh (Ignacio Montero and Mercedes Murillo-Barroso), and palynological investigations (Tim Mighall).

Chapter 8 discusses different aspects of settlement and economy at Garranes, looking at residential life, agricultural economy and specialist crafts. The wider landscape context of ringforts in Mid Cork is considered by Michelle Comber in Chapter 9, along with an examination by Edward O'Riordan of site destruction and popular perceptions in the early modern era. The final chapter brings these results together to consider Garranes as a ringfort settlement zone and its significance as a potential royal site with far-flung connections during the early medieval period.