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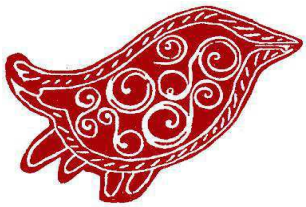

Title: Review: "The Gaelic lordship of the O'Sullivan Beare: a landscape cultural history", by Colin Breen (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005)

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close proximity. The walls of the structures ranged from 0.5m–1.2m in height and appear to be about 0.5m thick. The structures were all rectangular in plan and built of undressed stone, bonded with clay and earth with no foundation trenches. Four of the five were single rooms while one had two rooms. Two structures contained no fireplaces. Some pantiles were found during the excavation suggesting the buildings were not thatched. The seventeenth century date for the settlement is supported by two of the structures (1 and 2) containing typical projecting seventeenth century fireplaces. The rounded corners of structure 3 suggest a different style; it also has an interesting flagged floor with two rotary quern stones used as paving stones. The fourth structure occurs immediately behind structure 2 and has an interesting earth cut drain. The fifth structure was more finely constructed than the others but appears to be more agricultural in nature with no fireplace or internal divisions and had a steep sloping floor at the end.

Rosanne Meehan discusses the artefacts discovered in a succinct report at the back. The artefacts provide further clues to the date of the structures. There were a wide range of imported wares from continental Europe and Britain – similar to those of town dwellers of the late sixteenth/early seventeenth centuries. This fits in with the idea that this settlement may be associated with the Plantation period. The notable lack of local wares furthers this suggestion. Half the wares found were associated with food processing but, according to the report, quite a lot of the wares found would be regarded as prestigious – which may have been used for display purposes. Little pottery post dating the eighteenth century was found which indicates the site was abandoned sometime in the late eighteenth century. Ironically, though coastal in nature and the reason for the excavations, the site produced no fishing artefacts.

There is good historical and archaeological background research in the introduction. It explains the dearth of information on seventeenth century material in Ireland – both the lack of identifiable material and, up to recently, lack of interest, but this is changing. The main body of work of this period has been carried out in Northern Ireland. However, there has been some excellent work carried out in the Republic namely, Klingelhöfer at Mogeely, Breen in Bantry and Bere and, a similar but larger house was excavated by Rose Cleary at Drumlummin, Co. Tipperary. Unfortunately, there is no reference anywhere to the large corpus of material published on the post medieval in the archaeological inventory produced by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

The five houses excavated do not sit easily into any category of current vernacular categories. However, the authors tentatively put forward the interesting theory that these are vernacular hybrids – that is, house building techniques brought into the country by immigrant plantation settlers and adapted to the local weather conditions, building material and indigenous construction techniques. This report is a well-presented, clear account of the valuable excavations at Killybegs Harbour, and shows us the value of investigating post-medieval structures.

Mary Sleeman

The Gaelic Lordship of the O'Sullivan Beare: A Landscape Cultural History, Colin Breen (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005). Pp. 256. €45. ISBN 1-851-82955-5.

For generations of Irish archaeologists the later medieval Gaelic Irish landscape has been an accomplished archaeological vanishing act. So elusive, indeed, was the archaeology of Gaelic Ireland that few had bothered to give it any serious thought, while the archaeology of the Plantation period had only really been addressed by archaeologists working in Ulster and by American archaeologists such as Eric Klingelhöfer and Audrey Horning. There has, however, since the formation of the Irish Post Medieval Archaeology Group in 2001, been a renaissance in research on the post-medieval archaeology of Ireland. Colin Breen has played a key part in such developments and his current work, based on his doctoral thesis

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on the later medieval/ post medieval landscape of Bantry-Beara area of county Cork, in every way exemplifies the type of approach required.

The Gaelic Lordship is divided into seven chapters, the first of which introduces the author's research questions and the theoretical framework in which he proposes to locate them. His study was undertaken in 'order to address perceived shortcomings in Gaelic Irish landscape and settlement studies' of which, admittedly, there have been many, but only because there had been few attempts to conduct detailed fieldwork in Ireland for Gaelic settlement sites of the period. Breen is fully aware of the shortcomings of past approaches and, by providing a wide range of new and exciting data derived from excavation and observations made in the field, he confidently attempts to tackle answers to questions that have for so long eluded others.

Chapter 2 re-evaluates the evidence for Anglo Norman settlement in the Bantry-Beara region, by pointing out the similarities between the partial ringwork at Dunnamark, with that at Ferrycarrig, county Wexford, both of which share similar characteristics with a ringwork castle at Penmaen, Glamorgan in Wales. The apparent absence of the Gaelic Irish from this landscape is also questioned: could not, he posits, many of the thousands of hut sites, of indeterminate date, found throughout Ireland (often casually referred to as 'booley' huts) be actually later medieval in date? Breen also updates the discussion of evidence for the later medieval occupation of sites such as ringforts, cashels and crannógs, and provides an interesting and original discussion of the re-use of promontory forts in the same period. The lack of impressive physical expressions of Gaelic Lordship in the same period, he points out, probably derives from the Irish preference to express this in non-monumental ways, through patronage, the ownership of large herds of cattle and feasting.

The development of the Gaelic lordship and control over the Beara landscape is outlined in Chapter 3. The title 'O'Sullivan Beare' is first mentioned in an annalistic source in 1492, by which time all of the surrounding area would have been under their sway. Tower houses are now the homes of the Gaelic elite and the author examines the main factors influencing their location within his study area, along with their likely functions, noting that while the upper echelons of society appear to have been influenced by English practice, this did not necessarily have any impact on those they held lordship over. He also observes that there were small settlement clusters shown around tower houses on sixteenth-century maps of the area and that similar clusters were also associated with church sites. The author's excavations of hut clusters at Blackrock, near Bantry House, and Canalough have brought to light important new evidence for Gaelic houses of the early post-medieval period. Interesting parallels can now be drawn between the Canalough house types and those investigated at Goodland and Glenmakeeran in county Antrim (which Breen now convincingly argues have been misinterpreted as booley huts) and also with excavated examples in Gaelic areas of western Scotland. Evidence for an intermediate form of dwelling for those who could not afford to live in tower houses, but who could, nonetheless, afford not to live in mud-walled *creats*, is adduced from contemporary maps which, as the author demonstrates, also show single large houses in his survey area. Such a house, Breen argues, may well be in evidence at Caheravart, where a large structure was constructed within a pre-existing early medieval stone enclosure. This is followed by a short chapter on economy and Gaelic lordship, which begins with an interesting discussion of Gaelic land divisions and the likely nature and extent of agricultural activity in the area. The growth of an international fishing industry in the region was to become an important source of wealth for the Gaelic nobility, who soon found that they could readily tap into the spoils of this natural bounty.

Chapter 5 examines the internal sept divisions in Gaelic Bantry/Beara and how these were affected by the early English plantations. The author's excavations at Blackrock, outlined here, unearthed evidence for an early plantation post stockade of the 1580s-1590s

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which was later backfilled in the 1620s when an English style timber-framed house was built over it. Similar houses, Breen points out, are associated with contemporary British plantations in America, while the Jamestown plantation in Virginia (*c.* 1607-22) also had a wooden stockade. One of the six, sod-walled hut sites of a settlement cluster at Ballynacallagh was also excavated by the author, which proved to be a vernacular Gaelic type house but which had been roofed with Spanish roof tiles. These latter, he suggests, were built to accommodate followers of Dermot O'Sullivan Beare around 1602.

The expansion of church architecture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Beara/Bantry region, as elsewhere in Ireland and like the tower house, is also a physical manifestation of the growth of Gaelic lordships. In Chapter 6, Breen charts the rise of the Franciscan order in his chosen survey area and examines the surviving ecclesiastical sites in some detail. Again, the pattern of use mirrors national trends, with many churches already in poor repair by the sixteenth century, although a number were re-established as places of worship by planters. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, all of these had been abandoned.

In his conclusions the author challenges the perceptions of marginality associated with this region and perhaps, by extension, with the rest of Gaelic Ireland. The impressive evidence marshalled by him clearly demonstrates engagement with a wider world and we should now, he proposes, regard this 'area as being integral and recognised part of the broader Atlantic socio-economic sphere'. It is difficult to dissent from such a view, but his neo-marxist views on the early stages of 'capital formation' associated with the investment of planters in the region are somewhat less assured. This is, nonetheless, an extremely important and thought-provoking, and above all, highly readable work. It embraces, on the one hand a flexible interpretive/ theoretical agenda backed up, on the other, by a solid programme of fieldwork. It is, indeed, rare for an archaeologist working in this period to tackle so many exasperating gaps in our knowledge of the period head on. Subsequent fieldworkers in the greater Cork area will owe a large debt to Colin Breen's pioneering work, but all readers of this *Journal*, with a keen interest in the history and archaeology of this county, should have this book in their library, not only to greatly extend their knowledge of the period but also to see how far Irish archaeology has come.

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