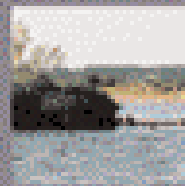
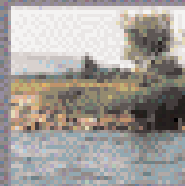


CRANNOGS



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PART I — INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Islands attract attention. They sharpen people's perceptions and create a tension in the landscape. Islands as symbols often create wish-images in the mind, sometimes drawing on the regenerative symbolism of water.

This book is not about natural islands, nor is it really about crannogs — these small man-made islands. It is about the people who have used and lived on these crannogs over time. The tradition of island-building seems to have fairly deep roots, perhaps even going back to the Mesolithic, but the traces are not unambiguous. While crannogs in most cases have been understood in utilitarian terms as defended settlements and workshops for the wealthier parts of society, or as fishing platforms, this is not the whole story. I am interested in learning more about them than this. There are many other ways to defend property than to build islands, and there are many easier ways to fish. In this book I would like to explore why island-building made sense to people at different times. I also want to consider how the use of islands affects the way people perceive themselves and their landscape, in line with much contemporary interpretative archaeology, and how people have drawn on the landscape to create and maintain long-term social institutions as well as to bring about change.

The book covers a long time-period, from the Mesolithic to the present. However, the geographical scope is narrow. It focuses on the region around Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland and is built on substantial fieldwork in this area. It presents fresh information on both the dating and the classification of crannogs, together with new theoretical perspectives and questions.

John Donne's classic line, 'No man is an island', conveys the idea that all people are in some way connected to each other. The island as a symbol often stands for anti-social behaviour and isolation. But, as I hope to demonstrate, people have drawn upon the island symbol in all its variations and forms throughout time, often in ways that articulate social norms and preconceptions. What I am particularly interested in is how the activities by the lake, and the building and use of crannogs, affected people's perception of social reality, and their sense of community and solidarity over time. One of the assumptions in the thesis is that both past and present realities are mainly socially constructed (see Berger and Luckmann 1967). Secondly, I believe that people actively and passively use material culture in a way that contributes to the forming of these realities, partly by shaping people's experience of space, and partly by creating and joining together items and room and context, creating categories of thought as well as frameworks of understanding from which actions can arise.

Many archaeological and social studies are about change, but this book will also discuss the phenomena of stability and long-term traditions. I will suggest that the repeated use of the crannogs can be read as materialised institutional practices, whereby major changes are made acceptable by referring back to earlier material culture. In this book we will try to get a better understanding of how the use of these built islands may have been connected with people's ways of experiencing communality and solidarity, how people's involvement with these sites and the waters surrounding them may have affected what was seen as good at any point in time. The building and use of the crannogs may be seen as reiterative practices, where slow changes are happening against the background of an earlier set of beliefs. Change is mediated through a

constant reworking of earlier ‘social realities’ and can be seen in parts of the archaeological record other than crannogs — for example, reburials in earlier monuments during the Iron Age and long-lived practices such as the deposition of items in watery places. I shall investigate the role of man-made islands in this respect.

Much archaeological terminology is economistic, and crannogs have often been explained in an economically sensible way — that they were built for protection of wealth or for resource exploitation. This terminology needs to be revised, as it hinders us from appreciating the variation in the archaeological material. Economistic interpretations are often standardised phrases that bring no additional understanding to the material. My anti-capitalist affiliations form an undercurrent in this book (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a for the role of archaeology as a social critique). What this means in practice is that I try to make explicit the often implicit applications of modernistic/economistic reasoning that have been used to interpret archaeological material, thereby normalising economics as the way to understand past realities. In this way the book is also intended as an anti-capitalist critique of earlier archaeological work. I wish to address the over-articulation of the so-called ‘economic field’ in processual/Marxist/systemic archaeologies and the under-articulation of everyday life in many of the post-processual approaches by contextualising production practices. I think that the terminology used in much archaeological work (not only in crannog studies) needs to be critically assessed. On many occasions a static use of modern economistic methods of thought and concepts hinders us from seeing and communicating much more interesting patterns in the archaeological material.

2. CRANNOGS

There has been quite some debate over just what a crannog is, and many readers may not be familiar with the word. Before moving on to theoretical issues, the history of crannog research and the main study, we need to look at what has been meant by the term ‘crannog’ and to discuss its use.

The word ‘crannog’ is Irish and consists of two parts — *crann*, meaning ‘tree’, and *og*, meaning ‘miniature’ or ‘young’. The term is often used to describe the small, wooded, man-made islands that can be found in many Irish lakes today. ‘Crannog’ (‘young tree’) would of course be an apt description of their present appearance, covered with small trees and bushes. The average crannog measures about 25m in diameter and reaches a height of 1.5m above the lakebed (based on survey information from County Sligo and parts of County Roscommon). Many crannogs in these areas are built of stone. It has been suggested that they look like Bronze Age cairns in the water.

Many people would have a picture rather like Fig.1 in mind when the word ‘crannog’ is mentioned. In the popular view they are seen as Celtic habitations, although the archaeological material does not fully support such an interpretation. Like Bulgarian tells, some crannogs have layers from many different periods. A single site could contain layers from the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and even more modern periods, although early medieval layers are the most common. There has been considerable debate as to whether all building phases on these multiperiod sites can be described as crannogs. This will be discussed in detail below.

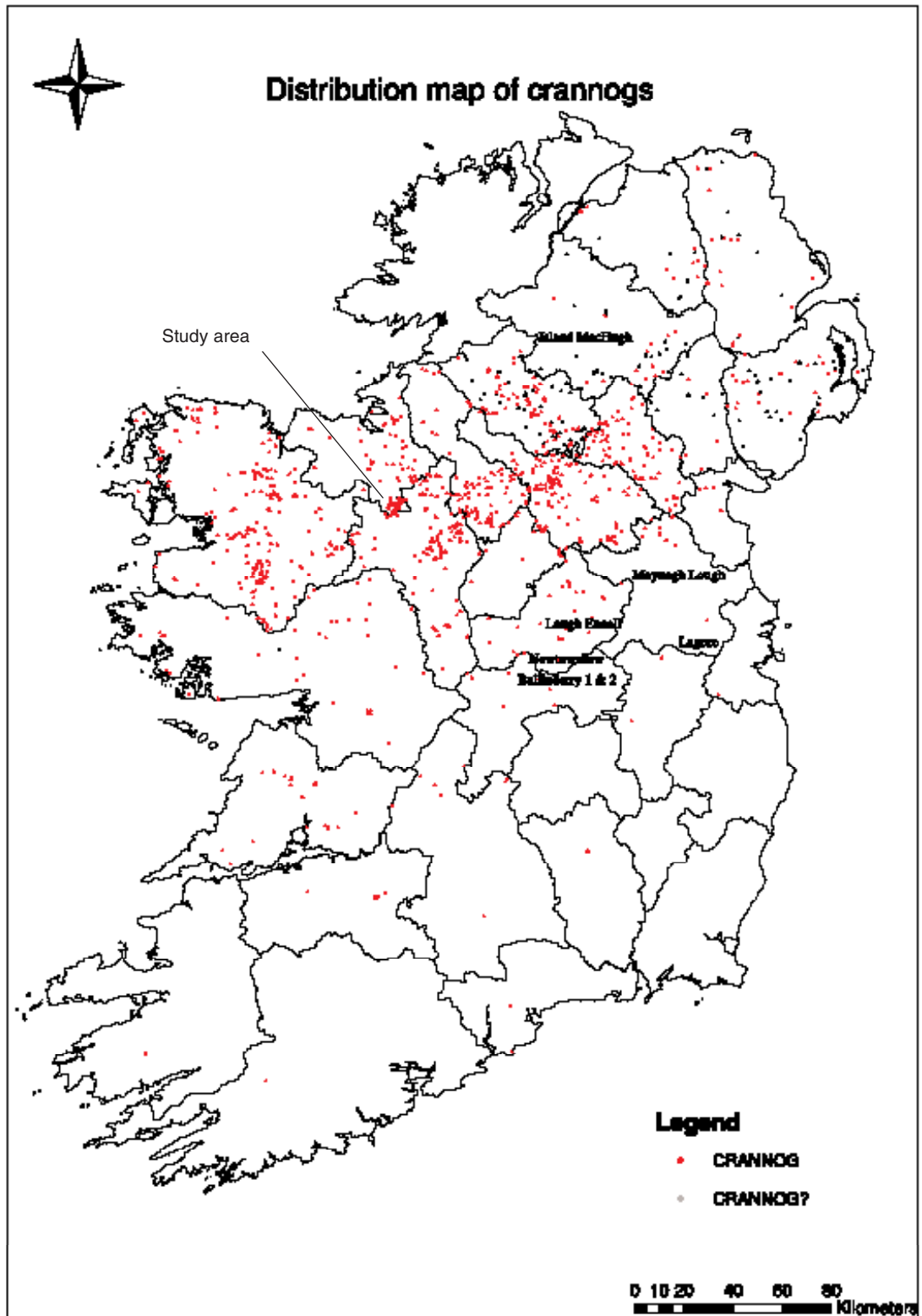
The distribution of crannogs

Wetland settlements can be found in all parts of the world. Some of the most famous are sites like La Tène in Switzerland (Vouga 1925; Schwab 1972), Alvastra in Sweden (Malmer 1991) or Star Carr in Yorkshire (Clark 1954; 1972; see also Mellars and Dark 1998). However, crannogs have a specific location; besides Ireland, they can also be found in Scotland (see Morrison 1985), and there is at least one in Wales (Campbell and Lane 1989).

Plate 1 shows the location of all crannogs and possible crannog sites recorded by the DoE and Dúchas for the island of Ireland. Their objective has been to establish that all the sites included are man-made islands. It has



Fig. 1—A crannog (after Morrison 1985).



Pl. 1—Distribution map of crannogs, showing key sites that have been fully excavated and published (the first crannog map was published in Stout and Stout 1997, 49).

been estimated that there were once 2000 crannogs on the island of Ireland (Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 262; Clinton 2000, 286). The map shows crannogs in all parts of the country, but most of them are located in a band stretching from the west coast to the east coast in the northern half of Ireland, corresponding quite well to the drumlin zone. Drumlins are the small, rounded, oval hills that divide the landscape into smaller compartments, and some have small lakes in between them. There are fewer crannogs in the south of Ireland, although some sites have been recorded there (e.g. Ussher and Kinahan 1879; Ussher 1903; Power 1920; Poole 1930). There are also fewer lakes in the south, which could explain this pattern. What is interesting is that there are areas — for example Donegal and Clare — that have lakes but where artificial islands are not so common. That Donegal lacked the same density of crannogs as, for example, Fermanagh and Monaghan has already been pointed out by Davies — ‘their distribution does not closely correspond to that of lakes’ (1942, 14) — but that Clare was so empty has only recently been noted, unless the archaeological survey turns up more.

The number of crannogs in a lake can vary. Some smaller lakes in the crannog belt may have one or two sites. Others could have anything from 20 to hundreds of sites, depending on how the term ‘crannog’ is defined. It has been argued that crannogs tend not to be found in larger lakes. Very few crannogs have been recorded in lakes like Lough Allen, Co. Leitrim, for example. However, some larger lakes, like Lough Arrow and Lough Gara, Co. Sligo, which is the main study area of this book, have quite a lot of crannogs. The point is that crannogs would normally not be built in lakes with open water, but can be found in abundance in larger lakes if, like Lough Gara, these lakes have small sheltered bays. What I have found on my visits to crannog lakes in counties Sligo, Roscommon and Monaghan is that the lakes chosen often have gently sloping shorelines, while lakes with steep shorelines (which also mean that they are deeper) seem to have been avoided. Crannogs can also be found in seasonal lakes — turloughs — and bogs. The survey in Sligo found that mountain lakes contain less crannogs than low-lying lakes. There are, of course, also lakes that do not have any crannogs at all.

Out of the possible total of 2000 crannog sites, perhaps not more than five have been recorded to modern excavation standards, while a larger number were examined during the nineteenth century. Information about crannogs does not come only from excavations and surveys; some material has also come to light as a result of illegal treasure-hunting (E.P. Kelly 1993a). The material from antiquarian collections and from treasure-hunting lacks important archaeological context, but it can still reveal something about the crannog lifestyle and their general date of occupation.

Marked on Pl. 1 are some of the most important crannog areas that have been excavated or have been the focus for recent archaeological projects: Lagore, Ballinderry 1 and 2, Island MacHugh, Newtownlow, Lough Ennell and Moynagh Lough. Many of these sites that have formed the basis of our understanding of crannogs are actually located on the periphery of crannog distribution. They are also located within travelling distance of Dublin, while areas such as Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan have received less attention in recent years. Bearing in mind the small number of crannogs excavated, this locational bias leaves open the possibility that there could be regional differences in the crannog tradition that have not been picked up in research. Lough Gara, the focus of this study, is situated in the middle of the crannog distribution area and may have the largest concentration of crannogs in Ireland. It all depends on the definition of crannogs.

It has been argued that owing to the multiperiod nature of the crannog material a distribution map such as Pl.1 would be of limited value to the researcher (Lynn 1983). However, the pattern

shown on the map is quite distinct, and even if this map includes sites from many periods it is still possible to say that the man-made islands did not at any one time stretch outside this area. There might be a variety of different ways of understanding this pattern, and perhaps different reasons have to be applied to different periods. Although it is outside the scope of this book to explain the distribution of crannogs I will try to give some suggestions for further research. It is well known that there is a trend towards regionalisation in the metalwork of the late Bronze Age (Eogan 1974). It is possible that the use of crannogs forms part of a regional identity as well. It is important to bear regional issues in mind when considering all the periods in which crannogs were used, not only the late Bronze Age. As Peter Woodman often points out, a regional distribution may be due to survey biases and it is of uttermost importance to examine the gaps in the material (Woodman 1978; 2000). In the case of crannog studies a detailed examination of lakes in the south of Ireland may be beneficial for research.

The name of the game

While most people seem fairly content to use the term *crannog* to describe any man-made island in a lake, there has been academic discussion of how to use the word. And to be aware of this distinction is the first hurdle that must be crossed to be accepted as a serious crannog researcher. From the start of crannog research in the nineteenth century there have been different views on what to call these man-made islands. Early researchers connected the islands to the documentary sources of the sixteenth century where the name ‘crannog’ was used, but there were no conventions regarding the use of the term, and the number of names for these sites has grown ever since.

Wood-Martin (1886a; 1886b) used the term *lake-dwellings* or *crannogs*. Alternatively, Kelly (1850) called them *stockaded islands*, while Davies (1942, 17) distinguished four different types of crannogs — the *crannog cairn*, the *clay mound*, the *log-platform* and the *Packwerk* (a term borrowed from the Continent). J. Raftery (1951, 37) used the word ‘crannog’ for the brushwood type of site seen from the Neolithic period onwards. Cross (1953) used the terms *regular and irregular metalling-sites* to describe the smaller crannogs, and *cairns* or *island crannogs* were the names given to the larger sites by researchers such as B. Raftery (1976). In museum catalogues Mitchell used the name ‘crannog’ even to describe the Mesolithic lake platforms. Davies (1942), on the other hand, called the Bronze Age sites ‘crannogs’. Accordingly, up until 1983 most man-made islands were called crannogs. Since then the terms *water-settlements* (J. Raftery, forthcoming), *lake settlements* (O’Sullivan 1998), *lakeside settlements*, *wetland settlements*, *crannogs*, and *unfinished crannogs* have been added to the ever-growing number of labels used to describe these sites. Lynn (1983) has argued that the term ‘crannog’ should only be used for certain sites belonging to the early medieval period.

The first use of the name

The term ‘crannog’ does not appear in the documentary sources until the beginning of the thirteenth century. Prior to this, in the early medieval period the site may have been called *inis* or *oilean*, both words meaning ‘island’ (Warner 1994, 62). However, these terms were not reserved only for the sites that we call crannogs today; they could also apply to monastic islands or other sites. In the early medieval annals the classic site at Lagore was not called a crannog but was referred to as ‘Inis Locha Gabur’ in entries for the years 850 and 934 (Price 1950, 23–4).

As far as we know today, the name ‘crannog’ — referring to a small island — appears for the first time in the entry for the year 1220 in the *Annals of Loch Cé* (Fredengren 1998b; O’Conor 1998):

‘Walter de Laci came to Erinn, and performed a great hosting to the crannog of O’Raighilligh. He went upon it, and obtained hostages and great power’¹ (Hennessy 1871).

It could be argued that if we knew what was meant by the term at that stage and what type of site it referred to, it would be easier to decide how to use the term today. Clogh Oughter² Castle stands on a small stony island in Lough Oughter, Co. Cavan. It has been suggested that the 1220 entry refers to this island, which measures 26m by 26m in the winter and 35m by 60m in the summer when the lake level is lower. It lies about 130m from the shore. Conleth Manning, who excavated parts of Clogh Oughter in advance of conservation, indicated that the castle was standing on a deliberately constructed pile of rocks. He did not consider this a crannog. As he put it, there was no evidence for a previously occupied crannog under the castle (Manning 1989–90, 43). Manning pointed out other references to the site in documentary sources, such as the *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland*.

‘The same day an Irishman called O’Reilly [Orauly], powerful in his own country, (...), rode over to a castle called Cronoc [Cronog] Orauly; sat down in an island and besieged the castle...’ (Sweetman 1974, 1224, Aug 5).

Manning saw it as likely that the reference was connected to the site he had excavated (Manning 1989–90, 22). The place also acquired the names ‘Cloch Lochá hUachtair’ and ‘Caisleán Lochá hUachtair’ (*ibid.*, 24).

There are a number of ways to interpret the archaeological information and the documentary references. The first way is to consider that the term *crannog* was referring directly to the pile of rocks that the castle was sitting on and that it was precisely the artificial pile of rocks that was called the crannog at this time. If this is the case, it may be that the word ‘crannog’ could be used interchangeably with terms such as ‘caisléan’ and ‘cloch’. Secondly, it might imply that the terminology changed when the castle was built on the island or that when the term crannog first appeared it referred to an artificial pile of rocks in the water. However, the element *crann* suggests that there may have been some structure of wood on or beside the island.

Another way of seeing it is that the term crannog refers to a ‘previous crannog’, i.e. a site that to some extent was constructed of wood, and that the name continued in use even if the site over time developed into a more stony construction, such as described by Manning. There is some evidence to suggest that Clogh Oughter may have had some earlier and possibly also wooden structures. Oliver Davies discussed Clogh Oughter in 1942. Lacking the evidence from excavation, he was not convinced that this island was artificial. He suggested, probably with a starting-point in the same reference, that the word ‘crannog’ could also have been applied to natural islands such as Clogh Oughter, ‘which is a stone castle on a rock with a very small amount of piling only on one side’ (Davies 1942, 15), i.e. there is some slight evidence for wood being used in the structure. Interestingly enough some prehistoric material has also been retrieved from this place. George Eogan’s catalogue of bronze swords (1965) mentions two swords found during river drainage near Clogh Oughter Castle (catalogue nos 47 and 100) and one sword found near the ruins of the castle (catalogue no. 101). This could possibly indicate an earlier, prehistoric phase at the site and further investigations in this location may be worthwhile.

Another possibility was suggested by Davies, who considered that the term ‘crannog’ could have referred to a particular building on the island, rather than the island itself. He thought the name could have been connected to features such as palisades (*ibid.*). Aalen too has implied that

the term ‘crannog’ might not be describing the island itself but rather a particular feature on the island: ‘Crannogs are lake-dwellings built on artificial islands constructed of stones and brushwood and consolidated by wattle fences and piles driven into the lake bottom’ (Aalen 1978, 87; see also Shirley 1846, 45; Kelly 1850). The example of Clogh Oughter demonstrates the possibility that the term, when it was first in use, referred to an artificial pile of rocks in the water. In addition, the term ‘crannog’, as both Davies and Allen have suggested, may not have referred to islands but to some artificial feature on the islands themselves, such as a hut or a palisade. If we look at this example we can see that the first reference to a crannog may be connected to a site that appeared to be a fairly stony island with a castle to a twentieth-century excavator. Without further investigations it is not totally clear what it may have looked like when it was commented upon in 1224. However, the modern findings suggest that the reference may have applied to a fairly stony tree-overgrown island.

Crannogs according to Lynn

Chris Lynn published the most influential article about crannogs in 1983. It dealt in particular with how to use the term ‘crannog’ and to which sites it should apply. He argued that the name should be reserved solely for heavily defended island sites of early medieval date and later. He believed that a true crannog was a largely artificial island, encircled by either a retaining ring of posts or a palisade, and built for purposes of defence. It is worth noting that Lynn’s definition contains both a morphological element (palisade) and a functional element (defence). Lynn scrutinised the evidence for ‘early crannogs’ of prehistoric date and found that they did not seem to have these characteristics (Lynn 1983, 50–4).

The purpose of the paper was to challenge the belief in a long-term continuity in crannog-building. Some researchers, such as Davies (1950), claimed that the tradition of building crannogs stretched as far back as the Stone Age. This was also the case with the interpretation of the survey and excavation evidence from Lough Gara, where it was argued that there was clear evidence for at least Iron Age crannogs (J. Raftery 1957; 1972a). Lynn believed that many Irish researchers were trying to cover up the ‘embarrassing’ lack of sites from the Iron Age by claiming an earlier ancestry for what he saw as purely early medieval sites. He felt that this long chronology distracted attention from the important period of the ‘later sub-Roman Iron Age’, where he hoped to see a genesis of the monument type (Lynn 1983, 47, 55ff).

Lynn also argued that a distribution map containing multiperiod sites would be of limited value for research (*ibid.*, 47). A map such as Pl. 1 would contain elements from different time-periods and would be useless in providing a cultural and locational context for crannogs. Such a map would have no beginning and no end. It is worth noting that it would not be compatible with Lynn’s own interpretative framework, which saw changes as being due to factors outside the culture itself, such as the migration of people or the diffusion of ideas. The dots on the map would represent the spread of a monument type from a point of origin. This model leaves very little room for internal explanations of change. Furthermore, if the crannog sites had such a long ancestry as some have claimed there would not be much change left to explain.

In order to use his model, Lynn wanted to make it clear that there was no continuity between early medieval crannogs and the earlier lake sites (Lynn 1983, 47). This is understandable, as multiperiod sites are not compatible with cultural-historical models of change. One could say that through the construction of a narrow definition such continuity was defined away, despite evidence that the same site could have been used during both the Bronze Age and the early medieval period, in which case there would be no change demanding an explanation. Only when

crannogs had been isolated as a phenomenon originating in the early medieval period could Lynn connect them to the ‘normal’ explanation of diffusion. Lynn then suggested that the building of crannogs resulted from influences from west Britain, where there was clear evidence for the use of crannogs during the preceding period, the Iron Age. He explained that crannogs sprang from a large-scale or small-scale diffusion from Roman Britain (*ibid.*, 54, 56). However, Graham (1988) has pointed out in relation to this issue that there is no clear evidence for a migration to Ireland at this time. Neither does Byrne (1973) mention any large-scale movement around this time from west Britain to the areas where we have crannogs, i.e. the northern half of the country.

Crannog–proto-crannog

No one disputes the fact of early lakeside activity. But when it comes to the question of definitions, it is also important to consider the interpretations which the present definitions are projecting onto the material. Lynn (1983) discussed what to call other artificial islands and sites that did not match his criteria for crannogs. Examples of these include Lough Eskragh (Collins and Seaby 1960; B. Williams 1978) and the earlier levels of Ballinderry 2, which later developed into an early medieval crannog (Hencken 1942), and Rathjordan (S.P. Ó Ríordáin and Lucas 1946–7). These sites all belong to the prehistoric period. Lynn tried the terms ‘proto-crannog’ and ‘crypto-crannog’, but did not feel comfortable with them because they imply a continuity of tradition that he wanted to avoid (Lynn 1983, 54).

I do not like these names either, but for other reasons. To call the earlier sites ‘proto-crannogs’ and the later ones ‘proper’, ‘true’ or ‘classical’ crannogs implies that the monuments developed teleologically, as if they had a preconceived meaning that in the end would show itself — their true optimal nature would evolve and what had gone before was only faulty ways of building crannogs. This naming process also draws parallels between prehistory and infancy or childhood. It portrays the past as being undeveloped, providing the basis for comparing the present progress against a backward past. In using the term proto-crannog one may be making an ethnocentric value judgement about ‘progress’ over time.

My pragmatic use of the term ‘crannog’

According to Lynn the term ‘crannog’ should be reserved for palisaded artificial islands from the early medieval period onwards. With reference to the discussion about Crannog Orauly in Lough Oughter and Inish Loch Gabor, the documentary sources imply that the early medieval sites were not called crannogs, but *inis*. It is also evident that when the term ‘crannog’ came into use during the thirteenth century it might have been referring to an artificial pile of rocks or to a palisade or a small wooden building on an island, for example, or it may have referred to abandoned dwellings that recently had been covered by new young trees. As it is not totally clear how the term was used in the beginning of the high medieval period it could be argued that it would be anachronistic to use the term ‘crannog’ for the early medieval man-made islands. The connection could not even be established on morphological grounds, comparing components of the sites, as there has been no investigation into the differences or similarities between the early and later medieval crannogs, and therefore we do not really know what the later medieval term referred to.

This is not, however, my main objection to Lynn’s restrictive use of the term. A definition is a theoretical tool that might need to be changed or amended as required. I am not shackled by a theoretical model of diffusionism and I am interested in the question of how the reuse of an

earlier site may have been meaningful to people. In this book I will work with a general understanding of the term ‘crannog’, implying a man-made island, in order to facilitate such an analysis. This will distinguish the artificial island from the lakeside settlement, which I take to mean a house or dwelling on the shore. In Chapter 6 I will work out a tighter classification scheme for the crannogs based on their morphological features rather than their dating. Throughout the book I will try to gain a better understanding of what these crannogs might have meant to people over time.

As I have pointed out, Lynn’s definition consists of both a morphological and a functional component, stating that true crannogs had a defensive purpose. It has been argued by Selinge (1977, 159ff) and Hyenstrand (1984), for example, that the blending of morphological and functional elements in a site description should be avoided. This might be seen as an expression of the same scientific minimalism used in Lynn’s article. While I do not agree that sites should be left without some attempt at interpretation, there is a valuable point in this approach. I have no doubt that defence was one aspect of crannogs, but there are many other interpretations of the material that could be just as valid. Including only a single functional element in the definition, as Lynn does, leads to the exclusion of alternative ways of interpreting the material.

This definition has also led to the exclusion of other important archaeological material. On the one hand, as will be outlined in the research history, Lynn’s narrow crannog definition has led to interesting research into the large ‘high-status’ crannogs of the early medieval period. This has resulted in a better understanding of the life of the upper classes during this period. There are, however, a number of contemporary man-made islands, such as the one we excavated in Lough Gara, that share some but not all morphological traits with the royal crannogs, and that have shown a somewhat different material universe. Using Lynn’s definition these smaller sites would run the risk of being ruled out before they had even begun to be studied. Smaller and perhaps less distinct sites might be under-researched because they were not seen as ‘true’ crannogs but as something deviant or outside the classification scheme (what Mary Douglas (1986; 1996; 2000) terms ‘out of category’). A too-narrow crannog definition runs the risk of pushing the analysis of these important sites into the shadow of the ‘great, royal, real crannogs’.

Furthermore, Lynn may have overlooked an important trait in the material in his desire to place the origins of crannogs in the early medieval period, necessary for his model of diffusion-based change. The physical reuse of a crannog does imply some sort of connection between earlier and later periods, although it might not be a case of ancestry. More and more studies have found that people, especially in early medieval times but also during other periods, consciously reused earlier sites; important in this discussion are also the later medieval inauguration mounds. It has been claimed that this reuse was meaningful in both a political and a cognitive sense for people in the past (see e.g. R. Bradley 1993; Bradley and Williams 1998). The reuse of crannogs has not been seen in this light. Instead it has often been explained away as a rational, labour-saving choice, where the reuse would have been due to the selection of a dryer spot in the lake, which would make it easier to build the crannog. Although I would perhaps not use the term ancestry in this sense to describe the practice of reuse, I would like to open up the inquiry into what these sites may have meant to people over time. I think that a too-restrictive use of the term ‘crannog’ tends to close down this avenue of investigation as well. It understates the actual physical connection between different periods while overstating the case for the crannog and the built island belonging to the early medieval period only.

I feel that much of the interest of this material lies in its multiperiod nature. However, one has to work with sensitivity when it comes to applying models of change. It is important to see that stability and gradual slow shifts in the use of a site deserve to be understood as well. It would be interesting to open up a discussion of internal reasons for the reworking and reuse of sites like crannogs, and perhaps even the construction of ancestry for people by means of material culture. This is one of the reasons why

I have chosen to work within a multiperiod framework and to follow a lake and its surroundings over time (see Fredengren 1996; 1998a).

There could also be practical reasons for using the term ‘crannog’ for all man-made islands. In a recent book O’Sullivan (1998) suggested a study of crannogs over time. When it came to definitions, he simply followed Lynn and stated: ‘In this study, the term “crannog” is generally reserved for the classic type of early historic artificially constructed islet with defensive palisade’ (*ibid.*, 5). The early historic period was defined as AD 400–800 in this work (*ibid.*, 4). But to apply the term ‘crannog’ only to sites of this period in a multiperiod text leads to inconsistencies. O’Sullivan’s book contains not only early historic crannogs, as stated, but also Viking Age crannogs, prehistoric crannogs and multiperiod crannogs (*ibid.*, 8, 21–2). It is easy to see that there is a pragmatic reason to apply the word ‘crannog’ to man-made islands from all time-periods in order to widen the focus and to maintain consistency.

Conclusion

Even in the nineteenth century Kinahan saw the term ‘crannog’ as a ‘modern term introduced to cover the place for an ancient one, which is unknown or unrecognised’ (Kinahan 1878, 278). It is not clear how the term was used when it was first introduced, and there is no evidence that Lynn’s early medieval crannogs were ever called crannogs. All available annalistic evidence shows that they were called islands — *inis* or *oilean*. In this book I will, like the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, start out with a pragmatic use of the word crannog, applying it to all man-made islands, regardless of date. The first reason for this is that the general public recognises and accepts the name crannog. Another reason is that a too-restrictive use of the term may lead to inconsistencies in writing. It would also place limits on our thinking, and perhaps incur the risk of excluding important connections and interpretations of the material.

One of the aims of this book is to arrive at a better understanding of what these sites may have meant to people. To have too narrow a definition leads to preconceived ideas and may restrict the research and inquiry.

Before we proceed into the field study of Lough Gara and the interpretation of the crannogs in their social context, we will take a further look at some theoretical issues and the aims and methods of this study as well as the history of crannog research. It will be seen that even if defence has been a key element in many of the interpretations, this is not the only way of looking at these sites.

PART II — SUMMONING THE POWERS

Crannogs (in the widest sense of the word) have often been explained on economic grounds. In the Mesolithic they were connected with fishing and possibly with lithic production. The Bronze Age sites have yielded finds such as metal and moulds for bronze-casting, and hence they have been seen as the residences of smiths. The early medieval crannogs have also been interpreted as workshops on the basis of evidence for glass-making, iron-handling and bronze-casting. They have been explained as high-status residences that were also centres of production, functioning as places that protected resources or were central points in their distribution chain. In this study we are going to build on earlier understandings of the material, but it is important to realise that there are many other possible interpretations. In this section I will go into more detail about my theoretical interest and aims with this book. I will also discuss how I chose this approach, as well as some of the methods used. This discussion is followed by a history of crannog research in which I want to set forth the theories that have influenced crannog research since its beginnings and show how the economic interpretations developed over time. The research history is also intended to help readers familiarise themselves with the crannog material. In this way I want to muster what is known from the work of others before embarking on the field study and the interpretations of the study area.

3. ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

Theoretical choices

Not only have the crannogs, regardless of their dating, been explained by economic factors, but the reuse of earlier sites, where layers from medieval times may follow Bronze Age ones, has also been explained in similar ways—that people returned to an earlier site not because it meant something but because it provided a suitable knoll in the water to make building easier. The reuse of earlier crannogs has often been seen as a rational, labour-saving choice. Beyond that there has been little effort to understand the multiperiod nature of these sites in recent crannog research.

There are a number of patterns in the crannog material that intrigue me and that I would like to follow up and to expand on further in my study. Some of these are precisely the ones that Lynn wanted to avoid. One is the issue of the reuse of earlier sites, and to some extent the possible importance of these sites in time-periods other than the early medieval. That some type of man-made islands may have been in use in the Mesolithic and that some were used repeatedly over long periods of time leave room for many different ideas. Multiperiod studies have to be open to other notions about temporality, monumentality and change than single-period studies. However, before I go into the details and focus of my own study I would like to set out some of my own theoretical background and my reaction to what I will describe as an ‘economistic’ archaeology.

Anti-capitalist archaeology

As has been hinted at above and as will be shown in the research history, there has been a trend towards the increasing use of economistic terminology and thinking over time in crannog studies (and in archaeology in general). Crannogs have been seen as awkward places to live. The only rational reason that could be advanced for such a choice is the exploitation of resources or the protection of wealth (see e.g. Lynn 1983, 54) — in other words, there must be some type of economic gain from living on these islands. Otherwise, they might run the risk of representing some slightly odd human activities, with no counterpart in many other parts of the world. Without an economistic interpretation, archaeologists would have a lot more explaining to do. What is important to focus on is that even if we accept the explanation that these sites were used for fishing, bronze production, etc., these activities could have been carried out in a multitude of other ways. My aim is to understand how the people who used crannogs perceived themselves and to find out why they chose to solve their problems in this particular way and what difference it made to them.

What is interesting in this context is that many studies in both archaeology and anthropology have shown that an ‘economistic’ world-view has more to do with western thought than with the way people perceive the world and themselves anywhere else. It has been demonstrated that such a framework is highly ethnocentric and connected with a time-specific mind-set belonging to the western world (see e.g. Tilley 1994; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Pálsson 1996). R. Bradley (Bradley and Edmonds 1993; Bradley 2000, 40–4), for example, has shown that the production of stone axes did not primarily rest on resource optimisation. The selection of materials for the axes was determined on other grounds, such as the relative danger of the collection place, which would have given the axes some special characteristics. Possibly, if we broaden the study of crannogs, we may also reach surprising results. An awareness of how ‘economistic’ thoughts have influenced

archaeological interpretations is shown in some recent archaeologies (e.g. Shanks and Tilley 1987a; 1987b; Tilley 1989; R. Bradley 1993; 1998; 2000; Brück 1999). I would like to develop these arguments further.

Many people in non-western societies see their landscapes as living entities rather than as places where resources could be exploited. This means that the economic way of perceiving the environment has more relevance for the present than for the past. I think that in order to gain a better understanding of people in the past we must start to *unlearn* our own cultural, conceptual framework, which to a large extent is a western liberal mind-set (Strathern 1988, xi–xii; Gosden 1999, 132). As things stand, an economic jargon has infiltrated the vocabulary of everyday life to such an extent that it has become seen as a natural way of thinking instead of as a political tool. (To read more about the social construction of economy as a subject see e.g. Philo and Miller 2001, xv; Gamble 2001, 170–6). However, by questioning these attitudes it may be possible to get a better understanding of the circumstances in the past.² In the present study this means to be aware that the waters and wetlands may have carried a range of meanings beyond their role in the supply of commodities.

In the strand of ‘critical archaeology’ as articulated by, for example, Shanks and Tilley (1987a; 1987b) it has been pointed out that archaeologists have to be alive to the social implications of our interpretations of the past. We need to be aware of what ‘politically loaded’ concepts we impose on the material and what effect this has on the present. This conceptual critique has led to the development of gender archaeology and the study of ‘the people without history’ in a post-colonial sense etc. (e.g. Preucel and Hodder 1996; M. Johnson 1999; Thomas 2000), and a similar critique of ‘economic archaeology’ is needed.

Today, throughout the world, there are ‘anti-capitalists’ who critique the effect of corporate market decisions on policy issues, and the way the ongoing globalisation is hollowing out democracy. Philo and Miller (2001) have pointed out that social scientists have a responsibility to participate in a critique of these developments. I think that archaeologists also have to shoulder their responsibility and be aware of how their interpretations of the past can be used politically. I believe that there is a reason to learn from the ‘anti-capitalist’ social critique and to try to rethink our relationship with the past for two reasons. Firstly, it is a matter of social responsibility — it is important to pursue an archaeology that does not ‘sponsor’ the market. Concepts like ‘woodland management’ and ‘resource exploitation’ are often used in the fields of wetland or marine archaeology, where the study of crannogs often occurs; these notions, which may have been unthinkable to past societies, are commonly applied as explanations to the archaeological material. Surely it is our task as archaeologists and historians to see that these concepts are used within their relevant chronological setting rather than being indiscriminately pasted onto the past as a motivating force for all human behaviour over time. Secondly, if we try to unlearn market thinking, we may learn new things about the past and about ourselves. This may also open up new interpretations. An anti-capitalist archaeology would offer a constant critique of concepts and ways of thinking that support the western liberal market society. In this book I want to try to unlearn some of the ‘economic’ thought patterns that have been imposed on the crannog material and to find new ways of understanding what crannogs meant to people. But I think these issues are of relevance to more archaeologies than mine.

Economic thought in archaeology

That archaeology has been connected with the normalisation of economy as a subject is illustrated even more clearly by a principle of archaeological thought from at least the 1950s

onwards, although this way of thinking has deeper roots than that. It has been argued, not only by processualists but also by functionalists, that archaeological material is better suited to telling about past technologies and economies than to dealing with social and religious issues. This view has influenced not only Irish archaeology (see comment in Cooney and Grogan 1994, 2; Cooney 1995, 265) but also much of archaeology in the western half of Europe. ‘Hawkes’s ladder’ is often taken as an example. In Hawkes’s ladder of inference it is explained that archaeology becomes more speculative when moving up the steps of technology, economy, social systems, and religion and rituals. What Hawkes meant was that archaeological statements about technology and economy are more reliable than its views on social organisation and religion (Hawkes 1954; Smith 1955). This in turn creates the impression that economy and technology were more real than social organisation and religion.

The processual/systemic approaches (as well as wetland archaeology) have dealt mainly with the lower steps on the ladder, such as woodworking technology, iron production, experimental archaeology, etc. Tierney (1998, 197) has commented on the ‘techno-fetishism’ in the study of early medieval archaeology in Ireland, and the same term could perhaps be used to refer to these strands within archaeology as well. In this light post-processual archaeology has been seen by some as a form of liberation and a way to reach higher steps on the ladder, with the inclusion of the study of ritual and religion as topics in archaeological studies (e.g. Cooney and Grogan 1994, 2). Although the point is important, it also carries a risk in that such a view perpetuates the same functional division as portrayed in Hawkes’s ladder, treating religion and social meaning as things quite separate from technology (see Fredengren 1998b). To see references to ritual and religion is commonplace in the archaeological field today, while the explanation of everyday events, farming, fishing, etc., is left within the bounds of processual archaeology.

Embedded/disembedded

There are also other reasons why it is important to deconstruct ‘economistic’ archaeology. I do not agree with Hawkes that it is easier to see economy and technology in the archaeological material. I will argue that it is just as complicated to see the economy in the material as to see religion. Furthermore, I also see a danger in a specific focus on ritual or religion in post-processual archaeology, as this would give support to the functional compartmentalisation expressed in Hawkes’s ladder. It may be time to melt down and blend these steps, as well as these categories of thinking (Fredengren 1998b, 132, 139–40), and to oppose the separation of the landscape into an economic layer, a religious layer and a natural layer.

What has been realised in anthropological work is that a division into a social and an economic sphere does not hold for ‘primitive societies’³ (cf. Polanyi 1947; 1957; Sahlins 1972, 182–3). Instead, social and economic aspects are so entangled that they cannot be separated into different subsystems, i.e. the ‘economy’ is embedded in social practice.

The processual archaeologies, either those influenced by Binford (such as Mytum 1992) or the Marxist archaeologies (e.g. Kristiansen 1984; T.B. Larsson 1986), have all worked to separate out economy as a distinct subsystem. Kristiansen, for example, proposes a pure historical materialism for understanding the Bronze Age, whereby changes in the economic productive forces, i.e. the herding of cattle, give rise to a new ideology among the ruling élite. Both Marxist archaeology and the systemic approaches basically support the view of economy as a separate analytical category. This, according to Barrett (1989, 115), is the same thing as lifting up economy as the only cultural general factor. In such a simplistic view of history we should be able to predict everything in a society by drawing logical and rational conclusions from its use of a certain

technology. However, the archaeological material shows much more variation than this.

For example, in the archaeological material we see that people who are engaged in the herding of cattle can live in totally different material cultures. It is not inevitable or self-evident that cattle-herding or iron production will lead to the building of crannogs. Even societies with similar ‘technology’ differ from each other. In these terms both Marx and Polanyi saw European industrial society as unique in human history (Dalton and Köcke 1983, 37), and to apply raw Marxist theory to the study of past societies would probably have been seen as an anachronism even by Marx. However, while Marx proposed that the ‘mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life’ in all societies, capitalist and pre-capitalist alike (Marx 1970, 21; Dalton and Köcke 1983, 37), Polanyi would only see economic determinism as working in capitalist societies. While structural Marxists like Godelier (1972) and Althusser (1977) to a large extent agree with institutionalists like Polanyi about the embeddedness of the economic spheres, they still see the economy as conditioning social life (Godelier 1977, 18–19; Dalton and Köcke 1983, 36; Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 170).

Looking at the archaeological material, I feel more convinced by Polanyi’s ideas than by those of the structural Marxists. A classic example is our present understanding of the transition from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic. Earlier this transition was seen as having been started by a change in productive forces, an economic change that enabled people to afford the building of monuments. A more popular belief today is that the monument-building itself changed people’s world-view so that a settled life became possible to imagine (see Hodder 1982; R. Bradley 1993, etc.).

The insight that those practices that we lump together and call economic are embedded in social praxis does not mean that we should refrain from studying them and that we should leap away to study religion and belief systems. Instead, the challenge is to study the phenomena that formerly have only been viewed through economic eyes. In this case, what has been termed the economic layer in a landscape cannot be detached from its historic and social contexts (for a similar critique of processual archaeology see Hodder 1982).

Economic meta-narratives

These questions about an ‘economic’ archaeology have relevance both for the study of the past and for the issues dealt with in this crannog study, as well as for the role I would like archaeology and this study to have in present society. This could be exemplified with a start in the one point on which I disagree with both Polanyi and Marx, and that is the disembeddedness of the present. The ongoing disembeddedness of modern life is, according to many, the most acute tragedy of the day (cf. Berman 1983; Lash and Urry 1994). Although much of modern political debate tries to foster in us an economic spirit, I think that people still live lives embedded in social practice to a large extent even today, and it is that embeddedness that helps us to find meaning in our lives. Here archaeology also has its role to play.

Now, let’s have a look into a world that aims at hegemonical thinking, a world in which disembeddedness is the real life. This is a quote from a normal book on microeconomics used in the education of undergraduates in economics at Swedish universities:

‘Derek Bok, Harvard’s president, once said that, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance”. To be ignorant of economics is particularly expensive, since economics helps us to understand the nature and organization of our society, the arguments underlying many of the great public issues of the day, and the operation and behaviour of business firms and other economic decision making units. To perform effectively and responsibly as

a citizen, an administrator, a worker, or a consumer, one needs to know some economics’ (Mansfield 1988, 1).

This statement tells us that to know the rules and mind-set of economics is everyone’s responsibility; otherwise we might not be able to accomplish what is asked of us. We might become irresponsible citizens who are not behaving effectively and not solving our problems in an economically rational way. And if we misbehave and are ignorant of these rules we will be punished. Economics as a subject pretending to be a science beyond questioning presents in this way a simple but intricate economic meta-narrative. Economics have become an ‘institutionalised’ style of thought in society, becoming seen as natural, beyond questioning. We have to be alert to the tendencies in our archaeological narratives to support this tale, especially when the material tells another story.

Economy as a meta-narrative used in archaeology still needs to be questioned. Despite that, much of contemporary archaeology is totally incompatible with an economic view. Yet archaeological results are still used to support subjects like economic history with supposed facts. North, a recent Nobel Prize winner, describes the Mesolithic/Neolithic interface as the first Economic Revolution:

‘The era can itself only have been a transitional phase because as population pressure continued to grow and compete for these common property resources even they would become increasingly scarce and relatively more “costly” in labor time to gather. The solution to the common-property dilemma in which prehistoric man found himself was the development of exclusive communal property rights’ (North 1981, 86).

‘The establishment of exclusive communal property raised the bands’ return to attempts to increase the productivity of the resource base’ (North 1981, 88).

‘The first Economic Revolution [...] was a revolution because the transition created for mankind an incentive change of fundamental proportions [...] exclusive property rights which reward the owners provide a direct incentive to improve efficiency and productivity, or, in more fundamental terms, to acquire more knowledge and new techniques’ (North 1981, 89).

North is building his reasoning on the processual works of Flannery (1968; 1969) and Binford (1968), which lend themselves to these economic interpretations.

But we do not have to go to processual archaeology to find support for an economic meta-narrative and to the use of economic factors to explain the existence of archaeological sites or historical change. Within post-processual archaeology we also find the historical support for concepts that provide the engine for the workings of the modern market economy. I will mention only a few of these here:

- Rational Actions — every action is goal-oriented. (Compare to the theory of agency.)
- Maximisation Theory — every action has utility maximisation as a goal; but what if people have other goals than the maximisation of returns from their investments?
- Methodological Individualism — all explanations have to start with the individual; but what if people think of themselves as a tribe, for example? Shanks and Tilley (1987a,

62–3) refer to Mauss (1979, 65–77), who questions the individual as a transhistorical concept. One example describes how people partake in ancestry and therefore cannot be seen as separate entities from each other.

- A Friction-Free Market — everyone is a nomad; goods and people are moving freely across boundaries.
- Free Information — multiple explanations: many explanations are valid, none are true.

These ideas are the conceptual pillars of the modern market economy and they also accompany the post-modern way of thinking. Therefore we have to be careful when these concepts are used to explain people's lives, especially in societies other than our own. It is important not to impose interpretations based on this specific economic style of thought on other times and societies, especially when the archaeological material may tell a different story. It has to be acknowledged that this particular economic way of thinking might not be applicable to all time-periods.

Institutionalism

In the foregoing section I referred to thinkers such as Polanyi, who has delivered quite an efficient critique of the market system. He and some other scholars would become known as 'institutionalists'. This school of thinking could be used in a critique of economic archaeology. However, institutionalist ideas can have relevance for other issues as well. The questions I want to work with are how people unite to share ways of thinking and experiences and how they create solidarity, common goals and even ethics. I would like to investigate how the use of material culture and crannogs made people think that they had something in common, which in turn reflects on the concepts of rational actions and methodological individualism. The anthropologist Mary Douglas has, in a number of publications, discussed how people through institutionalised practices end up sharing patterns of thought according to the way they classify and perceive reality. It could be a question of what is seen as good practice as compared to bad, or what is supposed to be clean in relation to dirty: things are not wrong, they are out of category (see Douglas 1986; 1996; 2000).

Institutions could be described as 'frozen ideologies' or ways of thinking that may have become established over a longer period of time (Liedman 1999, 51; Liedman and Olausson 1988, 8–10, 18–23), eventually becoming norms, traditions or laws. The institution of marriage, kinship, property rights, or the way a community discriminates between 'vulgar' and 'refined' are but a few examples (see e.g. Douglas 1996, 10). In this book we will look at how people may have experienced solidarity and communality. In a way, an institution is more than a tradition, although it resembles the notion of tradition. While a tradition may serve to legitimise actions on the basis that things were done in a particular way in the past, an institution is often legitimised in a general cosmology, a way of seeing nature and the world. These institutions regulate people's perceptions, and experiences that do not conform are often omitted, or are not regarded as real or proper (see e.g. Douglas 1986, 46ff; similar ideas have been put forward in Lakoff 1987). In the case of crannogs it's a matter of trying to understand the effect on the collective of what superficially appears to be an isolationist idea, the use of an island. The way in which people used these sites may have simultaneously re-enacted and changed social issues. The investigation of how these crannogs may have been used and how their existence might have influenced the way people perceived and built their communality and solidarity is not a study of what is eternally good. I intend instead to try to understand how things came to be seen as good over time. It is important to bear in mind that established ethics, laws,

regulations and organisations are of course oppressive as well as enabling. Institutions tend to enforce certain ways of thinking and to exclude all other ways of acting in the world.

All types of institutions, from a university to the norms and rules expressed in ethics, are a means of perpetuating what is seen to be ‘good’ in society. This in itself is a form of oppression. Foucault (1992; 1993), for example, has written pessimistically about the conceptual power structures embedded in such institutions as hospitals or prisons. He has described what were called total institutions. Max Weber (1992) has similarly discussed modern bureaucratic structures and the rationalisation of modern life as an institutional ‘Iron Cage’, built on a series of enforcing routines.

In my view institutional theory is also about providing what have been labelled ‘economistic’ activities with their cultural ‘embeddedness’, to enable us to see these activities in terms of their cultural context, from which they perhaps should never be separated if we want to understand how people in the past perceived iron-working or fishing.

The materiality of institutions

What interests me is the type of ideas manifested by the crannogs, and the way in which these sites as buildings transfer ideas over time. While the crannogs are the result of bringing ideas into being, they may equally have affected and merged into people’s way of life — facilitating certain actions and discouraging others. In architectural theory, institutions are buildings that in themselves lead people to think about how society ought to be structured. The institutional building is a place where ‘man finds the insight he needs to be able to carry out his actions with a sense of purpose and meaning’ (Norberg-Schultz 1971, 71). According to Liedman (1999, 587), institutions are rules that structure human actions, such as organisations, laws, etc. I think we can talk about norms as manifested in buildings and other material culture that could be studied by archaeologists — material institutions. In terms of the present study it would be of interest to investigate first whether there is evidence that islands were built during different time-periods and to see how the material ideas may have been reformulated from time to time.

Not only do these materialised institutional practices structure information by providing a set stage for action, they also dispense information. This is what Shanks and Tilley (1987b, 125–34), for example, have called the recursive role of material culture (see also discussion in Bender 1998, 63–4). Buildings and other material that we work with as archaeologists may, like any other institution, have provided an upbringing in ‘society’ or community, offering incentives for certain actions while discouraging others. However, this does not mean that people necessarily followed a pre-set ‘script’ in their actions, i.e. that their actions were determined by structure. Concepts deriving from institutional practices may consciously or accidentally be manipulated, and the concepts leave room for agency (Goffman 1959; 1971; Barrett 1994; M. Johnson 1999, 204).

Social construction of reality

An interest in these theories also involves a statement about *constructivism*. The notion that reality is mainly socially constructed was proposed by Berger and Luckmann in *The social construction of reality* (1967), which is now criticised as a bit too stereotypical (see e.g. Ellen 1996, 103; Littlewood 1996; Ingold 1996). To base my study on such a proposition would mean that we will only come to understand not how the world is but how we collectively imagine it to be. It is what we conjure up together that will matter and that we are all active in acting on this construction. For the study of people in the past it is a question of how and what they imagined and how it made sense. This does not, of course, mean that all people will share these views (and it may be in the clash between ideas that change occurs). A loop in this argument that has been

pointed out by many is that if reality is a construct, why is not this way of thinking a construct as well?

Change, stability, reiteration

The crannog material has many multiperiod elements. The crucial point for many studies in archaeology has been to understand change (see e.g. Cassel 1998). I think that with crannogs we have to move towards an understanding of both change and stability at the same time, and not restrict our study to either one or the other. In many studies change is expressed as the clash of people's ideas of the world. This would be one of the concepts in Mary Douglas's institutionalism (Douglas 1986). In a Marxist analysis change comes about as a result of a discrepancy between the superstructure and the base or, as it has been interpreted, the 'economy'. But if there was no 'natural' category of economy to discuss such an explanation would be more complicated. The structure–agency problem is a classical history–philosophical issue. If people's actions are largely determined by their history, how come there is any change at all? In our case it is a question of investigating how order as represented by the institutionalised concepts, as demonstrated by the crannogs, may have changed or been repeated. Change may, for example, have come about owing to people reacting differently to ideas depending on where they are situated as human beings (see Sahlins 2000, 271–91). Another reason may be people using structure in surprising ways to change the social logic. Drawing on the works of Sahlins (1981; 1985; 1995) there is a way of discussing this seemingly locked opposition. Sahlins sees symbolic order, as cultural categories, as being both the means and the result of practice. This means that cultural categories are re-enacted in everyday practice — and may be challenged for a variety of reasons. The meeting of different 'social logics' is one reason; the direct challenge and the interpretation of events is another.

However, in a long-term study there might also be a need to look at the reasons why things do *not* change. The study of stability has long been neglected (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 210). It is important to consider why the island theme may have been reused.

Another concept that bridges these ideas is the notion of cumulative instability — that while a practice such as the building and use of a crannog might have been perceived as a reiteration of an already existing idea, the mere act of copying changed its meaning. This would mean that even a reiteration contains within itself the process of change. Hodgson (1988) has discussed this using the term noted above, cumulative instability. Incorporated into this notion could also be Althusser's (1977, 106–16) ideas about every act's over-determination, i.e. that many acts have effects that are larger than their original intent (cf. Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 58–9). In other words, although something may seem stable the stability itself is also in flux, partly because the contexts around the copy may have changed. It may be set in a different social environment, or people may have experienced a spatial structure in a specific way. In addition, the appearance of stability or a reference back to the past could have a political purpose. This material may help us to discuss change and stability in a new way.

Past-modern, not post-modern

Post-modern thinking has broken both with the Enlightenment and with modernism, and with the meta-narratives of history. As discussed above, contemporary archaeological practice has, to an extent, supported the development of late modernism and post-modernism. Normalising the use of economic terminology, for example, has led to this, as have theories on progress and development. Such thought patterns are often seen within processual archaeology. The post-processual archaeologies with a focus on the transitory, on nomadism and mobility also support

such a development. By naturalising these concepts archaeology speeds up the transformation into an entirely post-modern society, which by some is not seen as something negative. Beck (1992a; 1992b), for example, suggests that the solution to the negative consequences of modernism lies not in the rejection of modernity but in its radicalisation. Lash and Urry (1994) state that the only way to proceed from the modernistic project is to continue the disembedding process with a further replacement of once-meaningful structures in people's surroundings by a focus on the individual reflexive subject. I follow their analysis with great interest, but their solution in this particular case — to drive people further into the late modernistic agony, where our relationship with other people and our surroundings becomes meaningless and interchangeable — is to give up. It is also complicated to pursue historical studies within a post-modern framework, carrying the risk of facing an extreme relativism or of ending up by repeating the meta-narratives.

What Knorr Cetina (1994) has suggested for her institutional sociology is the playful concept of past-modern rather than post-modern, to take her studies beyond modernist research with methods such as ethnography or microanalysis. In this way, she argues, localised life continues in its multiplicity, so that even small and localised ways of making sense of and of constructing life are worth studying. Social scientists would then be allowed to focus not only on cross-cultural patterns but also on other aspects of people's lives. Knorr Cetina reflects on the deconstructivism of, for example, Derrida (1976; 1978; 1981; or Barthes 1977), who argues that there is no possibility of finding an unambiguous meaning in any phenomenon. Knorr Cetina, on the other hand, believes that nevertheless the workings of it all, the constructed mechanics behind our experiences, are worthy of study. As she puts it, the focus in studies is not about 'showing that the monolith is empty, but showing us how it is built' (Knorr Cetina 1994, 3–4).

In her study of modern scientific institutions Knorr Cetina has found that they, like many other organisations, are dependent on fictions, or on stories made up about themselves. These places and their activities obtain their justification through answering their own fictions about themselves, pretending to be scientific by the use of technological-looking equipment, by participation in scientific conferences, etc. (Knorr Cetina and Mulkay 1983). These fictions are a part of our cultural imagination that should be rejoiced over, as they are imaginings that form what is seen as important. If the post-modern, or rather past-modern, world-view is seen like this then it is more than just a loss of meaning — the past-modern is willing to appreciate the cultural imagination that still keeps our lived worlds together. Fictionalities, even if they are made up in the world of scientists, comprise one among many ways to 're-enchant' the world (Knorr Cetina 1994, 5). In my analysis of the lake and crannog material I will use the term 'social fictionalities' to discuss the way crannogs may have worked in a social sense. Social fictionalities, or communal fantasies, may have either supported or obstructed the perceived togetherness of groups, and I will reflect on how material culture may have worked towards the construction of local cultural imagination at the time for people around the lake.

Re-enchantment or Entzauberung — the role of archaeology

Max Weber used the term *Entzauberung* to describe the ongoing rationalisation of society during the modern period (Weber 1987, 95f.). Earlier, Baudelaire had described the loss of enchantment that followed the modernisation of everyday life. What Weber, who also discussed the phenomenon, meant was the disenchanted, disembedded modern society in which the Cartesian dualism is close to reaching total separation, where culture, art and the whole humanistic side are completely separated from technology, resources, etc. (Liedman 1999, 453–62). This resembles both the functionalistic and the processual studies of archaeology.

To some extent Liedman sees things differently, and adds another dimension to the argument when he uses the opposite word *Zauberung* to describe modern man's total fascination with change, mobility and development (Liedman 1999, 459–60). This is a thought that he shares with Heidegger (1989, 124f.), who describes the present as totally bewitched by ideas of progress and technological changes.

It is my view that archaeologists, just like any other people who write about society, must identify the 'bewitchedness' in the ideas of progress and escalating modernisation, and be self-critical enough not to follow these streams of thought when our material tells different stories. Archaeology as a subject cannot avoid reflection on its role in the modernisation process. Our role, as its interpreters, is to create meaningful narratives about the past, which will allow us to see the value of re-enchanting the world. This enables people to live in a meaningful relationship with their surroundings and to close some of the Cartesian gaps that had begun to open before this, even in Plato's work. Trends towards a closure can already be seen in many movements of the present day. The man/animal divide is closing with the animal rights movement (see e.g. Ingold 1988), the body/mind divide is closing in current medical research (Svenéaus 1999), and the nature/culture divide is closing in the work of nature rights movements, perhaps supported by work in archaeology and anthropology (see Tilley 1994; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Pálsson 1996).

The world has changed from modernity to post-modernity, which means a move 'from certainty to ambiguity' and from monocultures to multiculturalism. In many ways the dualities of the world have been challenged (Harvey 1996, 5). To question the duality of structure between economics and imaginings is another challenge.

I think that the challenge for archaeology in the post-modern world is to try to re-enchant the places and events that through an ongoing commodification are constantly losing meaning, and the test is to do this without trivialising the narratives.

A regional multiperiod study

There are many indications that the crannog material has relevance for the discussion of people's lives and world-view in many time-periods. Instead of working against the material, dividing it up into a study of certain periods, I want to follow the sites through time to see how they change and to what extent they stay the same. There seems to be a consensus among archaeologists that there has been human activity by the waters through time, or at least since the Mesolithic (Wood-Martin 1886a; Davies 1942; Fredengren 1996; 1998a; 1998b; O'Sullivan 1998). Some examples of long-term landscape/settlement studies include Ystadsprojektet in South Sweden (Larsson *et al.* 1992) and studies in south-east Sweden discussing long-term landscape changes and the growth of political organisations (Magnusson 2001). Whether people were building islands at this early stage is debatable, and we will take a closer look at the evidence from one particular lake that gives some indications of early island-building. The antiquity of the crannog tradition has been a central research issue for a long time. In Chapter 6 I will make my own contribution to the debate by discussing the dating, location and morphology of the man-made islands based on the results of my own fieldwork.

What I will do is follow the activities in a lake with crannogs through time. But to understand what this lake has meant to people through the ages it is important not to restrict the study only to the crannogs, but to take into account other activities that took place around the lake. This study will also deal with lake sites such as jetties and harbours, etc., and also with the practice of depositing

objects in watery places. I think that examining people's changing attitudes towards these places as represented by buildings in the water or by other material will allow me to discern longer-term, maybe institutionalised practices.

Bridging the gap between dryland and wetland archaeology

The changing roles of the sites would of course depend on their relationship to sites on dry land too. Not only do wetland archaeology and marine archaeology often arrive at economic interpretations, but they also often fail to connect the issues discussed in the general subject of archaeology. Sometimes the method-specific issues become such a burden to the context-specific archaeologists that much of the material is left without an interpretation. I regard it as important to contextualise the findings from the waters in relation to the findings from land in order to contrast and compare the evidence from both the wetlands and the drylands in a wider region.

Inspired by the regional studies of the Crannog Archaeology Project (CAP) that led to the narratives of Kelly (1991a) and Karkov and Ruffing (1997), I have decided to focus on a specific area, Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland. The intention, however, is to stretch further inland than the CAP did to find out what happens in the archaeological material further away from the lakes — to investigate the relationship between the sites by the lake and the sites at a distance. Having started my work during what in the research history I have called 'The Age of Revisits', this study could also be classified as one. The area around Lough Gara has been the centre of archaeological attention before. Substantial archaeological work was carried out in Lough Gara in the 1950s and two crannogs were excavated.⁴ The present work, however, revisits the whole lake, not merely a single site.

Material used in the thesis

To find out more about the presumed multiperiodicity of the Lough Gara material I have carried out a substantial survey of the area. The sites comprise both large and small man-made islands, and in order to discuss them I have constructed a morphological scheme for comparison, thereby organising the material for further discussion. I have used radiocarbon dating to obtain a better understanding of the time-periods during which a particular island was in use. I also aim to address the question of when people built islands. Instead of focusing solely on the large, possibly royal crannogs, as has been done before, I will report on my own findings from the excavation of a smaller early medieval crannog. This might give us the chance to discuss the social lives of common people. I will also try to interpret the social space created on this island, and how the use of it has both changed and stayed the same throughout time. Insofar as these crannogs have involved an element of production and transformation of materials I will try to discuss these issues as well.

To contextualise the crannogs against other sites I have made use of distribution or occurrence maps. These maps are built on a general period classification. Many sites do not belong to a single period. Where this problem occurs I have carried them over into the maps for later time-periods. Much of the information in this thesis is based on the Record of Monuments and Places kept by Dúchas The Heritage Service, whose archive for field sites consists of surveyors' field notes. The distribution maps are compiled from their database, which we downloaded in December 2000 (Appendix 4.2). There is no information on when this database was last updated. I have found small discrepancies between the databases and the field notes kept by Dúchas, and there are some obvious sites missing in the database; my amendments to the database can be found in Appendix 1. Still, the general trend in the material should be clear enough even if each and every site is not included in these maps. Detailed discussions of the sites included on these distribution maps will

be forthcoming in Michael Moore's survey volumes for County Leitrim and County Roscommon, as well as in University College Cork's south Sligo volume and Paddy O'Donovan's north Sligo volume, all carried out on behalf of Dúchas. Rathcroghan will be dealt with in detail in a forthcoming book by John Waddell.

To understand specific site types I have searched in the first place for nearby excavations to obtain parallels, but at times such material has not been available and comparisons have been made with sites further away. This procedure makes the study less local, but the method is necessary to make sense of the material.

I have consulted the National Museum archives for finds from Lough Gara and its surroundings. A large number were retrieved during the 1950s and more have turned up since then. Many of these are listed in Appendix 3. The information regarding finds that turned up after the 1950s is fairly accurate, but the find-lists for the time of the drainage activities have only been partly available to me. This book does not cover all aspects of and all material from Lough Gara and its vicinity; such a study would lead to an information overload. A complete representation of this material is not possible. Professor Barry Raftery was able to make some of this material available to me. From other sources I discovered that over 4000 artefacts were recovered from Lough Gara at the time of the drainage. The full list of these finds was not available to me, however, so I have tried to reconstruct it using the finds in the Museum drawers. There are, however, still some gaps in the number series. The Lough Gara collections are rich, and to account for all this material would take several lifetimes. It has been important to keep strictly to a set of questions, but in doing this I know that I have excluded a myriad of issues that could be addressed with this material. For the discussion on the early medieval period I have used well-known secondary source material (E.J. Byrne 1971; 1973; Ó Crónín 1995; F. Kelly 1988; Charles-Edwards 2000), but I have tried to read these sources in an archaeological-spatial way. Sometime in the future this kind of literature could be used in the development of an early medieval landscape archaeology.

Apart from the research history (Chapter 4) this book is laid out in chronological order, beginning with a discussion of the Mesolithic and ending with the medieval period. The aim is to try to get as close to a local understanding of the material as possible. The only chapter that breaks with this chronological order is Chapter 5, 'The past is here and there', which presents the lake as it is perceived today. What is the relationship between the present we are living in and the past that we are studying? In an effort to break down the boundary between the expert and the people interested in the past I will report the results of interviews with people in the area where I am living. I will also discuss my views on living today and on the possibilities of gaining knowledge about the past.

And yes ... if anyone wonders, I think this could be classified as a post-processual book, at least on one criterion. I am open to the possibility that material culture (finds, sites) not only reflects people's actions but also to a degree determines and shapes them, thereby affecting the way we think and act. I also believe in the value of interpretative archaeology. However, I have some criticisms of the mainstream proponents of this form of thought, and these will be reflected upon below. The book is also intended as a critique of the use of economic meta-narratives in archaeology.

Interpretative drift

What binds together many of the chapters is the issue of 'interpretative drift'. This is a term I have borrowed from Tanya Luhrman (1989), and I think that it provides a compact description of my

method. What I will do is compare the archaeological material from different times in the same area. I want to learn what happens over time when the man-made islands are materially reinterpreted or reused. The island concept is to a certain extent reiterated, but possibly with slowly changing meanings. I use the same method to examine site types and the use and understanding of a landscape. In this way I expect to be able to discuss both how people continued to see their landscape over time and where their perceptions changed. But I am also interested in how the material culture affected what seemed to be rational in their eyes. I believe I can gain knowledge about the past by comparing groups of sites with each other and by analysing and interpreting their use of space.

Aim

The overall aim of this book is to obtain a better understanding of people's attitudes to waters at different times and to study how the building and use of crannogs may have reflected and shaped the norms and rules for human action in different periods. I am particularly interested in how people may have built up solidarity and responsibility, and in their perception of 'good', and I hope to identify structures of both stability and change. In so doing I would like to move away from a static perception whereby settlement in or beside lakes is always seen as connected with economic activities. A parallel aim is to investigate the development of the economic interpretation of these sites and to see whether we can understand more about both people and sites if we move away from such explanations. This study will mainly focus on the area in and around Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland, but it will also deal with issues that are relevant outside this area.

Questions to the material

The subject of crannogs is in need of quite substantial basic fieldwork, and I will show what we have achieved in our understanding of these sites' presence in the landscape and their place in time through our survey and a radiocarbon-dating programme. One of the questions I have been working on is the periods during which people were building islands, and whether sites from different times can be distinguished from each other morphologically. There has been a lack of crannog excavations in general, but a problem for interpretations of, for example, social space is that there is almost no excavation published that accounts for the location of finds within structures, etc. With these two issues in mind we excavated a crannog in Lough Gara. Other aims have been to find out whether there is any evidence at all for prehistoric man-made islands or whether the sites should solely be tied to the early medieval period and later.

With these field activities as a basis I will also show how I have dealt with issues relating to the crannogs' spatiality in terms such as monumentality and presence in the landscape, especially in relation to both seasonal and more permanent changes in lake water-levels. This is to a certain extent a discussion about temporality, inspired by my experience of this lake gained from spending a long time in the study area outside the summer field seasons. The questions emanating from the morphological and 'monumental' interpretation of these sites have formed the basis for many of the discussions in this book. In some ways this is the spine of the arguments.

I have also tried to obtain a better understanding of what waters and watery places as well as drier places on land could have meant to people at different times. This has involved, for example, the investigation of places where depositions have occurred, as well as the changing content of the

depositions over time. It has also meant that I have discussed log-boats, folklore or other material and documentary evidence that could help me to learn about people's perceptions of these places.

The discussion of water and land makes use of traditional distribution maps of finds and sites. I have also tried to inform myself in general from literature studies. One of the great challenges here has been the movement through so many time-periods and the complications of covering the 'general' knowledge about the various periods as well as getting into the specific issues of concern.

In order to understand change and stability in island-building I have developed a method called 'interpretative drift'. This means that I have tried to make use of people's material reinterpretations of a site, a lake or an area in order to find out what stayed the same and what was modified over time. I have tried to evaluate the archaeological material in this area to see, for example, what places were in focus at different times and in what ways.

Part of the aim has also been to move away from and criticise economic explanation methods. This critique has been developed through an analysis of earlier crannog research. I have also tried to show in my own interpretations that there is more to these sites than has formerly been expressed in scholarly circles. In the research history I have outlined the theoretical influences and investigated the roots of the economic interpretations.

Interconnected with these issues is also the study of how these sites could have been involved in various communities' narratives about themselves over time. One of the ideas that this book is built on is that material culture reflects people's actions and ideas as well as being a medium for future action. Sites would in this way transmit a silent discourse on how life should be lived. I have tried to focus on how both the crannogs and other sites in the area, through people's creation, maintenance and change of spatiality in their lived worlds, would have both altered and reproduced structures of solidarity and responsibility. Issues of importance here could include the construction of 'public' and 'private' space. The use of sites would have contributed to an emphasis on different places in the landscape as well as to the creation of lived 'social fictionalities'.

4. A HISTORY OF CRANNOG RESEARCH

Meta-narratives in archaeology

Crannogs have been taken to represent a lot more than defensive early medieval settlements and places for the exploitation of wetland resources. The researchers' interpretations and readings of these sites have varied through the years. The arguments as to why crannogs are worth studying have also changed over time. In this chapter we will look at the main phases of crannog studies and at how other scholars have approached the material, to see where they encountered problems as well as the sources of their theoretical influences. Many of these researchers have been influenced by variants of ideas from the Enlightenment as well as by the perception that human progress improves over time. This is also connected with an economistic archaeology.

It was a lot easier to carry out historical studies in the past. Today the Enlightenment and modernity have been questioned. It has been said that the discipline of history has been nothing but an ideological support for these ideas. Some argue that history as a subject has not been reporting on actual events from the past but merely presenting the success stories that the political situation at hand demands, providing western capitalist society with its own validation. It has also been claimed that every event in history is interpreted in the light of a meta-narrative, a general framework that gives the event meaning. One of these meta-narratives is the general framework of progress. The notion that human history shows steady signs of progress and that the amount of knowledge accumulates over time is no longer self-evident. However, now in the post-modern epoch these narratives, particularly the one concerning human progress, are no longer sustainable (Lyotard 1984; Liedman 1999, 19).

It has also been argued that although there has been an increase in the use of technology in society and the wealth of the world has grown, this does not mean that we have developed and made progress. Modernisation may have led to higher living standards in material terms, but not for everyone. While it has brought an increase in productivity based on resource exploitation, it has also brought an unprecedented number of disasters and human catastrophes, such as the Holocaust, global wars and environmental destruction. This increase in material standards has come at the price of an immense amount of human suffering. Another criticism of ongoing modernisation is that political democracy is weakened by the increased influence of market forces on policy issues. These are just some of the reasons for questioning the belief that society is moving forward and making progress.

This debate has some relevance to the present study of crannogs and to academic studies in general. This chapter reviews the history of crannog research in order to give the reader a basic insight into how the academic establishment has tried to explain and understand crannogs over time and to see what questions the crannog material was perceived to be capable of answering. Crannogs are often extremely rich in archaeological artefacts and many questions could be put to the material — gender-related questions, spatial analysis, questions about the conversion to Christianity, etc. However, none of these questions have yet turned up on the research agenda. As I will show, different generations of researchers have had different ideas about which questions the crannog material should be able to answer. By understanding these questions we should be able to get closer to understanding the meta-narratives to which they relate. This platform of understanding would also increase awareness of our own meta-narratives, and our often

ethnocentric interpretations.

There are historical reasons why certain explanations are favoured over others. Kuhn (1970) claims that certain time-bound paradigms determine which questions it is possible to ask of the material. These questions also affect the answers we get. Some questions that are seen as essential in certain situations might be seen as pure nonsense in others, and when the evidence does not fit the theories the material is disregarded. These paradigms set the boundaries for what is seen as common sense (Fleck 1979; Feyerabend 1988; Kuhn 1970; Trigger 1989). In analysing the crannog research I look at the major findings in each epoch to find out which questions and explanations have been of importance. By observing the way earlier researchers have built their arguments, this chapter also aims to make explicit the often implicit theoretical foundations used by the different scholars. As I will show, both the idea of progress and the idea of economic rationality have been pillars of crannog research.

Owing to my limited knowledge of Irish politics, this research history does not to any great extent relate crannog research to the national political ideologies of the times, although I am well aware that such a perspective would have much to offer. Interesting accounts of the role of Irish antiquarianism in the colonial discourse can be found, for example, in Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995), Joep Leerssen's *Remembrance and imagination* (1996) or Luke Gibbons's *Transformations in Irish culture* (1996). It is widely acknowledged that different academic practices, as well as contemporary politics, bring variations in the interpretations of the material. George Eogan has pointed out the different, and to some extent contemporary, regional trends that have prevailed in the understanding of Bronze Age deposits and hoards. Nordic countries have often preferred religious explanations, while other areas have seen the deposition of metals and other materials in more functionalistic terms (Eogan 1983, 4; R. Bradley 1990, 15–16). The issue of how we obtain knowledge about the past is, however, often bypassed (Cooney 1995, 263). This question is also connected to the issue of whether we really reach the past or only modernistic meta-narratives of the same, some of which are clearly economic.

The end of antiquarianism

At the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century there were two main ways of explaining the past in Ireland which had a bearing on the way in which the relative progress of the native inhabitants was assessed. One could say that this is the context and meta-narrative into which the crannogs were eventually written, but at this stage they had not even become a subject of antiquarian study. They were a monument type that was identified late compared to, for example, megalithic tombs and round towers.

The first explanation was the Phoenician model, which was supported by such luminaries as Charles Vallancey and Charles O'Connor of Belenagare, who actually lived most of his life near Lough Gara. This theory proposed that Ireland's native population had a civilised oriental origin, connecting up to the tribes of the Bible via the early Irish text *Lebor Gabala*, the Book of Invasions. The Irish connection with the biblical tribes was taken to mean that there were historical roots back to fairly developed people. This was a model that served patriotic ends and offered support to the notion that Irish people were also capable of building a civilised society. The other model, called the Scytho-Celtic, saw things somewhat differently. In this model scholars like Ledwich considered that all traces of culture in Ireland were due to outside influences from the European continent and Britain — the Vikings, for example. Other variants

extolled a Germanic teutonism, dismissing everything Celtic as being uncivilised (Leerssen 1996, 72–3, 89f.). It could be argued that this view suited Anglo-Irish scholars such as Ledwich as it justified their ancestors' appropriation of land in the seventeenth century and the dominance of their contemporaries in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Distance from the past

While antiquarians had recognised other monument types for what they were at an earlier stage, crannogs entered the scholarly discussion only in the nineteenth century. By this stage Irish antiquarians had been debating the question of the origin of the Irish population for years. What would have a bearing on later interpretations were documentary sources showing that crannogs had been used until quite recent times.

One of the last pieces of evidence for the use of crannogs comes from the Elizabethan military maps made at the end of the Nine Years' War (1595–1603) (Pl. 2). As Nicholls (1987, 405) observed, crannogs may have been in use until the war years of the 1640s. There is also documentary evidence for the use of crannogs and fortified islands up until the middle of the seventeenth century (Wood-Martin 1886a, 23, 148–9). The identification of seventeenth-century artefacts is also an indication of their late usage (O'Sullivan 2001, 410–11). The time that elapsed between the last use of crannogs and their conversion into objects of archaeological study in the nineteenth century was not very long. There is a possibility that some of the crannogs were still in active use when they became objects of antiquarian interest.⁵ Oliver Davies, for example, mentions the possibility of early nineteenth-century remains on Island MacHugh crannog (1942, 16; 1950, 89–90). Folklore from my own study area, Lough Gara, indicates that there was activity out on the crannogs in the twentieth century, when some of them were used as hen-houses (see Chapter 5).

The use of crannogs could be seen, then, as something that did not fit into a civilised society. Archaeology strives on the one hand to get nearer to the past, while at the same time seeking to control it — objectifying it and putting it behind (cf. Leerssen 1996, 34). Crannogs as a monument type came to archaeological attention quite late. However, that they became a focus for antiquarian studies meant that they slowly became 'past', i.e. that they were no longer active in the society of the time as living settlements.



Pl. 2—The Bartlett map showing a crannog c.1600 (Hayes-McCoy 1964).

The Danish tomb is ... a crannog

Before crannogs could be inserted into the interpretative scheme of progress, the nature of the site had to be established. The most famous crannog of all, that at Lagore, was first investigated in 1839. The antiquarians Sir William Wilde and George Petrie visited the site and described it as a circular mound girdled by upright posts in a bog near Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. A drain had been cut through the site at an earlier stage, exposing masses of bones which had been sold off for manure. Wilde found the site of interest for its ability to provide information about the anatomical history of Ireland. Not only cattle skulls but also pig, deer and dog bones and two human skeletons were found at the site. Artefacts were also found and were divided into three categories, 'the warlike, the culinary, and the ornamental' (Wilde 1840; Wood-Martin 1886a, 23), but did not trigger off any particular interpretation. Although this site was to become the crannog *par excellence* in the future, it was not described as either an island or a crannog at this stage. The connection between sites like this and the term crannog came later.

Lagore was discussed again about ten years later in an article by Talbot and was not clearly called a crannog even at this stage. Talbot believed that Lagore was a burial monument, owing to the human skeletons found, and that it belonged to the northern antiquarians' third class. He suggested that the 'tomb' of Lagore could be dated to the latter periods of heathendom on the basis of this classification. He further argued, on artefact evidence, that this tomb was built by the Danes. However, as the finds did not totally correspond to Danish artefacts, he concluded that the site must have been occupied by a half-caste race of Danes who had adopted the customs of the Celtic aborigines, just as had happened elsewhere in their colonies (Talbot 1849, 106–9). Although Talbot saw Lagore as a tomb, he was ready to see its connection with the adoption of local customs by the Danes.

The first connection between island sites like Lagore and the word 'crannog' had appeared some years earlier, but not directly in connection with Lagore. In 1846 and 1847 E. P. Shirley, a major landowner in south Monaghan (see Woodman 1998, 7), reported on the finding of crannogs in the area around Carrickmacross (Shirley 1845, 94, note 43; 1846). Although the Ordnance Survey memoirs consider artificial islands in Fermanagh as antiquities already in 1834 (see Day and McWilliams 1990) — and perhaps it is in these sources that we should search for the cradle of crannog research in Ireland — it seems that Shirley was one of the earliest to connect the term found in the documentary sources to the small islands both with and without documentary references. The first site he wrote about was a small submerged island surrounded by wooden posts and containing animal bones at Lisanisk near Carrickmacross. This crannog was recognised in 1843 and was excavated by a Mr Charles C. Gibson. It was argued that this site could be connected to a crannog depicted on a 1591 map, which showed an island marked as the house of the Gaelic chieftain 'Ever Mac Cooley Mac Mahon'. Another man-made island in the nearby lake of Moynalty was investigated in 1844 after drainage and yielded artefacts from various time-periods. There were no known documentary references to this island, but Shirley connected it by its morphology to the term crannog. He also researched the documentary sources further and highlighted documentary evidence for crannogs that could be found from the year 1246 onwards in the *Annals of the Four Masters*. As he saw it, 'These fortified islands were generally artificial, and upon them were constructed wooden huts or cabins, called in Irish, Crannoges' (Shirley 1846, 45).

With the help of the documentary sources it was clear to Shirley that these sites were not tombs, as later suggested by Talbot, but were watery defences used by the Gaelic chieftains. He argued that this people had chosen to use crannogs because they held a prejudice against castles

of stone, and related how one of the MacMahon chieftains was given a castle by his superior, De Courcy, and dismantled it as ‘it was contrary to his nature to couch himselfe within cold stones, the woods being so nigh’ (Shirley 1846, and references therein). Shirley’s interpretation of this evidence paints the Irish who used these crannogs as slightly odd people, deviating from the norm by not preferring stone castles. The interpretation of crannogs as defensive habitation sites has also prevailed owing to this connection with the later medieval documentary sources. The tomb interpretation as proposed by Talbot never won the approval of the academic community.

The crannog at Clonfinlough: retreat, war and industry

Another early account of crannogs comes from an area not that far from Lough Gara in County Roscommon. All these lakes contained crannogs which were exposed as a result of drainage. In 1852 the major drainage operations carried out by the Board of Works and Department of Arterial Drainage and Inland Navigation in Ireland had been going on for nine years, and had revealed crannogs as well as many artefacts from many watery places throughout Ireland (Mulvany 1850–3). In an article ‘On certain antiquities recently discovered in the Lake of Cloonfree, Co. Roscommon’, Mr D. H. Kelly (1850–3) discussed a chain of three lakes in Roscommon called respectively Ardekillan, Clonfinlough and Cloonfree.

The crannog in the middle lake, Clonfinlough, measured 130 feet (c. 42m) in diameter and was constructed by driving oak piles into the lake marl. In the centre was a platform of oak trunks radiating out from the middle. On this platform an island of soil, stone, bone and wood was constructed. It was clear to Kelly that these islands were man-made. The island also had a gangway of wood leading out into the water. On it were found artefacts of bronze, iron and wood. On the island and outside it both a human skull and animal bones were found. A human skull had also been retrieved from a log-boat beside the crannog at Ardekillan (Kelly 1850–3, 208–11, 214).

The island in Clonfinlough was, with all its morphological similarities, compared to the site at Dunshaughlin reported earlier by Wilde.⁶ Kelly also observed the locational connection between crannogs and churches in his own material, just as in the case of Lagore. He was not, like Shirley, primarily relying on the documentary sources for his interpretation. Instead he interpreted the site from the artefacts found. Finds of knives, shavings from wood-turning and unfinished combs led him to assume that ‘the little island resounded to the busy hum of industry’ and that people in their leisure time made toys, at least in the later stages of its occupation (Kelly 1850–3, 211). Kelly allowed his friends to suggest various interpretations of the site. One of them proposed, owing to the finds of bones, that the islands could have been burial-places, or they might have been for people labouring under feudal tyranny, or they may have been used as garrisons for petty chieftains (*ibid.*, 212–13). The latter interpretation agreed with Shirley’s views and with the interpretation based on the documentary material. Another interpretation proposed by some of Kelly’s friends drew on this connection and even thought the site may have been a dwelling for predatory chiefs, and that it may have come to be used by clerical artisans at a later stage. A third friend suggested that the island was a smithy. It was argued that the smith would have been associated with the evil eye and magic and would therefore have been avoided by people. The island would in this sense have provided a retreat for the smith (*ibid.*, 212–14).

It was in these years in the middle of the nineteenth century that crannogs became established as a monument type. It was not clear from the beginning that these sites were settlements, since Talbot suggested that they could also be seen as tombs. It was Shirley who connected the term to the man-made islands with the help of documentary sources and maps. The documentary sources also gave the main framework for interpretation, seeing the crannogs as the settlements of

the Irish. This view was incorporated into the general framework of thinking in which the development or lack of development of the Irish race was discussed.

New wave

The continuing interest in connecting the crannogs to the documentary evidence that had been begun by Shirley perpetuated their interpretation as defensive structures and also acted as a framework for dating. Many researchers, such as Reeves (1857–61a; 1857–61b), continued to emphasise the connection between the documentary sources and the role of the crannogs as medieval and later sites. This role in the historically documented periods was clear and did not threaten the current biblical chronology. It is important to bear in mind that the existence of a prehistory that extended beyond biblical time was not self-evident at this stage. It was perhaps not until the publication of Lubbock's *Prehistoric times* in 1865 that the idea of a prehistory won wider acceptance (Woodman 1978, 6). However, the prehistory of man was still disputed by people such as O'Lavery, who expressed concerns about the three-age system in 1857, and Clibborn, who was promoting a biblical chronology in 1859 (see O'Lavery 1857, 122f.; Trigger 1989; Woodman 2000, 3). As we will see, the study of crannogs confused rather than clarified questions about the division of time.

In 1857 the publication of articles concerning crannogs started to increase. Wilde had continued his work on collections of finds from many different places, and his catalogue of finds in the Royal Irish Academy contained a special section on crannogs (Wilde 1857). He also published an article in which he summarised recent work in crannog research since his findings at Lagore in 1839 (Wilde 1857–61). This article also drew attention to lake settlements in other countries, such as the *Pfahlbauten* in Switzerland, published by Keller (1854), thereby opening up an international comparison of the sites. Wilde concluded that these Swiss sites were older than the Irish sites on the basis of finds of stone artefacts. Irish sites had yielded objects of both bronze and iron (Wilde 1857–61, 150–2). The dating of crannogs remains a matter for debate up to the present time.

The internal structures of crannogs and multiperiodicity

In the years to come two people, Wakeman and Kinahan, dominated the field. Both had an extensive publication record when it came to crannogs. Kinahan worked mostly in the western half of Ireland and dealt with crannogs from Galway. He also carried out work in Mayo and Donegal (1861–4; 1864–6;⁷ 1866–9; 1870–1; 1886a; 1886b; 1886c; Trench and Kinahan 1864–6). Wakeman concentrated on the counties of Cavan, Fermanagh and Antrim (1861; 1870; 1870–1a; 1870–1b; 1870–1c; 1870–1d; 1870–1e; 1872; 1879; 1879–82a; 1879–82b; 1883–4; 1885–6; 1889; 1890–1). The main line in these works was to record new sites (which Wilde (1861–4) also continued to do) but there were also other views on why the crannog material was important, and dating was one of the issues on the agenda.

Kinahan was a geologist and was used to the practice of stratigraphical recording. This method was also proposed for the documentation of crannogs. The observation of the crannog stratigraphy also had a bearing on the discussion of dating. From his excavations of a number of crannogs in Loughrea, Co. Galway, he concluded that iron was in use on these sites at an early stage, and that the lake would have been lower when they were built (Kinahan 1861–4, 414ff). In a later paper he noted that many crannogs had more than one habitation layer and that they

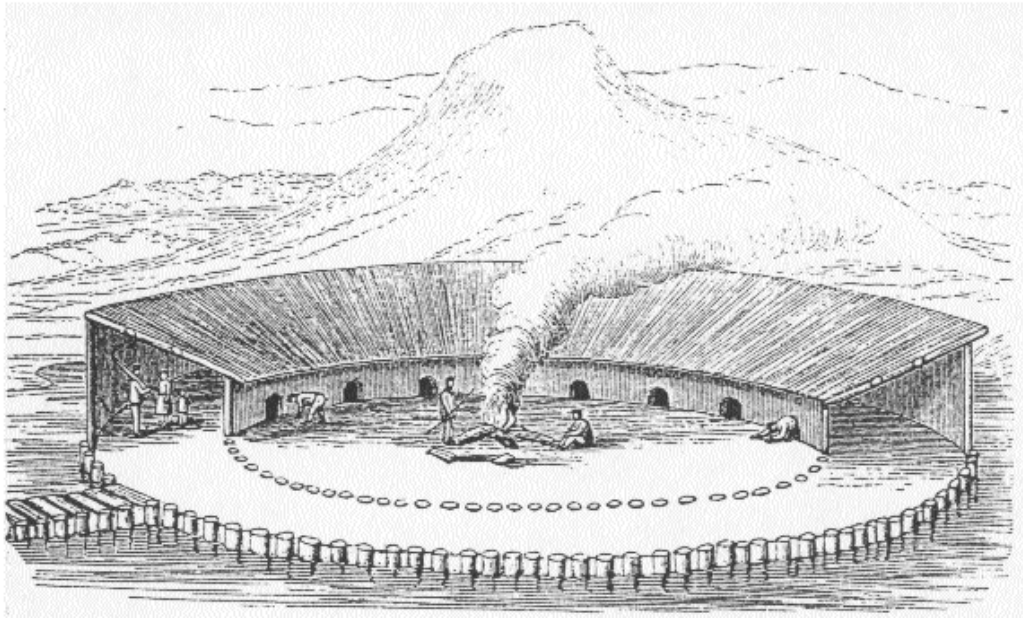


Fig. 2—Kinahan's reconstruction with buildings around the margin of the island (Kinahan 1866–9, 31).

would have been reused and rebuilt on various occasions (Kinahan 1870–1). This observation not only added to the understanding of the time-depth of the crannog as a site but also opened up the issue of the changing nature of one particular site. Kinahan continued his excavations both at a site in Ballinlough, Co. Galway (Kinahan 1864–6), and at Lough Nahinch, Co. Tipperary, which otherwise was outside his main area of interest (Trench and Kinahan 1864–6, 176–8). The latter site has been claimed to be the first crannog examined and to have come to light as a crannog already in 1810 (O'Sullivan 1998, 10). Trench and Kinahan do indeed refer back to an earlier published record in Wakefield's *An account of Ireland*, where another Mr W. Trench had reported in 1810 an oddity that looked like a big tub in a lake, although he could notice no cut-marks on the wood (Wakefield 1812, 94). The oddity was not seen as a crannog at that stage and it cannot really be seen as the start of crannog studies. The site was not described as a crannog until Trench and Kinahan visited it in 1864.

Kinahan continued his investigations on the subject and through excavation experience he could bring out regularities in the internal composition of these sites. In his article 'Observations on the explorations of crannogs' the patterns in the field evidence at this stage were summarised. He had, for example, observed that fireplaces were often found in the middle of the islands (Kinahan 1870–1). He also published one of the earliest reconstructions of a crannog based on his knowledge (Kinahan 1866–9, 31).

While most people in later days have seen crannogs as portrayed on the Bartlett maps with a house in the middle of the island, Kinahan viewed the evidence in the opposite way (see Fig. 2). The crannogs were seen to have had an open area in the middle, where a communal fire was located. The area around it, which would also have been the edges of the island, would have been occupied by huts in which a family lived. At an early stage Kinahan interpreted his evidence and discussed the social structure of the communities on the crannogs, and commented on the existence of larger and smaller crannogs. The island itself would in his view represent a tribe

(Kinahan 1866–9, 31). At a later stage he added that the larger ones could have been used by a number of families, while the smaller ones might only have had one habitation (Kinahan 1870–1, 460). This form of reconstruction never won the support of the archaeological community, and later reconstructions always opted for a central dwelling (see, for example, Wood-Martin 1886a). The social interpretation was followed by Wakeman, for example (1883–4, 376). Kinahan also published his thoughts on crannogs in his *Manual of the geology of Ireland* (1878, 278–82).

What is important about Kinahan is that he was calling for better recording and an understanding of the structures *within* the crannogs rather than the hitherto one-sided collection of new sites or artefacts from the sites. He criticised earlier researchers, believing that they had learned very little from their explorations about the buildings themselves and where the artefacts were found in relation to these built structures. He considered that they were only interested in the collection of objects (Kinahan 1870–1, 459–61). It can be said that Kinahan tried to shift the focus from the artefacts to the sites themselves. He had started to find regularities in the material and urged other researchers to take note of a number of characteristics when they were excavating a site.

He had, for example, found that some of the sites yielded basketwork, which may have been the remains of floors or partitions, and that many of the larger crannogs had a central fireplace and ash-heap where many of the artefacts could be found, or that the artefacts were found near the walls. He also wanted more information on whether the buildings of the crannog were located around the edges of these sites, as proposed in his reconstruction (see Fig. 2), or whether they covered the whole structure, as he thought might be the case for the smaller crannogs (Kinahan 1870–1). What was of great importance for future crannog studies was that he noted that many crannogs were multilayered and that the same location could have been reused. The same island could in fact have been a series of islands built on top of each other, sometimes after long periods of abandonment. It was no longer only a question of the artefacts of different materials such as stone and iron that might be found on the sites.

Crannogs, progress and the Iron Age

Wakeman was the other scholar who carried out a considerable amount of work on crannogs. Originally he was a draughtsman who at an early age had been an assistant to Petrie in the Ordnance Survey, but he gradually moved from art to archaeology. In his interpretations he repeated many of Kelly's ideas. For example, he believed that crannogs were not only defensive sites but also places 'of mechanical and artistic industry' (Wakeman 1870–1a, 232), on the basis of finds of iron slag. It is worth noting that in using these terms he was labelling his findings on the crannogs with a terminology that belonged to his own industrialised era, thereby implicitly imposing his contemporary framework of thinking on the crannogs.

The classification and dating of the artefacts from the crannogs seem to have been what fascinated him most. In an early article Wakeman was curious about the fact that both delicate metal weapons and quite crude stone axes could be found side by side on the crannogs. He interpreted this as being possibly due to differences between poor and rich people on the site, or to the fact that the finds were not contemporaneous (Wakeman 1861). Although promoted by Wilde and the basis for his racial discussions (Morse 1999, 4–5), the three-age system was a problem in Irish archaeology, and the archaeological material from the crannogs did not help to resolve the problem. Wakeman, working with this material, harboured the suspicion that there might not have been an exclusive Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age in Ireland, as had been suggested by his Danish colleagues, but rather that there could have been considerable overlap in

the use of the different materials (1870–1d, 462; 1883–4, 376f.; 1885–6, 372). His articles showed a distinct interest in materials that could provide information about the transitional periods.

In one article he focused particularly on the under-studied iron artefacts from crannogs. This was the beginning of the search for the Iron Age in Ireland, at least with reference to the crannog material. The iron artefacts found in the crannog at Lagore were dated to the ninth century AD on the basis of documentary references. Wakeman saw this as the oldest provable limit of the Iron Age in Ireland. Many iron artefacts had also been found on the crannog in Cornagall, Co. Cavan. Among these was an iron object that looked like a bronze celt. Wakeman felt that the study of such artefacts could aid understanding of the transition from the use of bronze to the use of iron (Wakeman 1870–1d).

The finds from the crannog at Lisnacrogher, Co. Antrim, were used to provide yet another important link in the transition from bronze to iron. Until recently this was the only Iron Age crannog known. Wakeman wrote about this site over the years. It was partly destroyed at the time of his visit, but in his opinion it clearly had the characteristics of a crannog. There were still some oak timbers left, as well as stakes arranged in a circle and some woven basketry. However, it seemed to him to have been smaller than the crannogs of Lagore and Ballinderry (Wakeman 1883–4, 377). Many classic Iron Age finds such as swords and scabbards derived from Lisnacrogher. However, both the nature of this site and the connection between the artefacts and the site have been questioned. It has been argued that rather than coming from a crannog these artefacts derived from a deposit in a bog (Munro 1890, 380). It was later found that the crannog had been registered under the wrong townland name. It was really located in Carncoagh, according to Knowles (1897).

With the issues of the dating and classification of artefacts and the way they changed over time, Wakeman began to touch on questions about man's progress. In this scheme of thinking the Iron Age and the introduction of iron had another role to play. Wakeman remarked that Caesar had attested to the use of iron among the Britons, and commented with regard to the Irish material:

‘It is hard to believe that the natives of this country were behind their neighbours in the art of metallurgy, or in any of the arts, the intercourse between the two islands having been of the closest kind. Indeed it would appear that our *Insula Sacra* was the more civilised and learned’ (Wakeman 1870–1d, 462).

In another article, mainly about pottery from crannogs, this material was likewise compared to items found in Britain (Wakeman 1870–1e, 564):

‘It has shown, at least, that the remote ancestors of the Irish people had in daily use pottery, peculiar to themselves, of graceful design and of admirable manufacture, superior indeed to any possessed by the Britons or Saxons, a fact hitherto more than doubted even by our best informed writers upon archaeological questions.’

To Wakeman, the finds from crannogs could throw more light on the question of the introduction of iron into Ireland. This would denote a progressive change on the part of the Irish, and would start a discussion of the development of the Irish as compared to their island neighbours. By these comments Wakeman was using the archaeological evidence from the crannogs to show the Irish superiority over another culture, and so the quest for artefacts from the crannogs was transformed into competitiveness between cultures. In the same volume in which Lisnacrogher was first

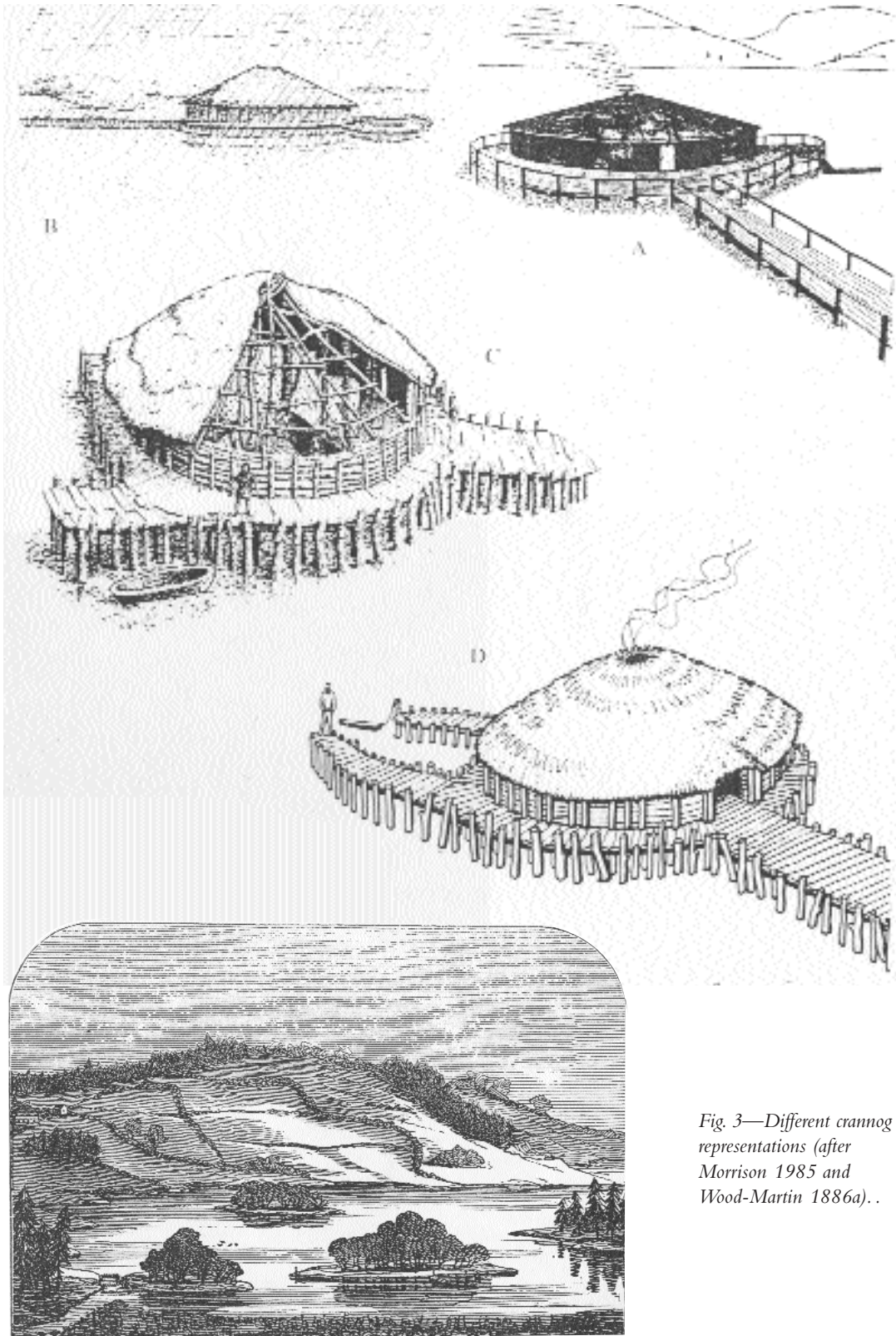


Fig. 3—Different crannog representations (after Morrison 1985 and Wood-Martin 1886a)..

published, another scholar, Graves, commented that the artefacts may well have belonged to some hundred years BC and that they suggested that the Irish race, together with their neighbours in Britain, were not far behind their Continental counterparts (Graves 1883–4, 407–8). This issue of the relative progress of the people inhabiting the crannogs as well as the existence of an Iron Age before the published Irish documentary sources would receive much attention in the future, and was seen as a highly relevant issue for research.

The geographical area covered by Wakeman was also dealt with in articles by Harkness (1863), Lockwood (1883–4) and Milligan (1885; 1885–6). The latter published an account of the recognition of two crannogs in Drumlane Lake, Co. Cavan, beside which an Iron Age cauldron was found (Milligan 1885–6). Others, such as W. Hughes (1886) and General Dunne (1868–9), also wrote about the subject in this period. Despite the gap in publications between 1872 and 1879, there seems to have been considerable activity in crannog research and a considerable interest was shown in the early material from these sites in the search for a prehistory. After this hiatus came scholars such as Gray (1883–4a; 1883–4b), M’Henry (1886), Munro (1885–6; 1894) and de Vismes Kane (1885–6).

In these years we can see tension between interpretations built on the documentary sources, which preferred to see crannogs as defensive structures used in the Middle Ages, and interpretations based on the archaeological material. The latter pushed the date of crannogs back beyond the written record to some time at least in the Iron Age, and also explored other ways of understanding the sites. However, the documentary evidence appears to have overruled the material evidence most of the time.

Another issue that arose was the notion of progress and the comparative advancement of the people on the crannogs in relation to people in other cultures. The artefacts from the crannogs became a yardstick for development.

The lake-dwellings of Ireland

The first book of synthesis followed up this extremely lively activity in crannog research. W. G. Wood-Martin, a Church of Ireland landlord from County Sligo, published *The lake-dwellings of Ireland* in 1886. The book consists of two parts; the first is a discussion of the origin, construction and civilisation of the crannogs, and the second is an appendix in which sites and finds are sorted by county. Wood-Martin was well aware of the three-age system (1886a, 55; Herity and Eogan 1977, 12). *The lake-dwellings of Ireland* was published only a few years after the Berlin Congress and ‘the scramble for Africa’, and it is clear that the book was coloured by the colonial thinking of the time.

Both in areas of interest and in interpretation Wood-Martin follows earlier scholars to a great extent. But it is only in this book that the racial concepts and ideas of progress introduced by earlier researchers arrive at a full-blown but unresolved confrontation with the archaeological material. In this book crannogs were viewed as man-made islands surrounded by a palisade, which was considered to provide both shelter and defence (Fig. 3). Inside the island enclosure were one or a few huts, housing a single family (1886a, 36). According to Wood-Martin there were two probable reasons for the building of crannogs. The first may have been the lack of open country at a time when wide and dense forest stretched over the land. The second was clearly defence (*ibid.*, 9). That they could not be only for temporary refuge was shown both by the richness of the islands’ kitchen middens and the repeated rebuilding of the islands, and furthermore by the presence of both domestic and industrial utensils. Wood-Martin believed that they should instead be seen as habitations that were in use over longer time-periods, perhaps even different periods.

He had also noted that there was often more than one island in each lake; hence they could not have been for chieftains only, but also for their followers (*ibid.*, 35–6).

Progress

One of the issues dealt with in *The lake-dwellings of Ireland* was the notion of human progress, which had been touched on by both Wakeman (1870–1d; 1870–1e, 564) and Talbot (1849). The idea of human progress was first expressed by Turgot and formalised by Condorcet in the eighteenth century. Turgot had launched the four-stage theory of how mankind had evolved from hunters to herdsmen and then farmers, ending up as the crown of civilisation — the European tradesmen and merchants. It was believed that men, in contrast to animals, learned from their experience. The accumulation of knowledge would mean that the amount of mistakes would decrease over time and society would progress to something better. By sweeping away superstition and by the use of reason mankind would steadily achieve better social, political and economic conditions (Nordin 1989, 41, 51). The same four-stage theory is the basis for our archaeological classifications in the form of the three-age theory. This ethnocentric view of progress in relation to the past is still common in much archaeological writing.

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to note the words used to introduce this first major work on crannogs in Ireland:

‘To look back to antiquity is one thing; to go back to it is another. If we look back to antiquity it should be as those who are winning the race — to press forward the faster, and to leave the beaten still farther behind’ (Wood-Martin 1886a, 1).

In this quote, the relationship between the past and the present is likened to a competition. The competition has a winner — modern man — who should be spurred to further achievements by looking at the losers, the people from the past. The author reveals his views on the reasons for pursuing archaeology and clearly expresses his belief in progress. By employing the notion of progress, archaeology was used in the modernisation process whereby the past was taken to represent a stage that should be left behind. The past as represented by the crannogs was a place from which to move on into a better future. But as we will see, the quote above is not fully representative of Wood-Martin’s further reasoning in his book, as the idea runs contrary to the material world of the crannogs.

The exposure of a considerable number of structures and finds from crannogs made it necessary to draw some conclusions from the material. Some of the finds accounted for in his book are medieval, but almost every time-period from the Mesolithic onwards was represented in the crannog material (cf. E.P. Kelly 1991a, 84). Wood-Martin saw the crannogs as having been used throughout time: ‘some of them had a continuous existence throughout the three ages of Stone, Bronze, and Iron’ (Wood-Martin 1886a, 55). But they were also in active use from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. It was therefore held as probable that the islands had been in use since the first people came to settle in what is now Ireland (*ibid.*, 159). And it was precisely the realisation that the islands were used through time that led Wood-Martin’s ideas about progress into serious trouble. If the crannogs did show a continuous use over time, how could the theories about the progress of the crannog-dwellers be sustained?

Race

There was an analogous dilemma in the colonies, where people who were supposed to change

did not change rapidly enough, and where the industrialisation and modernisation did not proceed at the same pace as elsewhere. The colonisers needed an explanation of why the change for the better did not seem to occur universally (cf. Hobsbawm 1987, 46–8).

This dilemma led to a general questioning of one of the cornerstones of the Enlightenment — the idea of physical unity, which had held that every person had the same capacity to develop and that their race, age and gender should be no impediment to their ability to achieve (cf. Jones 1997, 40–4) and to reach the same goal. Now it was proposed that some people, owing to innate racial deficiencies, would not develop at the same speed as others. Wood-Martin had read Sir John Lubbock's *Prehistoric times* (1865), and the book is often referred to in *The lake-dwellings of Ireland* (see 1886a, 3, 5f., 113), but the references are mainly factual and it might be too simplistic to assume that Wood-Martin single-mindedly followed the racial and racist theories of Lubbock. Lubbock claimed that biological factors caused ethnic differences and that some ethnic groups did not have the ability to change (Trigger 1989, 11). Inspired by Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, Lubbock held that racial differences in the end would lead to the extinction of the most primitive people and to the spread of civilisation throughout the world. According to Trigger, these views were deeply embedded in the establishment and maintenance of colonies abroad (see Trigger 1989, 117).

While racial explanations were used to account for the lack of change in crannogs, it is important to remember that racial theories were not unusual at this time. The debate in Ireland was already there with Vallancey and Ledwich, as shown by Leerssen (1996) and Wilde (Morse 1999, 4–5). To use race as an explanation was the common way to 'conceptualise human groups' in the nineteenth century (Jones 1997, 40–5). On the one hand, Wood-Martin used racial explanations for his material, at times in a derogatory sense. On the other hand, Wakeman had used the crannog material to show the superiority of the Celts, as discussed above. When Wood-Martin tried to explain the long use of the crannogs with a reference to the behaviour of the people around him today, he stated that 'the Celt clinging to his watery home with as much pertinacity as in latter days he clings to his cottage on terra firma' (Wood-Martin 1886a, 35). It is clear from this that Wood-Martin saw crannogs as having been built by Celts. Being Anglo-Irish, he did not see himself as a Celt, but ascribed the characteristics of inertia to those who were.

Another explanation for the prolonged use of this 'primitive form of habitation' was the unsettled conditions in the country. It is only vaguely implied that this is due to ethnic difference when Wood-Martin draws parallels with the struggles between Celts and Saxons in Scotland described by Sir Walter Scott in his historical novels (*ibid.*, 159). Perhaps it might be worthwhile to consider Wood-Martin's own role as a Protestant Anglo-Irish landlord. Did he think of himself as a Saxon and of his tenants as Celts? It is possible that Wood-Martin shared the idea of the civilising role of the Anglo-Saxons which had been a theme in imperialist policy since Dilke wrote *The Greater Britain* (Dilke 1868; L. Magnusson 1985, 18). The role would have a bearing on the relationship between Celts and Saxons, in that the Saxons should civilise the Celts, who were lagging behind in the competition for progress.

Wood-Martin connects the idea of racial physical deficiency with the idea that crannogs were defensive sites:

'A race inferior in number, arms, or in physical developments, would avail themselves of artificial or natural bulwarks to ward off the attacks of dreaded enemies, and water and woods would have from the earliest times formed important factors in the art of defence' (*ibid.*, 9).



Fig. 4—Cashel on island (Kinahan 1872–3, 11).

In this passage Wood-Martin portrays the savages as struggling for the best solution given their poor circumstances. Later he marvelled at the unexpectedly large size of the brain of primitive people and explains this by the hardship in their lives:

‘... indeed, on the principle of the survival of the fittest, it could only be the robust who lived through the hardships and climatic exposure incidental to a savage life’ (*ibid.*, 53).

In the analytical section of his book Wood-Martin tested the racial theories about human progress in vogue at the time, but his unease increased as the theories failed to fit the material, which indicated that the crannogs changed little over time. Wood-Martin still wanted to preserve the purpose of his book, and he had to do that by compromise. In a few concluding sentences at the end of part I, he claimed that, despite all the signs of repetition and stagnation in the crannog material, there was still progression: ‘From careful examination, however, of the “finds” in lake-dwellings, the conclusion may be drawn that civilisation in Ireland, from the earliest dawn, has been on the whole steadily progressive...’. Wood-Martin believed it probable that the Stone Age and the Bronze Age overlapped more (and even spread over to other time-periods) in Ireland than anywhere else. Perhaps Ireland left these periods behind much later than other places. However, according to Wood-Martin this did not mean that Ireland was at all times uncivilised. He compared this with the late use of stone implements in Scotland under a fairly civilised monarchy (*ibid.*, 160).

Wood-Martin followed Wakeman and Kinahan to a great extent, but what is interesting is that

his synthesis brings out the tension of interpretation in the other scholars' work. Although he made use of ideas that were common in the field at the time, he formulated many of the problems in the crannog material more clearly than had been done before. One of these questions, as discussed above, was how to explain human progress when the material shows nothing but stability. *The lake-dwellings of Ireland* is still a good introduction to crannog studies. What is also clear is that Wood-Martin tried to use early social theory to understand these lake-dwellings, as he tried to write the crannogs into the meta-narrative of progress and race. Many later crannog researchers have encountered the same problems.

The turn of the century

In the years after the publication of Wood-Martin's book, interest in crannogs seemed to decline rather than increase, although Wakeman and Kinahan still published a few articles. Wakeman continued to deal with the finds from Lisnacrogger, Co. Antrim (1889; 1890–1). Kinahan (1897) wrote a short notice about some stone structures in Lough Bola, Co. Mayo, that more closely resembled water cashels than crannogs, following up his interest in these sites that he had identified earlier (Kinahan 1872–3; 1878).

These stone cashels (Fig. 4) on seemingly natural islands were also reported by Layard from Lough Skannive in Connemara and Lough Cullen, Co. Mayo (Layard 1897; 1899). A similar stone fort had also been reported in County Antrim (M'Henry 1886). This showed more morphological variation in island-built sites than had been acknowledged before, but no particular interpretation was drawn from the material.

Moylurg crannog

Buick belonged to the next generation of researchers who both excavated and surveyed sites. He excavated the crannog at Moylurg, Co. Antrim, although the excavation report consists mainly of a description of the artefacts found (Buick 1893; 1894). Among these was a wine-strainer of bronze that, according to the excavator, connected the Moylurg crannog to Lisnacrogger. It also showed the transition between bronze and iron, and the degree of civilisation of the crannog-dwellers continued to be an issue. Like many of his predecessors, Buick used the evidence from crannogs to question the application of the three-stage system to the Irish material:

'The traces of art-work ... indicate an advanced state of civilisation, however much we may be inclined to think otherwise: whilst the finds in stone and bronze are in themselves a sufficient answer to those who are so bent upon maintaining rigidly the classification of the Danish archaeologists anent the three separate Ages of Stone, Bronze, and Iron in its application to this country as well as to Sweden and Denmark, that they overlook, almost, if not altogether, the vast extent of the overlapping which undoubtedly existed here at home: and directing their gaze only to the negative side of the question, or sheltering themselves behind imperfect and badly conducted investigating, persist, despite all the evidence to the contrary, in assigning to our implements and weapons in stone or bronze an exaggerated and mischievously misleading antiquity' (Buick 1894, 330).

Killyvilla and Drumacrittin

At around the same time D'Arcy (1897; 1900) excavated three crannogs in the neighbourhood of Clones, Co. Monaghan. The issue of the dating of the crannogs was also important to D'Arcy, and the excavated material from these sites proved a challenge to the current state of knowledge. At one of the sites, Drumacrittin 1, both lithic material and a stone axe were found, together with interlaced motif-pieces. Finds of débitage showed that the lithic material was connected with the occupation of the crannog, while none of this material matched the stone axe. D'Arcy (1900, 209–10) concluded from this that the stone axe must have been an 'antique' to the people on the crannog, and that it could not be taken as evidence for the late use of stone axes in Ireland suggested by other researchers. In D'Arcy's view the finding of early material on the crannogs was not connected to the date of the sites themselves. In general he thought that the crannogs should be dated according to the documentary material that stretched back to the early medieval period, with an emphasis on the twelfth century. To extend the existence of the crannogs further back than that would be to go beyond what it was possible to know (*ibid.*, 209–10, 235).

In these years Hall (1907; 1910) also published some short notes on crannogs in County Cavan, and Knox (1902; 1908) reported briefly on crannogs and underwater structures in Lough Carra, Co. Mayo, and the finding of a carved church window in a crannog at Lough Caheer, Co. Mayo. Lett (1905), Reilly (1902) and Ussher (1903) also published short articles on crannogs.

Celtic Revival and 'ex oriente lux'

George Coffey, the curator of the Royal Irish Academy collection, is credited with having put the archaeological material in sequence in Ireland. Herity and Eogan (1977, 12–13) remark that 'He was a member of a circle of literary men and artists who fostered the Celtic Revival in Dublin'. Coffey's overall aim was to bring order to the sequence of the Irish material, and I think that one of the reasons he was interested in crannogs was that they might provide him with the missing link of the Iron Age. Judging from his publications, this was a period that occupied his mind at the turn of the nineteenth century (see e.g. Coffey 1903; 1906; 1910).

In his *Guide to the Celtic antiquities of the Christian period* (1909) and *The Bronze Age in Ireland* (1913), as well as in various articles, Coffey argued that the La Tène style would not necessarily have come to Ireland through any British connections, and saw no reason why the periods in Ireland would have been later than the periods in Britain. The finds from the crannog at Lisnacrogher were taken to represent the landing of Celts from the Continent (Coffey 1910, 103; 1913). Coffey is here articulating the diffusionist arguments for change that had been hinted at by earlier researchers, and pointing out connections with Europe rather than an attachment to Britain.

Coffey excavated Craigywarren crannog in County Antrim (Fig. 5). It was situated in the same bog as the supposed crannog of Lisnacrogher, where the La Tène items were found. Coffey stated that Lisnacrogher could be seen from the site (1906, 109). Whether the decision to excavate was influenced by the proximity of Lisnacrogher is not stated in the report, but it seems likely. The report is divided into two parts, discussing the site's construction and then the finds. It was constructed by laying down heather on a surface of black greasy mud. The island was seen to have had a hut with an external hearth. The finds included a sword, a piece of a stone axe, some lithics and a number of horse skulls, as well as pins and a brooch. However, as regards the Iron Age, the crannog at Craigywarren proved disappointing. It did not provide any information about a connection with the Iron Age Celts. According to the excavator, many of the pins and the brooch found during the excavation belonged to the period after the tenth century AD, and were used to date the site.

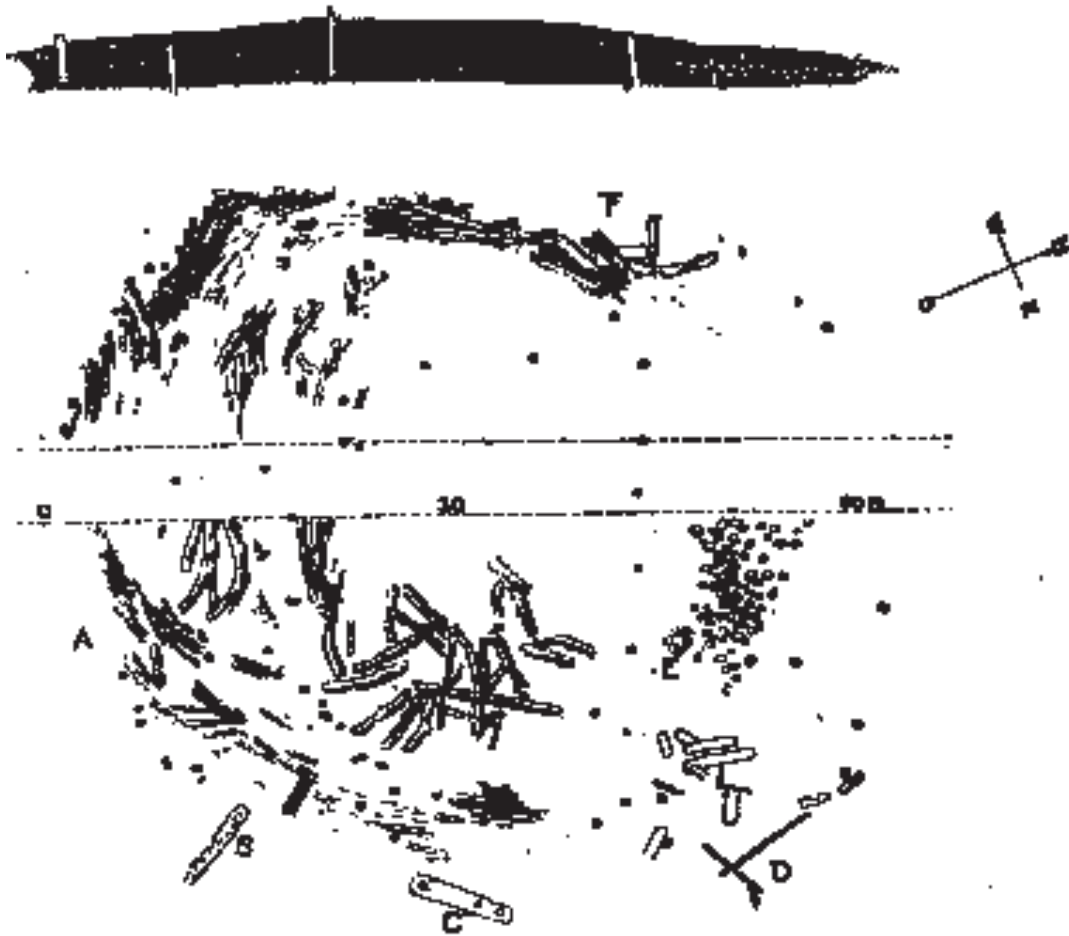


Fig. 5—Plan of Craigywarren crannog (after Coffey 1906).

Coffey encountered the same problems as many earlier crannog researchers regarding the existence of early finds on a late site. Numerous pieces of worked flint and flint chips were found at Craigywarren. In the same paper, Coffey's friend Knowles suggested that the presence of earlier finds on the crannog might have had to do with its long continuous use, following Wood-Martin's ideas. Coffey, following D'Arcy's line, denied that the presence of these artefacts necessarily implied that the site was old. He suggested instead that the earlier finds might have been collected as antiquities, or could have been brought in with the building material (Coffey 1906, 113). This would imply that there was no human thought behind it and that the old finds were meaningless to people at the time they came into the crannog. At a later stage Oliver Davies (1950, 91) was convinced, contrary to Coffey, that Craigywarren had a Neolithic occupation layer.

Other than this comment on Wood-Martin's assumption about continuity of tradition, very few conclusions are drawn from the Craigywarren material, which makes this report typical of much of the research around the turn of the century, and it may be an indication of an archaeology that saw itself as more scientific, with a responsibility to describe rather than to interpret the material in social terms. According to Coffey (1906, 113), the excavation had

established that this crannog was not destroyed by violence as all the artefacts were left there to be found, but at the same time it could not have been left under peaceful conditions as people had not taken their valuables with them. Furthermore, it did not provide any answers to the question about the transition to the Iron Age.

Another crannog-like site, Lough Pairc, Co. Galway, was excavated (Macalister *et al.* 1914) and seemed to be a hybrid of a crannog and a ringfort. In the years that followed there seems to have been a geographical shift in the interest in crannogs; a number of smaller articles appeared, dealing with crannogs in the south of Ireland. A crannog in Cork was published by Power (1920), and one in Kilmichael by Long (1929). Another southern crannog was published by Poole (1930). This does not mean that there was no activity in the northern parts of Ireland during these years. Lawlor, for example, published an investigation of a crannog in Ballygolan (1920), and Gogan, a member of staff of the National Museum of Ireland, wrote about the state of crannog research at this time, and about the crannogs in County Antrim in particular (1933).

There were also articles discussing the cultural context of crannogs. For example, in Armstrong's 'The La Tène period in Ireland' (1923) crannogs were seen as strongholds of 'the Celtic invader'. However, if the evidence for La Tène crannogs was analysed it would become apparent that neither of the newly excavated crannogs at Moylarg and Craigyarren provided much support for this connection as they seemed to date from what is now called the early medieval period. Despite the fact that there was little material evidence for a connection between crannogs and the early Iron Age and despite the contextual problems of the Iron Age finds from Lisnacrogher, crannogs were used by Armstrong to demonstrate the coming of the Celts. That the Celts were credited with this innovation was quite compatible with Coffey's interests and shows a different angle on the Celtic connection. In this case the focus was no longer that the Celts were 'backward' and had problems in leaving their islands behind. The material showed instead the strength of a conquering race. Coffey would have been a part of the circle that fostered the Celtic Revival (see Herity and Eogan 1977, 12), and the interest in and interpretation of the crannogs would be closely linked to this background which confronted British colonialism (see Castle 2001).

An archaeology for the Free State?

A new fact is a good fact

The period after Independence saw many changes in institutional practices as well as in legislation in Ireland. In 1930 the National Monuments Act was introduced⁸ (Herity and Eogan 1977, 14; Cooney 1995, 267). In general there was a move towards the professionalisation of archaeology in these years, aiming at the establishment of an élite 'whose main role was the scientific recovery of more information about the past' (Cooney 1995, 268). The National Museum of Ireland was at this time under the directorship of Adolf Mahr, Keeper of Irish Antiquities, who came from Vienna. Cooney believes that these links 'between Mahr's Germanic academic tradition and the development of Irish archaeology' explain the strong empirical tradition in Irish archaeology and are one of the reasons why Irish archaeologists have a 'reluctance to theorise or synthesise' (Härke 1991, 198–204; Cooney 1995, 268). This trend has continued within Irish archaeology up until today. As Woodman (1992, 295) has pointed out, the foundations for Irish archaeology today were laid down in the period just after Mahr. Mahr had an impact on the Museum's recording system and also initiated a number of research programmes (Kilbride-Jones 1993; Cooney 1995, 267; see

also J. Raftery 1988). One of these was the Harvard Archaeological Expedition, which excavated many of the crannog sites that were to become key sites. Many of the new generation of scholars, such as Joseph Raftery, worked with Mahr. Some of these men were eventually to carry out their own crannog excavations. In the north extensive fieldwork was carried out by Emyr Estyn Evans and Oliver Davies of Queen's University in Belfast (see Stout 1996). But there were also members of the old guard, such as Macalister, who continued to take an interest in crannogs, with the partial excavation of Cro-Inis at Lough Ennell, Co. Westmeath. This crannog was connected with King Mael-Sechlainn, who died there in AD 1022 (Macalister 1938).

Mahr is known for his great contributions to the formal institutionalisation of Irish archaeology. However, his own views on crannogs and the rationale for researching them have not been noted to any great extent. The crannog seems to have fitted into a narrative about the Celts that he had propounded in London at the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences in 1932 (Mahr 1934). He believed that it was important to discover the geographical origins of crannogs, thereby supporting a diffusionist mode of inquiry, as suggested by Childe, for example. Mahr's views had also been published in the *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* published by the Irish government to mark the progress of the new state since the Treaty in 1921 (Mahr 1932). Like his predecessors, Mahr connected crannogs with a Celtic invasion in the Iron Age, while at the same time acknowledging their use and occupation up until the sixteenth century in the areas 'outside the Pale' (*ibid.*, 214, 226). He did not believe in an indigenous development but rather saw crannogs in Ireland as resulting from external influences from the Continent. In Mahr's eyes the material changes noted during the late Bronze Age represented a 'foreign invasion' with its roots in the Urnfield civilisation in Germany, where the 'Continental crannogs' such as Buchau in Federsee could be found. As he saw it, the Celts from the Rhine area, pushed out by the Urnfield culture, moved on to conquer Ireland and Britain.

'It is significant that the Teutonic group at the same time cuts itself adrift from the western heritage and finally turns its face towards Central Europe. Simultaneously with that its Eastern branch begins to take shape on the Baltic shores opposite Scandinavia and it was the Eastern Teutons, again and again recouping themselves from the old motherland, who in the end overthrew the Mediterranean order of Rome' (Mahr 1937, 389ff).

In Mahr's interpretative framework cultures were either vibrant or degenerate; the development of crannogs in Ireland was due to new fresh influences from Europe and reveals the old connections between Central Europe and the British Isles (see Mahr 1934, 275–6).

Mahr saw crannogs as a common cultural trait connecting the people in Central Europe and Ireland, and believed that they were a symbolic settlement type of the Celts. This argument was based on information about Lausitz, which he called a crannog, as well as from Buchau. The discovery of crannogs in Ireland from the late Bronze Age as well as from the Iron Age would support his argument (Mahr 1934, 276; 1937). Raftery obtained his evidence for him at Knocknalappa. Mahr later interpreted the site at Lisnacroggher as the settlement of a La Tène tribe (Mahr 1941, 13–14). It is commonly known that Mahr had Nazi connections (see Mitchell 1990, 12; O'Donoghue 1998), which may have influenced his interpretative framework and rationale for crannog research. As we have seen, crannogs in Mahr's eyes were connected with invasion from the Continent. On the other hand, these interpretations must also be seen against the long-standing tradition of understanding crannogs in racial terms that had been prevalent in Irish archaeology at least since Wood-Martin's time.

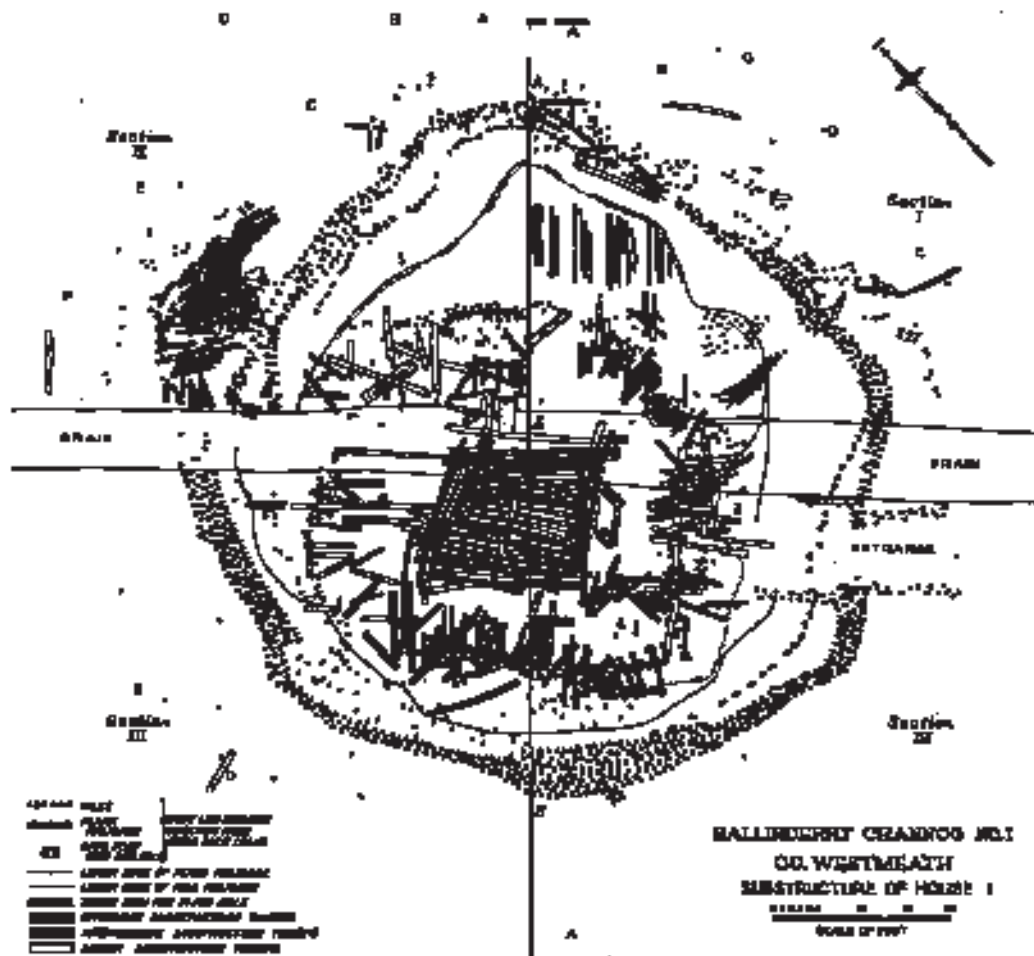


Fig. 6—Plan of Ballinderry 1 (after Hencken 1936).

Mahr also carried out a trial excavation of a crannog in Fenagh Lake, adjacent to Kingsfort and Lurgan townlands in County Sligo (see NMI file 1928, 717–47). This site produced artefacts of mainly early medieval date and may have been a ‘low-status’ crannog, as will be discussed later, but neither the objectives nor the results of this excavation were ever published.

Among the many projects that Mahr supported was a study of the racial history of Ireland, carried out by C. P. Martin and published as *Prehistoric man in Ireland* (1935). The work was based on measurements of skulls from archaeological contexts. One chapter, ‘The people of the crannogs’, deals with the presumed inhabitants of crannogs. Martin showed that both long-headed and broad-headed as well as a significant amount of round-headed skulls could be found on crannogs. According to Martin, these round-headed skulls represented an earlier population group than the Iron Age Celts, leading him to connect the crannogs with another race. Based on his evidence, Martin asked the question ‘did the newcomers drive the round-headed people of the Bronze Age to take refuge on the crannog?’ (Martin 1935, 129, 130). Therefore, where Mahr had interpreted the crannogs as the defensive settlements of the incoming Celts, Martin saw them as representing the story of the losers, the refugees and the people left behind to defend themselves.

The Harvard Mission

Another project supported by Mahr was the Harvard Archaeological Mission to Ireland. The expedition excavated a number of sites that became important for further understanding of Irish archaeology (Harbison 1988, 13; Cooney 1995, 267). The Archaeological Mission was part of the Harvard Irish Survey, which also comprised two other parts: a Social and Economic Survey of Ireland and what Mahr calls outright 'a Racial Survey' — a study of the physical and social anthropology of Ireland. The whole research project was led by Professor E.A. Hooton of the Anthropological Faculty of Harvard (Hencken and Movius 1932–4; 232; Mahr 1937, 268). The expedition excavated a number of crannogs.

In 1932 the excavation of the crannog Ballinderry 1 (Fig. 6) was carried out by Hugh Hencken (1936). He continued in 1933 with the excavation of Ballinderry 2 (Hencken 1942) and between 1934 and 1936 the crannog in Lagore was also excavated (Hencken 1936, 103; 1950, 3).

BALLINDERRY 1

Ballinderry 1 is situated on the border between counties Offaly and Westmeath. Before excavation the site was an overgrown low hill measuring 33m by 20m in a swampy area of what was once a lake. This site was seen as a crannog with an external palisade of piles and an internal one of planks. In the middle was a raft-like structure that Hencken interpreted as the foundation of the crannog, upon which at least three consecutive houses were built. Ballinderry 1 had two main phases, dating from the tenth to the eleventh century AD, and yielded a considerable number of finds, including numerous pins, knives, a gaming-board, axes, a plough coulter and pieces of a stave-built vessel. According to the excavator it may have been sporadically used down to the seventeenth century. It was concluded from the archaeological material that during its main period of use it must have been a permanent settlement rather than a temporary refuge, and that the people there must have farmed and herded on the nearby fields. Although there were some Viking finds from the site, Hencken believed that the occupants of the crannog were purely Irish (1936, 225–6). Human remains were also found on the crannog among the floor timbers of one of the houses, but they were interpreted as having been accidentally incorporated in the building (Movius 1936). The stratigraphy and the features of the excavation have been reinterpreted recently by Lynn (1985–6), Newman (1986) and R. Johnson (1997; 1999).

BALLINDERRY 2

Ballinderry 2, the second crannog in the same area, showed early medieval occupation dating from the seventh to eighth century AD resting on a series of prehistoric, seemingly late Bronze Age, layers on what had been a small island in the lake (Hencken 1942). In the early medieval period this crannog enclosed an area about 35m in diameter (Fig. 7). The Bronze Age site consisted of at least two parts, possibly connected to each other by a causeway. The site produced not only human skulls but also a saddle quern and some bronze knives. Hencken described this late Bronze Age phase as a lakeside habitation, rather than a man-made island, which consisted of a number of small huts, although in a later publication he called it a crannog (Hencken 1950, 12). The term 'economy' was used in the interpretation of the finds of animal bones and grains. Three skulls found were seen to represent the ritual preparation of the sites before habitation. According to Hencken, these skulls yielded information about race, showing that the Celtic skull type already existed in Ireland in the late Bronze Age. He commented, however, that the skulls could just as well represent both the Celts who were perceived to have settled the sites and the 'natives whom they had killed' (Hencken 1942, 1–2).

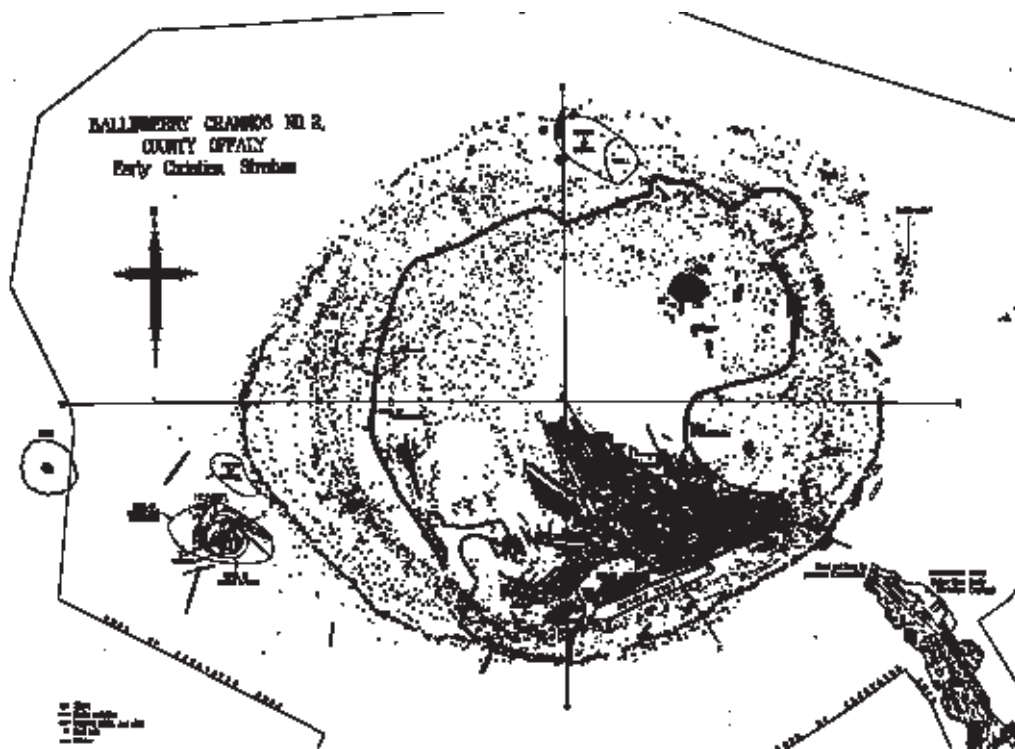


Fig. 7—Plan of Ballinderry 2 (after Hencken 1942).

Hencken showed that the site was reused in the early medieval period, when a crannog was built on the same spot. At this stage a stout palisade was constructed along the edges of the site, and was interpreted as being for defence as well as for consolidation of the building material. Owing to its small size (35m) Hencken saw the site as being the habitation of a family rather than a village (Hencken 1936) or a tribe, as suggested earlier by Kinahan. The culture at this stage was 'a combination of prehistoric and sub-Roman elements'. From the bone report it was concluded that the economy would have been nearly the same as during the late Bronze Age. There was also sparse evidence for industry, as shown by items used in spinning (*ibid.*, 2–3).

LAGORE

The third crannog to be excavated by Hencken was Lagore, Co. Meath, which had been known to archaeologists since the beginning of crannog studies. The site measured about 41m in diameter, was raised up to a height of 3m and was surrounded by three palisades. In the interpretation of both Ballinderry 2 and Lagore Hencken (1950, 3) saw the crannogs as the marshland equivalent of stone forts. Lagore was identified in the documentary sources as being in use between AD 676 and 969 as the seat of the local kings (Price 1950). With this documentary reference in mind Hencken saw the opportunity to date many of the artefacts found on the crannog. According to Hencken, Lagore had three phases of occupation between the seventh and tenth centuries AD, and the site yielded a large number of artefacts, including personal ornaments as well as farming equipment. While no prehistoric layers were identified, a wooden human figure was found in the bottom layers. This was later dated to the late Bronze Age (B.J. Coles 1990).

There were also finds of a stone axe and flints that, according to the excavator, dated from the Bronze Age. These were interpreted as having been incorporated by chance into the building material (Hencken 1950,10). A large number of human bones were also found on the crannog. These were interpreted as evidence for a possible massacre of the workers at the site (*ibid.*, 3) rather than indicating that the site was a tomb, as had been suggested by Talbot in 1849. Since the 1840s the site had been known for its large amount of animal bone. Agricultural equipment was also found, ranging from ploughs to sickles, which was taken as an indication that the inhabitants grazed cattle and farmed somewhere near the lake. The site showed evidence for leather-, bronze- and iron-working on the crannog (*ibid.*, 7–8, 10).

Lagore as a royal site was compared to other settlements of high status and could be seen to differ from the other excavated crannogs in two ways. First, Lagore was larger than many other crannogs. Second, it stood out in terms of the different types of craftsmen, inferred from the artefacts, who would have been, as Hencken put it, ‘employed’ at the site. The range of activities represented by the finds at Lagore suggested that it would have been a self-supporting settlement (*ibid.*, 12).

The ‘culture’ represented at Lagore was seen as one of steady assimilation, incorporating elements from what Hencken called the megalithic period onwards. Hencken also discussed the similarities and differences between late Bronze Age and early medieval crannogs. He suggested that the former were less fortified. It was then argued that crannogs were fortified from the Iron Age onwards (*ibid.*, 12–15).

In his summary the cultural elements found at Lagore represented the way Ireland in general differed from the rest of western Europe. According to Hencken, change normally came in sequence, but in Ireland cultures such as the Roman and the Germanic did not replace and follow each other as they seemed to do on the Continent. In Ireland elements from the new cultures were absorbed into the existing one. Lagore was in this sense a royal fortress that displayed a ‘strange combination’ of varying cultural elements (*ibid.*, 17), representing a ‘melting-pot’, as it were.

With these words Hencken is almost repeating his predecessors’ views on the unchanging nature of crannogs. While he was dealing with many of the problems that earlier scholars had observed, his explanatory structure also delivered some new ideas, such as a suggested morphological difference between late Bronze Age and early medieval crannogs. Another novelty was a more distinct articulation of the economic importance of the crannogs. ‘Economy’ was a term introduced to understand the activities on the site and especially the faunal remains. Other present-day terminology crept in, such as the craftsmen on the crannog being seen as ‘employed’ there. ‘Economic’ archaeology had at this stage been part of the general debate for some years. Gordon Childe (e.g. 1928; 1930) had already abandoned his earlier cultural historical models in favour of these theories, but this approach to the material really took off with J. G. D. Clark’s *Prehistoric Europe: the economic basis* (1952) (see Trigger 1989, 250–4, 268–70).

What was also important in Hencken’s work on crannogs was the identification of Lagore as a ‘royal’ site. Common to all three of Hencken’s crannog reports is that their interpretations are very meagre while their catalogues are extensive. It seems as if the rich excavations imposed such a burden of information that an understanding of the nature of the sites was nearly impossible to reach.

Excavations after Mahr

The excavations of Lagore, Ballinderry 1 and Ballinderry 2 served as field training for many men in Irish archaeology, and especially for the circle around the Museum director, Mahr (Mahr 1937,

268). These included, for example, Joseph Raftery. In 1942 Raftery published his report on the crannog of Knocknalappa in County Clare. Finds such as a bronze sword and a stone axe from the lakebed at this site had come to light earlier and were published by Wallace (1936–9). Knocknalappa was a smaller site, measuring 40m by 15–20m, built on marl. It yielded artefacts from both the late Bronze Age and the early medieval period, including a sunflower pin, a bronze ring, saddle querns and pottery, as well as animal bones. The site did not show any traces of formal settlement or hearths, although it was suggested that there might have been walls of marl that subsequently collapsed. Raftery therefore interpreted the crannog as a place of temporary refuge, where skin tents may have been erected when needed (Raftery 1942, 59). The site was argued to date from 500–300 BC (and therefore similar in date to Lisnacrogher) despite the fact that it had produced late Bronze Age artefacts: it was argued instead that these belonged to the Iron Age. Another important issue for Raftery was to establish the trade routes by which the artefacts came to Knocknalappa (*ibid.*, 66–7). Knocknalappa, with its Bronze Age date, was one of the crannogs that Mahr fitted into his narrative about invasions from the Continent (Mahr 1937, 387).

A few years later Ó Ríordáin and Lucas (1946–7) published the excavation of a small crannog at Rathjordan, Co. Limerick, which yielded Neolithic material. During the Lough Gur excavations two low habitation mounds, Ballingoola III and IV, were excavated in a marshy area near the lake. These sites seemed to consist of burnt clay and charcoal and produced finds of flint as well as portions of stone axes (Ó Ríordáin 1949).

Davies and landscape archaeology

Oliver Davies, working in the north of Ireland, developed ideas that resemble modern landscape studies. He built his knowledge on thorough survey work as well as excavations and wrote extensively about crannogs (Davies 1940; 1941; 1942; 1946a; 1946b; 1950). Already in 1942 he had published the paper ‘Contributions to the study of crannogs in south Ulster’, which summarised the results from both fieldwork and excavation, mainly in the areas of Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim and south Donegal. This article has a modern feel to it with regard to both questions and answers. Davies summarised his fieldwork in the following way:

‘...it seems that nearly every island has been inhabited at some time or other, whether it is artificial or not’ (Davies 1942, 14).

Davies drew attention to the abundance of Irish sites from all periods situated in or near water. He argued that the crannog as a settlement type went back to the Neolithic (1940, 126; 1942, 16). The common view at this time was that the sites dated from the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. Davies tested this idea by the excavation of Rough Island near the Iron Age stone figures at Boa Island, Co. Fermanagh (Davies 1940). There were some indications that the site was prehistoric, but it also produced later medieval pottery. The idea of Stone Age crannogs had been around for a while, but Davies put the case more articulately. He pointed out that people must have lived by the water on both natural and man-made structures throughout time. This view embraced many different structures, from early Stone Age activity on mud-flats to natural islands, crannogs, island churches, castles built on small rocky islands, and eighteenth-century follies (Davies 1942, 14–17).

What also makes Davies’s research extraordinary is that he tried to understand the crannogs in relation to other sites in the wider landscape. For example, he contrasts the occurrence of crannogs with that of island churches on a wider scale than Kelly (1850–3) did in his comments about the Roscommon lakes of Ardakillen and Clonfinlough. According to Davies, the island

churches were more generally spread out in the lakes than the crannogs were (1942, 15). There also seem to be recurring topographical factors connected with the location of crannogs. It was noted that crannogs tend to avoid open lakes, and that although some are located out on deep water, most were situated in the shallows (*ibid.*, 15, 21).

THEIR RACE — THE MARSHLANDERS

The question of race reappeared in Davies's writings, but in a different form than before. Davies acknowledged the fact that Irish chieftains occupied many crannogs. That meant that crannogs represented the settlements of a certain class. At the same time he discussed whether the building tradition could have been upheld by another type of people — another race. It is suggested that 'their construction was borne by a half-isolated caste or race, unsympathetic to the mainlanders' (1942, 14–15). This is the first time to my knowledge that people from the mainland are contrasted with lake-dwellers. The question of two different peoples is argued with reference to the material culture. Davies claims that there exists a special, seemingly medieval, 'crannog pottery' that was not seen as commonly on the dryland sites (*ibid.*, 15, app. 5 and 6).

Davies (1942) also puts forward ideas on morphological classifications of the different types of crannogs. I feel that despite his problems with the dating of certain sites Davies is still underrated in the history of crannog research. Firstly, he suggested the existence of multiperiod sites like Island MacHugh and Lough Enagh. Secondly, he created a new twist to the question of race introduced by Wood-Martin by implying that there were both a land race and a lake race, and tried to incorporate crannogs in a discussion of settlements from other places in the landscape.

Raftery at Lough Gara

Judging from the publications, there was a fairly steady interest in crannogs during the 1950s, with excavations like Joseph Raftery's at Lough Gara (Raftery 1957), the area on which this book focuses. Raftery excavated two crannogs on this lake, Rathtinaun and Tivannagh, but the sites are not yet fully published. Information about them has to be gathered either from other works of Raftery (1941; 1957) or from general syntheses in Irish archaeology (e.g. Evans 1966). Raftery wondered whether the crannog culture was 'mainly that of fisherfolk or did it have an agricultural or pastoral background' (1957, 6). This economic question occurs regularly within the cultural-historical way of thinking, and it could be seen as a shift in focus. While Davies was still talking about different races on land sites as compared to those in the waters, Raftery was interested in whether the crannogs showed a difference in people's subsistence activities. Here the whole range of issues relating to ethnicity and identity was brought into the picture. The main questions that Raftery asked when he excavated the crannogs in Lough Gara was whether they were introduced as a monument type and by what culture. Artefacts such as quernstones were interpreted as evidence of an agricultural economy, as was the carbonised grain found on the islands, which formed part of the argument for an agricultural identity for the people (*ibid.*, 11). In this Raftery was following Hencken's interest in the economy of the crannog people, and it is also worth noting that Raftery was not at all as strong in his views about the racial question on the crannogs as Mahr was. At a later stage the findings from Rathtinaun were taken to represent the much-sought-after Iron Age (J. Raftery 1972a).

Test-trenching in the north

There was also continued activity in the north, with excavations by Collins and others at Lough Faughan, Clea Lakes and Lough Eskragh (Collins 1955; Collins and Proudfoot 1959; Collins and

Seaby 1960). At Lough Faughan early medieval artefacts and medieval pottery were found. The artefacts ranged from lignite bracelets to bone pins and spindle-whorls, and there were also remains of iron production as well as clay moulds for bronze-casting. Collins (1955, 71) also found prehistoric pieces of flint around a hearth and these were interpreted functionally as strike-a-lights.

Collins continued Hencken's economic interpretations. The animal bones that were incorporated in the building material and the evidence for metal-working on the site were interpreted as reflecting the 'economy' of its people. The people of the crannog were seen as a self-sufficient unit larger than a family (Collins 1955, 71–2). The crannog at Clea Lakes was test-trenched and was supposedly surrounded by a stone wall which must have made it look like a cashel before it decayed. On the island were the remains of a stone building and a few hearths. The finds were mainly early medieval and consisted of some bone pins, beads, spindle-whorls and crucibles (Collins and Proudfoot 1959). The economic questions continued in this article. Observing the considerable amount of stone that had gone into the building of the crannog, the excavators wondered about the labour force used (*ibid.*, 94). Collins and Seaby (1960) revealed a structure that only partly resembled an ordinary crannog in Lough Eskragh, Co. Tyrone. There were two areas of piling in the lake. Only in one place were horizontal brushwood and timbers resembling a crannog found. This place was connected with Bronze Age artefacts, but at this stage the only interpretation offered was that it may have been a parallel site to Knocknalappa and Ballinderry 2.

Other publications on crannogs in the 1950s include J. Smyth's writings on crannogs in north Monaghan (1954) and George Eogan's on the discovery of the crannog at Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath (1957). However, there was a marked slowdown in the publication of work on crannogs during the 1960s and the 1970s, with only about nine relevant articles. People in other disciplines, such as the geologist Frank Mitchell (1970; 1971; 1972a) and the dendrochronologist Mike Baillie (1979; 1992), kept up the interest in lake-dwellings.

Conclusion

Much crannog research up to this period involved the collection of more archaeological material. Throughout the period the definition of the site type became more and more refined. Crannogs were of interest because they often provided a fairly rich assemblage of artefacts that could throw light on the artefactual sequence in Ireland. For scholars such as Wood-Martin the issues of progress and race were more prominent in the crannog discussion. What is interesting is that the crannog material was used both to demonstrate the refinement of the Celts as compared to the Saxons (Wakeman) and to represent the inertia and backwardness of the Celtic race (Wood-Martin).

Later researchers such as Mahr and Martin saw the crannogs as reflecting cultural identity, and in a diffusionist mode changes were explained by the movement of people and ideas. Mahr saw crannogs as defensive structures introduced into Ireland by Continental Celts, pushed out by other, stronger tribes. Martin, on the other hand, saw them as the defences of a threatened and weakened native population. These studies were conducted side by side with a scientific, professional Irish archaeology that engaged in the data collection. The method of explaining the material was empirical-inductive, meaning that conclusions were built directly on observation of the material.

What is worth noting is the increased use of economic interpretations, introduced by Hencken. Raftery put forward the notion that the crannogs might not have represented a particular race such as the Celts or a pre-Celtic people, although he still saw the artefactual evidence as showing contacts with people on the Continent. Instead he connected them with

people who may have had a different occupation — that is, the people on the crannog may have been fishermen as opposed to the farmers on the mainland.

The age of revisits

The end of the 1970s and the early 1980s was, as I will show, the prelude to two productive decades of crannog research, when the research agenda changed drastically. The main period of interest was no longer the Bronze Age–Iron Age, and the explanatory modes altered. A critique of the cultural-historical approach started to grow in the 1960s with the works of D. Clarke (1968), Renfrew (1969; 1972) and Binford (1962). The main argument of these scholars was that traditional archaeology was mainly descriptive and focused on unique events and that it did not really explain why a change took place and what was the system at work behind it. Furthermore, they saw no clear reason why a set of artefacts should be seen as representing a culture; this explanation could not be tested against the archaeological material.

Another element of the criticism was that the traditional approaches were not very strict in their scientific methods. The empirical-inductive method of the cultural-historical approach failed to justify why certain conclusions ought to be valid. The method lacked objectivity, and it was proposed that archaeology should use a hypothetic-deductive method for gaining knowledge of the past, i.e. to formulate a hypothesis that could be tested against the material. This method should then be verified or falsified. The aim of archaeology was also to search for general laws of human behaviour, to explain evolution and systematic change, and to focus on larger, general processes — hence the ‘processualist’ label.

Another point was that archaeology should align itself with science instead of the humanities. This led to a refinement of many archaeological methods. As I will show, much wetland archaeology has its roots in these processual developments and in the coupling of archaeology and science.

Processual approaches have been influential in Irish archaeology, without any implicit reference being made to them. The years following these publications were times of a profound source criticism. Although there was no outspoken processualist in crannog studies, it is apparent that the terminology and modes of explanation used stem from the general debate of the times.

Baillie, through construction of a dendrochronological curve, obtained indications that many of the crannogs surrounded by a palisade (from which the oak samples for the curve were taken) generally dated from the sixth to seventh century AD (Baillie 1979; 1982). Warner (1983, 160–1) pointed out that there was only a weak link between the crannogs and Iron Age material culture. While many Scottish crannogs had a clear Roman Iron Age connection, most recorded Irish crannogs have not yielded Iron Age material. Despite the fact that much of the narrative about crannogs was built around the Celts and the Iron Age, there were only two crannogs that could possibly be dated to the period — the sites at Lisnacrogher and at Lough Gara. Warner argued that, owing to the weak link between sites and artefacts, the understanding of the culture of the Iron Age could be built only on the metalwork, as so little was known about the settlements from this time (*ibid.*). Together these signs implied that there was something wrong with the early dating of the crannogs. This was to start the decades of revisiting.

Chris Lynn — breaking the tradition

As discussed in Chapter 2, Lynn picked up on this unease about crannogs belonging to the Iron Age or earlier and managed to detach the earlier sites from the study of crannogs. In this way

Lynn believed he had broken the chain of tradition that had caused the inertia in crannog research since its beginnings in the nineteenth century. One can say that while Warner (1983) disconnected the crannogs from the early Iron Age, Lynn connected them to the early medieval period. Lynn suggested that one could now start the investigations into how the building of crannogs was due to influences from west Britain. Using a diffusionist mode of explanation, this is a model of change that leaves the internal culture as inert recipients of innovations. Lynn (1983, 54) interpreted the earlier platforms as places for industrial activity or fishing and fowling, while the real crannogs would have been 'a wealthy person's stronghold'. These views have been echoed in many later writings, and as we know this interpretation was not new. It has its roots in the early beginnings of crannog studies, when people such as Shirley linked the sites with documentary sources and map evidence.

Crannogs are generally stratigraphically complex sites and Lynn's article soon inspired a critical review of many of the key sites that had been excavated during the first half of the twentieth century, strengthening the position of the empirical tradition in Irish archaeology. Many of these reviews were published in 1986, the year when the Crannog Conference was held in Dublin. Island MacHugh, the large crannog excavated by Davies (1950), was re-excavated (Ivens *et al.* 1986). The excavations of the Harvard Mission were scrutinised as well. Conor Newman (1986) questioned the stratigraphy of Ballinderry 2, Warner (1985–6) discussed the start date for Lagore, and Lynn (1985–6) debated the structural remains of both Lagore and Ballinderry 1. These re-evaluations of previously excavated sites started a trend that continued to the end of the century. The dating of Ballinderry 1 was approached from an art-historical perspective by Ruth Johnson (1997). Lyttleton revisited the possible crannog at Loughpairc (1998) and Grogan *et al.* (1999) have worked on Knocknalappa. Many of these complex sites now have to be read together with their corrections in more recent papers before being interpreted.

Almost as long-lived as the tradition of reinterpreting previously excavated sites is John Bradley's excavation of the crannog at Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath. The excavation of this large site started in 1980–1. The crannog shows layers from almost all periods, including the Mesolithic (see Bradley 1982; 1982–3; 1984; 1985–6; 1990–1; 1993; 1994–5; 1996; 1997). Bradley has often emphasised the role of Moynagh Lough as a royal site in the early medieval period, comparing it to Lagore. Another crannog at Newtownlow with royal/prosperous connotations was excavated (E. Kelly 1991a, 86f.; Bourke 1986; 1987) but has not been fully published.

The high-status crannog in early medieval society

A new theme in crannog studies could be detected in the 1980s. This was a discussion of status, politics, power and kingship in early Ireland. The development of this theme was to a large extent due to the strong belief that crannogs belonged mainly to the early medieval era, building on the ideas of Lynn (1983) and the conclusions drawn from the excavations at Moynagh Lough and Newtownlow. There was now a better possibility of connecting man-made islands to a certain period in time and of understanding their social context.

One of the earliest attempts to introduce a political element into the study was made by Warner in 'The archaeology of early historic Irish kingship' (1988). Here and in his following works Warner discussed how crannogs fitted into the workings of ranking and royal power. The idea was to study sites like crannogs and ringforts which had royal documentary references to see if they differed morphologically from other sites (Warner 1988; 1994). Warner consciously distanced himself from processualism in the article, but still made use of its way of approaching the material. As was common in many processual studies at the time, archaeology was a question

of setting up a hypothesis and testing it against the material. Furthermore, the notion of ranking and status that Warner made use of is prominent in this way of thinking. These ideas have continued to influence crannog studies up until today.

This concept of crannogs being royal was also supported by another argument. It was not only the richness of the finds from crannogs compared to the contemporary ringforts that led Warner to believe that many of them were royal sites. The rich finds could of course, as he argued, also be due to the extraordinary preserving conditions on waterlogged sites, and other site types might have been as rich if only the material was preserved to the same extent. As Warner saw it, it was in their locational setting where the arguments for these sites being royal was found. It was their inconvenient location away from the farming lands that made them special. The argument was that you must be of some special standing in society if you had the means to ensure that someone on the mainland looked after your cattle (Warner 1988, 50–1). It has been suggested that crannogs represent high-status dwellings as they would have required more material and would have been more labour-consuming than the contemporary ringforts (Stout and Stout 1997, 48).

Eamon Kelly of the National Museum of Ireland followed the same line in blending early political history with the insights gained from investigating the archaeological material. In his ‘Observations on Irish lake-dwellings’ (1991a) he focused on understanding lake-dwellings in relation to the history of the early kingdom of Midhe, and therefore also a history of the rise and fall of the Southern Uí Néill dynasty (Liam Price had in 1950 documented the royal families connected with the Lagore crannog, and Byrne (1968) discussed the site’s role in the kingdom of Brega). This area contains not only Knowth, the megalithic tomb that was settled by one of the sub-kings in Midhe, but also Tara and a number of excavated crannogs that were held to be royal.

The presence of Viking material on a couple of these sites was noted, and Kelly asked whether the archaeological material could throw more light on the supposedly complex relationship between this population group and the Irish. The material culture of Midhe was compared briefly to that of the next large political unit at the time — the Uladh in the north — and the buffer zone between the Uladh and Midhe, situated in the present north County Louth. It was found that Midhe had very little of the native pottery which is common in areas controlled by the Uladh, while the buffer zone has very few of the ringed pins that were common in Dublin and on the midland crannogs. Kelly interpreted this as a sign of regional differences between the two kingdoms, where their northern neighbours looked to the north and the Southern Uí Néill were connected to Dublin by trade or warfare (Kelly 1991a, 87). The archaeological material was held to reflect the findings from the documentary sources.

When it came to discussing the crannog material from the midland lakes Kelly drew on his experience from his involvement in the Crannog Archaeology Project (CAP). His article is an attempt to bring together archaeology and early Irish history. Two members of the same project (Karkov and Ruffing 1997) published another article on the same theme, ‘The Southern Uí Néill and the political landscape of Lough Ennell’. I think Kelly’s article is one of the most interesting crannog articles, opening up questions about the role of archaeological material in obtaining an understanding of larger political history in the past. It is also interesting to try to make use of the rich early documentary material. However, Kelly used the archaeological material only to confirm the documentary sources, instead of interpreting the material on its own and then comparing it with the documentary evidence, which might have led to complementary or even contradictory narratives (for interesting discussions on the relationship between archaeology and documentary sources see, for example, Austin 1990; Austin and Thomas 1990; Andren 1998). Thus Kelly let the archaeological material reflect the ‘documentary reality’, writing the

archaeology into the story of kings and power. Although none of the writers of ‘the political strand’ clearly expresses it as such or makes use of Marxist thinking, they are writing the history of one class of people — the wealthy people.

The Crannog Archaeology Project (CAP)

Kelly, Karkov and Ruffing all participated in the CAP, which was carried out in cooperation with the National Museum of Ireland. The project was directed by Robert T. Farrell from Cornell University, USA, who, together with the Museum and Victor Buckley, then at the OPW’s Archaeological Survey in Mullingar, established a lake project in the midlands based on their initial trial surveys in Lough Annala and Lough Ennell (Farrell and Buckley 1984). The main activities took place in the late 1980s over a series of summer seasons that were organised as a field school for Cornell University. The project was the first to emphasise the importance of fieldwork on land, on the shoreline and underwater (Farrell and Buckley 1984; Farrell 1991, 100; Karkov and Ruffing 1990–1, 105). Many of their methods for underwater survey were inspired by Scottish crannog research (Dixon 1982a; 1982b; Morrison 1985; cf. Karkov and Ruffing 1992–3; Farrell *et al.* 1989). I think that one of the most important results of the survey was the recording of many different types of sites within and near the water. Our knowledge of water sites was extended to include everything from jetties and breakwaters to stone platforms and crannogs (Karkov and Ruffing 1990–1, 111; Farrell 1991, 102). One of these platforms was excavated, but there were no finds of datable material (Brady 1991; 1994c). It was also noted that the stone platforms were located in clusters some 300m from larger crannog sites, but their function and date remained undisclosed. However, it was suggested that previous finds of Viking silver hoards may stem from stone platforms like these (Karkov and Ruffing 1990–1, 111). When it came to relating the water sites to the sites on land, the efforts did not stretch further than connecting some of the crannogs to nearby ringforts.

The great residual issue of the CAP is the fact that the definitive publication that includes the detailed results of the field and lacustrine survey has not yet appeared. It is hoped that Farrell will be able to produce the masterwork before too long. Until it emerges we can only discuss the views of some of the members of the project.

One goal of the project was spelled out by Ruffing and Karkov:

‘... a systematic survey of the crannogs of the Irish midlands, which will include: an accurate count of the number of crannogs in each lake; documentation of how crannogs relate to other nearby features such as ringforts or rock platforms; and the recording of any variations in structure which may reflect regional differences, differences in function, or differences in social status of the crannogs’ occupants’ (Karkov and Ruffing 1990–1, 105).

In their publication we can trace the interpretative framework borrowed from earlier writers, and it is possible to see the interest in the perceived status of the inhabitants of the crannogs, as expressed by Warner (1983). There is also a movement outward into the landscape to include features beside the lake as well. Strangely enough, nowhere in the publications of the project is there a reference to Davies’s (1940) article discussing both the relationship between small and large sites and their relationship to other sites such as church islands. The conclusions in their publications (1990–1; 1997) do not draw primarily on the results from the field project but on earlier crannog excavations and documentary sources.

‘The diversity of finds in combination with the documentary evidence suggests that crannogs played a central and multi-faceted role not only in the accumulation of wealth, but also in its re-distribution ... If nothing else the amount of material from crannogs and nearby platforms is an indication of the amount of wealth these sites could control’ (Karkov and Ruffing 1990–1, 112).

Karkov and Ruffing (1990–1, 112) also stressed the importance of crannogs in communication and trade. We can see in their interpretation how the crannogs were drawn into the economic field as places where wealth was controlled. In this narrative the reason for using the crannogs was economic gain.

Wetland archaeology, environmentalism and anomalies in the record

While the CAP was mainly linked to marine archaeology, crannogs in recent years of study have also been connected with wetland archaeology; some of them were built in lakes that later turned into wetlands, and some may have been built in bogs. Wetland archaeology is an international field that has developed as a speciality during the last twenty years mainly through the enthusiasm and work of Bryony and John Coles. They established WARP (the Wetland Archaeology Research Project) in 1986 and have promoted the amazingly rich archaeological material that comes from locations such as bogs and fens. Good preservation has meant that organic and other remains that may not have survived on dryland sites can give insights into people’s lives. The term ‘enlarging’ the past is often used in these circumstances (see Coles and Coles 1996; Coles 2001; Lane and Coles 2002). This field continues to contribute greatly to our understanding of the past.

However, the blessing of working with a rich material can also become a curse. At its worst, wetland archaeology gets weighed down with information overload and becomes a practice of data-gathering with few, if any, interpretations of the material. Many wetland projects are left at the ‘evaluation level’, with few conclusions drawn from well-documented materials. Often simplistic economic narratives are written about the perceived ‘management’ of wetland and dryland resources, disregarding historical and social contexts for the findings. People’s choice of locations in and their relationship to the landscape are explained by subsistence strategies and not by what the places could have meant to people (Fredengren, forthcoming; cf. Bond, forthcoming). I just wonder whether we can prove that people were thinking in terms of resource exploitation or management. Is it only the fact that economics is the ideology of today that makes economic interpretations seem like common sense and therefore beyond questioning?

In Ireland I think we can view the development of wetland archaeology against a change in the scientific analysis of archaeological remains. While the material gives great opportunities to investigate flora and fauna through pollen analysis, macrofossils, osteology and beetle analysis, there seems to be a particular interpretative framework that creeps in with the choice of methods. With a good coverage of natural events there has been a tendency to prefer environmentally deterministic interpretation, whereby changes in climate, vegetation etc. are automatically seen as prompting human change. As a background to the interpretations of crannogs presented we have to bear in mind the aspects of environmental determinism revealed in Baillie’s (1993) and Warner’s (1993) work. In their view, crannogs began to be built in the early medieval period because the local cultures were weakened by environmental disasters and as a result of intrusions by stronger cultures. This explanation may be seen as a mix of cultural-historical understanding and a processual environmental determinism.

In the 1990s the Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit was established at University College

Dublin in collaboration with the Office of Public Works. Much of its activity involved the recording and dating of trackways in commercial bogs and the main aim was to record a rapidly vanishing archaeological resource. The Wetland Unit has excavated a couple of interesting sites that have brought the study of crannogs forward in a material sense. In 1993 Moloney *et al.* published the excavation of the palisade-enclosed houses from a bog in Clonfinlough, Co. Offaly, dating from the late Bronze Age, and in 1995 Keane surveyed a man-made island at Boofeenau, Co. Mayo, without a palisade, dating from the middle of the early medieval period. These results may be seen as anomalies or as a critique of Lynn's morphological distinctions which proposed that crannogs would be islands with palisades dating mainly from the early medieval period. Even though wetland archaeology often uses functional and economic narratives there are signs of change within the field, frequently expressed during discussions at the TAG conference in Dublin in 2001, and the challenge is to lift the detailed material and environmental studies into an interpretative framework. Do pollen diagrams and macrofossil analyses necessarily have to be used to demonstrate subsistence strategies and resource exploitation or are there other, more social interpretations that could be gained from this material, for example in discussions of social space? I am totally convinced that we can look forward to new and interesting interpretative accounts of how wetlands as places have changed in meaning for people over time.

The Discovery Programme

The Discovery Programme has also in recent years had some involvement in the subject of settlement by waters. Kieran O'Connor's *The archaeology of medieval rural settlement in Ireland* (1998) contained a section on later medieval society. As we have seen, the period of interest in crannog studies changed from the Iron Age to the early medieval period. What O'Connor really does is to bring the later medieval period back to our attention. One criticism of this book is that crannogs are mainly seen as lordly, high-status sites during the latter period and that no attempts are made to look for ordinary people's presence in rural areas at the time.

Later in the same year the Discovery Programme also published Aidan O'Sullivan's *The archaeology of lake settlement in Ireland* (1998). The book is a handy checklist for anyone interested in crannog excavations and finds from lakes retrieved in the last few centuries, and is filled with illustrations of well-known crannogs. It is an interesting book and a major contribution to Irish wetland archaeology. However, it does not deal with the different interpretative schools that have flourished and formed crannog research over time and has no direct interface with theoretical archaeology and how or when the contemporary view of crannogs as high-status defended settlements started. The same author has also published a paper on the evidence for late medieval occupation of crannogs (O'Sullivan 2001) and a guidebook on crannogs (O'Sullivan 2000).

The Discovery Programme's North Munster Project has also contributed to the study of the use of lakes in the late Bronze Age. This project has to date supplied the only social interpretation of Bronze Age crannogs or lake settlements. The main focus of this project is the hillfort at Mooghaun (Grogan 1999), and this work shows more theoretical awareness, but a brief study of and revisit to Joseph Raftery's Knocknalappa was also made (Grogan *et al.* 1999).

Grogan has described the North Munster Project as an integrated regional landscape study, focused on studying a regional settlement pattern in the later prehistoric period. It was realised that the scarcity of domestic sites hindered the identification of a social hierarchy, which was assumed to have existed on the basis of rich late Bronze Age artefactual assemblages, and one aim was to retrieve this settlement (Grogan 1993).

The proposed settlement model for the project is built on the assumption of a hierarchical and ranked society. The highest level in the settlement hierarchy would be represented by the hillforts. Below this in the hierarchy would be the less defended hilltop enclosures and lake sites like Knocknalappa, which might represent local powers. The enclosed but not heavily defended settlement sites would represent the next level. From the new investigation of Knocknalappa it was concluded that the site could represent a high-status settlement as it had yielded a number of bronze finds (Grogan *et al.* 1999, 120). Grogan's Bronze Age model resembles Warner's for early medieval kingship. As explained above, this is a processual view of archaeology similar to ideas expressed by, for example Kristiansen (1984), where possession of resources equals power in society, and where ranking and status are assumed to be universal characteristics of human society. This 'materialistic' view of power differs from, for example, a Foucauldian understanding of the same, where power is not a 'property' but rather is the ability to manipulate and manoeuvre the conceptual structures in society (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 72–3; Deluze 1990, 57). So there are many other ways to think about power than the processual way.

The landscape is perceived in this project as having a number of layers. There would be an economic layer but also a social and a historical layer, and these would be reflected in the landscape and in the archaeological material (Grogan *et al.* 1995). However, it is not made clear which layer includes the crannogs. In dividing the landscape into these elements, the framework of the study resembles the functionalistic approach of Renfrew (see Renfrew 1972, criticised in Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 32). Champion, who influenced the theoretical choice of this project, saw the different layers as coinciding in the environment (see Champion *et al.* 1984).

Implicit processualism in crannog studies

PRESTIGE AND STATUS

None of the people involved in crannog research made any explicit reference to the processual school of thinking. Warner (1983) reflected on the models and theories of Binford, but found them too programmatic. In his study of early Irish kingship he made use of typical processual ranking models. Some, but not all, pieces of this framework of thinking influenced the approach to the archaeological material as well as the interpretations. Researchers such as Warner, E.P. Kelly (1991a), and Karkov and Ruffing (1997) made assumptions that crannogs had some relevance to questions of status in the early medieval period. Grogan *et al.* have used similar notions of social stratification and status to understand the Bronze Age lake material. The notions of ranking and control of resources were also popular in works such as *Ranking, resource and exchange* (Renfrew and Shennan 1982), and many of the articles in this book focus on the control of resources (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 38). Similar social processes were used in the discussion of social stratification, status and prestige in both time-periods. This implies an almost stagnant meaning for these sites over time, as they would simply represent prestige. Furthermore, processual studies often have an economic bias (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a).

METHOD IS THEORY

During these years wetland archaeology has refined the study of past environments, pollen analysis and wood species analysis, but there has been very little discussion of the theoretical foundations of their own work. This way of conducting archaeology could be described by the term 'Method is theory', which was professed by the processual school of archaeology. The aim was to improve the methods of searching for a fuller, more objective view of the past (see Shanks and Tilley

1987a, 6). More emphasis has been placed on extracting the maximum amount of information from the archaeological material than on critically scrutinising the reasons why certain questions are asked. Traditional processual studies emphasise that human behaviour is determined by the ecological environment. This archaeology has often turned into an environmental determinism, in which explanations of how people adapt to environments are common.

CHANGE

Something that is normal in processual studies but which was not discussed in Irish crannog studies is the overall notion of change and human evolution. During this period, the 'Age of Revisits', crannog research comprised a series of period-specific studies. No one dealt with notions of social change or looked at the similarities and differences between the different times that the crannogs were in use. The Bronze Age sites were studied in isolation and the early medieval sites were seen as something totally different, all in line with Lynn's separation of the site type into early medieval crannogs and some other type of diffuse, non-related prehistoric lake site. Possibly if the sites had been compared to each other these researchers might also have encountered Wood-Martin's old problem of a society that experienced very little change. It is, however, interesting to see that their interpretations as high-status settlements differ only slightly between the two periods. (For an explanation of the different theoretical approaches see Chapter 6.)

Post-processual archaeologies and crannog studies?

As discussed, there have been very few overt attempts to identify with the overall strands of processual archaeology in Ireland. The only forthright processualist in Irish archaeology is Mytum (1992⁹) (cf. Cooney 1995), but, as discussed above, some of the terminology and spheres of interest that have influenced crannog research have been borrowed from this school. Neither has there been any direct interpretative or post-processual archaeology used within crannog studies. Often in the general debate these two very different ways of thinking have been lumped together and treated as 'New Archaeology', without acknowledging that these approaches are practically opposites (for an outline of the differences between the approaches see Appendix 5).

However, theoretically aware papers and post-processual archaeology have influenced many other studies: see, for example, Cooney's analysis of Nationalism and the use of theory in Irish archaeology (1995) and Woodman's contribution on the political use of Tara (1995). Ideas about Nationalism and Archaeology have also been dealt with by, for example, M. Stout (1996). A large number of interesting papers can be found in *Early medieval Munster* (Monk and Sheehan 1998, including contributions from both Tierney and Jerry O'Sullivan). Newman (1998) has studied how medieval kingship in Ireland was constructed making use of earlier ceremonial complexes, i.e. what is referred to as 'the past in the past', a concept that could well be adapted to crannog studies. Among the interpretative landscape studies Cooney (2000a) has to be mentioned.

The processual schools were severely critiqued by Hodder (1982; 1986), for example, and by Shanks and Tilley (1987a; 1987b) and Shanks and Hodder (1995). The first blow was the realisation that no interpretation was value-free. The scientific method favoured by the processualists was not as objective as had been presumed, as observations cannot be separated from the observer. This is the notion that data are theory-laden (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 9). The processual archaeologists had uncritically accepted a positivistic epistemology. A balance to this would be, for example, the development of a phenomenological landscape archaeology (see

Tilley 1994; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Cooney 2000a). Instead one ought to look critically at, for example, the perceived ‘common-sense’ categories that were used to explain the material. To take this critique on board in crannog studies would mean to take a closer look at common explanatory structures in crannog and wetland studies such as status, hierarchies and defence, as well as much economic jargon such as exploitation of resources, subsistence strategies and wetland management. Other concepts that should be questioned are terms such as society, family, male/female, settlement, etc.; for the latter see, for example, Brück and Goodman 1999. It has been argued by anthropologists such as Marilyn Strathern (1988) that we have to unlearn our western frames of reference in order to gain a better understanding of people in other cultures. One way of doing this is to question the economic language that is pushed as a framework onto the material. Furthermore, economic notions about resource exploitation and economics may also be categories of thought that have been imposed on the material by modern perceptions.

One of these ‘common-sense’ notions is the idea of progress. It has been taken for granted, and not only in processually influenced crannog studies, that society moves forward. When there is no common ground to show what the goal is, or where different societies may have varying ideas of what is good, a unilinear forward movement might not be forthcoming.

A second objection, which is interlinked with the critique of the economicism discussed above, is concerned with the excessive focus on nature determining people’s actions. This proposes a view in which people are no more than machines. This strand of thinking can be identified in models where a climate change is seen to lead to changes in the archaeological material. Instead it was argued that humans are social and political beings who actively engage with others and their surroundings. What was new in post-processual archaeology was the idea that material culture (finds, buildings, structures) does not only reflect social conditions or activities, as proposed by traditional and processual archaeology. In crannog studies the sites and the material culture have been taken to reflect racial identity, people’s professions and status. The concept of the archaeological material also being a medium, being both expression and impression at the same time, has not been used at all in crannog studies. The material culture could have its own effect on people in the sense that it could change people’s ways of perceiving both the landscape and themselves, and could also be used in social formations and strategies. Power in the post-processual view is often not as simple as the control over resources or ranking proposed by the processual approaches. Instead, power is said to be present in every human interaction and sits partly in structure (Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 72–3).

Post-processual, critical archaeologies have also engaged in finding out how the practice of archaeology is affected by contemporary ideologies and issues, and how perceptions of the past could be used politically; for an interesting read on related matters see Bender 1998. The intention is not to politicise archaeology but to show that that aspect is always there, which also ought to make the archaeologist responsible for the interpretations. We have to be critically aware of the concepts we use to explain the material and in this critique make room for other, less programmatic ways of reading the material.

Another interesting option is to start looking at how the construction of sites such as crannogs may have affected how people participated in and paid attention to their surroundings, following much recent work in landscape archaeology (Tilley 1994; Bender 1996; 1998; R. Bradley 1993; 1998).

Another field that needs to be addressed is the relationship between nature and culture at different points in time.

PART III — OUR CONTEMPORARY PAST

The Crannog Research Programme worked in Lough Gara from 1995 to 2000. In the beginning our activities centred on the survey of the crannogs of the lake and the collection of local tradition from the area. In the later years an increasing amount of time was spent on the excavation of a small crannog on the western shores of the lake. At all stages the project involved people living around the lake today, as well as people from many other places. The activities of the project are a part of our contemporary past and show an interconnection between people, landscape and archaeology in a place in the west of Ireland. This fieldwork is not mine alone; many people have participated and have shared their knowledge of and familiarity with this landscape. This section of the book deals with our fieldwork and the experience gained therein, as well as our present relationship with and sometimes distance from the past.

5. THE PAST IS HERE AND THERE

For the last number of years I have been directing the Crannog Research Programme in its work around Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland, including the survey and excavation of crannogs. I have lived in this place during most of this time, and it and the community are really the centre of my life at present. The aim of this chapter is to portray the societies in the study area as well as to reach an understanding of people's relationship to this landscape, and in particular to the lake and the crannogs. I have done what people could call a 'deep interview' with the place. It has been important to investigate people's attitude to the past and to the archaeology around the lake. What I will try to show is how people have reflected on the project and the practice of archaeology. I want to discover the role of archaeology today, and how the past is and could be of importance for the future to the small communities around the lake. The chapter also deals with our modern viewpoint, and with archaeology as a contemporaneous practice and critique in a post-modern/late modern world.

Here

The map

A few years before I came here with the project, the community in Monasteraden on the western side of the lake set up an employment scheme that produced a booklet about the area's past, with an accompanying map. The booklet tells about the old railway line and the creamery, and also about the birds and wildlife around the lake. The map shows archaeology, geology, pubs and scenic spots. Before the map was compiled it was almost impossible to understand the surroundings and to find the outline of the lake without joining together a number of different maps. This is an area that official mapmakers have not regarded as a centre. One of the reasons for this is that the lake is cut by the county boundary between Sligo and Roscommon; until the late nineteenth century a third county, Mayo, also held part of the waters. The boundary places the people around the lake on the periphery of two different administrative systems, and the respective County Council offices are located far from the lake. The boundary has in this respect created a marginality.

The way in which the scheme in Monasteraden disregarded the superimposed boundaries in the creation of the map is almost anarchistic, and one of the leading ideas was to create a viable centre, with the lake in the middle. Monasteraden has up until recently had a very strong community, and the idea was not to exclude the other places around the lake but to make connections between small communities in rural Ireland. The map, with the lake in the centre, shows the villages of Monasteraden, Kilfree, Clonloo, Boyle, Killaraght, Kingsland, Frenchpark, Tibohine and Ballaghaderreen, all together on the same map sheet (Fig. 8).

People also saw the purpose of the map as the attraction of tourists to the area. And the map brought me. After completing the first part of my education in archaeology I worked on an excavation in Ireland at Carrowmore with Göran Burenhult. On one of the field-trips we passed the lake, and someone told me about the place and the crannogs, the man-made islands in the lake. I was also told that no research had taken place since the 1950s. When I left home I had been asked to find a subject for further research, and I found the place interesting. On my time off I

happened to walk into a bookshop in Sligo and discovered the map and the booklet about Lough Gara and its surroundings. I wrote to the people involved in the mapping project and asked if they and the community would be interested in having a few archaeologists around to carry out a research project. Through this work I have accepted the responsibility of writing a history of this place. The Crannog Research Programme has worked in the area since then, with the survey and excavation. In the beginning this map done by the community set the framework for my investigations but, owing to the material, I have had to extend the area and follow what I could see as patterns in the material.

The lake

Lough Gara is a fairly large lake on the borders of County Sligo and County Roscommon. The lake has an outflow in the Boyle River; the river creates a small lake, and then turns into a river again. This connects with Lough Key and further on with the Shannon River system, which leads to the Atlantic Ocean. Two rivers feed the lake. From the west, from lakes like Ullar in County Mayo, comes the Lung River; from the east, from the foot of the high plains of Rathcroghan, runs the Breedoge River. Lough Gara consists of three parts, the Callow in the south, the Upper in the middle and the Lower in the north (see Fig. 8).

The lake is located on the boundary between two topographically distinct areas. To the south and east are the lower lands of Roscommon, while to the north-west are the more hilly lands of Sligo. Each side of the lake has its own characteristics. The slopes of the mountain of Mullaghatee define the western edge of the lake. From this side there is an immediate sight of the lake, and a wide view over the boglands towards Annagh and Callow. On the opposite, eastern side of the lake is a series of hogback drumlins which block the view from the east towards the lake until one is really near the shore. Many visitors who are new to the area often get disorientated in this repetitive landscape, while one faces a mountainous landscape towards the west, the place of the setting sun. To the south, on the Frenchpark–Tibohine road, Monasteraden can be seen as a small mountain village on the slopes of Mullaghatee; with Keash in front, it is only possible to get a glimpse of the lake from here. The long arms of the drumlins form the shoreline, stretching in towards the lake centre from the east, creating a number of small, shallow bays. Around the edges of the lake, located in many of the drumlin bays are perhaps hundreds of crannogs. Few, if any, make use of the deeper areas further out in the lake.

The lake today is quite shallow and as a result it is not easily travelled by boat. There are a number of shoals and the waters can easily be stirred up by bad weather. Together with the natural islands in the lake — Inch Island, Crow Island and Eagles Island — there are a number of summertime peninsulas that become islands in the winter during higher water-levels. These include Inch More, Derrymore Island and the drumlin at Emlagh. The water is usually lower in the summer and the lake starts to fill up towards the autumn. Owing to lower water-levels many of the crannogs are situated on the dry shoreline during the summer. It is easy to walk around most of them in the summer, while in the winter they are surrounded by 1–1.5m of water. It is possible to see two, if not three, earlier shorelines that have cut lines into the ground around the lake.

The water-level in Lough Gara has been lowered twice during the modern era in order to improve the agricultural land around the lake. The first drainage scheme was completed in 1859. These efforts did not yield the expected results, so a second scheme was commenced in 1951. This time the main effort was put into deepening the rivers and streams, and extensive drainage work took place along the Boyle River. The main impediment that hindered the outflow from the river was Tinnecarra Rock. When this rock was blasted and the rivers were dredged, the lake



Fig. 8—The community map of Lough Gara (courtesy of Lough Gara Cultural Resources).

level fell. According to local sources the combined effect of the two schemes was a drop in water-level of *c.* 1m (Mitchell 1990; Edwards 1990, 381). It is often claimed that the crannogs of Lough Gara were just coming out of the water when the lake level was lowered again in the 1950s. However, many of the crannogs seen today also appear as islands on the first-edition Ordnance Survey maps that date from 1836. This again shows that the drop was not as great as was presumed.

Even if many of the crannogs were recorded on official maps before the water-level changes, no one had officially recognised them as crannogs until the last drainage. Wood-Martin (1886a, 300) had noted thirteen crannogs in Sligo, fourteen in Roscommon and one in Mayo. None of these were in Lough Gara. It was only after the water-level dropped in the 1950s that the artificial islands came to public notice.

One year after the second drainage, in 1952, a short article concerning the findings in Lough Gara appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*. In this article a Mr Gallagher from Ballymote reported how the new, lower water-levels had revealed a number of small islands, measuring about 10–12m in diameter, with plank floors and surrounded by stakes. There were also a number of finds made along the lakeshores at this time: for example, a Halstatt bronze sword was found on Inch Island (see Fig. 9). In the same article Dr Joseph Raftery, who later carried out the archaeological investigations around Lough Gara, commented that these

islands represented 21 crannogs, and compared the findings with sites like Knocknalappa and Ballinderry 2 (Anon. 1952). Soon after this an archaeological survey took place, which was published by R. E. Cross, one of the engineers on the drainage scheme (Cross 1953).

Dr Joseph Raftery excavated two of the crannogs in the lake — Rathtinaun on the eastern lakeshore, and Tivannagh on the Boyle River — and published brief accounts in 1957. The foundations of Rathtinaun were laid down in the late Bronze Age and the site was reused in the early medieval period. It is possible, judging from the artefact material alone, that the site also had a later medieval phase. At Tivannagh the earliest layers seem to date from the Neolithic, or possibly from the Mesolithic period. Just like Rathtinaun, this site was reused in the early medieval period (Raftery 1957).

The lake is not in the centre

The large blue mountain called Kesh dominates the mid-lake view. Kesh sits to the north. Just beside this bowl-shaped mountain lies the megalithic complex of Carrowkeel. Generally speaking, the area is full of archaeological remains. Kesh is the mountain that I use to orient myself when walking around the lake.

I do not really know if I would call the lake pleasant. The shoreline is in many places not suitable for walking, being cut by very deep and wide drains as well as by small rivers and streams that run down from the slopes of Mullaghatee or out from between the drumlins. Both the drains and the field boundaries are fenced off by rows of barbed wire and electrical fencing. Another reason is that the shoreline is not always solid. In places it consists of gravel and sand, while in other places it is fairly wet water-meadow or marly/marshy. It is rare to meet people while surveying the crannogs. Many who have lived in the area longer than I would simply say that the lake is *there*...

It is clear that, despite its central position on the map, the lake is not at the centre of people's lives today. In this respect the map does not fully represent people's cognitive landscape. To say that the lake is there describes the mental distance from the lake. Not many people live by the lake. An integral part of our survey was to get an understanding of how people today perceive the lake and its surroundings, as well as to discover what the archaeology means to them. To find this out we interviewed people who live in the surroundings to see how local inhabitants relate to the landscape. What looks close on the map may not be close in a cognitive sense. Clare, who lives in the stretch of land called 'the islands' (a place not noted on any of the maps), does not know many people in Killaraght, and she cannot recall that she was ever there before. Carmel, a neighbour and a cousin of Clare, was never at the back of Mullaghatee until recently. Their perception of the area does not fully correspond to the equally measured distances on the map (neither does mine). Places that are nearer to us than the next parish are towns like Ballaghaderreen, Swinford and Ballyhaunis, to which we travel by car. When choosing a building site people would prefer road frontage to lake frontage, although there is nothing wrong with a lake view. The only people who would willingly settle in the marginal areas are foreigners, like the Dutch couple who occupy a remote mountain location, or some



Fig. 9—Bronze sword found at Mc Loughlins Island (i.e. Inch Island) in Lough Gara (after Anon. 1952, 182).

Germans by the shore, or local gentry. Overall the roads are much more important than the lake. At the same time the lake is referred to in many house names, especially in names for Bed and Breakfasts on the western side of the lake. This and the map might imply that the lake is increasingly becoming part of the identity of people on this side. This west side is the side from which the lake is visible. People on the eastern side instead have their eyes set on their nearest town, Boyle.

The road is important in modern living and so is the contact with other places. While some of the younger generation want nothing more than to get out of this place, to travel to Dublin or Sligo or abroad, there are also many who wish to make their future here in the countryside, by the lake. A common opinion is that one ought to leave the place for a while, to come back with a refreshed mind and new eyes for the place. It is thought that the place would mean more to someone returning, to people who have realised what they lost by leaving. There are so many forces, some of them inherent in modernity itself, that urge us to leave, for a bit of change, for better places, in the name of progress, while the forces that urge us to come back and stay are fewer and weaker.

A fountain to remember

Today many members of the community give the impression that the lake is spatially distant from them. People have done something about this. In 1999 the community in Monasteraden completed the building of a monument in the crossroads of the village, a fountain that lights up in green, red and blue when the evening comes. The fountain has the outline of the lake, and around the edges are miniature crannogs and rocky cairns that symbolise the crannogs as they look today. There is also a small stone cottage fitted in because it was neat and nicely done. At the back of the fountain there is a seat and the place is a meeting-point for people too young to get into the nearby pub (Pl. 3).

I was asked to open this monument in August when the excavations were nearly over and the project had come to an end. The year had been one of the worst in my life, and for many others in the village too. It had started with the murder of the principal community activist and village leader, Terry. He had started the building of the fountain, and here we stood at its completion without him. All of us in the community felt the importance of carrying through our projects, and this was one of them completed. Although in the face of what has happened everything feels shallow and out of place, we have to carry on. I continued to do my analysis of the lake, past and present, because Terry would have wanted it done. His goal was to ensure that people would be able to continue to live in this area in the future, and that emigrants would be able to return and make their living here. In some respects this is what I want the fountain to remind us of. This is the reason why I continued my work. The fountain as a monument could serve as a reminder of Terry's ambitions for the community's future and of how we worked together as a group, as a community. Focusing on the lake would have created a new unity of the smaller communities along the edges and the shores.

Community

Globalisation also affects this area, and many people live with one foot in late modernism. The growing interconnections between markets and the increasing flows of capital and credit also mark this place. Late modernism with the advances in communication techniques threatens us with the homogenisation of attitudes, and the flattening out of local cultures (cf. Berman 1982; Lash and Urry 1994, 3). There is awareness in the area of the pressures that a growing globalised

market can put on small societies. The market economy has largely come to replace democracy in many places around the world; we may think that we have some influence over what the market produces, but the market is not democratic. Some people here are organised in 'Communities under Threat', a group that aims to ensure the survival of small rural communities in the west of Ireland. The idea behind one of their activities is to short-circuit the capital flows from the rural areas towards the large centralised markets by purchasing local products as much as possible. There are also organisations like 'Developing the West' whose work aims to enable people to live in their rural communities and to see that the direction of development does not always come from somewhere else.



Pl. 3—The fountain in Monasteraden.

While I have led the Crannog Research Programme, the project has also represented something we have done together. Important questions for Monasteraden and for the communities around the lake are whether people will now try to walk alone and whether the idea of community still has a role to play in their lives. An increasing privatisation of society is common today, and not only as a result of politics influenced by Thatcherism. Individualism and egoism are not hard to understand in a modern setting; they belong to the cultural logic of late modernism, pushing resource maximisation on behalf of the individual. What is more interesting to contemplate is that communities still exist and that people still work towards what they think is the common good. If people still feel that the community is important, there is every reason in the world to gather strength at local level, and the initiative that lies behind the map is as relevant as ever.

The cultural logic of late modernism leads to the interchangeability of places, where living in one place means just as little as living in another place. The emotional ties to a place through its past form part of the thinking behind the present study. Interestingly enough, recent commentators have suggested that the way out of the post-modern dilemma lies in the 're-constitution of communities' (Lash and Urry 1994, 3).

There

The past

In the strengthening of local communities the past can play a distinct role. What to remember and what to forget is a social practice, a shared but not always articulate decision. The past can be reached in many different ways. I work with the notion of contextualisation, where I try to make sense of and draw connections between different material assemblages or try to understand the location of different sites. In this respect I am also trying to gain an understanding of people who lived in the past. For many people around the lake, the past is about getting in contact and making connections. Frank, a man who used to live in the area but now only comes for visits during the summer, told me during one of our chats that the past lies in the yearning to get in contact with

the ancestors that lived around the lake. Although we share the wish to make contact with people from the past, our methods differ. He felt that by touching the stones of old buildings it is possible to get in contact with them, to understand their feelings, even though one possibly would not understand their different way of thinking. In his view the past was something different from the present to some degree.

A nearer past was addressed by Michael, who pointed out that the past may not be located very far from the present. It is possible to see the past as if it started only just now. Michael said that the past is the beginning of this sentence, and that the past was everything that happened up until now. For younger people in the area the past is the Ice Age, the Stone Age and what the ancestors did, and the wonders of how their family managed to survive up until now. The past lies to a greater extent in the life story of their families than in archaeology.

But sites and especially objects can also represent the past. People react differently when presented with artefacts. My friend Nigel and I were bringing home a quernstone just found in a drain, but we had first to go to a petrol station. There we met a priest who no longer serves the parish. We showed him the quernstone and he touched it and commented, 'Oh! Those poor people!' Why did he see them as poor? Both Nigel and I felt puzzled by the reaction. Did he mean that they were poor, or that they had a harder life, or was it that they were not Christian? The past in his eyes clearly represented something worse than the present.

Just as the past can provide a comparison with the present for some, others think that people from the past can influence the present. Some worry that ghosts from the past could come to persecute them because of disrespectful uses of old places. A friend of mine told me how she and her sisters had played at an old burial-place, and that from time to time she worries whether she might have disturbed the dead and whether they therefore might trouble her. A local schoolteacher, Una Staunton, who taught at the school at Clooncunny Bridge, has related to the past in a similar way in a privately published booklet. The publication contains a semi-mythological narrative of past races that lived along the lakeshores, as well as an account of the local gentry such as the O'Garas and the MacDermots. It also contains a collection of poems about the lake and the surroundings (Staunton, n.d.). To describe the past in poems is a recurring genre in local historical journals (see *Corran Herald* 1996, etc.). In the poems Staunton views the past as if the lake holds a secret, or as if the past is divided from the present by a curtain. This curtain can be pushed aside so that the past can be glimpsed. The past is in constant danger of becoming lost as it drifts in the haze. But the past in her writings is also the realm of the dead. This does not mean that the past is passive; it can indeed exert influence on the present. In a poem called 'Draining of Lough Gara' the past plays a fairly active role:

'Quiet in their graves the O'Garas sleep
Yet o'er their lake safe vigil keep
While "Progress" rumbles with stately tread
To find — Crannoga of the dead' (Staunton, n.d.).

The progress referred to in this last stanza of the poem was the machinery that improved the land by the drainage or, as Staunton saw it, cut through the cultured lands around the lake. The crannogs are seen as rising from the waters, taking revenge on the modern developments. Here the poems show a different attitude to the past than that of the priest, and also indicate the power of the lake in people's minds.

The past is not as present to all people as it seems to have been to Staunton, although she also

saw it as something that runs the risk of being lost. When making inquiries about the past, I have often been told that if only I was here some ten years ago such and such a person could have told me about the past, but they are no longer alive. In this respect some people are known to have ‘possessed’ the past, and with their deaths the past also died. I have often come across situations where, interestingly enough, there are also younger persons who are in possession of the past.

The lake’s past and future

For people in general the lake’s past does not stretch that far back, often only as far as the time of the drainage when the crannogs were found, and it is often remarked that others, people not from the area, found the crannogs. Some people also remember the time when the lake was so high that regattas could be held there, while others have family histories about boat-trips from Belenagare to Coolavin. Otherwise most people see the historical tradition as broken off by the Great Famine, as people had not the strength to think about the past while starving. Staunton (n.d.) has a different view of these matters, in which the past stretches back to 3500 BC. This is a story of how different races invaded the area. First came the stone-using people, followed by but coexisting with the bronze-using people. For Staunton the lake was a place that held onto its secrets, secrets of the dead.

Other stories about the lake and other places in the area can be found in the Schoolbook manuscripts in the Department of Folklore, UCD, which are collections of folklore from local schools all over the country in the 1940s. One of these manuscripts tells a tale about seven enchanted sisters, each of whom lived in a lake. One of them lived on a crannog, another in Lough Gara, and one in the nearby Lough Key. According to what was then an old tradition these sisters would one day decide to meet, and the land would be drowned under the waters (Schoolbook manuscript 239: Tibohine, Frenchpark, Roscommon). In Lough Gara, the lady of the lake materialised on the crannog called ‘the Bawn’s island’. In these manuscripts there are also stories about fairy cattle and enchanted horses that come from the lake. If one of these creatures got into a herd it would deprive the other animals of their strength and make them sick (Schoolbook manuscript 238). This idea that the lake waters were connected with evil creatures that could cause harm to people and animals occurs in other places (possibly one can also see parallels with Staunton’s poems). D’Arcy wrote in his papers on the crannogs of Killyvilla and Drumacritten that the lake waters were connected with folk beliefs in fairy horses (D’Arcy 1887, 209–10). Traditions that involve the ritual swimming of horses and of cattle and horses through lakes and rivers around harvest time have also been noted. The waters are seen as keeping animals healthy, but there are also stories about how it could harm them (see MacNeill 1962, 243–59). There is quite a lot of folklore evidence for how the waters could be charged with both benevolent and sometimes dangerous powers. These powers would be connected to the water’s liminality and transgressive properties, thus creating a dangerous geography.

The future of the lake is today connected with anxiety. Many of the younger people worry about the lake and the dangers of pollution coming from somewhere along the Lung River. Clare explains this as that people take less care of the lake when they do not need it, when they don’t need the water for anything. People ought to take more care of the lake than they do. Staunton instead worried about development coming in with a new race of alien people. Older people see the future of the lake in terms of tourism and fishermen, as a place that can be developed for leisure. Some people interested in developing the lake for fishing have lobbied for the raising of the water-levels again. This would conflict with the turf-cutting that provides a livelihood for some people, and would also submerge parts of the shores that have been used for the summer

grazing of cattle. On the other hand, it could possibly protect the archaeology — to make it hidden again.

The local papers, the *Roscommon Herald* and the *Sligo Champion*, have reported on the excavations a couple of times. A recent article about our excavation is called ‘Dig seeks to uncover the crannog mystery’; another is called ‘Thousand year old timbers’. The press also reported on the finds in the 1950s, but the headings of the articles are somewhat different: ‘Lake finds show progress of life in early ages’, ‘Riddle of the crannogs’, or ‘Finding the lost city of Ireland’s first queen’. If we compare the titles of the articles to see what the public get out of archaeology, we can see that the past has been viewed as a story about progress on the one hand, and on the other hand it is compared to a riddle or a mystery. That the past is seen as mysterious is something I encountered when I was asked to write the plaque for the fountain at the crossroads. This is the text on the plaque:

‘The crannogs of Lough Gara

Today most Crannogs look like little wooded islands in the water. The word crannog did not come into use until around 1200 AD, but has despite this been applied to artificial islands dating to almost all eras.

In Lough Gara these man made islands, big and small, are situated in the shallow bays and inlets of this large lake. They have been counted in hundreds. The archaeological material suggests that small islands were built in this lake already in the Late Mesolithic around 3500 BC. The practice of building on the shallow shores gained in strength during the Late Bronze Age, 1200–800 BC and then again in the Early Medieval times around 600 AD. Some were used in the 17th century. In places remains from many of these time-periods can be found on the same island — as someone from here described it — the crannog is built on another crannog. Most islands in Lough Gara are stonebuilt — many look like cairns. Some have small causeways leading out from the shoreline, perhaps some of them had small stone houses, used in later periods. Some of them show no evidence of houses at all.

This lake has had many pasts — it still holds the hope of many possible futures for the people living around the shores. There is evidence that the crannogs were used just recently in this area. Folk memory tells that they are still active in people’s minds today. This just also happens when you are looking at this local interpretation of the crannogs here at the crossroads, bringing them into mind.¹⁰ The crannogs are now part of your memory and you are thereby forming theirs.’

The content of the plaque was ratified at the community meeting, but it needed to be corrected for spelling mistakes and so it was sent out to people in the area for review. The people who made the language corrections also suggested changes to the text. These suggested changes might be more interesting than the plaque itself. In what came back the whole last section had been rewritten. It was as if people could not reconcile themselves to a view of the past in which the creation of memory is a process that we all participate in. It had been replaced with a line about the site’s mysterious past, just like the headings in the local newspapers, confirming that the past is not *here*, but lies mysteriously *there*.

The reuse of monuments, and what a crannog is

I will take this chance to try to explain what I meant by the last paragraph on the plaque at the crossroads. Monuments and artefacts may have had an original meaning, but this meaning may

have changed or been reworked ever since the very beginning. This meaning might well have already been complemented by other meanings when the site was built. There is probably no single idea that has made sense of crannogs all through time, and there would also have been times when they fell out of memory. The sites have attracted attention over and over again; they are inscribed and reinscribed with meaning, and this process continues to this day. This is what Bradley calls 'the afterlife of monuments' (R. Bradley 1993, chapter 6). The meaning of the crannogs of Lough Gara has changed throughout time and keeps changing; as well as investigating how people in the past understood these monuments, it is important to understand the context in which they figure today, the way they are being remembered now.

The past and the monuments around us are not really a finished story. The stories we tell about them and the physical use we make of them keep linking them to new pasts. In this way we can argue that the crannogs never really went out of use, not as long as people tell stories about them. And there are stories about both the lake and the crannogs. Some people have told me that the crannogs were in use during the Famine times, when they were used to prepare food for the starving people. There is one island in the northern part of the lake that has been called Stir-about-island. Some people have given the crannogs on their land personal names; we have called a crannog that was a terror to survey 'the Devil's crannog'; another crannog is called Oen Daddy, a third Ned's Island. Long before I was here there was a man who told stories about the people living under the lake. The story has it that he was considered a bit mad, but that his madness had been vindicated by the finding of the crannogs in the 1950s. After all, the madman was right. I think we all have to agree that these stories show people's involvement with this place.

Others told me about finds of artefacts from the lakeshore. Stone and bronze axes are found at regular intervals in the area, but other finds have also been made in the lake. A man in the nursing home in Boyle told me how they had found three human skulls on a crannog. The men took pity on the skulls and reburied them near the crannog. This crannog was supposed to have been located in Feridia Bay at Derrymaquirk townland. While the townland name occurs, there are no special names for the bays in the official sources; each inlet is instead named by the two townlands that most often divide it into two parts. The inlets are not seen as named entities.

Placenames like Feridia Bay cannot be found on the official maps. At some place between Inchmore and Sroove the waters are called Poll More, which is translated by Nan Drury as 'the great hole in the lake'. There are also other areas in the lake that are described as dangerous holes, and the lake waters are not just an anonymous plain of water. Instead the lake comprises many places with changing qualities and different characteristics. In this area, by the lake, there are places called 'Ryelawn' and 'the Islands' which have some historical origin. There is also a constant naming process going on, whereby places get named after their owners. Some people, like the fishing gillies, have also started to rename the islands in the lake, so instead of names like Inch Island and Eagles Island we today have a layer of commercial names like pike island, perch island, etc., transforming the landscape into a commodity for sale to the tourists.

However, this is only one part of the story. Besides being still in use in people's minds, both the crannogs and a number of other archaeological sites are in physical use by people in the area. We still celebrate Mass at St Attracta's Holy Well, and people we love are buried within the walls of the early medieval monasteries in Monasteraden and Carrowntemple, in Killaraght and Tibohine. But the crannogs are also used today. To understand how they are used we have to look at the recent archaeological material found on them. On a number of occasions I have found cartridges and cans on the crannogs. The shrubs that grow on many of these sites provide perfect cover for duck-shooting, and the cans imply shorter periods of waiting. These are remains from

the male world of shooting. On another crannog was found pieces of white broken glass. According to the Schoolbook manuscripts in the Department of Folklore, UCD, this crannog had a special name and was used for illicit distilling of poteen in the past, as were some others in the lake. Kinahan (1870–1, 461) discussed how such activity could have taken place on the islands, and suggested that the finds of querns on the surface of the crannogs could be connected with such activities. Distilling was also mentioned as the use of an island off Boa Island, Co. Fermanagh (see Davies 1940, 122). What we find on archaeological sites from today is worth a study in itself, reflecting present attitudes to the sites.

The crannogs are used at present for other purposes as well. Many people have been telling me about the crannog in the water just beyond our excavation. In our documentation it is called KILC 21, and in people's minds this is a boundary-marker down at Regan's shore; mothers tell their children to be careful not to go further into the lake than this. It is not safe to swim further than this in the lake during the summer. Crannogs have other uses as well; for example, the small crannog site in the northern half of the lake, KILF 5, is used for mooring a boat. There are also stories about how one of the crannogs, KILA 52, was used as a hen-house in the summer.

What a crannog is

In my interviews I have asked people what a crannog is, and never yet has any of these answers come up. No one has mentioned that crannogs are for duck-shooting or that they are markers in the water. In some ways the crannogs that I study as an archaeologist are not the same crannogs that people relate to in their everyday life. I think this reveals the invisible boundary established between people and the past, a boundary that can also be seen as existing between people and academia. Ever since the crannogs were found in the 1950s they have been connected with people from elsewhere. I think this might be one reason why these stories were not told; another reason is that people mainly associate archaeology with the study of a distant past. On being asked what a crannog is, many people pass the question back to me, saying that I am the one who is supposed to tell them, I am the expert. Other answers are that a crannog is not very much to see — a heap of stones in the water. Frank visualises the crannogs as places where cannibals lived, perhaps stealing people from other crannogs. The zigzagging causeways meant that prisoners could not escape from the islands. Other people believe that it was the other way around, that the crannogs were built for protection from wild animals or people on the mainland, and that the irregular causeways would hinder anyone trying to gain access. Another friend, Darryl, also reflected on the causeways of the crannogs and suggested that, like souterrains or caves, they carried the notion of secrecy. Many people that I have been talking to have commented on how the landscape is perforated by tunnels and souterrains, secretly connecting one place to another.

Some people have reflected on the size of the islands. Many are not over 25m in diameter, and are therefore seen as too small for people to live on all day long. Perhaps, then, they were places for temporary withdrawal. Crannogs are seen by most people as islands with houses on them, built for defence. My job is not to replace these memories with something better or truer, but to enrich these memories. I have had problems in answering what a crannog is. I am still not really sure, and I prefer to think of what a crannog does, in terms of enclosing space, attracting attention, inhabiting the lakeshore. To some extent people expect archaeology to provide functional answers, and it feels peculiar to be unable to fulfil these expectations.

Mainly local people have visited the excavation to ask questions about what we really did see among the stones. Not many people have commented on my nationality and my accent. Some have asked whether there are crannogs in Sweden. Others have commented on my excavations

and said 'Enjoy your holidays', finding it hard to believe that archaeology is a job. This comment, in its well-meant cheekiness, reveals archaeology as a subject that has removed itself from issues of real importance and has become a sort of pastime, something to do when you are at leisure. It is our fault that we do not connect with any relevant social issues, and I know that this is the thinking behind the comment. It is mainly academics who have found it hard to accept the thought that I am not here to study the Vikings, my presumed forefathers, but the fact that we do not have crannogs in Sweden might legitimise my study in their eyes.

Discussion

As things stand today, the lake and the crannogs are not at the core of people's lives. Nevertheless some people have opinions about the crannogs and try to explain their existence. Compared to the stories recorded in the Schoolbook manuscripts, the recent folklore about them has not much of an 'Otherworld' element. The stories about the lady of the lake and about fairy horses have been relegated to the past memories of the lake. It is more common to see them as places of refuge in times of danger, or as those sites that the archaeologists are interested in.

However, I have been arguing in this chapter that the crannogs have not really gone out of use. What can also be shown is that the crannogs have been in physical use up to the present. They have, for example, been hides for people shooting ducks, as well as acting as boundary-markers for swimmers. In this respect the biography of the crannogs has not ceased to be constructed.

Another aspect of this phenomenon is that although these sites may have been constructed at different periods, they share a contemporaneity in the landscape today. This would lead to the conclusion that the past is not only there; it is here and there. Someone once said that the crannogs are like black holes in time. They do not share the same limited temporality as us humans, and they have had relevance during longer periods of time. The crannogs are also a part of our life stories today, shaping life by the lake in their own ways.

6. THE FIELDWORK

In the preceding chapter we examined what the crannogs of Lough Gara and the lake mean to people today. By visiting and describing these sites together with their relationship to other sites and their location in the landscape, we hoped to obtain a richer understanding of what they would have meant to people living by the lake before the modern era and at different times. This chapter deals mainly with the general results from the lake survey and tries to relate these findings to sites from other lakes (the more detailed survey information can be found in Appendix 1). Our survey also included such sites as ringforts and burnt mounds, but they will be dealt with in their respective places in the part of the book called 'Lough Gara through time'. In this chapter we will try to deal with the question of whether there were crannogs dating from before the early medieval period. Two earlier researchers claimed that the lake had crannogs from at least the Stone Age and that there were crannogs in the transition between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. It was also claimed that Lough Gara had more sites than any other crannog lake, as well as a larger variety of sites than normal lakes (Cross 1953; J. Raftery 1957; 1972a). We will check the validity of these statements and discuss whether all the sites so claimed can really be regarded as crannogs.

Furthermore, in order to get a better understanding of these sites I will present a way of classifying crannogs in the field. This scheme has been used to analyse the crannogs of the lake, but is based on knowledge of sites in Lough Gara as well as sites in the rest of County Sligo, County Roscommon and County Monaghan. Later on I will present the different dating methods used for these sites, and in particular the radiocarbon dating series for the sites from Lough Gara. The classificatory scheme and the dating show that there are both morphological similarities and differences between sites in use at different periods. These considerations and an attempt to construct a sequence in the material are necessary to build a foundation for the interpretation of these sites over time that follows in Part IV.

The last section of this chapter is called 'A discussion of island space' and aims to make use of the survey information to discuss the spatiality of these sites. I will start to unravel this complex multiperiod material from this end, before allowing it to entangle itself again in its social context and relationship to other sites and people.

The survey

The Crannog Research Programme in Lough Gara

Our project surveyed the lakeshores and the waters of Lough Gara during the summers of 1995–2000. During summer 2000 we were also contracted to visit all the crannogs registered for County Sligo on behalf of Dúchas. In Lough Gara there were earlier surveys that we had to take into account when carrying out our own activities. The initial aim of our survey was to see whether there were still unrecorded crannogs in the area and to check the validity of earlier surveys. A further aim was to compare and contrast the sites and to discuss their place in the multitemporal landscape of the lake.

Earlier surveys in Lough Gara

Although Raftery must have carried out a complete survey of Lough Gara, the only survey

published to date is that by the engineer on the drainage scheme, Mr Cross (1953). In this article, entitled 'Lough Gara: a preliminary survey', the find circumstances in Lough Gara were discussed and the different types of sites were shown. Cross also included a map showing the location of a total of 145 crannogs (see Fig. 10). According to this map the lake had two types of crannogs: triangles represent the 35 larger crannog islands, while filled circles represent the 110 smaller stone platforms. Most sites are located along the Boyle River and in the inlets on the eastern side of the lake (see Fig. 10). In the archives of Dúchas there is an unpublished map that was made available to the project by Mr Victor Buckley. This corresponds in general to the published map, except that the sites are numbered from 1 to 145 and it is drawn at a larger scale (6in. to 1 mile). There is no information on who prepared this map, and it may have been either Raftery or Cross. In this work the map will be called the 'numbered Cross map' owing to the similarity between these maps.

Raftery, however, published notes which show more than twice as many crannogs in Lough Gara as the Cross map. He had 360 crannogs registered for the lake, of which 300 were of a smaller type (Raftery 1957, 14; forthcoming). Both these numbers are quite high, given that a normal crannog lake contains one or two sites. The same year as the Cross map was published another survey took place. The results were collected on a 25in. map, which is signed 'Mr D. W. Forsyth, July 1953'. The map holds information on the size and the OD mid-point height of the sites; it covers the Boyle River from Cuppanagh Bridge at Lough Gara down to Tinnecarra. It is unclear whether this survey only dealt with the river or whether it incorporated the lake as well. A swift comparison between the Cross map and the Forsyth map reveals differences between the two surveys. There are more sites marked on the Forsyth map than on the Cross map. Furthermore, apparently corresponding sites on both maps are given somewhat different geographical locations. Overall there is much more detail in the Forsyth map. This map may provide evidence for more sites than shown on the Cross maps, as claimed by Joseph Raftery. Against this is the fact that the artefacts in the Museum as well as the documentation of the two excavations make use of the number series from the numbered Cross map. Rathtinaun is called crannog 61 and Tivannagh crannog 124, just as on the numbered Cross map. The Museum documentation also shows that Joseph Raftery abandoned an earlier number series for this series, rather than expanding the number series for a higher number of sites. Professor Barry Raftery now keeps this unpublished map at UCD. The Forsyth map was not available to me until after the major survey was carried out. There are rumours that a third map existed, the Master McLoughlin map, composed by a local schoolteacher. I have not been able to locate this as yet.

Dúchas (formerly the OPW) has recently surveyed both the Sligo and the Roscommon sides of the lake. Their SMR (Sites and Monuments Record) is built on a paper survey, in which information has been collected from the early Ordnance Survey maps and documentary references to sites as well as from the analysis of aerial photos. The crannogs registered in the SMR were originally based on the information from the Cross survey. Additional sites depend on information gained from their own site visits or sites reported to Dúchas by the public. In their recent field surveys as yet unregistered crannogs had been located on the western side of the lake.

Our survey

The two Cross maps and the information from the SMR formed the background to our survey of the sites in Lough Gara. The survey was carried out by talking to people who had connections with the lake and by walking the full shoreline of Lough Gara and the Boyle River, along with stretches of the Lung River and the Breedoge River. Parts of the lake were surveyed from a canoe, and we also dived around a few sites. The major survey work started in the summer of 1995. This

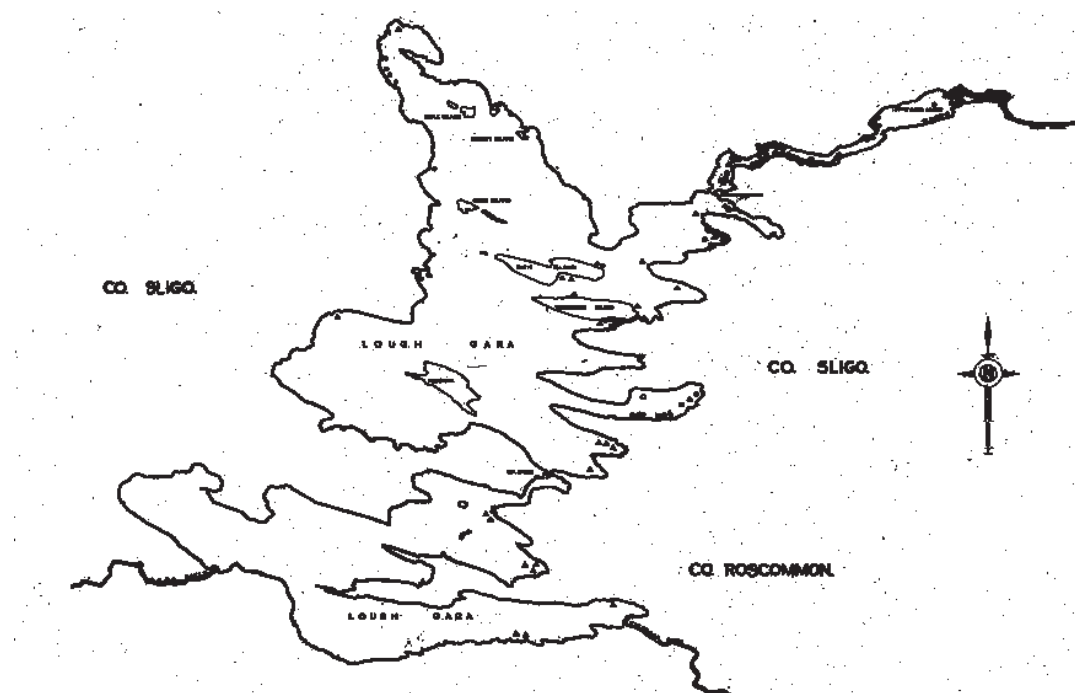


Fig. 10—Lough Gara, showing distribution of crannogs (after Cross 1953).

summer was excellent for the purpose. It was dry and provided us with one of the lowest water-levels since the 1950s. Each team was given the responsibility for a parish, and the full extent of the lakeshore was walked in a strip approximately 100–150m wide, stretching inland from the shoreline. I have also walked the shore in winter, when the lake is higher and the crannogs are surrounded by water. Some of the shores that consisted of sand and marl at the time of drainage are now under grass or overgrown with reeds. In the areas where the shoreline is under pasture the visibility is quite good, while in other areas it can be described as a complete jungle. Responding to the fact that Dúchas had recently found new sites on the western lakeshore, a stronger emphasis was given to the survey in this part of the lake. The availability of the Cross maps also led us to a thorough search of the areas marked, but this did not mean that other areas were neglected.

The first task was to identify and survey as many crannogs as possible. A new site could be claimed if it met a few of the following conditions: distinct shape and material, right position in the landscape (below earlier shorelines), changes in the vegetation (nettles), finds of bone and wood, artefacts and local tradition. Local tradition could at times provide information about sites and finds from the time of the drainage. It was seen as important to note the measurements of the sites and their location in the landscape. This information was written down on individual site reports, which usually included a photo of the site. The sites were given individual numbers (see Appendix 1).

Crannog morphology

Owing to its variety of sites, Lough Gara is a good place to start a discussion about site morphology. As shown in the research history, finds from crannogs can date from almost all

periods and, as the large radiocarbon series from a number of these sites in Lough Gara will show, there was activity in Lough Gara from the early Mesolithic through to the later medieval period. The following discussion, however, is built primarily on morphological and topological criteria rather than on dating. Lynn, who set the standards for what was supposed to be acknowledged as a crannog, blended morphological criteria with an interpretation of the site's function, favouring the defensive aspects of crannogs (Lynn 1983); as noted earlier, this method leads to the exclusion of alternative interpretations. The classification below is built on morphological criteria alone and leaves the question of dating and the interpretation of a site's function to a later stage.

Taking as our starting-point the definition of a crannog as a largely man-made island, it is important to resolve the following questions in the field.

- (1) To what extent is/was the site enclosed (on all sides) by water? Was/is access to/exit from the site ever delimited by water? What is the site's position in relation to an earlier shoreline? Should other watery places be included as well?
- (2) To what extent is the site man-made, and what field evidence proves this?

These two questions are central to the discussion of whether or not a site is a crannog. The following classification scheme is suggested on the basis of our experience in the survey of the crannogs of Lough Gara, and taking into account the knowledge gained from our survey of other lakes in Sligo and in other counties (at total of 200 crannog sites). Rather than applying a theory to the material, the scheme uses a synthesis of the materiality of these sites and a traditional classificatory scheme.

Classification key

This classification key serves to sort the crannog material into groups and types. It also points out other morphological details that might be of importance for the discussion and the interpretation of the site. This key (Fig. 11) should be read from left to right and from the top down. Sites on the left-hand side can be more easily argued to be crannogs than those on the right. As this is mainly a method of describing the sites as they appear in the field, discussions of what they looked like when in use and how they may have been perceived will be left until later. The purpose of this key is not primarily to classify the sites in order to say that they all are similar; instead I believe in doing this in order to enable people to focus on important morphological details on the sites, which would help to interpret the sites as well as to discuss their differences. I think it could be a help to have the general patterns drawn up as it is only then that we can start to trace the differences between the sites.

Groups

There are two different groups of crannogs in Lough Gara and elsewhere, on the basis of surface material — the crannog cairn and the crannog mound. The crannog cairn has a stony surface. The crannog mound has a surface of organic material such as grass, soil, wood, etc. An important criterion for a site to be classified as a crannog is that its body is raised slightly above its surroundings, making it into an island. Excluded from the group of crannogs are sites that have no body of filling, either of cairn or of mound material, that raises them above the water or wetland. Such sites include the circles of stones or posts/piles set in a circular fashion like hut sites or fish-traps located on the shoreline or in wetlands. I have decided to name such sites lakeside settlements or activities, although they have been called unfinished crannogs in some surveys.
























Groups	Cairn	Mound	No filling
Types High - h = 2m Low - h = 0.5-2m Platform - h = 0.5m	  	  	
Form	 Circular	 Oval/elongated	 Irregular
Section	 Even	 Mid-cairn	 Mid-hollow
Surface material Composition	Flints/boulders Dense packing	Shattered stones Loose packing	Wood/bones Scattered
Edge slope - gradual - sharp - berm - bank	   	Edge material - wooden palisade - revetting - external - radial timbers - chain of stones - drystone wall	     
Lakebed	Marl/mud	Sand	Peat

Fig. 11—Principles for the classification of crannogs. The scheme reads from left to right, where, in general, properties to the left make a stronger case for the site being a crannog. This classification scheme was inspired by K.G. Selinge (Hyenstrand 1984).

Types

The two groups of crannogs can occur in three different types — the high, the low and the platform crannog. Height above the bottom sediments is the determining factor for deciding which type each site belongs to. The platform crannog measures 0.1–0.5m above its surroundings. The low crannog measures from 0.5m to 2m above its surroundings. The high crannog measures 2–3.5m above its surroundings. These heights show the individual site's resistance to daily and seasonal water-level changes. An aspect that needs to be discussed in relation to a site's height is the likelihood that it might have sunk down into the sediments, which seems more probable for a larger site. This would lead to an underestimation of its height. The same effect might be produced if the site is located in a bog, as part of it may be overgrown with peat.

Form

The crannogs can have different forms, varying from circular to oval and elongated. (I have never so far encountered rectangular or square crannogs.) There are also irregular sites of no fixed shape, which can mean that the site is broken up into numerous parts, or that the body leads off in a variety of directions.

Section

The section through these sites varies. The simplest profile is the dome-shaped site, where the surface rises evenly from the edge over the site, suggesting that it once had an even surface. Another profile type rises sharply from the lakebed on one side to form a mid-cairn, slightly off-centre. Some sites show the opposite feature, having a central hollow instead of a cairn. The mid-cairn/hollow is often surrounded by a plateau that slopes gradually into a berm forming the edge of the site.

Edge

The edge of the site should be noted. The edges around crannogs can vary from sharp to gradual or indistinct. They can consist of wood piling or a boulder-chain, or can be of the same material as the rest of the site. Some sites have a berm of stone. The existence of a revetting palisade that holds the crannog material together or an outer palisade has been important in earlier definitions. Some sites, such as Cro-Inis and one of the crannogs in Lough Kinale (E.P. Kelly 1991a), have an earlier outer palisade and a later revetting palisade. Others may be sitting on timbers radiating out from the main body.

Other information

Some sites have additional features such as causeways, harbours or jetties. In order to be able to judge whether a site was once an island it is important to note its location in relation to earlier shorelines. If the site is located in water it is pertinent to describe the bottom conditions. If the site sits on lake sediments such as marl, mud or lake sand, there is an increased probability that it was once an island surrounded by water. If the site is surrounded by peat, this could imply marshland/wetlands, although it could also mean that the place was formerly a lake. More lakes than Lough Gara have been affected by drainage and water-level changes, and it can at times be difficult to be sure whether the site was ever surrounded by water, without excavation or coring. In this situation it could be essential to note the location of the site in relation to earlier shorelines around the lake and to figure out where causeways are leading. They could possibly connect the site to earlier shorelines.

To determine whether an excavated site was situated on a shoreline or in a lake it is important to examine the possibility that the sediments on which the site is built may represent a lakebed, a shore or wetlands. If the site rests on lake sediments it is quite clear that it was intended to be an island when it was built.

With the help of this information it should be possible to judge a site's insularity and to understand whether it is a crannog or another type of site. The survey data should also be augmented with information about location, views from/to site, distance to other sites, etc.

Crannog, crannog possible and unlikely crannogs

In the survey we have tried to describe the sites according to the criteria above. However, not all sites from earlier surveys can be judged to be crannogs. There are sites that only fulfil a limited number of the criteria set out for being man-made islands; these are called 'crannog possible'. This term has also been used for sites described in earlier surveys that have not been located by our survey but for which there are enough records to suggest that they existed. This applies in particular to many of the Cross sites. Sites that have been located and judged not to fulfil the criteria for being crannogs have remained in the record and have been termed 'crannog unlikely' or 'no crannog'.

The sites in Lough Gara according to the classification scheme

During the survey it was found that for many of the 145 sites registered on the Cross map there is very little field evidence today. There is even less field evidence for the 360 sites mentioned by Raftery. The number of crannogs in Lough Gara depends on how we define crannogs and how we treat the evidence from earlier surveys. The highest number of crannogs (all types) that can be claimed for Lough Gara is 190. This figure includes sites of all types, from high-cairn crannogs to platform mounds and from definite to possible and unlikely sites. If we break these figures down into other classifications the numbers look different. There are 61 definite crannogs in the lake, and 123 possible and unlikely sites. Two sites from earlier surveys have been declassified totally with the help of field evidence. The sites that are shown on the Cross map but for which there is no field evidence today have been treated as possible crannogs. There are also two low-cairn crannogs that are not located near the open water by the lake, but sit instead on the edges of wetlands near the lake. These are not included in the figure above.

Figure 12 shows the location of the sites on and around Lough Gara, both those formerly known and those not recorded before our survey. A filled circle represents the sites that can be regarded as definite man-made islands. Sites that are uncertain are marked with an unfilled circle. Sites registered in earlier surveys that have not been located by our survey are also marked with an unfilled circle. All sites are numbered and have their own site reports in the appendix, where the rationale for each classification is discussed (see Appendix 1). Most sites are registered along the Boyle River and on the inlets on the eastern side of the lake. Our survey has, however, located a number of sites on the western shores of Lough Gara. The new sites help to balance the distribution between the eastern and western halves of the lake. What is clear on the map is that the shores in the middle of the lake, along a north-south line, have been avoided, with the exception of some of the sites in the Callow Lake. The map shows both the pre-drainage shoreline and the present shoreline, which was scanned in by Lough Gara Cultural Resources from stereoscopic photographs taken by the Geological Survey of Ireland in April 1974. It can be seen that the shallowest shores have been chosen for almost all crannog-building in Lough Gara. Again, only the sites in the Callow Lake deviate from this pattern. The crannogs in Lough Gara are



Fig. 12—The location of all crannogs in Lough Gara.

located in almost every inlet of the lake. No site has been found to the east of the Tinnecarra rock, where the shoreline of the Boyle River is quite steep and where the waters are fast-running.

In what follows we will compare the location and features of the high, low and platform crannogs in Lough Gara to discover differences and similarities in terms of location and construction.

Most of the surviving sites in Lough Gara could be classified as crannog cairns, i.e. they are built of stones. It is possible that mounds are more prevalent in other parts of the country.

The high-cairn crannogs

LOCATION

There are twelve high-cairn crannogs¹¹ distributed around the lake and in the Boyle River. This is an unusually high number for one lake. Often there is only one high-cairn crannog in any given lake. There are only nine other high-cairn crannogs in the rest of County Sligo, and there are never more than two in the same waters. Most of these crannogs can be found on medium-sized lakes such as Glencar, Lough Gill and Lough Arrow. Some, like the crannogs at Glencar, Ballegawley Lake and Lough Talt, can be found in lakes near mountain passes (Fredengren, forthcoming).

Figure 13 shows the location of the high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara, and what we can say is that they are predominantly located in the drumlin bays on the eastern side of the lake. There is only one high-cairn crannog on the western side. Most of these sites are located halfway between the earlier shoreline and the summer waterline. They also occupy a position more in the middle of the bay than the low-cairn crannogs and the platform crannogs. The favoured bays are shaped by the surrounding drumlins, and the shores they stand on today are sloping gradually down towards the water. This is a general trait — the crannog-builders seem to have avoided



Fig. 13—Location of high-cairn crannogs.

shorelines that slope at a steep angle. It has been argued that crannogs rarely occur in rivers (de Paor and de Paor 1960). There are, however, three high-cairn crannogs in the Boyle River, and their location follows the same rules as the sites in the lake. They are placed where the river's edges are sloping gently and where the river forms shallows. This also seems to hold for the location of crannogs in many other places further down the River Shannon, such as outside Tully townland near Drumsna and Carraig Faran (not in SMR), Co. Roscommon, or LH8:3 at Castleforbes Demesne, Co. Longford.

In Lough Gara the high-cairn crannog does not usually share the same inlet with crannogs of the same type, while it can coexist with one or many smaller sites such as low-cairn or platform crannogs. High-cairn crannogs do not overlook each other. As a matter of fact, the views from these sites are often restricted in most directions by the surrounding drumlins. The location chosen often means no visual contact with open water or high mountains. They come across as features in low-lying drumlin surroundings that often block the views in many directions. To visit a crannog rarely involves a dramatic, long view or a wide landscape experience. This observation also holds for most crannogs in Sligo.

FEATURES

The high-cairn crannogs in Sligo and Lough Gara are oval to rounded islands. The average high-cairn crannog measures 26m north–south by 24m east–west and reaches a height of up to 2.6m above the lake sediments. Lough Gara holds two exceptionally large crannogs. The site at the shore in Rathtermore townland, KILA 034, measures 52m north–south and 44m east–west, while reaching a height of 2.8m. This is the largest crannog in Sligo. Lough Gara also has the highest crannog in the survey — KILN 013 measures 3.3m above the lakebed.

Most high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara have fairly uniform surfaces of loosely packed

stones. Only one or two sites have stones that are more firmly set into the soil. The high-cairn crannogs display internal topographical differences that may represent divisions of internal space, and it is possible that these features correspond to building structures in the later phases of crannog use (Fig. 14). Most high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara have a mid-cairn located slightly off-centre on the island. It normally measures about 6–7m in diameter and is raised *c.* 0.5m above a surrounding plateau. One possibility is that this mid-cairn represents a small house. Only one site has a hollow in this mid-cairn. It may have been one of these mid-cairns that was excavated by D’Arcy (1897; 1900). The excavation showed that it contained numerous hearths. Kinahan (1870–1, 461) had also noted that some crannogs contained a higher, greener area, where the principal hearth was to be found.

The plateau often extends out for 5–7m from the mid-cairn and is narrower on the side facing the shore. As a result many crannogs have a steeper side towards the shoreline. In most cases the plateau comprises the larger part of the crannog body. If the mid-cairn represents a house, the plateau could represent an open space on the islands. It often has edges that drop down to a surrounding berm. The berm is like a firm area next to the lake, providing a solid edge around the site. On some sites a ramp connects the plateau with the berm. In most cases in Lough Gara this berm is also the edge of the site.

Some crannogs in other lakes have both a revetting and a surrounding palisade. There is very little evidence for palisades on the high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara. Only one of them shows a revetting palisade (BOYL 038). None of the remaining eight show any evidence for either a revetting or a surrounding palisade, and according to Lynn’s strict definition they should not be classified as crannogs. These sites show many similarities in size, form and location. There are, however, small differences in their construction materials: for example, boulders seem to form a larger part of the material in the sites in the southern half of the lake than in those in the northern half.

EXCAVATED HIGH-CAIRN CRANNOGS

The crannog in Rathtinaun townland that was excavated by Dr J. Raftery in the early 1950s can be classified as a high-cairn crannog. It measured about 2.5m in height with surface layers of densely packed stones, and was found to be a multiperiod site (J. Raftery 1957, 10).

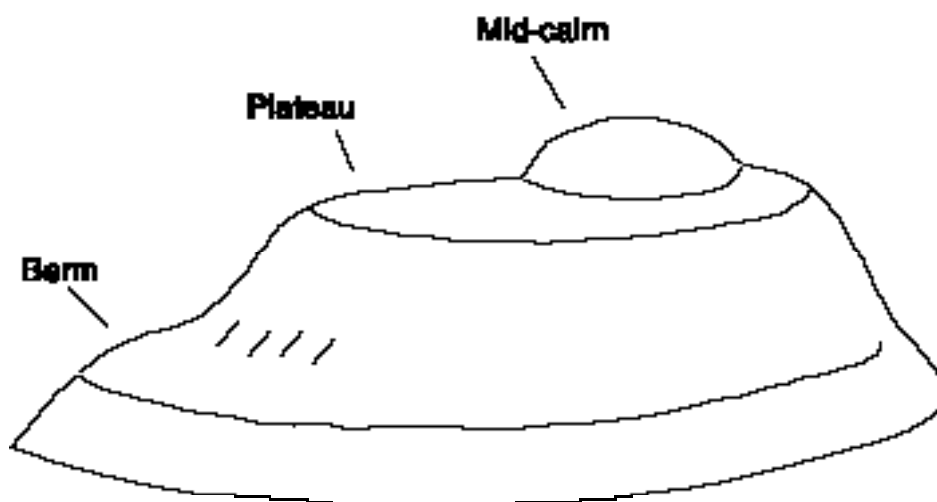


Fig. 14—Features on high-cairn crannogs.

As can be seen on Fig. 15, Rathtinaun may have had layers of stone packing almost 1.5m thick. There are similarities with the high-cairn crannog at Ardakillen, which also had substantial stone packing in the top layers (see Wood-Martin 1886a, 236, fig. 231). In the section on crannog dating below we will test the idea that the stony top layers in many of the high-cairn crannogs belong to the later medieval period. It is also likely, based on excavation evidence, that these layers cover earlier phases of occupation. Rathtinaun's stone layers covered both early medieval and late Bronze Age layers. Many other crannogs, for example Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath (see e.g. J. Bradley 1985–6), and Ballinderry 2 (see Hencken 1942), are also multiperiod sites with many prehistoric layers.

The low-cairn crannogs

LOCATION

There are about 48 low-cairn crannogs in the lake,¹² while there are 23 in the rest of County Sligo, in smaller lakes, mainly in the area around Ballymote. These lakes are either open water or wetlands where an earlier shoreline can be observed.

There are no low-cairn crannogs in the north–south band shown in the distribution of the high-cairn crannogs. However, they do occur in all parts of the lake, both east and west (see Fig. 16), and in this respect their distribution differs from that of the high-cairn crannogs. Some of the low-cairn crannogs are located in between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level, while others are located out in the water. These sites are located in bays, but they do not always take up the mid-positions in the inlets. The low-cairn crannogs can coexist with high-cairn crannogs or with other low-cairn sites,¹³ but they can also be alone in a particular inlet. In places they can sit side by side in the bays, like the site I have excavated in Sroove townland, which has two low-cairn crannogs as neighbours. Some of the low-cairn crannogs have been found beside natural islands such as Inch Island or the island at Derrycoagh townland.

FEATURES

The low-cairn crannogs are smaller than the high-cairn crannogs. Most are round to oval in shape, but some are more irregular, consisting of more than one part. The average low-cairn crannog measures 17.7m north–south and 15.2m east–west, with a height of 1m above the lakebed or the shore sediments. Some have a surface predominantly of flagstones that rest on lake marl. Others have a considerable quantity of equal-sided rounded to subangular stones, placed on a layer of shattered stones. Sites with a flagstone surface seem to be located slightly higher up on the shoreline, nearer the earlier shoreline, than the sites with equal-sided stones. But there are also flagstone sites further out on the shores.

Low-cairn crannogs do not display the same internal topographical divisions as the high-cairn crannogs. They are either more or less flat or slope gently down towards the lake. Some have revetting palisades that are better preserved on the sites further out in the water. Some have a partial boulder-chain at their edges, but the most common edge is the same stone of which the site is built.

EXCAVATED LOW-CAIRN CRANNOGS

Prior to our excavation in Sroove (see Chapter 10) very little was known about this site type. It has mainly been the high-cairn crannogs that have received academic attention in the past. However, the site at Bofeenau, Co. Mayo (Keane 1995), may prove on excavation to be such a site.



Fig. 15—Rathtinaun, photo-montage of section from *Dúchas* archives.

The platform crannogs

There are 124 platform crannogs registered for Lough Gara,¹⁴ with one possible site in another Sligo lake. Out of all the sites in Lough Gara there are only thirteen definite platform sites. One hundred and eleven sites are classified as possible owing to lack of reliable field evidence; three have been inspected and classed as unlikely. Most information about the platform crannogs comes from Cross's survey. The limited field evidence means that this survey is crucial for any discussion of this site type.

Clusters of sites were marked on the maps from the time of the drainage. Some were located along the Boyle River. There were many sites in bays on the eastern side of Lough Gara. Some sites are also marked on the western side of the lake, such as those in the townlands of Tawnymucklagh and Lumcloon, for example. These sites are marked higher up on the shoreline



Fig. 16—Location of low-cairn crannogs.

than both the high- and low-cairn crannogs. I have searched these areas extensively; in certain cases small, quite irregular stone platforms can be located, but in other cases there is nothing, or only changes in the vegetation. During our survey we also located a platform type on the edges of the summer shoreline. These platforms or the type do not seem to have been observed by Cross. Figure 17 shows all platform crannogs noted in Lough Gara.

If we can trust the map evidence, platform crannogs seem to share their location with many other platform crannogs as well as with high- and low-cairn crannogs.

FEATURES

The features on most of the platform sites have to be determined with help from what was published in the Cross survey (1953). The smaller sites are described as low stony platforms. Those few platform crannogs that have been identified in the field appear as small irregular stone platforms. However, as a group they contain much variation, in building material, form and location. These stone platform crannogs are generally quite small, measuring on average 8.8m north-south and 7m east-west, with a height of 0.3m above the shore. The platform crannogs could be sorted into three subgroups. The first consists of sites built of small rounded to subangular boulders. They consist of only one layer of stones and are distinguished from their surroundings by their material. Their forms are rounded and the edges are irregular. These sites occur both in the Lower Lake and along the Boyle River and tend to be located on the edge of the summer water-level. The second group are constructed of well-sorted small boulders, set firmly into the ground, and have a more definite form than the first group. These sites are located between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level. Some are clearly visible, with their edges defined by both material and shape. Some even have small stone causeways that either connect the sites to the shoreline or, strangely enough, lead out into the water. The third subgroup incorporates a range of sites, from areas of grass-grown heaps to spreads of fire-cracked stones, which are all located between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level. Under this heading there are sites that are almost level with the shoreline, and perhaps they should only be seen as reinforcements of the shore. They are not all that easy to justify as crannogs as their island bodies are limited in height. O'Neill (2000, 175) has mentioned the finding of small brushwood platforms from the as yet unpublished excavations in Derryville Bog, Co. Tipperary. Until these sites are finally published we can only assume that they should come under our heading of platform crannogs, but they could also be low-cairn crannogs. It depends on how we judge their presumed insularity or whether they could represent other site types and their height above the watery material.

Other sites in the lake and comments about the survey

Many of the sites in Lough Gara fit readily into the classification scheme of high-cairn, low-cairn and platform crannogs. There are, however, a number of sites that do not. Some of these may sharpen our understanding of what a crannog is, and some may add to other elements of our knowledge about the lake. It was found that the general lakebed consists of marl covered with silt along the shores and brown mud in the deeper parts of the lake. There are a number of natural islands and shoals in the lake that have not been used as crannogs. This means that not just any small island would be considered suitable.

There are also other natural features in the lake that may pass as small islands. Large parts of the lake were covered with reeds during the summer and, especially in the Callow Lake, there are small circular reed-stands, 5–10m in diameter. Some of these reed-stands were strictly circular and raised the question of whether they were growing on submerged platforms of corresponding



Pl. 4—Man-made island created by removing parts of the ground and then reconnecting it with causeways.

Among other sites found along the shores that cannot be classified as crannogs are numerous U-shaped harbour clearances, causeways that lead out into the water, linear pilings in the water, and two larger water-henges. The latter consist of two arms of grass-grown shattered stone. One of them (KILA H2) is located in Ross townland and seems to surround a low-cairn crannog. The other (KILA H1) is located at the western side of Cuppannah bridge, adjacent to a moated site. This site could perhaps also be discussed as a harbour feature.

Patterns in the material

I have visited all the registered crannog sites in County Sligo, and it is clear that Lough Gara holds both more sites and a larger morphological variety of sites than any other lake in the county. While high-cairn and low-cairn crannogs can be found in other crannog lakes, platform crannogs are not common at all.

Our survey located more sites on the western shores of the lake than were recorded in earlier surveys, and these sites are mainly low-cairn crannogs. Even given these newly registered sites, the number of definite crannogs for the whole lough is less than the figure claimed by both Cross and Raftery. The largest discrepancy is in the small platform crannogs recorded by the earlier researchers; only a smaller number of these sites are visible today. The reason for this could be that these sites were also less definite to the earlier surveyors. Many of the platform crannogs we located are mere spreads of stone, with at times a very vague edge definition. The lower numbers could of course also be explained by the change in vegetation along the shoreline. The areas where these sites were marked are overgrown with grass, which would make it difficult to locate the sites. The trampling of cattle may also have destroyed some sites.

A common feature of most crannogs in Sligo and the other surveyed counties is their location in shallow water near the shores of both large and small lakes. Most sites are located in low-lying drumlin lakes. Mountain lakes seem to have been avoided in general. None of the lakes chosen have a dramatic view, encompassing a larger landscape. All of the sites registered in Lough Gara are located in the area below or on the earlier shoreline that is clearly visible in most places around the lake. Some of the sites may have been attached to the shoreline, some are located between the earlier shoreline and the present water-level, some are situated on the border of the present summer water-level, and some are still located in the water all year round. The landscape around the lake varies considerably; despite the opportunity to locate the islands with a good view of open water, in most cases this was not done. Instead, most of the sites are found in inlets surrounded by high drumlins. Two sites have also been found in bogs. We do not know without excavation whether they were built on a lakebed that later turned into bog or whether they were built in a bog directly.

The crannogs of different types do not necessarily have to be contemporary. The question of crannogs in groups will be returned to below. It has also been addressed in our excavation of a low-cairn crannog on the western shores of Lough Gara.

The existence of a palisade was one of Lynn's foremost criteria for a crannog. Very few of the crannogs of Lough Gara show a continuous wooden palisade. This could well be due to the fact that the palisade has eroded since the water-level fell, or — as in the case of our excavated crannog — that later building material covered the former palisade. Some sites have a boulder-chain along one side, defining its edge. But in most cases the crannog is defined by the edge of the building material.

Dating of the crannogs

As was explained in the research history, the dating of crannogs has not been one of the simplest issues to resolve. From the beginning they were seen as mainly medieval, then the focus shifted towards the transition between the late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. In the last twenty years it has been realised that the evidence that supported the dating to the transition from the Bronze Age was very weak (see Warner 1983). Instead the emphasis has been put on studies of crannogs in the early medieval period, especially after Lynn's (1983) article and Baillie's dendrochronological work (1979; 1982). Only with Kieran O'Connor's book (1998) has the study of medieval crannogs taken off again; see also O'Sullivan 2001.

The crannogs of Lough Gara show a lot of variation in type, form and location. We will take a closer look at the dating issues in this part of the chapter. It is possible that some of the morphological variation could be connected with different periods of usage. Having said that, it is still important to bear in mind the multiperiod nature of this material.

As mentioned earlier, the artefact material from the lake also tells about activity around the shores during many different time-periods. There are numerous more or less reliable ways of dating these sites. After presenting the results from the radiocarbon dating we will discuss other dating methods that may throw light on the crannog's position in time — for example stratigraphy, artefact dating, dendrochronology, dating by proximity to other sites, etc.

The dating aimed to address the following issues.

Do the sites still located out in the waters of the lake belong to another time than the artificial islands on the present shoreline?

Is it possible to trace any morphological differences between sites of different dates?

Are there any Mesolithic or later medieval sites in the material?

On a number of occasions in Lough Gara artificial islands have been located off natural islands. An indication of their date would be necessary in order to understand their relationship to the settlement traces on these natural islands (see Fredengren 1998b).

Do the dates support the view that crannogs/man-made islands existed at an earlier stage than the early medieval period? Do prehistoric crannogs exist on Lough Gara?

Is it possible to distinguish the development of settlement around the lake?

If so, how does this development compare with the results from the three excavated sites in the lake?

Radiocarbon dating

The Crannog Research Programme received funding from the Heritage Council to carry out a large-scale sampling of datable material from the crannogs of Lough Gara. Until now it has been nearly impossible to judge a particular site's date by survey alone. We could only rely on a loose association between sites and artefacts, following Cross and Raftery's example, which suggested a pre-Bronze Age date for nearly all smaller sites. Another suggestion, drawing on current

knowledge, would be to classify all small sites as prehistoric and all the large sites as historic. Of course, neither artefacts nor radiocarbon dates on their own date a site conclusively, but if the dates agree this fact lends support to the use of a site during a particular period at least.

SAMPLING

Crannogs are in some respects easier to work with than many other monument types. It is not always necessary to excavate in order to find datable material as suitable matter can be found on the surface or at the edges of the site. Some crannogs, especially those further out in the water, still have wood surviving on the surface. However, far from all sites in Lough Gara have surface material available for dating. Many of the sites located higher up on the shoreline are today overgrown with grass. If these sites ever had a surrounding palisade it would be covered by vegetation today or would have withered away through the years. Bearing this in mind, our sampling has been dependent on the availability of datable material.

New in this sampling, as compared to other large-scale dating programmes of crannogs, is that not only wood but also animal bones were collected from the surface for dating purposes. This enabled us to get an indication of the date of the stone floors in the top layers of some sites. Where possible, I have tried to get a good representation in the samples between horizontals and verticals, to indicate both phases of building and phases of use. It is, however, important to bear in mind that surface material does not date a site conclusively. It only gives indications of some of the periods when a particular site was in use.

Altogether 35 samples were sent to the Radiocarbon Laboratories in Groningen. Twenty-nine of these derive from surveyed crannog sites around the lake, while six samples come from the excavated site in Sroove td, Co. Sligo. The exact location of the samples on each site can be found in the appendices with reference to the specific site number.

In the sampling it was seen as important to select pieces that represent both vertical and horizontal timbers from varying wood species as well as to sample bones. We have dated samples from a variety of wood species, such as ash, oak, hazel etc. On a number of occasions more than one piece has been selected per site. In the wood samples the eight to ten outer rings have been dated. As these rings are the youngest part of a tree, this procedure reduces the risk of the 'old wood effect'. In a few cases brushwood has been available for dating, which also minimises this risk.

Table 1 shows calibrated dates from sites in Lough Gara that fall into three general time-periods. There is some evidence for activity in the Mesolithic period, both in the early Mesolithic and on the border between the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. There is also a set of dates in the late Bronze Age (900–800 BC). Unusually enough, there are also dates from two sites that belong to the early Iron Age. The next set of dates belong to the early medieval period, with some continuing into the following period. In this set there are dates ranging from AD 660 to 1160, which leads into the later medieval period. Our dates relate to Baillie's dendrochronological series. Stout (2001, 101) has commented on his results, stating that they indicate that most sites date from two concentrated phases of use, the first between AD 524 and 648, the second between AD 722 and 926. Baillie (1988) has argued that the gap in construction may have been due to plague in these years. What may be interesting in terms of this debate is that we have three radiocarbon dates that cover this period.

The context of the dated sites

THE WESTERN SHORES OF LOUGH GARA

Although the sampling was largely determined by the availability of material, the dated sites could

Table 1 — Radiocarbon dates from Lough Gara from eleven crannogs of different types.

Possible platform crannog			
KILA 15:001: 8160 ± 50 BP	7330 BC (95.4%)	7050 BC	
KILA 15:002: 5270 ± 50 BP	4230 BC (95.4%)	3970 BC	
Low-cairn crannogs			
BOYL 25:001: 2540 ± 45 BP	900 BC (95.4%)	750 BC	
KILN 7:001: 2700 ± 20 BP	900 BC (95.4%)	805 BC	
KILN 7:B001: 2730 ± 30 BP	970 BC (1.6%)	950 BC	930 BC (93.8%) 810 BC
KILA 16:001: 2690 ± 20 BP	900 BC (95.4%)	800 BC	
KILA 16:002: 2170 ± 30 BP	350 BC (95.4%)	110 BC	
KILA 16:003: 2130 ± 20 BP	350 BC (4.8%)	320 BC	210 BC (88.5%) 90 BC 80 BC (2.1%) 50 BC
KILA 16:003: 2220 ± 30 BP	390 BC (95.4%)	200 BC	
KILA 16:004: 2220 ± 30 BP	390 BC (95.4%)	200 BC	
KILA 16:005: 2140 ± 20 BP	350 BC (1.24%)	320 BC	230 BC (1.6%) 220 BC 210 BC (81.4%) 90 BC
KILA 45:001: 2210 ± 20 BP	390 BC (95.4%)	190 BC	
KILA 45:002: 2150 ± 25 BP	350 BC (25.7%)	290 BC	240 BC (59.7%) 90 BC
KILC 20:001: 1230 ± 20 BP	AD 690 (2.4%)	AD 700	AD 710 (20.4%) AD 750 AD 750 (72.5%) AD 890
KILC 20:002: 1190 ± 20 BP	AD 770 (95.4%)	AD 900	
KILC 22:001: 1290 ± 30 BP	AD 650 (95.4%)	AD 780	
KILC 22:002: 1240 ± 30 BP	AD 680 (95.4%)	AD 890	
KILC 22:003: 1180 ± 40 BP	AD 720 (2.7%)	AD 750	AD 770 (92.7%) AD 980
KILC 22:004: 1170 ± 30 BP	AD 770 (95.4%)	AD 970	
KILC 22:005: 1170 ± 30 BP	AD 770 (95.4%)	AD 970	
KILC 22:006: 1160 ± 30 BP	AD 770 (95.4%)	AD 980	
KILC 22:007: 1110 ± 25 BP	AD 880 (95.4%)	AD 1000	
KILC 21:001: 2740 ± 25 BP	970 BC (1.9%)	950 BC	930 BC (93.5%) 820 BC
KILC 21:002: 2770 ± 20 BP	980 BC (95.4%)	830 BC	
KILC 21:003: 2590 ± 25 BP	900 BC (95.4%)	800 BC	
KILC 21:004: 2710 ± 40 BP	970 BC (1.3%)	950 BC	930 BC (94.1%) 800 BC
KILC 21:005: 2690 ± 30 BP	900 BC (95.4%)	800 BC	
KILC 21:B001: 2510 ± 50 BP	900 BC (73.4%)	750 BC	690 BC (22.0%) 540 BC
KILA 11:001: 1040 ± 20 BP	AD 970 (95.4%)	AD 1030	
KILA 11:002: 1130 ± 30 BP	AD 780 (2.0%)	AD 800	AD 810 (93.4%) AD 990
KILF 5:B001: 1180 ± 20 BP	AD 770 (91.2%)	AD 900	AD 920 (4.2%) AD 940
KILN 12:001 1120 ± 50 BP	AD 770 (95.4%)	AD 1020	
KILN 13:B001 113.8 ± 0.5 BP	AD 1590 (95.4%)	AD 1920	
High-cairn crannogs			
BOYL 38:B001: 970 ± 30 BP	AD 1000 (95.4%)	AD 1150	
BOYL 38:002: 1180 ± 20 BP	AD 770 (91.2%)	AD 900	AD 920 (4.2%) AD 940
BOYL 38:003: 970 ± 30 BP	AD 1000 (95.4%)	AD 1150	
BOYL 38:004: 1110 ± 25 BP	AD 880 (95.4%)	AD 1000	
KILA 34:B001 1190 ± 50 BP	AD 80 (95.4%)	AD 980	

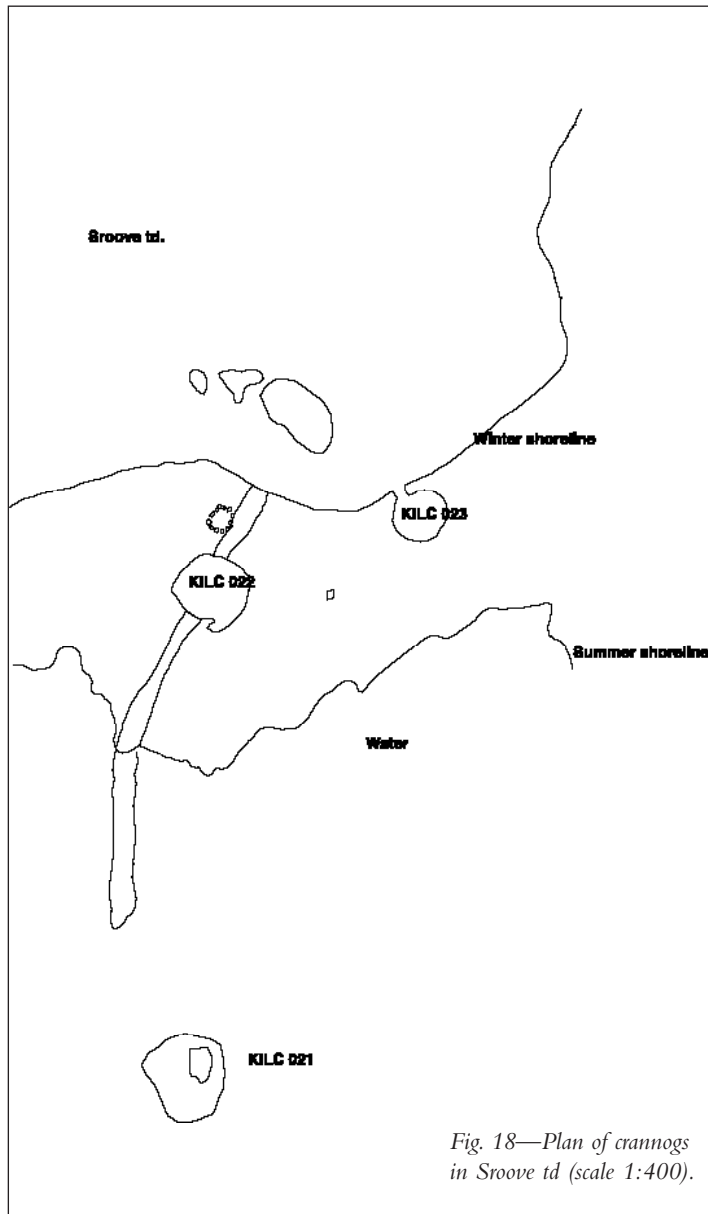


Fig. 18—Plan of crannogs in Sroove td (scale 1:400).

be discussed in groups according to their location. The first group were located in a small bay in Sroove td, Co. Sligo, on the western shores of the Lower Lake.

In this bay there are three low-cairn crannogs (Fig. 18). Two of them (KILC 022 and 023) are located just below an earlier shoreline, to which both are connected by causeways. A third site (KILC 021) is still in the water and is visible as a crannog in the summer. In winter it is covered by water, while the two others higher up on the shore are surrounded by water.

The most southerly of the crannogs (KILC 022) on the shoreline was excavated (the results of the excavation are presented in detail in Chapter 10). Organic material was sampled throughout the excavation. The oval island measured about 16m in diameter, reaching a maximum height of 1.5m above the earlier lakebed. This is a six-phase site that changed from being composed of organic material, such as a brushwood floor, into a quite

dense stone-packed floor towards the end of its building. All the radiocarbon dates fall within the time-span AD 660–1000 (see Table 1), making it an early medieval site. However, the topmost layers, consisting of dense stone packing, contained no datable material, although they must have been laid down some time after AD 1000. Possibly the site was still being modified in the later medieval period. The second crannog, KILC 23, in this bay was not excavated and there was no datable surface material. However, the stones in its top layers resemble those of the excavated crannog, KILC 22. Their morphological similarity and the fact that both are connected to the same shoreline could indicate that they are contemporary.

Material from the crannog in the water was also dated. This low, circular stone cairn measures 18m north–south by 20m east–west and rises to a height of 1.2m above the lakebed.

The surface consists of well-sorted rounded stones as well as some scattered angular stones (Pl. 5). Animal bones are mixed in with the stone floor, which rests on lake marl held together and surrounded by a palisade of numerous vertical posts. We sampled both the vertical posts and the horizontal logs that form the structure of the site. These all showed a late Bronze Age date, 980–800 BC. Some of the animal bones were dated in order to see whether the site had a different usage date, but they also dated from the late Bronze Age, more precisely 900–540 BC. As this is a definite man-made island, located further out in the water than possibly two early medieval sites, the results offer firm evidence that crannogs were already being built in the late Bronze Age.

Whatever the date of the unexcavated site, this bay presents two low-cairn crannogs that date about 1000 years apart. The older crannog is in the water, the younger on the shore. They are of similar size and height. However, their building material differs somewhat. The late Bronze Age crannog has a high marl content in its body, while the early medieval site consists of organic material and stones. Both are finished off as cairns. The cairn material on these sites differs: the earlier site is finished off with smaller rounded stones, while the later shows a large number of flagstones and a much denser stone packing. From this we learn that low-cairn crannogs can date from both the late Bronze Age and the early medieval period.

The next crannog that was sampled (KILC 020) is located two bays south in Sroove td. This site is also surrounded by water and has a small flagstone causeway leading to the shore. It is about 12m north–south by 10m east–west, and rises to 0.9m above the lakebed. The site consists of fairly large angular flagstones (50cm on average) and half-rounded boulders, forming an uneven floor. Diving at the site confirmed that it is surrounded by at least twelve thin, eroded, vertical wooden posts forming a ‘lean’ palisade. Surprisingly, this site does not date from the Bronze Age but rather from the early medieval period (AD 690–900).

Another low-cairn crannog that was dated is located further north of the excavated area. This site (KILF 005) can be found in the lagoon at the northern end of Lough Gara in Mahanagh td, Co. Sligo, on the boundary of the summer water-level. It measures 14m north–south by 14m east–west and rises up to a height of 1.2m above the lakebed. The site consists of vertical posts set into the lake marl and a timber platform, upon which rests a layer of shattered stones and flagstones. One post from this site dates from the early medieval period (AD 770–900).

THE EASTERN SHORES OF LOUGH GARA

A number of crannogs from the eastern shore and some from along the Boyle River have been sampled, and in these cases also the dates are either late prehistoric or early medieval.

The most southerly site sampled lies in the Upper Lake, off a marshy natural island. This is a low-cairn crannog (KILN 007) in Derrycoagh td, Co. Roscommon. In the vicinity there are other low-cairn crannogs of unknown date, located closer to the shoreline. This site is located at the edge of the present summer shore at a small unnamed island. It measures about 18m in diameter and rises to a maximum height of 0.7m above the surrounding shore. The low, almond-shaped cairn consists of an area of rounded stones with surrounding patches of shattered stone. It comprises different parts and could be described as an irregular site. There are traces of a surrounding palisade that may have contained these features. The palisade and the animal bones date from 970–805 BC. The dating of this site strengthens the evidence that crannogs date from at least the late Bronze Age.

The next site, situated on the Lower Lake, has given some extraordinary dates. This is a low-cairn crannog (KILC 046) still in the water off Ross td, Co. Sligo. The oval site measures 14m north–south by 11m east–west (Pl. 6) and rises to a height of 1m above the lakebed. It consists of

top layers of angular boulders and flagstones that seem to be sitting on large horizontal beams and grey sand. There are vertical posts throughout the site and along the edges, forming a revetting palisade. One of the horizontal beams and one vertical post were sampled. The sampled wood represents a part of the posts at the edge of the site's palisade and one part of a horizontal timber, which may represent a floor. The site dates from the early Iron Age, between 380 and 90 BC. This is the first definite Iron Age crannog in Ireland since Wakeman's disputed site at Lisnacrogher (see Wakeman 1883–4; Munro 1890, 380). As shown above, there is dating evidence for crannogs from the late Bronze Age in Lough Gara. This set of samples from Ross td indicates that the tradition of building man-made islands continued into the Iron Age.

In the next bay, at Ross/Rathermon td, there are both platform crannogs and low-cairn crannogs. Here also is one of the largest sites in Lough Gara, in Rathermon td, Co. Sligo, between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level. The site measures 52m north–south by 44m east–west and rises to a maximum height of 2.8m above the surrounding meadow. It consists of a dense stone packing of large boulders and stones forming terraces on the site. In places shattered stones are exposed. Among these shattered stones on the lower terrace animal bones were found. One of these was sent for radiocarbon dating, but it has not been returned yet. A later medieval date is expected for the site.

Iron Age dates were also produced by samples from a crannog (KILA 16) off the south-eastern side of Inch Island in the middle of the lake. It is situated in water and is connected to land by a causeway of earth. It measures *c.* 22m east–west by 24m north–south and rises to a maximum height of 1.94m above the lakebed. It is classified as a low-cairn crannog, but it borders on being a high-cairn crannog owing to its height. The surface consists of subangular stones and some flagstones. There are also smaller angular stones, 5–10cm in diameter, forming a dense packing. There is a soil- and grass-capped elevation in the centre. Vertical posts surround the site and retain the marl on which the stones rest. The posts sent for dating represent this revetting palisade. This site dates from two separate time-periods. One post belonged to the late Bronze Age (900–800 BC). The other four posts were dated to 390–80 BC, in the early Iron Age. This means that the site may have been built on in two separate periods, and also offers further evidence for early Iron Age crannogs in Lough Gara. It is also worth noting that this crannog is located off a natural island.

Inch Island is a drumlin island, arching from one side to the other. On its north-eastern side are the only datable traces of what might have been a platform crannog. Overall there is very little material to date from the platform crannogs in Lough Gara. This site on Inch Island (KILA 014, 015) was marked by Cross as two small sites. Today, however, they do not really appear as small islands.

In an area covering nearly 40m at the edge of the summer shoreline there are a spread of angular stones and some patches of brushwood set into the lake marl, surrounded by a set of vertical posts (Fig. 19). Samples from the brushwood yielded a date in the early Mesolithic period, from 7330 to 7050 BC. A sample from the vertical posts gave a date on the boundary between the late Mesolithic and the early Neolithic, 4230–3970 BC. These dates suggest a use of the lakeshore in early prehistory. However, whether they belong to crannogs is a matter of debate and further fieldwork. This site will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7.

The next site is located on the eastern shores of the lake, a bit further north. This is a small low-cairn crannog (KILA 011) situated on the edge of the summer shoreline in the northern half of Rathtinaun td, just outside the high-cairn crannog (KILA 009) in Emlagh td. In the same bay there are also a number of more or less visible platform and low-cairn crannogs. This site rises to a height of 0.7m above the surrounding lakebed and measures 7.5m east–west by 6m



Pl. 5—Late Bronze Age crannog in Sroove td (KILC 21) (photo: Fredengren and Larsson).

north–south. It consists of a few flagstones and evenly sized semi-angular boulders with a thin floor of angular shattered stones coated with and resting on lake marl. The samples represent a peg and a post set into the lake marl at the northern edges of the site. These possibly represent the remains of a thin revetting palisade. This site dates from the early medieval period (around AD 780–990).

Bone samples from the high-cairn crannog (KILA 009) in Emlagh Bay have also been sent for radiocarbon dating but have not yet been returned. The site lies between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level. This crannog measures 23.8m north–south by 20.8m east–west and reaches a height of 2.5m above the surrounding meadow. The top layers consist of rounded stones, 20–30cm in diameter, which seem to be sitting on a layer of shattered stones mixed with animal bones. The sample was taken to see whether this stone dump is medieval.

BOYLE RIVER

Two sites along the southern side of the Boyle River were also investigated. The first (BOYL 026) is a low cairn/mound in Derrymaquirk td, between the earlier shoreline and the present summer water-level. It is a compact site of shattered and fire-reddened stone, measuring 5m east–west by 6m north–south, with a maximum height of 0.8m above the shore sediments. A small row of angular stones forms a boulder-chain around the lakeside perimeter of this site. A piece of wood from a root-welt opening in the middle of the site was dated to the late Bronze Age, 900–760 BC.

The next site is a high-cairn crannog (BOYL 038) situated near the summer edge of the Boyle River further east in the same td. It measures 26m in diameter and reaches a height of 2.5m above its surroundings. Part of the site has been eroded by the river, exposing a stratigraphy of (from the top down) a massive stone packing of boulders among which can be found animal bones,

followed by shattered stones, brushwood, horizontal logs and brushwood. There are also some vertical timbers representing posts surrounding the site. This site dates from the early medieval period, 920–1160, which also means that it stretches into the later medieval period. The later results derive from animal bones from the top boulder layers and from a vertical post at the edge of the site.

Discussion

There is very little evidence on which to build a discussion about platform crannogs. There is a possibility that they date from the Mesolithic period but the site type needs further investigation. What the radiocarbon dates have revealed is that definite man-made islands were built and used at least in the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, and these low-cairn islands should, according to our criteria, be included as crannogs. As shown, low-cairn crannogs can also date from the early medieval period. From this small sample of sites it is possible to say that one is more likely to find flagstones in the building material of early medieval sites than in late Bronze Age sites. This means that the smaller sites are not only tied to the pre-Bronze Age period, as suggested by Cross (1953) and J. Raftery (1957), but they also belong in the early medieval period.

There seems to be a vague pattern in the location of these sites in relation to their date. The samples have included sites that are in the water, like KILA 11 and KILA 16. There seems to be no distinct connection between date and location in relation to the shore. Both early medieval



Pl. 6—Iron Age crannog at Ross td (KILC 46).

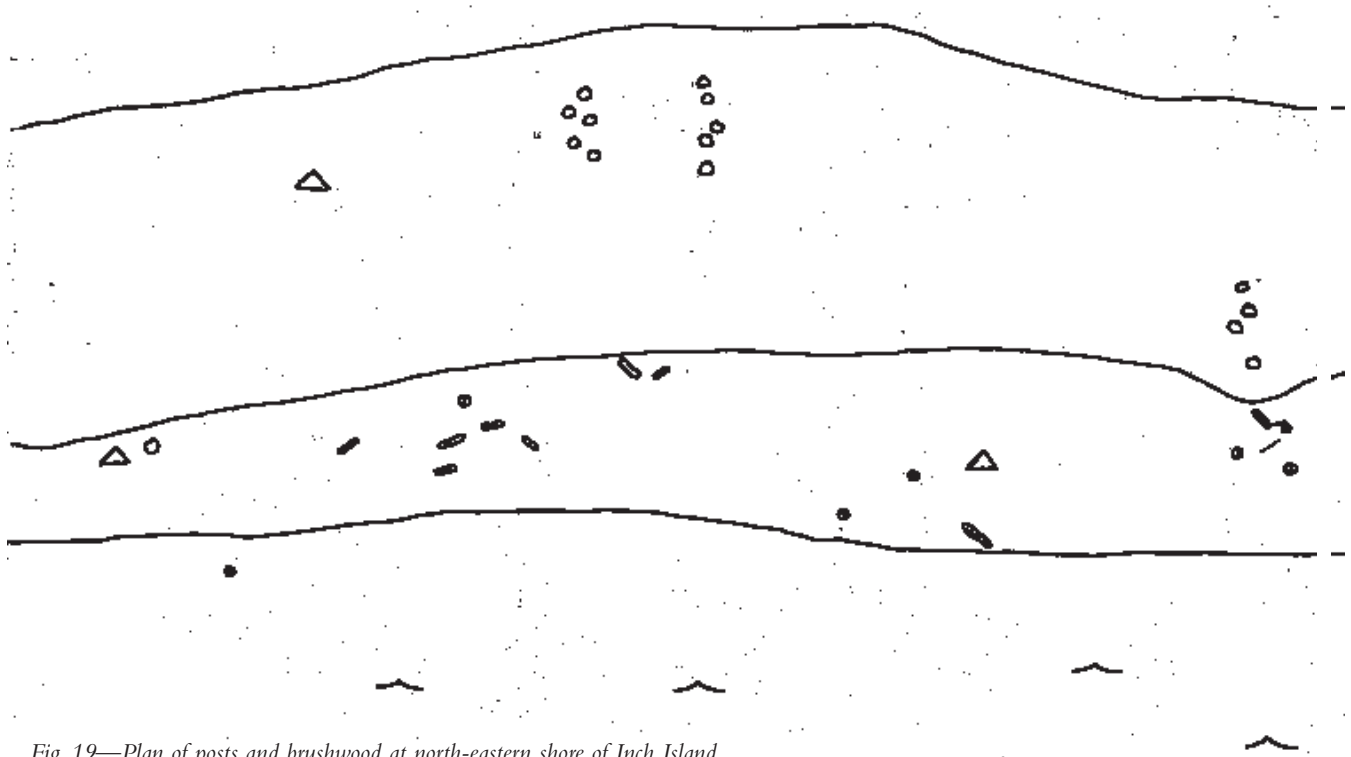


Fig. 19—Plan of posts and brushwood at north-eastern shore of Inch Island.

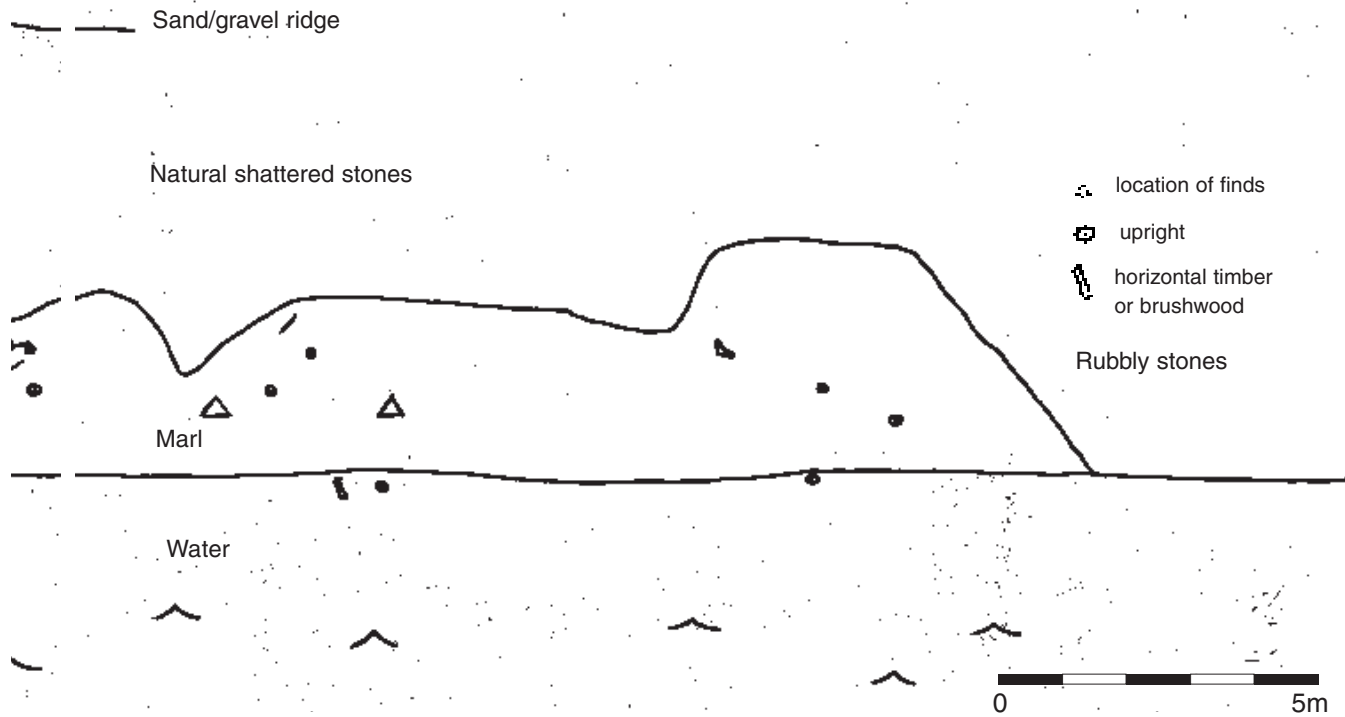
and prehistoric sites can be found in the water and on the shore. It is worth noting that the low-cairn crannogs so far have shown no evidence to suggest either Mesolithic or later medieval occupation.

The evidence so far confirms that high-cairn crannogs date from the early medieval period. There is a possibility that the stone packing on the high-cairn crannogs dates from the transition between the early medieval and later medieval periods. Animal bones from the stone packing of some sites (e.g. BOYL 0388) suggest that they were in use at these times. Besides radiocarbon dating there are other methods to understand crannog chronology. We will examine some other dating methods, to see whether this in any way affects the trends apparent in the material from Lough Gara.

Stratigraphy

The dated high-cairn crannogs from Lough Gara have shown evidence from the early medieval period and onwards. However, there is reason to believe that they are built on layers from other periods as well. The first proposition set out is that a high-cairn crannog is more likely to have layers from many different phases and periods than a low-cairn crannog or a platform crannog. Many repeated visits to a site would slowly lead to the appearance of a higher site. The site would grow over time like a 'Bulgarian tell', with construction layers added on top of each other over time.

With the help of our excavated crannog (KILC 022; see Chapter 10) we can see a sequence. The site was first built mainly of organic materials and was slowly converted into a stone structure. The lower organic parts dated from the early medieval period and were followed by



stone packing dating from either the later parts of the early medieval period or some time after this.

From photos (see Fig. 15) one can see that the crannog of Rathtinaun followed a similar development, from organic to stone. The crannog at Ardekillan, Co. Roscommon, also shows a similar sequence. We know that medieval artefacts have been found on this crannog. This stratigraphical evidence may support the idea that many crannogs were in use during the transition between the early and later medieval periods and that a stony surface might have been a morphological trait of these sites. Medieval artefacts, such as a sherd of green-glazed pottery, were found in the top stone layers of the crannog in Newtownlow, Co. Westmeath (Bourke 1986; 1987). Also, wood from a surrounding palisade from the crannog at Lough Kinale, Co. Longford, was dated to the twelfth century AD. From the description given by Farrell (1991) and E. Kelly (1991a, 88), this seems to have been a high-cairn crannog. Our field visit to the site confirms this. This evidence lends support to the view that the stone-built high-cairn crannogs may date from the later early medieval or the later medieval period. It also suggests that the continuous addition of layers to many low-cairn crannogs may have stopped at this time.

Proximity to other sites and text dating

The use of a crannog could, of course, at times also be attested by documentary sources (a method already tried by Shirley in 1846). There are a few references to Lough Gara, or Lough Techet, as it was formerly called. However, none of these relate directly to any of the crannogs.

One of the references tells how an O'Gara was slain by his kinsmen on an island in Lough Techet (AFM 1435). The island was called *Inis Bolg* and may possibly be identified as the present-day Inch Island in the middle of the Lower Lake rather than a crannog.

As suggested by O’Conor, the date of a crannog’s use could be appreciated if there was another settlement site located near it on the shoreline. It has been suggested that the location of moated sites on the shoreline might indicate the use of crannogs in the waters in medieval times (O’Conor 1998, 84). In the southern part of Lough Gara, in the Callow Lake, there is a substantial high-cairn crannog. Just adjacent to this is the ruin of a sixteenth-century castle that may at some stage have been a later medieval moated site (Kieran O’Conor, pers. comm.). Similar combinations or ‘pairing’ between crannogs and moated sites can be found, for example, in Cloonacleigha Lough, Co. Sligo (see O’Conor 2001, 338). During our survey the site was classified as a high-cairn crannog. This combination would lend support to the proposition that these high-cairn crannogs were used in the medieval period (it would then be in contemporary use with the moated site).

Artefact dating

The artefact material from Lough Gara contains items from almost all periods from the Mesolithic onwards. Appendix 3 shows the connection between different crannogs and artefacts. It was held by both Raftery and Cross that the smaller crannogs belonged to a pre-Bronze Age period as early artefacts were found on or around them. Cross stated that ‘in every instance except one the smaller type sites have produced pre-Bronze Age material’. He claimed that numerous Bann flakes were found on or in the vicinity of these sites (this might not necessarily be true, as I will discuss in Chapter 7). The larger islands were connected with items from the late Bronze Age (Cross 1953, 94–5). Like Cross, Raftery stated that these smaller sites were probably early, perhaps dating from the period between 6000 and 3000 BC, but they could also be younger (J. Raftery 1957, 7–8). This method of dating sites is self-evidently not very secure, as the connection between artefacts and site is not always straightforward. As shown, the larger sites most likely date from the early medieval and later medieval periods, but may have earlier layers.

In the material from Lough Gara there are sites like KILN 7 that produced late Bronze Age dates. The late Bronze Age/early Iron Age site at Inch Island also had artefacts from the same period in the vicinity. There are a handful of sites from which Bronze Age artefacts derive but where there is no radiocarbon evidence for any construction activity at the time, such as KILA 040. Even if the presence of Bronze Age artefacts is an indication of use of a site, it is not the strongest dating evidence possible. Furthermore, artefacts from one time-period found at a site do not rule out the use of the site during other periods.

Dendrochronological dating

During our survey in Lough Gara no timbers have so far been found that are suitable for dendrochronological dating. Dendrochronological dating has been carried out in other parts of the country on a number of large palisaded crannogs. The dating series (see Table 2) is based on oak and shows a concentration of dates around the second half of the sixth and the first half of the seventh century AD. All of the sites are located in Northern Ireland and the samples could reflect a regional increase in crannog use.

If these dates are compared with the radiocarbon dates from Lough Gara we will find that they are slightly earlier than the latter’s early medieval dates. It could be argued that there was a delay between the construction of crannogs in present-day Northern Ireland and in the west. This would tie in with Lynn’s (1983) ideas of a spread from the east and from Scotland to a certain extent. However, dendrochronological dates of AD 609–10 have also been obtained from an oak palisade at the crannog in Levallinree, Co. Mayo, in the west of Ireland (Lawless *et al.* 1989, 24).

Table 2 — Dendrochronological dates from oak posts from crannogs (Baillie 1982, 175–95; Edwards 1990, 37; Lawless et al. 1989).

<i>Crannog</i>	<i>Year when timber was felled</i>
Island MacHugh, Co. Tyrone	AD 594 ± 9
	AD 608
	AD 616 ± 9
	AD 619
	AD 622 ± 9
	AD 627 ± 9
Midges Island, Co. Antrim	AD 570 ± 9
Mill Lough, Co. Fermanagh	AD 553 ± 9
Ross Lough, Co. Fermanagh	AD 570 ± 9
Tamin, Co. Antrim	AD 618 ± 9
Teeshan, Co. Antrim	AD 581
Levallinree, Co. Mayo	AD 609–10

This suggests that there was a distinct activity in crannog-building at this stage not only in Northern Ireland but also in the west. I see it as likely that the crannogs of Lough Gara also may have had a building phase around the late sixth and early seventh century.

The results from Baillie's dendrochronological series (Baillie 1982, 175–95) tie in well with Lynn's ideas about the large palisaded crannogs belonging to the early medieval time-period. There is nothing in the Lough Gara material that disputes this idea, but, as I have argued earlier, there are a number of smaller sites that must not be overlooked owing to their limited size. Also, this dating has to be seen as spot-dating that does not necessarily give an indication of all the periods during which a site was in use.

Analysis of the dates and survey

We began this section with a series of questions that might be addressed with the help of the radiocarbon dating. These issues have also been addressed by a discussion of other methods of determining the age of the crannogs. This analysis is the basis for the interpretations in the following chapters of the book that follow the lake through time.

SEQUENCE

The sequence of crannogs suggested by the Lough Gara material is illustrated in Fig. 20. The figure shows that the crannogs tend to increase in height and size over time. The radiocarbon dating series from Lough Gara shows that there was already human activity by this lake in the early Mesolithic. There was also building going on at the lake in the transitional years between the late Mesolithic and the early Neolithic. There is as yet no secure evidence from the samples for the building of islands in the lake at this time. All we can say is that the lakeshore was being utilised by people. The early dates from Inch Island in the middle of the lake show that these people at least had an interest in the natural islands in the lake.

The small stone platforms that were claimed by earlier surveyors may have been built at this stage. There is not much left in the field as evidence for these sites, and their dating relies on artefacts. In interpreting the Mesolithic and Neolithic material this vagueness will have to be taken into account.

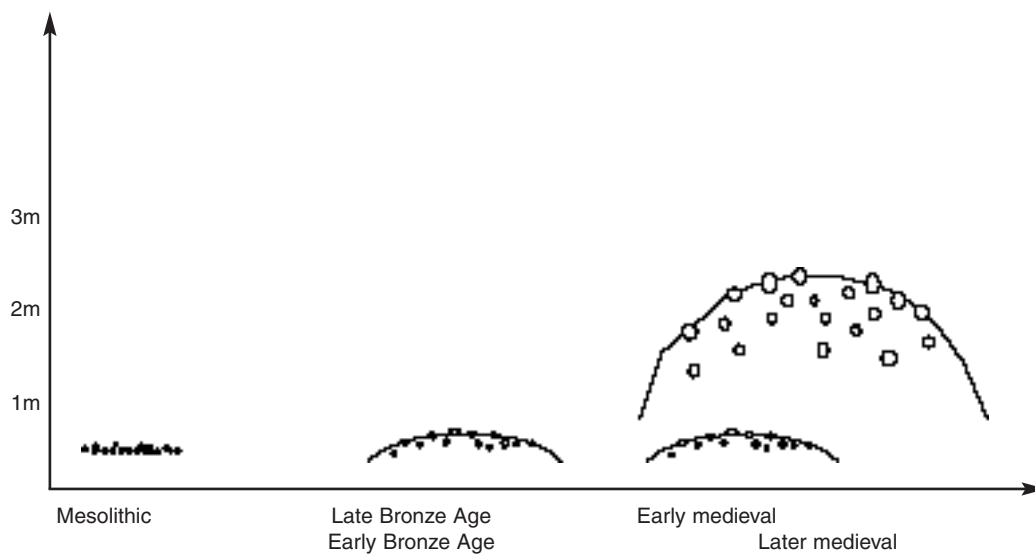


Fig. 20—The crannog sequence suggested by the Lough Gara material.

In the radiocarbon dating series there is no evidence for the use of any type of crannog during the Neolithic period or for any dates in the early Bronze Age. There is some evidence in other parts of the country that small platforms may have been in use during the Neolithic. Oliver Davies (1950) found Neolithic pottery at Island MacHugh. The site at Cullyhanna is often taken as an example of a lakeside settlement dating from the early Bronze Age (Hodges 1958; Hillman 1976). The signal is not as strong as in later periods, however.

In Lough Gara the first real evidence for island-building comes from around 900 BC, in the late Bronze Age. There is evidence that these islands continued to be built in the early Iron Age. With the new evidence from Lough Gara I think we can put forward the notion that crannogs, i.e. man-made islands, were built and used in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age. This conclusion differs from Lynn's (1983) idea about crannogs as a phenomenon only beginning in the early medieval period. However, this does not mean that the crannogs were in continuous use throughout prehistory. From the first century BC until the early medieval period there is no evidence for crannog activity at all. One of the periods that is missing is the later Iron Age. This period has a low visibility in almost all archaeological materials. Only one crannog has produced dates in this time-period. At Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath, animal bones from the presumed late Mesolithic levels were radiocarbon-dated to around AD 400 (Woodman *et al.* 1997, 142) instead of giving the expected Stone Age dates. This indicates that some activity may have taken place on the crannog in this period.

The strongest evidence from the crannog material points to the sixth–seventh centuries AD (Baillie 1982; Lynn 1983). It was only then that real crannogs were supposed to have been built, according to these researchers. The Lough Gara dates have also shown intensive construction activity in the early medieval period. What our material adds to the general debate is substantial evidence that low-cairn crannogs were also in use during the early medieval period. Morphologically these are similar to the late prehistoric low-cairn crannogs in height and diameter. There might be a slight morphological difference between the sites in the water

belonging to the early medieval period, which tend to have a larger number of flagstones on the surface, and the earlier sites, which tend to have more compact masses of shattered and fire-cracked stones at the surface. Another apparent feature of the late Bronze Age is the 'irregular' site, i.e. the body of the island is composed of different parts. These parts could be contained within the circle of the same palisade. This was the case with a site in Clonfinlough, Co. Offaly (see Moloney *et al.* 1993). The radiocarbon dates from the excavated site in Sroove and from other low-cairn sites have shown that both these sites and the larger high-cairn crannogs were in use during the early medieval period. Evidence from elsewhere, for example from the site at Bofeenau, Co. Mayo (Keane 1995), supports this hypothesis. This means that the narrative from the early medieval period must take into account sites of different sizes and constructions, and not discuss only the larger palisaded sites when trying to understand the island-building phenomenon at this time.

The survey and dating results also suggest that crannogs began to acquire additional layers, and thus greater height, towards the end of the early medieval period and into the later medieval period. This would lead me to suggest that the high-cairn crannog can be seen as a medieval feature. One has to bear in mind that it is very likely that the high-cairn crannogs cover earlier sites from the late Bronze Age and from the early medieval period.

To conclude, the dates and the results from the survey suggest that low-cairn crannogs were built in the late Bronze Age and in the early medieval period. The high-cairn crannogs probably belong to the later part of the early medieval period and into the later medieval period. They would have a surface of quite dense stone packing.

LOCATIONAL SEQUENCE

One of the issues raised before sampling was whether the crannogs located off the natural islands in the lake dated from some particular period. It was found that the sites at Derrycoagh td and at Inch Island dated from the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, implying that the building of man-made islands beside natural islands took place at this time; this is important for our further interpretation of these sites.

A comparison was carried out of the dates from sites located in different positions in the landscape, such as on the present-day shoreline or in the waters. Early medieval sites could be found in both positions, while the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age samples came mainly from sites located further out from the shoreline. This means that we have a tendency for prehistoric sites to be found in deeper waters than early medieval sites in Lough Gara.

In Lough Gara most crannogs are situated on the shore of the lake or in the lake waters. But there are also two sites located in bogland at some distance from the lake. It has been argued by O'Sullivan (1997) that one can separate the Bronze Age 'lake-side settlements' from the early medieval crannogs by comparing evidence for their location at the time of building. In an excavation situation one can compare the materials on which the sites were located. Sites like those in Lough Eskragh, Co. Tyrone (see B. Williams 1978), were built on peat and would not qualify as crannogs. They would not have been surrounded by water but by wetlands, and would therefore not qualify as islands in the sense of bodies of land surrounded by water. The later, 'real' crannogs would have been built in water and would therefore be found mainly on lake sediments such as marl.

However, this locational separation does not enable us to assign sites to different periods. Just to take one example, Ruth Johnson (1999) has recently claimed that one of the classic crannog sites, Ballinderry 1, was a lakeside settlement when it started to be built in the early medieval

period. Only later was it turned into an island.

Another argument against the locational classification above is that islands may not necessarily have had to be built in water. The early medieval text *Vita Tripartita*, dating from around AD 800, relates how St Patrick cursed a particular man in a family, so that his future projects would have no success. One of these projects had to do with the building of islands:

Si insolas in gronna, nunquam firmiter posunt stare...

‘If they [build] islands in a bog they can never stand firmly’

(Stokes 1887, 212–13; see also Mulchrone 1939, 126).

The text is interesting in that it is an early reference to early medieval island-building and it also shows that people were not unfamiliar with the concept of building islands in bogs. People at this time obviously did not feel that islands had to be surrounded by water; wetlands would also do. They would not have been unfamiliar with the term ‘bog island’, for example. According to O’Sullivan’s (1997) classification, islands built in bogs would not be counted as crannogs and would belong to prehistory rather than to the historical period. This contradicts the evidence presented by Johnson (1999) as well as the documentary evidence presented above. With the help of this historical reference we can say that construction on peat need not be an indication of prehistoric date. This is also clear from the archaeological material.

The location of the crannogs can be analysed from another perspective as well. If the high-cairn crannogs are taken to represent a later phase of the crannogs in Lough Gara, as suggested by radiocarbon dating and stratigraphy, their distribution pattern may inform us about the social situation in these times around the lake. The high-cairn crannogs are more frequent on the eastern side of the lake, while the low-cairn crannogs can be found on both sides. The platform crannogs also have a more easterly distribution.

Water-level changes

As discussed, the lake levels in Lough Gara change drastically between seasons. There are also reasons to believe that the lake levels have changed between different periods. Not only were some of the crannogs submerged before the drainage, all along the shorelines of Lough Gara at least three earlier shorelines are easily discernible. In order to find out more about the lake level changes we initiated a joint operation with the Department of Quaternary Research (now Department of Physical Geography and Quaternary Geology) at Stockholm University and undertook investigations into earlier lake levels. The purpose was to find out more about former water-level changes and to see how people may have perceived these in relation to their lake settlements.

The study was carried out by investigating the bio-, litho- and chronostratigraphy in the lake sediment and its surroundings. Analyses were performed of siliceous microfossils and mineral magnetic characteristics. The results showed that Lough Gara has gone through relatively drastic lake level changes since the Mesolithic period. In general, the sequence indicates a change from higher levels to lower levels, with a general rise from the early medieval period onwards. The higher levels were easily observed around the lake as accumulation of lake marl up to *c.* 2m above the present-day lake surface. The reason for the fluctuating levels could be carstification together with a variety of factors such as peat accumulation in outlets, differential isostatic uplift and climate variations (Stjärnfeldt 1997; J. Risberg, pers. comm.). While this material allows us to discuss general changes in lake levels over time, the radiocarbon dates turned out to be affected

by processes generating similar ages throughout the analysed core. Probably this is caused by the incorporation of carbonate with infinite age. This problem could be avoided in the future by sieving the sediment for terrestrial macrofossils. Without further investigations and a reliable chronology it is difficult to correlate the observed stratigraphic changes with the periods of human building activity within the lake.

Island space

It has been claimed that ‘New Archaeology’ tried to promote a concept of space that belongs to ‘Western Capitalist’ societies (see Tilley 1994, 3, 20–1). This would be a measured, rational space that probably was not possible to perceive in the non-market societies from which much of the archaeological material comes. For example, in site catchment analysis a concept suitable for the market forces can be traced — a transparent, commodified space, where one place is interchangeable with another in terms of the relative availability of resources. While criticising this landscape perspective Tilley (1994) suggested an enquiry into the construction of social spaces, and asked for a discussion of how different spaces could have worked towards enabling as well as constraining social actions. Many prehistoric sites have been discussed from the viewpoint of how they shape and form people’s spatial experience, thereby being both a result of and a formative influence on social action (see Tilley 1996; R. Bradley 1993; 1998). So far the discussion has mainly concentrated on megalithic tombs and henges, while no one has dealt with the specific theme of island space and crannogs.

In order to lay a foundation for the wider contextual interpretation of the crannogs I have constructed a temporal sequence in the material, running from the possible platform crannogs into the low- and high-cairn sites. The crannog material has often been seen as an expression of a site that did not change over time. This was a problem that faced many of the early scholars, such as Wood-Martin (1886a). What is important with crannogs is to have enough sensitivity in interpretation to see that even the slightest variation on the island theme may have had a relevance to people at the time. In what follows we will discuss how the things we have learned about crannogs, such as their boundaries, height, location etc., may have affected people. We will examine the effects crannogs have on people, spatially and eventually also in the formation of concepts for thinking. It is important to remember that the spatiality and the date of the site also have a bearing on social issues. In order to discuss the social spatiality of the islands I will use the term ‘islandness’.

Boundaries

The first spatial aspect of all these sites is that they are islands. A particular feature of islands is that they have boundaries that are less arbitrary than other places. Most cultures see land and water as two opposite categories, but islands can also be seen as dryland surrounded by bog and wetland. Tim Robinson expresses ‘islandness’, or what islands ‘do’ in a cognitive sense, in the following way:

‘There is something compulsive in one’s relationship to an island. A mainland area with its ambiguous or arbitrary boundaries doesn’t constrain the attention in the same way. With an island it is as if the surrounding ocean like a magnifying glass directs an intensified vision onto the narrow field of view. A little piece is cut out of the world, marked off in fact by its richness in significance. So an island appears to be mappable. Already a little abstracted from reality, already half-concept, it holds out the delusion of a comprehensible totality’ (Robinson 1996, 1).

For Robinson islands create a tension in the landscape. But what are also of importance are the more real and distinct boundaries that express what is so special about island space. Islands can be used to invoke a space of difference. One difference is in terms of immunity, whereby the rules applying to other places may be lifted and nullified. Islands can also create imaginings of what it would be like to be there, in a perfect world — as Robinson says, they are worlds unto themselves. I think we can learn from this when it comes to crannogs. People could have used them to create small, manageable worlds for themselves.

The form of these islands implies certain spatial actions. The people who built the islands chose to be spatially cut off by water and to create an area where people could stay for some time. In some ways the act of building an island could be interpreted as a gathering of space, where the ‘islandness’ hinders both access and exit from the site. Islands thereby give room to dramatise otherness and create a bounded context. While tombs may demarcate the space of ‘inside’ as compared to ‘outside’, the difference with islands is more distinct as you approach them over water. It is therefore important to investigate what the waters meant to people over time.

Some islands have causeways that mediate their isolation. While the built island offers a place to stay, the causeways express a wish to reconnect. The causeway signals ‘Walk, but walk on our terms and not where you like’. Architecturally the causeways can be seen as paths expressing a movement from land through water to a place in the water. While providing entry or exit a causeway also urges a movement. The causeways that stretch out into the water show another intention to move out, to reach out into the water and then to return to the island and stay. While the causeways, like paths, provide repeated, directed movements through the water, they are also emphasising the connection with land rather than with water. The crannogs could to a varying degree be standing for terms like intensification, detachment and isolation.

The crannogs vary in size, from the platforms merely 3m in diameter to the low- and high-cairn crannogs of up to 30m on average. None of them are particularly large. The platform can only have provided space for a few people, and there would have been very little room for any internal division of space. Whatever took place on the islands, it must have taken place with intensity. What was happening on one side of the island would not have gone unnoticed on the other. The limited size would also have held an element of exclusion: only so many could have been allowed onto the islands, leaving so many out.

However, not even the boundaries of an island are free from a certain amount of arbitrariness. Barth (2000, 17–18) has discussed the changing nature of the land masses close to the tidal waters of the sea, and not even this boundary is free from vagueness. This would at least to some extent also apply to the body of the crannogs, but presumably platform crannogs would have been affected to a different degree than high-cairn crannogs.

Temporality–height

All the sites in Lough Gara termed crannogs carry the possibility of having once been islands, as they are all located below the present winter shoreline and the area around them would have been filled up with water at some time. People intentionally chose the location and height of the crannogs and built the bodies of the sites to different heights; perhaps this deliberate choice ought to affect our interpretation of island space. However, in a lake like Lough Gara a particular site’s ‘islandness’ would have been affected by more than general changes in water-level. There are also quite distinct seasonal changes, with the waters rising about 1.5m in the winter. Not all sites would be affected by changes in the lake in a similar way and this should affect our interpretation of them.

The platform crannogs have quite low bodies. A crannog that only reaches a height of 0.4m

above the surrounding lakebed has been built with a limited period of use in mind. Such a site would only have attained its insularity at certain times of the year, as only slight variations in water-level would have led to inundation or drying out. The platform crannogs could only have been islands during a few months of the year, maybe for only a few weeks, and perhaps even then they would have been susceptible to flooding.

The high-cairn crannogs lie on the other end of the scale; with a general height of 2.5–3m, they were high enough to transcend the restraints imposed by seasonal water-level changes. They could have been occupied throughout the year, while the low-cairn crannogs would have been more exposed to inundation and therefore would have had a shorter season of use. The height of the crannogs could be interpreted as different manifestations of temporality.

What is important to bear in mind is that one and the same island may have had a genealogy. By this I mean that it may have started as, for example, a platform crannog and that its meaning would have changed as it was rebuilt. Some islands did grow into high-cairn crannogs and this would set them apart from the smaller islands.

Man-made tension in the landscape

As we have seen, the crannogs have been built in a lake that has many natural islands of all sizes and types. There are both small shoals and larger islands. I cannot find a strong enough expression to communicate this extreme act of people creating nature, creating islands, as if the dichotomy between nature and culture was totally erased or mastered.

Most of what has been discussed above relates to various aspects of being on, entering or leaving the crannogs. The site would also have meant something to the people on the shore. Distinct islands cannot be argued to be hideaways if they sit on open water. The more substantial islands must rather have attracted attention, perhaps emphasising social and physical distance between people on these islands and on the shores.

Islands differ from other places in that they have an extraordinary presence and intensity in the landscape. What I have felt in surveying Irish lakes is how a crannog in a lake focuses attention, while an empty lake is not the same. Islands have a special effect on us, structuring our experience in particular ways. An island seen from the shore, like a mountaintop seen from below, invokes a tension in the landscape, creating the dichotomy of being here in body while one's thoughts are elsewhere. Islands — and to some extent also mountains — create a longing, a tension in the landscape by dramatising the spatial difference between here and there. To mis-use Edward Said's (1978) concept of orientalism, islands create a visual tension between near and far away. Island-building involves a direct human action that may draw on this characteristic in the landscape.

Although it has been possible to outline a number of different spatial interpretations between the three crannog groups, crannogs as a site type also exhibit large degrees of similarity. First of all, that they lend themselves to being discussed as a group points towards a metaphorical sameness. There is also a regularity in the occurrence of many of the same type of sites in the same lake. What they all have in common is that they inhabit the waters. It is also important to bear in mind that at any one time, such as the Bronze Age or the early medieval period, none of these sites was alone in the lake. There were also other sites that may have been in use at the same time or at an earlier stage.

What do crannogs do?

I would like to finish this survey chapter with a discussion of the crannogs' monumentality because I think they do not really work like other monuments. In *Altering the earth* R. Bradley

(1993) discusses what monuments do, meaning how they shape people's experiences. The discussion is built on evidence for many land-based monuments such as megalithic tombs, barrows and henges that differ to a certain extent from our islands in the water. The first suggestion made in the book was that monuments, apart from being constructed in order to help people remember someone or something, also mark out and change people's spatial experience of special places. They change people's awareness of the landscape (Bradley 1993, 5). The building of crannogs would of course also change the way that lakes or wetlands were perceived by for example introducing habitation to these naturally uninhabitable places.

The second characteristic of monuments is that they 'last for a very long time' (Bradley 1993). By this it is meant that many sites in the landscape have effects on people throughout time. But as has been shown in the discussion on temporality, crannogs don't work like other monuments. Owing to seasonally changing water-levels as well as the limited height of both the platform and low-cairn crannogs, they might not have the year-round presence of other monuments. Instead they can take you by surprise and turn up from the waters at unexpected times. Only the high-cairn crannogs may exhibit a year-round monumentality in this respect. The water, on the other hand, also makes these sites last. Just think of the wood on the surface that in some cases has lasted since the Mesolithic. So even if crannogs are monumental sites, their 'lasting' is of a particular kind.

The third quality of monuments is that, although they retain their presence in the landscape, they can be manipulated and may be reinscribed with new meanings over time (Bradley 1993, 5). In the sequence of crannogs we can see variations on the theme of built islands over time, and I think we have to be open to the possibility that the overlaying and reuse of earlier crannogs might have been part of the reason why crannogs were built. They would have drawn on the power of earlier monuments and places. Bradley (1993, 125), for example, mentioned the royal crannog of Lagore in such a context.

Conclusion

Lough Gara is a special lake. There are more crannogs there than elsewhere, and there is also a larger variety of crannogs than in many smaller lakes. I think that one reason for this is that it has suitable shallow bays that corresponded to what people wanted — built islands in low water.

In this chapter I have outlined a sequence of crannogs covering the long time-span from the Mesolithic to the present. I think we can safely say that islands were built in the late Bronze Age and in the Iron Age in Lough Gara, and we have evidence for activity in the lake in the early medieval period and later. The evidence for islands from the Stone Age still has to be treated with caution.

That the crannogs may possibly have been in place since the Stone Age need not imply that these islands meant the same thing to people over time. The ongoing use of the islands for the different activities represented in the artefact material may have changed their meaning. As shown, crannogs also change spatially over time while still repeating to an extent a similar material expression. The spatial aspects of crannogs offer a means of understanding their social aspects, and variation in height, access etc. might have a bearing on the interpretation of sites. This information will be drawn on in the following chapters of the book.

PART IV — LOUGH GARA THROUGH TIME

The following five chapters deal with Lough Gara over time, and aim to contextualise the crannogs and other sites and finds from the waters together with the land-based archaeology. Many of the chapters, but not all, discuss the evidence within each time-period for monuments, burial, settlements and finds. The chapters all lead up to a discussion about people's attitude to the waters and to themselves. This is then used to articulate the evidence for the crannogs in each period and to draw conclusions about the social practicalities and the perceived realities of the times. Bearing in mind the 'monumentality' of many sites, both crannogs and others, the distribution maps used include not only monuments that were constructed in the period in question but in some cases also sites from earlier times.

Most of the following chapters have a simple form that discusses burial/ritual, settlements, the evidence for artefact loss or deposition, and the crannogs. To separate settlement and burial is not, however, without complications, as during certain time-periods they tended to share the same location. In other periods burials and settlements (in terms of houses) have left no trace in the archaeological material and we have to use artefacts to understand where people dwelt. Secondly, concepts such as settlement and burial are not value-free analytical entities. These categorisations are interpretations in themselves, and can be questioned (see e.g. Brück 1999, 55, 60–4). What do we actually mean by a domestic settlement, for example, when burials at times look like settlements or when metalworking residues are retrieved from tombs?¹⁵ Do the crannogs which have produced finds of hearths, human skulls and moulds for bronze-casting represent defended domestic settlements or workshops? In the early days of crannog studies it was unclear whether crannogs should be seen as tombs or settlements (see e.g. Talbot 1849). Perhaps they should be seen as a blend of all these categories, which would be unusual in our society today. It would, for example, be what Mary Douglas (1986) calls 'out of category' to find a human skull in a motor factory. While I use these fairly static categorisations to facilitate the writing of each chapter, my aim is to question these classifications, and when necessary to break them down.

It is also important to bear in mind that the amount of archaeological material available for the various time-periods differs. In the Mesolithic period it is mainly artefacts that indicate human activity, while during the Neolithic period stone-built monuments are present in the landscape. For the Iron Age the material remains are quite sparse. I take the visibility of the material to represent more than chance finds; it may also be seen as meaningful, revealing past people's attitudes towards a permanent presence in the landscape, for example. Low-visibility sites would mean that people did not see long-term presence as important, while high-visibility sites would indicate that they did. This all draws on the ideas brought forward in the discussion of monumentality (see R. Bradley 1993; 1998).

Furthermore, in interpreting the different site types found in and around the lake I have had to do a certain amount of generalising. Sometimes, owing to a lack of local evidence, parallels have had to be drawn with archaeological material from elsewhere. While this is necessary, it makes the study less local. Another challenge in this work is posed by the fact that the theoretical discussion and the issues of importance in each period differ considerably. The discourse in the Mesolithic differs widely from the one in the early medieval period, and I have therefore tried to focus on a constrained set of issues. Following an area through time entails limitations in the scope of the issues dealt with.

7. INTENSITY — THE MESOLITHIC

Far back in time, after the Ice Age, the lake was one and not three as today. In later days this large lake has been called the greater Lough Gara (Mitchell 1987; Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 104). In the thousands of years that followed, the water-level fell and the lake divided into different parts. There are some traces to indicate that people were here from at least about 8000 years ago, during the Mesolithic period. The early Mesolithic in Ireland runs from 7000 to 5500 BC, and the later Mesolithic from 5500 to 4000 BC. The division of the Mesolithic into two parts is mainly due to the transition from the use of a microlithic technique to the use of a long-blade technique (Woodman 1978; 1985; Cooney and Grogan 1994, 20ff). The evidence includes the two dates from the shore of Inch Island in the middle of the lake, one from the early Mesolithic and the other from the end of the late Mesolithic. A range of artefacts has also been found on the shores, most of them dating from the later period (see Woodman 1978, 322).

All the artefacts from Lough Gara were found in the boundary zone between land and water in the landscape. As indicated in the survey chapter, it is not totally clear which type of site they were connected with. It could well be that they derived from small platform crannogs; another possibility is that the items have eroded from deposits higher up on the shore, or that they were placed as hoards in the water.

In this chapter I will try to make use of the Lough Gara material. However, I will also use material deriving from other areas in order to draw up a narrative about people's lives and relationships with others as well as with the waters and the lakes. The general narrative for the Mesolithic is built on a few sites, such as Mount Sandel, Co. Derry (Woodman 1985a), and Lough Boora, Co. Offaly (Ryan 1978; 1980; 1984), for the early part. The sequence of the late Mesolithic draws on evidence mainly from Newferry, Co. Antrim (Woodman 1977). There is also evidence for the latest phases of Mesolithic activity from a few other sites, such as Dalkey Island, Co. Dublin (Liversage 1968), Sutton, Co. Dublin (Mitchell 1956; 1972), Rough Island, Co. Down (Movius 1940), and Ferriter's Cove, Co. Kerry (Woodman and O'Brien 1993; Woodman *et al.* 1999).

Settlements

Woodman (1992; 2000, 7–9) emphasises that our present view of the Mesolithic is coloured by the low visibility of the material compared to other periods, and there could have been a number of things happening that left either no evidence at all or undiagnostic traces in the material. The perceived lack of material of course also depends on what lifestyle we expect to find traces of. The Mesolithic is a period that does not offer any strong evidence for houses or other sites that we today connect with a settled lifestyle. The material must be approached from a different angle.

The forest

In the Mesolithic wide forests stretched over the lands surrounding the lake. During the early part of the period this forest consisted of hazel, birch and pine (Edwards 1985; Woodman 1985a; Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 84 ff), but the type of cover changed in the later Mesolithic to tall trees like oak or elm (Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 141–3). Tall trees like these create a roof through which only some of the sun's rays can penetrate, leaving the ground free of a dense vegetation of shrubs

and bushes. The hollow space under the trees contained paths, streams and animals; the trees formed a lid, separating the ground from the sky and the mountains above. Under the shelter of the trees, travelling on foot would have been relatively easy. Mountaintops and lakes/waterways would then have been among the few places where people could have been in direct visual contact with the sky. The area around Lough Gara was probably forested at this time, and it would only have been the highest mountains, like Keash, Knocknashee and Muckelty, that rose above the forest roof. Keash hill has long caves running into its interior, in which bones of bear, red deer and wolf have been found (Scharff *et al.* 1903). Recently some of the bones from the excavations in the caves were dated and many were found to belong to the Pleistocene and to the early Mesolithic (Woodman *et al.* 1997, 139–40).

In order to understand more about how the people living around Lough Gara at this time might have perceived their environment we may have to draw on studies from other fields. Anthropological studies have shown that forests are not only seen as resources but that many cultures ascribe considerable meaning to the trees. Laura Rival (1998, 3) has pointed out that in many cases trees have a symbolic value as being self-sustaining and also as transcending death, since many species, such as oak, would have a longer life-span than humans. According to the pollen diagrams people did not interfere with the forests to any great extent at this time, and it is possible that only small areas were cleared (Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 139).¹⁶ However, the fact that people left no traces in the forests does not mean that they were not emotionally involved with these areas. Ethnographic sources show that many hunter-gatherers look upon forests as parents and providers (see Ingold 2000, 40ff, including references), not as meaningless voids in the landscape. It is possible that the people who left their traces around the lake regarded the forests as more than a source of food. They might have been places associated with memories, paths and peoples.

It has been proposed that people during the Mesolithic may have seen themselves as equal to the animals and that they were living in ‘partnership’ with nature, possibly paying attention to natural places such as lakes, islands, rivers, mountains and caves (R. Bradley 1998, 33–4; 2000). Besides recent ethnographical sources there is also archaeological material that could support such views. Most of this material does not derive from Ireland, however. Bradley has built his arguments on an analysis of the grave-goods in Mesolithic burials and has pointed out that there is a recurring pattern in these burials that may even have its roots in the Palaeolithic. Burial might incorporate red ochre and the deposition of antlers with the dead (*ibid.*, 20–35).

There may also be evidence for the circulation of human bones, and for the use of organic materials as grave-goods. Another interesting feature that supports Bradley’s theory about people being one with nature comes from Scandinavia, where in some places dogs were given burials similar to humans (see e.g. Larsson 1981, 36; 1990). Bradley’s interpretation of this is that people included both animals and plants in their burials, which would suggest a connection between people and nature at this time (Bradley 1998, 33–5).

There is practically no evidence for Mesolithic human burials in Ireland. Red ochre has, however, been found on artefacts from Mount Sandel in Northern Ireland. It seems to have been more common on ‘narrow elongated blades’ and is found at the edges of the artefacts (see Woodman 1985a, 51). Antlers are sometimes found in Irish lakes and wetlands, but they belong to giant deer that are considered to have been extinct by the ninth millennium BC, before the arrival of humans in Ireland (Mitchell and Ryan 1997, 88). Horns from giant deer have also been found in Lough Gara (Felicity Mac Dermot, pers. comm.; Mitchell 1979). Although the giant deer was extinct the antlers could have been used in later rituals in the same way as at Star Carr. Clark (1967, 87–8) suggested that the deer craniums with perforations found at the latter site

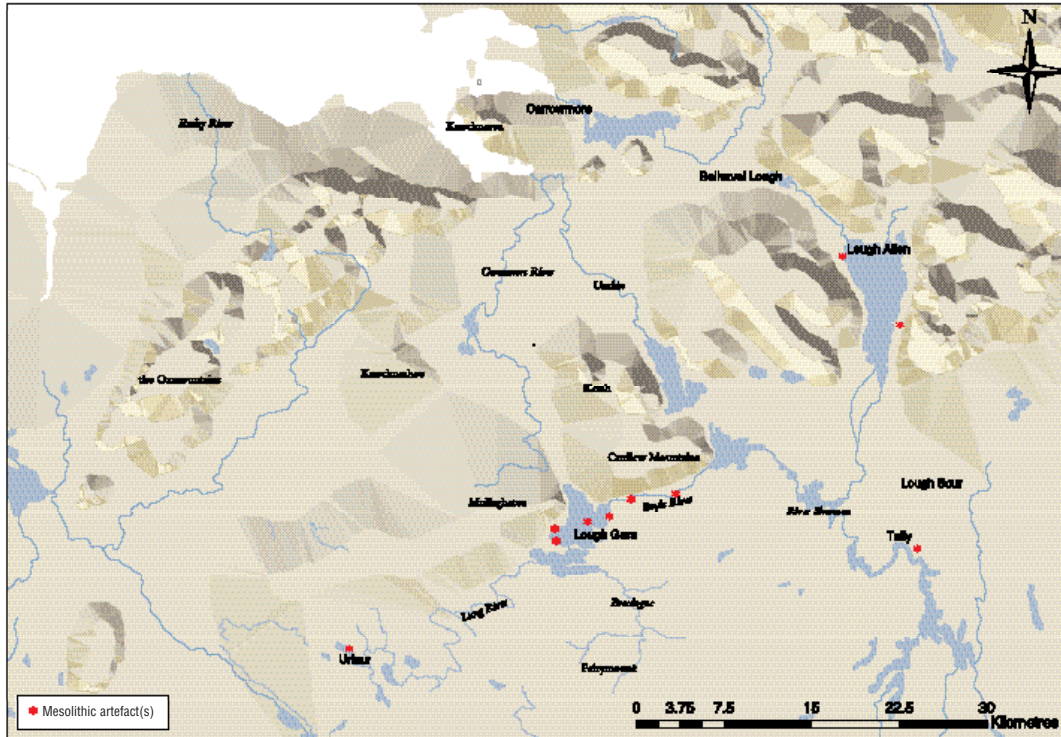


Fig. 21—Waters with Mesolithic material near Lough Gara.

could have been used as shamanic masks (for shamanic practices see Eliade 1964 and Vitebsky 1995). Besides the horns from giant deer found in Lough Gara, antler tips were also found on the shores together with some of the lithic artefacts. However, it is not known what time-period they belong to. Their cultural context could suggest a late Bronze Age date, but it would be an interesting exercise to date them.

There is very little evidence for forest clearance at this time in Ireland. Perhaps the trees and the woodlands were seen as alive or as having a spirit, and therefore were not touched to any great extent. The forest around the lake may have felt like a home, a place that could be inhabited by people and animals alike.

The waters

What is striking about the Irish material is that very little has been found in these dryland areas and where the forests would have been. Most Mesolithic artefacts have been found in or near water, just as at Lough Gara. Mesolithic material has been recovered from other lakes near Lough Gara (Fig. 21), such as Lough Allen,¹⁷ Co. Leitrim, and Urlaur, Co. Mayo (Davies 1942, 25; J. Raftery 1944; Mitchell 1970; Woodman 1978, 321–2). These two places are connected to Lough Gara via the river system.

Woodman (1978, 186–91) has suggested that people were more settled during the early Mesolithic than in the later Mesolithic, based on the evidence from the excavation of Mount Sandel (Woodman 1978; 1985a; 1985b). People in the late Mesolithic, on the other hand, were organised into communities that moved between different places during the year. As no base-

camp has been found a settled lifestyle could not be proposed (this is still the situation; see Woodman *et al.* 1999). Instead Woodman suggested that people moved from the sea to the lakes and inland in a seasonal cycle. According to this narrative the winters were spent hunting wild pig in the forests, while in the spring people moved to the sea to collect oysters. At the beginning of summer they followed the fish like salmon and eel upriver (Woodman 1978, 176–81). Nothing has been written about the lives of these small semi-nomadic communities since Woodman 1978, and most recent work has focused on lithic studies.

The question of how people lived, whether as nomads or as settled people, has been tackled from another angle as well. By contrast, Cooney and Grogan believe in a more settled late Mesolithic on ‘economic’ grounds. They argue that when the Boreal climate of the early Mesolithic gave way to the warmer Atlantic conditions the resource productivity of ‘settled activities’ would have been higher, and therefore it is more likely that people would have decided to settle down (Cooney and Grogan 1994, 21–2). Burenhult (1980, 113; 1984, 139–50) made a somewhat similar comment on how the abundance of seafood near Carrowmore provided the people with enough resources to remain settled as early as the late Mesolithic. However, the whole economic argument reflects an environmental determinism and is not supported by any archaeological evidence, being built solely on climate change and resource availability. The argument in both cases is built on the same assumption that underlies modern neo-classic economics — that people were resource-maximisers who seized the opportunity to produce more when they saw it.

That Mesolithic research is inherently economic was pointed out by Richard Bradley in the mid-1980s. Many of the narratives, not only in Ireland but also elsewhere, explain all sorts of variations in the archaeological material with one single term — resource exploitation. In *The social formation of prehistoric Britain* Bradley (1984, 11) made his now-classic comment about the Mesolithic being reduced to an economic phenomenon and the people to eating-machines:

‘... in literature as a whole, successful farmers have social relations with one another, while hunter-gatherers have ecological relations with hazel-nuts’.

In another context the same author urged a redefinition of the narratives in which Mesolithic people are seen as nothing more than ‘stomachs on legs’. There is no other period that is infested to such a large degree with economic language as the Mesolithic. The picture given is one of resource-optimising creatures exploiting their habitat. The only relationship they had with their surroundings was an economic one. In order to learn more we have to move beyond this type of explanation.

Interesting facts in this context are that quite dramatic changes in people’s everyday lives seem to have taken place without any clear changes in eating habits. It has been noted that no drastic dietary changes took place during the transition from the early to the late Mesolithic period in Ireland (Woodman 1981; Woodman and Anderson 1990, 380–1) in spite of striking changes in the material culture, where microliths were replaced by long blades. This implies that these people’s actions should perhaps be seen as more than mere adaptations to changes in economic and ecological factors, and that there might be reasons other than practical ones for the ways in which people transformed their landscape and their material world. If changes in eating habits played no part in the transition between the early and late Mesolithic, why should they be advanced as reasons for a change to a more settled lifestyle, particularly when there is no supporting archaeological evidence?

Vague evidence for Mesolithic crannogs

If we leave the clearly economic narratives for a while we can consider it likely that the people who lived by the lake may have felt some affinity with the forest, the mountains and the waters. The question is, however, how we can relate the issues of human settlement to the small platform crannogs that have been reported from places such as Lough Gara. But the material evidence for these is not totally straightforward.

In Lough Gara human presence can be seen most clearly in the artefactual material. More than 2000 lithic items such as débitage, cores, tools of flint, chert, sandstone and limestone have been found in the lake, in the zone between land and water. These artefacts were collected by both archaeologists and people from the area, from the time of the drainage and later. Many of these finds are now in the National Museum, but it is possible that more material may exist in school and private collections around the country.

*Table 3 — NMI collections containing lithics of the Mesolithic period.*¹⁸

E20	E22	E114	E115	E116	E117	E118	E119
Raftery	Raftery	Mitchell	Mitchell	Mitchell	Mitchell	Mitchell	Mitchell

Table 3 lists the NMI collections that hold Mesolithic artefacts. Woodman has analysed the finds in the collections, but offered no breakdown of the material. However, his general analysis of material from both the Raftery and the Mitchell collections suggests that most of the lithic artefacts belong to the latest phases of the late Mesolithic (Woodman 1978, 322). He found a significant number of ‘large leaf-shaped Bann flakes’ in the collections, together with some ‘blade points’. There were also some single- and double-pointed picks, but no ‘bar forms’. These are regarded as earlier in date (Woodman 1978, 322). Figure 22 shows some common late Mesolithic artefacts.

Earlier researchers argued that these artefacts were connected with the smaller crannogs (Cross 1953; J. Raftery 1957). Cross (1953, 93) wrote that ‘in every instance except one, the smaller type sites have produced pre-Bronze Age materials’, by which he meant the Bann flakes that are now considered to be one of the ‘type fossils’ for this period. Woodman, on the other hand, pointed out that the connection between the crannogs and the artefacts is not totally clear. He suggested that the Lough Gara material probably consisted of a mixed assemblage and that the material may have occurred on natural gravel spreads by the shores or was being eroded out from deposits higher up on the shore (Woodman 1978, 322).

In our survey we divided Cross’s smaller sites into platform crannogs and low-cairn crannogs. There was very little field evidence for the platform crannogs apart from the information from Cross (1953) and J. Raftery (1957; forthcoming). However, the excavation of a low-cairn crannog and many of the radiocarbon dates have shown that these sites belong to the early medieval period or to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. There was only vague evidence that some of the platform crannogs may date from the Stone Age. The survey information thus lends weight to Woodman’s doubts about the connection between the artefact collections and an early date for the crannogs.

There is also another reason why the connection between artefacts and crannogs can be questioned. If the Museum register of lithics is compared with the small crannogs noted by Cross (1953) the statement that every small site was connected with pre-Bronze Age artefacts can be seen to be untrue. There are no lithics registered for many of the small sites (see Appendix 1). The fact that the lithics in collections E114–E119 are not registered by site but by townland makes a

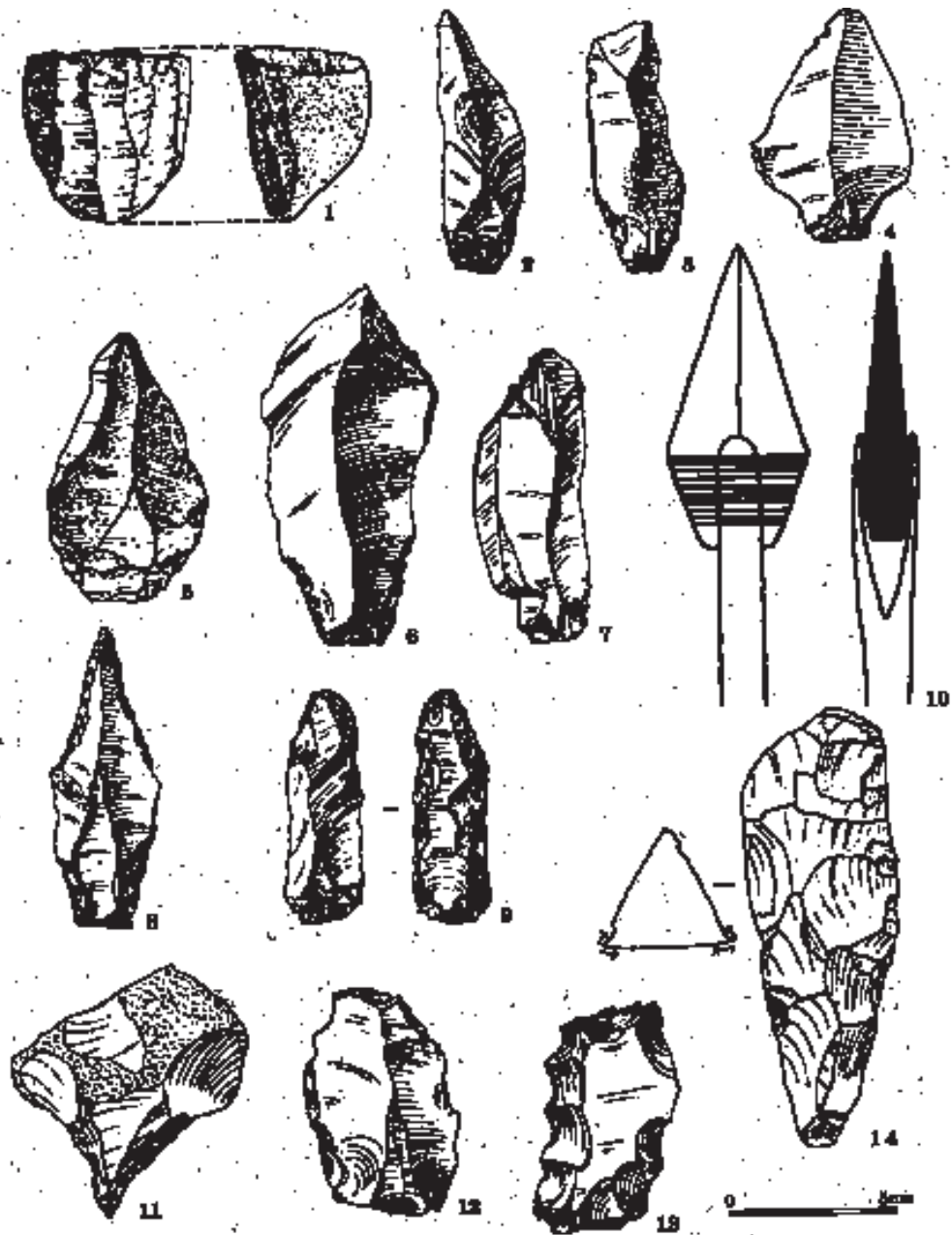


Fig. 22—Drawing of usual late Mesolithic artefacts and suggested hafting of a flake (after Waddell 1998, 20).

site-by-site comparison impossible. Some artefacts from collections E20–E22 can be linked to particular sites, but the integrity of these sites is not totally clear. While there is still a possibility that some of the lithic material was connected with the smaller sites, we have to bear in mind Woodman's doubts and the fact that he regarded the Lough Gara material as almost without context and not deriving from any crannogs at all (1978, 322). If we leave aside for the moment the question about the eventual Mesolithic crannogs, we will see that the material is not totally

useless. Shifting the analysis from the presumed sites to the townland level may still provide a basis for a narrative.

Three or two narratives

While Raftery and Cross argued that there was clear evidence for small man-made islands of Mesolithic date, it is still important to take Woodman's critique of the existence of these islands seriously, especially as there is only sporadic evidence of the presumed sites on the lakeshore today. However, the dates from the northern shores of Inch Island show that there was substantial activity in the waters at an early stage. The material shows that people already had an interest in islands in the early Mesolithic, but a clear connection between the small platform crannogs and the Mesolithic artefacts cannot yet be made. Owing to the vagueness of the material I will show two — possibly three — ways of looking at the material, implying different ways of understanding the social cohesion of people living around the lake at this time.

(a) Without going into the issue of the existence of small man-made islands at this stage, the material might be taken to mean something anyway. The artefacts could represent points of intensive human habitation around the lake. This narrative looks further into the places in the landscape where the artefacts have been found. The lithics were eroded from deposits higher up on the shore, as suggested by Woodman. As a basis for this and the following narratives it is important to investigate what the artefacts could represent and this narrative will present a small artefact analysis.

(b) The second narrative is a variant of the first, likewise not connecting the artefacts to any man-made islands. Instead they may be seen to represent hoards and/or depositions in the water. In this narrative it is also important to understand the general landscape location.

(c) The third narrative explores more deeply the implications of whether there was evidence of the use of small platform crannogs at this stage and the deposition of artefacts on them.

I will build different interpretations around these themes, while leaving it up to the reader to decide which of the options is the most likely. It is important in all the narratives to understand how the different uses of the landscape may be connected with the ways in which classifications and collective patterns of thought develop.

The first and second narratives — places of intensity

The artefact material consists of worked stone flakes, stone splitters, cores and what is normally called *débitage*. Making these tools, and perhaps also using them, creates 'intensities' in the landscape, places that bear the mark of use in terms of collections of worked stones. While it might be hard to tie the artefacts from Lough Gara directly to a specific site, this does not mean that the material is useless for all types of analysis.

At a broader level than the site-specific, the lithic assemblages were concentrated in three areas around the lake (Fig. 23). Moving upstream from Lough Key and the Shannon, the river changes in character from the small rapids and fast-running streams with steep-sided banks at Tinnecarra to a wider stretch of slow-running shallows and gently sloping shores. This is where the first group of lithics was located. These finds are registered for Coolnagranshy¹⁹ td on the southern bank and Tivannagh td on the northern bank. Then the river narrows again and the water flows faster. There are fewer lithic finds from this narrow stretch leading towards Lough Gara.

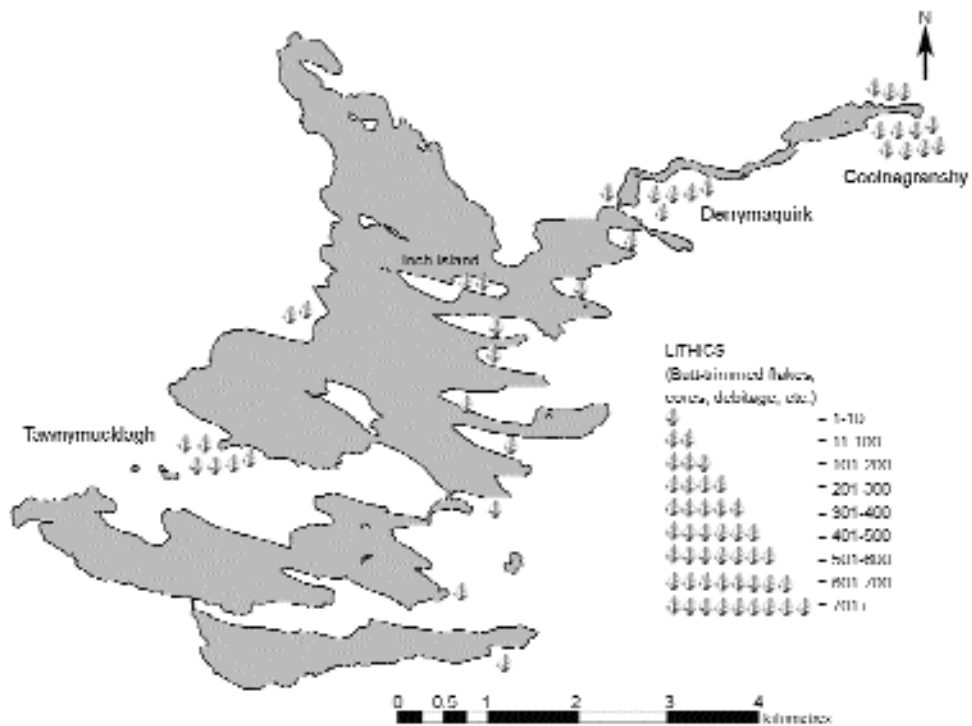


Fig. 23—Places of intensity in Lough Gara.

Some 2km further upstream, the waters of the river open up into the larger lake, and this is where the next group of finds is located. The activity here is centred on the areas that can be seen from the river-mouth. Lithics were found along the shores of Emlagh td, which would look like a drumlin island in higher water; indeed, Emlagh may have been an island until substantial bog growth set in. Some winters, when the water is high, it is still an island. There are fewer artefacts from the nearby townland of Rathtinaun, which does not present itself to people travelling up the river in the same way. There are also collections from the two islands, Derrymore Island and Inch Island. A few other finds of artefacts from locations such as Stony Island and Sroove td could be associated with this group in the middle of the Lower Lake.

The third group is concentrated another 2km further up the waters in the townlands of Lumcloon and Tawnymucklagh. Here the lithics were again found at a shore that opens to the north, facing a traveller heading upstream. The two townlands meet in a stream that drains the water from the bog in Monasteraden. In many cases what appear today as bogs were open water in the early post-glacial period (McCartan 2000, 15; but see Woodman 1978, 160, for a different opinion). Perhaps the bog was water at this stage, or a shallow lake, or it may have been connected to the Lung River, which leads further into the heart of Mayo; as mentioned above, there was Mesolithic activity further up this river at Urlaur. There are also some stray finds from Ardsoreen. This is where the present river connects to the Upper Lake, and there is also lithic material from the mouth of the Breedogue River, which flows into the Callow Lake, emphasising the importance of locations where fast-flowing waters slowed down.

From a journey perspective like this, it is also possible to see a direction in the material. The

locations are visible in a movement upstream, but movement downstream would not reveal the same pattern. The pattern could be described as a focus on places where the river or lake is in transition. In the first group the river is opening and closing. In the second group the river opens into a lake, with a focus on the natural islands, while at the third location the water changes from lake to stream. In many ways this corresponds with the patterns observed in the midlands and in the Bann Valley, where artefacts have been found at the entrances to or exits from lakes (Mitchell 1971; Woodman 1978, 161; Cooney and Grogan 1994). It could be added that the locations selected seem to be related to the respective speed of the water: places where there was a transition from fast-flowing to calmer waters seem to have been important.

One possibility is that the three concentrations of artefacts represent small communities who may have had Lough Gara as a focal point in their seasonal wanderings, with each group keeping some distance from the next. Whether their temporary settlement in Lough Gara was connected with the building of artificial islands remains to be discussed.

Eroded settlement layers

What the overall distribution of artefacts reveals, regardless of whether or not they were eroded from layers higher up on the shore, is people's interest in topographically distinct places which are today natural islands surrounded by water or bog or peninsulas. How should this interest in islands indicated by the artefactual material be understood? It is of course possible, as Woodman has suggested, that the artefacts were eroded out from deposits on these islands and peninsulas in the lake. If the artefacts were not deposited on the crannogs, the material evidence from the three locations in Lough Gara needs a different explanation. One explanation could be that the deposits eroded out from layers higher up on the shoreline. If this were the case, it would perhaps be possible to find larger settlements higher up on land. However, quite intensive searches in locations above areas that have yielded many lithic finds have not so far produced any results. Places like the natural ridge at Ballynease Mac Peake have been searched. This site overlooks the Bann Valley, where so many late Mesolithic artefacts were found, and was seen as a likely location for a late Mesolithic base-camp. The search was fruitless, however (Woodman and Anderson 1990, 381). The evidence from Inch Island also shows that there was direct building activity in the waters during the latest phases of the Mesolithic. What we can see in this first narrative is that the general location of the artefacts indicates that people were interested in parts of the lake that had distinct topographical features such as islands and peninsulas. They were also interested in places where the water changed in character from river to lake or from fast- to slow-running.

Our findings at Inch Island

In Lough Gara we obtained new evidence for a quite substantial use of the lakeshore at Inch Island during the Mesolithic. There was earlier evidence for Mesolithic activity around this island. Mitchell had collected a number of late Mesolithic artefacts at this location. On the north side of the island Cross (1953) had marked the sites of two small crannogs.

During our survey we found piling, timbers and brushwood stretching over a 40m area of white marl along the north-east shore of the island (see Fig. 24). The wood can be seen to form three groups, 3–4m apart. A small number of posts can also be seen in the water, but a more thorough underwater search may reveal further structures. One of the verticals has produced a radiocarbon date of 4230–3970 BC, indicating activity in the latest phases of the Mesolithic, while a brushwood piece has indicated a date in the early Mesolithic, showing that there was human activity on Inch Island around 7330–7050 BC. This piece was of dogwood, a species recovered

from many Mesolithic sites. It turns a red colour in winter and was sometimes used for arrows (Ingelise Stuijts, pers. comm.).

The marl is overlain by a surface that consists of natural shattered stones. These may represent deposits that were washed out of the drumlin island during a period of higher water-levels. The shattered stones cover the area up to a gravel ridge that represents an earlier shoreline. In this area of shattered stones it is possible to trace two parallel lines of small boulders, each measuring 2m in length, set 1.5–2m apart and about 2m from the earlier shoreline. Near this were found some artefacts of black chert (Fig. 25). The next structure is located further west and on the edge of the shattered stone/marl area. This structure also consists of smaller boulders, leading towards the water. It is possible that these stones are a part of the structure and are connected to the vertical piles and posts just below it in the marl. Perhaps we are dealing with a causeway or a jetty leading out into the water. However, these structures cannot with certainty be seen as man-made islands.

In the marl area an animal bone and five artefacts were found. One or two of them are of late Mesolithic type. These artefacts were lying loose and were not embedded in the marl. Without excavation it might be bold to interpret these structures as crannogs, but the dating evidence shows that there was deliberate building activity in the waters of Lough Gara in the very latest phases of the Mesolithic period.

The new results show that there is more to the Lough Gara material than eroded deposits from earlier shorelines. It is as yet too early to interpret these sites as crannogs. What is also interesting is that there are traces of early Mesolithic activity at this site, which suggests that a previously important place was revisited in the late Mesolithic. Only further investigation can reveal the extent of the early Mesolithic deposits, however.

Only future research can tell us whether the artefacts have eroded out from deposits higher up on the shores, and only then can this first narrative of the way people used this area be expanded. We can only speculate that they lived on the islands and perhaps fished from boats or from the shores.



Fig. 24—Inch Island: location of site.

The second narrative — intentional deposits or hoards

Another way of understanding the finds is to treat the items as hoards, deposited in the water or on the shores. This is our second narrative. There is evidence for Mesolithic hoards from elsewhere in Ireland. Woodman's gazetteer lists a total of ten places from all over Ireland and Northern Ireland where hoards containing late Mesolithic material have been found. In those cases where findspots have been recorded, most have been retrieved in wet areas such as bogs or beside lakes. The details of the find circumstances are not always clear, but the caches found at the excavated sites show traces of formality in their deposition. For example, all three hoards found at the excavation at Newferry 1 showed considerable order in the deposition.²⁰ In Dalkey a hoard was found during the excavation of a midden (Liversage 1968; Woodman 1978, 342–5).

When it comes to the material from Lough Gara, Cross (1953) leaves some room for interpreting the finds as hoards. He writes that the finds were made on or beside the crannogs. To this could be added Travers's finds from Emlagh td; he was almost certain that none of them could be connected to the crannogs. Perhaps this is what it is about — formalised deposits of flakes and cores in the water.

Woodman offered no interpretation of the hoards mentioned in his gazetteer. The differences between the finds that derive from activities higher up on the shoreline and those that may have been deposited are quite large. Compared with deposition on seasonally accessible platform crannogs, deposition in watery locations would reduce the possibility of retrieval and would remove the items from circulation.

A brief analysis of the lithics from some locales in Lough Gara

If we continue for a while to disregard the issue of built islands and content ourselves with the notion that the general location of the artefacts may tell its own story, we may take a closer look at the artefact material to find out what these items might represent. There are a number of ways in which these items can be analysed, but we will look only at what these artefacts may have been used for and what material was selected to make them. There will also be a brief analysis of the production process to examine whether these items were created by the lakeshore.

As mentioned above, the material includes Bann flakes and other butt-trimmed forms (Woodman 1978, 323), as well as cores, other blades and débitage. Artefacts like the butt-trimmed forms are normally interpreted as fishing equipment (Woodman 1978), but microwear analysis has shown that a proportion of them may well have been used for woodworking (Woodman and Anderson 1990, 385). However, they might have meant more than this to people.

I have not carried out any in-depth analysis of this material. However, a general analysis of the Lough Gara material shows that both retouched and 'unretouched' material, débitage and cores were deposited in various spots by the lake. The fact that finished artefacts are included along with waste material and cores can be taken as an indication that the artefacts may have been made where they were found. One possibility is that these items were made by the lakeshore. A good article showing the different steps in the production of lithic artefacts is Berit Valentin Eriksen's 'Chaîne opératoire' (2000) (see Fig. 26).

The material was analysed in cooperation with Dr Agneta Akerlund, using this article for comparison. It was concluded that the smaller pieces of débitage seem to be missing from the collections. This could be due, on the one hand, to a collection bias whereby the smaller débitage pieces were left unnoticed on the shores. On the other hand, the artefacts may not have been produced in these places but brought from elsewhere. That not all parts of the



Fig. 25—Artefacts from the north side of Inch Island.

production process were present has also been noted at Newferry, where there was ‘a relative absence’ of on-site flint-working (Woodman 1978, 67).

Further light may be shed on this question by a comparison between the type of stone used for the registered cores and that of the artefacts and other material found around them. These artefacts are probably best analysed by locale. The amount of lithic material from Lough Gara is quite large, so I chose to concentrate on the findspots at Lumcloon/Tawnymucklagh, Inch Island, Tivannagh and Coolnagranshy because of the presence of a reasonable quantity of lithics and one or more cores in the material.

The purpose of this investigation was to visually identify the different types of stone used, with the help of the late Conor MacDermot of the Geological Survey, who had an invaluable professional knowledge about the areas in and around Lough Gara. The first stage was to see whether there was more than one type of stone in the assemblages and whether these stones were local or not. Another question was whether the cores matched the artefacts and the débitage found at the locale.

Lough Gara has bedrock of red and white sandstone; limestone and chert also occur locally. Other types of stone can be found in the area, transported here with the glacial till from the east. This could distort the analysis of the sources and it is important to be aware that even the more exotic stones could turn up in and around the lake as erratics.

TAWNYMUCKLAGH/LUMCLOON

Over 300 lithics come from this bay in the lake (see Fig. 23). They can be found under the

following collection numbers: E20, E115, E119:27–57,²¹ E120:71, NMI 1975:36–208.

My analysis is based on a smaller selection of these finds and shows the trends in the material. A closer analysis of these items would have a lot to offer. The first thing was to check the cores left in this locale.

Table 4 — Analysis of lithic material from Tawnymucklagh.

Core no.	Stone and description
E115:7	Dark brown chert with narrow black striations. Feestone, 7cm x 5cm. Artefact negative can be seen in the stone.
E115:8	Black chert with limestone inclusions. Crackly surface, 5.5cm x 4cm.
E115:9	Nougat brown to orange chert, 6cm x 6cm x 2cm.
E115:10	White-grey chert with orange stains. Crackly surface, 5cm x 6cm.
E115:18	Black-brown chert, coarse, 9cm x 6cm.

The five cores registered for this locale are all of chert. The black, brown and orange types of chert can all be found in the vicinity of Lough Gara. These stones may derive from the Curlew or the Bricklieve Mountains. What is interesting is that core E115:7 consists of a brown and black striated chert that shows a distinct pattern. This rock type, feestone, can be found in Fairymount, south of the lake. Owing to its striations, lithics from this material have different characteristic patterns, a bit like the growth rings of trees (Table 4).

The artefacts are made from a variety of mainly local types of stone, including sandstone, black chert, brown chert, and brown chert with ‘worm-hole’ inclusions. (An artefact of feestone was located at Rathtinaun td, E20:1288.) It is also possible to find colour variations within the other chert material. One of the butt-trimmed chert flakes comes from a stone with red dot inclusions; another has blue streaks (see E120:1–26).

Among the débitage can be found pieces of black and brown chert as well as feestone chert. There are also pieces of volcanic rock (see E119:27–57). The nearest source for this is at the present-day Curlew bypass. It is worth noting that there is not a total correspondence between artefacts, cores and débitage in terms of materials. This could suggest that both the corresponding artefacts and cores were brought from elsewhere.

INCH ISLAND

Over 100 lithics are registered for Inch Island and they are to be found under the following collection numbers: E20, E119 (see Fig. 23).

Table 5 — Analysis of lithic material from Inch Island.

Core no.	Stone and description
E20:662	Black siliceous chert. Crackly surface, 14cm x 5cm.
E20:663	Black siliceous chert. Crackly surface, 4cm x 2cm.

The two cores registered for Inch Island are of a black, siliceous chert, which is locally available (Table 5).

The artefacts from Inch Island show more variation in composition than the cores. There are at least three different colours of chert, from the shinier black that corresponds with the cores to

dark brown and grey-brown. There are also some artefacts made from the stripy feestone, which correspond with one of the cores from Tawnymucklagh/Lumcloon. There were also artefacts of a more siliceous brown stone with spots, which could be chert or flint.

The débitage contains at least the same three variants of chert seen in the artefact material, black chert, brown chert and feestone (see E119:35). It also includes two pieces of volcanic rock, just as at Tawnymucklagh/Lumcloon. The material from Inch Island shows a mismatch between cores and artefacts, suggesting that the parts have been rearranged.

TIVANNAGH

These artefacts are from the north side of the Boyle River. There are around 150 registered in the following assemblages: E20, E117.

Table 6—Analysis of lithic material from Tivannagh.

Core no.	Stone and description
E20:523	Black chert, feestone pattern, 9cm x 7cm. Artefact print can be seen.
E20:3731	Dark brown to grey chert, 7cm x 8cm. Artefact print can be seen.

The two cores are of dark brown chert and feestone chert, which are both locally available (Table 6). The artefacts are of sandstone, black chert, brown chert, and broken pieces of a more siliceous black chert.

COOLNAGRANSHY

These artefacts are from the south of the Boyle River, from the townland with the highest number of finds. Nearly 800 artefacts from this location are registered in the following assemblages: E20, E118.

Table 7 — Analysis of lithic material from Coolnagranshy.

Core no.	Stone and description
E118:22	Black chert with fossil inclusions.

Core E118: 22 consisted of black chert (Table 7). The vast amount of artefact and débitage material contains a variety of types of stone, including black, brown and orange chert and sandstone.

DISCUSSION

In this analysis it was found that the artefacts from Lough Gara consist of mostly local material. People seem to have used both dry stones like sandstone and limestone and fatter, siliceous stones such as black and brown chert, and in rare cases possibly flint or at least a more siliceous version of chert. There is also evidence for the use of volcanic rock. Some of the material may have come from mountains or hills not too far away from the lake, such as Fairymount to the south or the Curlews to the north. The tendency to use almost any local stones to produce a uniform toolkit has been observed in many other places (see Woodman 1987).

It was also found that the artefacts and débitage did not always match with each other or with the cores in terms of material. To be more precise, there are more stone types in the rest of the material than can be found in the pieces registered as cores. One of the techniques used when

analysing lithics is to carry out a refitting of cores, artefacts and débitage found at a particular locale. I have not attempted any refitting of the lithic material from Lough Gara. However, the much more basic technique of comparing the types of stone could work in a similar way. Refitting analysis has been carried out at sites like Newferry, but the lithics could not be found to derive from the same core or be put together with any certainty. Instead the blades seemed to belong to different production occasions. Among other things, this implies that people brought new blades with them every time they visited the site (Woodman and Anderson 1990, 381). If the evidence from Lough Gara is interpreted in the same way as the Newferry material, it could be taken to represent many different visits to the lake and numerous occasions of stone-striking.

While this pattern in the Lough Gara material may mean that the stones were worked on numerous occasions, the absence of certain parts of the production process may indicate that this activity did not take place by the lake. This may suggest more than that the cores represent different striking occasions. It could mean that the cores, artefacts and débitage have been rearranged and moved around since the time of production. This might be one of the reasons why we do not find all the pieces expected from the production process. That the analysed pieces consist of a variety of locally available stones may mean that these places could have been visited on numerous occasions, and that people purposefully mixed stones of different colours and textures in these locales.

What the stones may mean

Recent interpretations of the Mesolithic artefact material have been mainly functional, and the main research issue has been to estimate, with the help of microwear analysis, whether the items were used for fishing or woodwork. Fewer studies have dealt with what these artefacts may have meant to people at the time. One way forward in this issue would be to investigate and interpret for example the colour variations in the stones and the different textures of the materials selected by the people. All these factors and experiences of the material could contribute to a further understanding of the lives and thought of the people by the lake. A further analysis of the material from this standpoint will have to await another study. In the following I will instead focus on what the relationship between the different stone components found on the shore may mean. The fact that the cores, artefacts and débitage do not totally match with each other in the three locales around the lake may suggest another interpretation. It is possible that not only the artefacts but also the cores and the débitage were seen as meaningful. We are looking at the creative process with modern, western eyes, which divide human activities into, in this case, useful and waste.

Returning to the production process, the late Mesolithic assemblages derive from a technique of direct percussion. This means that a suitable stone is prepared and a striking platform is created. Then the top of this platform is hit directly by another stone in order to produce the flake.

Figure 26 shows a generalised lithic production process. This process leaves a core. Refitting analysis aims to recreate this process and to see whether the cores, flakes and débitage in the assemblage match and were related to each other; while it is on the one hand a way of analysing the production process, refitting could at the same time tell us what these items might have meant. It could also be seen as an attempt to estimate the degree of 'ancestry' between the different pieces of stone found in the one place. The core represents the origin of the artefacts. The core therefore could have carried the meaning of having an ancestral relationship with all the artefacts and the débitage that derive from it; they could symbolically represent a small genealogy in which the striking occasion symbolises the birth of the artefacts, the débitage out of the core (the biographies of artefacts such as stone axes have been discussed by Thomas 1996

and Kopytoff 1990, but we are going to look at the matter from a different angle). The method of refitting is not only used as a tool in the present discourse to understand the production process and location of different striking events, but it could also be a way of understanding other traits in the material itself, important for understanding the meanings of this material to people in the past as well. The method actually describes the material as something that can be put together in a spatially logical and prescribed way; the different pieces should optimally be linked to each other as in a jigsaw that can be assembled and disassembled. This experience of the material is something that we may share with the people working and using the stones at the time. It is an added understanding of the characteristics of the material.

From an analysis of the lithic material it would be possible to work out at least two levels of identity. (1) If the stones selected are from a local area they may have emphasised a local connection. (2) If the striking process also means an ancestral activity, this adds meaning to the places where the material was found. This model of thinking can be applied to the material from Lough Gara.

In the case of the analysed material from Lough Gara there are some indications that the cores found at one location do not relate directly with débitage and artefacts from the same place. Instead the ancestry of core, artefact and débitage may have been rearranged, so that cores of one type of stone were left with artefacts and débitage of a different material. However, if the material is compared in terms of sourcing, most of it seems to be connected with the nearest region around Lough Gara. Later, in the Neolithic period, the rearrangement of body parts in megalithic tombs has been taken to represent the negotiation between individual and society, with the skeletal remains metaphorically representing and constructing social organisation (Shanks and Tilley 1982, 150ff; Cooney 1992). If the stone artefacts represent ancestry in any form, the rearrangement of cores, artefacts and debris by the lake may have assumed a similar meaning. The context in which they were found may indicate a new set of social relations.

There are two other points that may support the argument of a similarity between these artefacts and the ancestry of people. The first is suggested by the link between stone artefacts and red ochre noted at Mount Sandel (Woodman 1985, 51). As noted by Bradley, elsewhere in Mesolithic 'Europe' this red substance has been found deposited in graves together with humans or animals. This tradition may have had roots in the Palaeolithic (R. Bradley 1998, 24, 31–5). One way of understanding the Irish stone artefacts is that some of them were treated with red ochre in the same way as dead people in other places. Therefore they may have acquired a similar significance. The practice of attaching red ochre to stone artefacts may be a variant of the tradition noted on the Continent and in Scandinavia.

Furthermore, there are no formal burials connected with the Mesolithic period in Ireland. The few human remains belonging to this period have been found in connection with lithic material and in shoreline or watery places. A bog body was found in Stony Island Bog, Co. Galway. This is said to be the earliest bog body in Europe, and the weighted average of the radiocarbon dates is 5210 ± 50 BP (see Briggs and Turner 1986b, no. 101; Ó Floinn 1995; Brindley and Lanting 1995), calibrated to 4230–3940 BC, which straddles the transition to the Neolithic. Human skeletal remains of the later Mesolithic have also been retrieved from places by the water like Ferriter's Cove and Rockmarshall. These sites were also connected with lithics (Woodman *et al.* 1997, 138, 143). These are the only human remains we have from this period. It could be argued that this is another similarity between stone artefacts and people. The dead may have been treated as if they were flakes and consequently deposited together with other flakes and/or in watery places. However, this argument about the lithics in no way implies that the



Fig. 26—The lithic production process and a uniplane core after Valentin Eriksen 2000).

artefacts were not used for fishing or woodworking as suggested by Woodman (1978) and Woodman and Anderson (1990). It is only intended to add to our understanding of people at this time and the further meaning of things.

From this analysis we may suggest:

- (a) that the lithic material may represent a number of different striking occasions;
- (b) that the sourcing of the stone material may represent a connection with mainly local areas;
- (c) that the relationship between cores, artefact and débitage may be likened to an ancestral one.

Intensity—the first two narratives

The artefact material that we have analysed consists of worked stone flakes, stone splitters, cores and débitage. Making these tools, and perhaps also using them, creates intensities in the landscape, places that bear the mark of use in terms of larger collections of worked stone indicating concentrated human activity. We have also suggested from the artefact analysis that the items found on the shore may carry the meaning of ancestry. What is interesting is that the zone between land and water is the only place where any type of human activity is made visible.²² There are traces of life, death and creativity in this zone, but not anywhere else in the landscape. In order to summarise the first two narratives we will compare and try to understand what these places, islands such as Inch Island or peninsulas such as Tawnymucklagh, may have meant to people and what difference it would make if we view these traces as the result of erosion from places higher on the shore or as deposits at the edges between land and water. Recently Sinead McCartan (2000) has shown that natural lake islands, as well as islands off the east coast, were in use with

a special emphasis during the late Mesolithic. She drew on evidence from the islands of Clonava in Lough Derravarragh and Derragh in Lough Kinale, and offshore islands such as Dalkey, Sutton and Rathlin Island on the east coast. To this list could be added Inch Island and probably also Derrymore Island, Emlagh and Coolnagranshy in Lough Gara, which is a drumlin today, surrounded by wetlands. There is also Tawnymucklagh, which is a distinct peninsula.

With a starting-point in an economic meta-narrative, and a questioning of the same, McCartan points out the irrational choice of using places with restricted resources available, especially places such as offshore islands but also lake islands. The choice does not make economic sense, and therefore needs an explanation.

‘Why, for instance, would people settle on an island where there were fewer, and possibly inferior, resources to those on the mainland? To isolate oneself on an island is not unlike the construction of an “enclosing” space that occurs in the later prehistoric period, and may be symptomatic of economic or social stresses’ (McCartan 2000, 26).

I would like to focus on McCartan’s important observation that the interest in islands during the late Mesolithic is connected with an interest in the enclosed space that the islands provide. The evidence from Inch Island suggests that people in the latest phases of the Mesolithic had an interest in islands in Lough Gara, but also that this island had been a focus of attention at earlier stages as well, in the early Mesolithic.

These islands might not be large enough to support many people, but they are large enough to be places where a small community of people could gather in a specific geographical location. However, the natural islands do not offer the same concentration of space and intensity as the small platform crannogs.

What the first and second narratives imply

If these depositions were carried out with the same references to ancestry or group membership, they could mean that the remoulding of group identity was sealed under water for long periods of time. As these identities were constructed by the use of the same equipment that was employed for fishing or woodworking on the shores, group identity may also have been based on people working together for an extended period of time. Perhaps this was also the way people usually deposited bodies after death. If the focus on the islands was about life, the focus on the water may have had to do with death.

The places from which the material derives may have been chosen deliberately as representing topographically defined places, and the reason for this may or may not have been economic stress; that is a question of assumptions about the reasons for human activities. Another interpretation would be that places like islands would already have meant a lot to people before they settled in these areas and that they made use of a pre-understood meaning structure that was developed in a new setting. Perhaps the use of islands reflected mythologies of an earlier island origin. Islands attract attention and they are places that are easy to remember in a landscape. Our interpretation of the material from Lough Gara would differ if it was found to derive from deposits higher on the shoreline. Then it could mean that the place mentioned may have been inhabited ground that people returned to on different occasions. If they instead represent depositions at the water’s edge the situation would be slightly different.

If we were to build a story without the small platform crannogs, it could be suggested that the natural islands in the lake were made into a defined space, and simultaneously a communal ground.

This would place an institutional emphasis on the inclusion of a much larger group than could have been accommodated by the small platform crannogs. Against this background the material traces at the north-east side of Inch Island could be seen as a definition of the island space.

The third narrative

The first two narratives deal with artefacts that tell us about people's focus on the topographically distinct places around the lake. The human activity by the lake could be seen either as eroded settlement layers or as some form of deposits in the waters. These narratives can be compared with another scenario envisaging the existence of platform crannogs in the lake at this time.

Evidence for and against Mesolithic crannogs in Lough Gara

Cross (1953) was quite certain that 110 small crannogs existed in Lough Gara, more or less contemporary with each other, and that they belonged to the Stone Age as they were associated with artefacts from this period. Raftery claimed about 300 small crannogs for Lough Gara (J. Raftery, forthcoming, 5) and stated that he had found similar sites in Lough Scur, Co. Leitrim, and in Croghan Lake, Co. Roscommon.

As there is no clear evidence for these sites from our survey, we have to rely on the descriptions from the 1950s. This is how Cross saw the sites:

‘There were two main types, one of much smaller size than the other. The first type, mainly in Lower Lough Gara, averaged only twenty feet in diameter, is very flat and consists mainly of a circle of stones of varying size mixed with occasional horizontal timbers and pieces of brushwood, although the horizontal timbers and brushwood are not superficially evident in all cases.... In every instance except one the smaller type of sites have produced pre-Bronze Age material. The “Bann Flakes” found in the vicinity were often located as small heaps of varying sizes of flake. There were traces of animal bones and charred timber but no apparent surface remains of a dwelling or habitation’ (Cross 1953, 93).

The sites that Cross and Raftery associated with pre-Bronze Age material were described as rather flat, circular sites of stones, 6–10m in diameter and rising to a maximum height of 0.45m above the lake mud. The interior of these small islands occasionally consisted of brushwood or irregularly sized stones. Horizontal timbers were present in some cases, and a few of them were charred. On the surface animal bones could be found, and some sites had causeways of large stones. Raftery divided the smaller sites into type I, which was circular, around 10m in diameter and c. 0.45m high, and type II, also built of shattered stones, which seem to have been larger and more amorphous; some of the latter had wooden piles, but these sites would be more spread out, with a very poor edge definition (Cross 1953, 93; J. Raftery 1957, 7; forthcoming, 5). None of these sites have been published in any detail, and the sketchy description of them is based on what is found in the articles cited above.

COOLNAGRANSHY

One site that has been held to be an early crannog was described in more detail. Labelled Coolnagranshy 1A, it was described as a ‘metalling site’ (this is what Raftery called the sledged stone material that formed its surface). It measured about 5m in diameter, and cores, waste flakes,²³

hammer-stones and over 200 Bann flakes were found on it. Raftery suggested an industrial interpretation of this site, seeing it as a place where Bann flakes were produced (J. Raftery, forthcoming, 12). In the field this site appears as a pile of stone blocks in the river (BOYL 007).

TIVANNAGH

There is also another site that yielded some early material culture and may have been an early crannog. Raftery chose to excavate two sites in Lough Gara. One of them, Tivannagh (BOYL 056) or Crannog 124, was thought to be representative of a smaller type of site, and was classified as belonging to Raftery's type I. Although the upper levels belong to the early medieval period, the lowermost level on this artificial island is said to have been earlier, perhaps dating from the Stone Age. This site is located on the northern bank of the Boyle River, where the widened area narrows again, just beside a gravel shoal that may have formed a ford across the river at some stage. It was built just over a hollow in the lake sediments of boulder clay. This hollow had filled up with peat before the foundations of the site were laid down (the site must have been built after the peat started to form, which could be an indication of early peat formation in Lough Gara). On the boulders a number of quite long horizontal timbers (up to 5m) were laid down to form an approximately circular area (no measurements for the site's diameter at this stage or in its early medieval phase have ever been published). There were also traces of hazel twigs laid down beside the timbers, and in the middle of the site was a 4.5m-long canoe, which Raftery interpreted as part of the filling material in the crannog. The surface with the timbers on the protruding boulders is described as very uneven, which led the excavator to interpret the site as a 'seasonal fishing station, or a mooring place for boats'. The pollen in the peat of the site was analysed and indicated that the earliest levels pre-dated 3000 BC (I presume that they dated the peat that accumulated over the site). Associated with this were animal bones, charcoal and 'two implements of the "Bann-flake" class'. These artefacts are described as more 'rudimentary' than others found around the lake (J. Raftery 1957, 8–10). A Mesolithic or Neolithic date is possible for this site.

INCH ISLAND

Raftery noted yet another type of site, apparently less distinct than those discussed above. One of the sites described, located at the southern shore of Inch Island, belongs to this group of amorphous sites. 'Sometimes several of these sites coalesced to form a more extensive area ... stretching over some 30 metres' (J. Raftery, forthcoming, 5).

Some photographs presumably from Lough Gara, taken on a Galway University field-trip (Pl. 7), show some smaller sites. The first looks to be a fairly well-composed circular site of shattered stones, while the second seems to have less well-defined edges and consists of small boulders. Few locational details are provided for any of these photos, and they cannot be directly connected to any of the sites encountered during the survey. Furthermore, no connection can be made between the lithic material and the site (O'Sullivan (1998, 53, pl. 18) has connected this picture with Joseph Raftery's written evidence for Mesolithic crannogs). In this case the evidence is not totally clear.

As discussed above, traces of Mesolithic activity have also been found on Inch Island's northern shore, but the evidence does not confirm the existence of crannogs at this time.

Spatial relations between the crannogs

Cross marked out the smaller sites along the inlets in nearly every part of the Lower Lake, and Raftery contributed a brief summary of their location: 'In several instances the metalling sites were grouped in rows along the shore; in one case, for example, in Emlagh td there were four,

the first two 3 metres apart, the second and third 4 metres apart, and the third and fourth nearly 7 metres from each other’.

While Woodman did not comment on the sites at Inch Island or Tivannagh, he showed a strong disbelief in the sites at Coolnagranshy, as well as in the sites registered on the Cross map for Lumcloon and Tawnymucklagh. He saw no evidence for any sites connected with the artefacts. Instead he believed that most of the finds came from the lakebed and that they were not in their primary position. He described the site at Coolnagranshy as a gravel spread, resting on shell-mud, which should not be seen as a man-made island, and he saw the material at Lumcloon and Tawnymucklagh as having been eroded out from a bog deposit (Woodman 1978, 323).

As noted in the survey chapter, many of the smaller sites were hard to locate in the field. They are marked in places that were newly exposed shores in Raftery’s time, where there now are grass-grown water-meadows, and they cannot be fully accepted without stronger field evidence. Among the smaller sites with datable material we have managed to separate out a number of sites belonging to the late Bronze Age or to the early medieval period. Remaining in the group are sites with no datable material. These consist of scatters of small boulders, either at the earlier shoreline or at the present summer water-level. At the present stage of research it is hard to judge whether or not these sites are Mesolithic.

The narrative with Mesolithic platform crannogs

In the first narrative we rely on the information from Raftery and Cross to some extent and accept that many, but perhaps not all, platform crannogs belong to the Mesolithic. The main focus would probably be on the platform crannogs that, according to the maps, are located along the Boyle River and in the Lower Lake. These platforms were small, at times no more than 5m in diameter, but occasionally there are sites up to 10m across. None of them are particularly high, at the most 0.5m above the lake sediments. The posts at the northern side of Inch Island would then represent two small islands, defined by the posts, whose bodies have been eroded away over time by the waters.

While the material from Lough Gara is not at present strong enough to fully support this narrative, it could be strengthened by the existence of comparable sites, such as Moynagh Lough. In this lake there was something that can be seen as two early platform crannogs under an early medieval high-cairn crannog. ‘The evidence suggests that the natural knolls attracted a group of people who threw down stones, pebbles, twigs and brushwood to form a rough platform. They knapped implements of both flint and chert’ (J. Bradley 1991, 7, 9). Among the finds were two cores. The site can, at this stage, be described as two low knolls in the water, one about 10.5m across and about 65cm above the water, and the other somewhat smaller, only 9m across and about 55cm high. It was noted that there existed an occupation layer of charcoal-flecked mud and that lake marl had been used to build up the knoll. It is stated that the Mesolithic activity was sealed by a layer of brown open-water mud (*ibid.*). Charcoal from this site produced a radiocarbon date of 4230–3940 BC (J. Bradley 1984, 86). The activity at Moynagh Lough, then, belongs to the same period as the site on Inch Island. The sites at Moynagh seem to have been two small, low islands with distinct bodies, like the platform crannogs.

There is also evidence from elsewhere that can be brought in to support the claims of Cross and Raftery and which may strengthen the proposition for early platform crannogs in Lough Gara. There were in particular three sites at the island of Clonava in Lough Derravaragh, Co. Westmeath. Site 1 was a small elevation of waste chert and flakes, resting in the fen-peat. Charcoal from this site was dated to 4450–3960 BC. This site was somewhat larger than the other ‘heaps of chert and stone’.



Pl. 7a—A smaller site in Lough Gara.



Pl. 7b—Archaeologists inspecting a spread of stones exposed on the foreshore of Lough Gara in 1952.

According to the plan it may have measured 15m in diameter, but it had a comparable height of 0.5m. In the excavation report this site seems to be only one of many similar scatters located only a few metres apart. Flint and chert scatters and cores were found, along with several polished axes and a large number of Bann flakes (Mitchell 1972; Woodman 1978, 317–21).

In Derragh td at Lough Kinale a large lithic assemblage was found during field-walking (J. Raftery 1972b, 183, 187–90; 1973, 178–82; Woodman 1978, 316–17; Mitchell 1970; Cooney 1987, 64–6). It is possible but not totally certain that these collections represented small platform crannogs. Derragh site 1 has been mentioned as a mound 15m in diameter and 0.5m in height, but on the other hand much of the material seems to consist of assemblages found on the shores of a natural island. My own survey in this area has only shown vague evidence for platforms as they could just as well be natural formations.

There are also two other sites that have produced dates in the Late Mesolithic. A timber and stone platform found in a raised bog on Valencia Island was dated by peat stratigraphy to the late

Mesolithic, 5720–5300 BC (6560 ± 120 BP) (Mitchell 1989). Furthermore, a brushwood platform found at Mitchellstown East, Co. Limerick, was also radiocarbon-dated to around 6000 BP. No finds were associated with either of these sites (Gowen 1988; Gowen, pers. comm., in Woodman and Anderson 1990, 386), which are slightly earlier than Moynagh Lough and Inch Island, for example.

What these examples show is that there may have been small sites — and in particular low sites — in other areas. These would resemble our platform crannogs. However, in places like Derragh and Clonava it is not clear whether the build-up of scatters of flakes and débitage could be described as man-made islands (perhaps they were not intended to be islands, but after a while they might have become islands). The heights of the sites seem to cluster around 0.5m; however, the height of the knolls at Moynagh Lough is measured as above water. Many of these sites seem to have dates that correspond to our dating of the vertical post from Inch Island. They all belong to the years between 4500 and 3900 BC, which should represent the transition from the late Mesolithic to the Neolithic. The two sites without finds have been dated to the middle of the late Mesolithic.

Temporality and island space

According to Woodman (1978) and van Wijngaarden-Bakker (1989, 129–30), people may have fished the waters of the inland lakes from the early summer to the late autumn. Eels would have been moving around in the waters during the summer, while in the winters when it was colder they would sleep, hidden away among the rocks in the lake. Other fish that were probably available were the salmon that ran up the rivers from April and would have been there during the summer. In the winters people would have moved inland through the forests to hunt wild pigs, starting a new seasonal cycle in the early spring by the sea.

O’Sullivan has applied this framework to many of the sites discussed above that we have described as crannog platforms. He offers the following interpretation of the lives of Mesolithic people at Clonava by Lough Derravaragh: ‘The chert outcrops were undoubtedly an attraction for Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, but the abundant wetland resources would also have been a factor in local settlement patterns’. What he means is that the wetland resources explain the settlement by the lake. ‘These wetlands and woodlands would have been high in food resources, not only in summer and autumn but throughout much of the year’ (O’Sullivan 1998, 50). Furthermore, he speculates that subsistence activities such as fishing and fowling explain the building of presumed small islands on the shore (e.g. *ibid.*, 64). However, such an explanation does not deal with the archaeological material at hand and does not even attempt to explain island-building as a phenomenon. Fishing or fowling could just as well have been carried out from the shore, or from a canoe.

To build an island signifies more than this; they are an excellent starting-point for a discussion about both sedentism and economism. To build an island, even a small platform, is not the easiest way to fish. It is not economically the most rational thing to do, especially in a lake that already has a variety of natural islands. These activities (fishing, fowling) could just as well have been carried out from the shore or from a boat; they would not have required the construction of islands of brushwood, wooden piles and stone. Why did people choose this option? Perhaps, according to their logic, both fishing and stone-working had to occupy a distinct place in the water or on the edge between land and water. We may thus have to adjust our understanding of the activities that we think we can see traces of on the islands. If people fished or fowled from these islands, it was perhaps because they believed that fishing had to be undertaken from spatially defined man-made places such as these platforms.

The platform crannogs described were purposefully built in the shore area, with island bodies not

higher than around 0.5m. This means that they were deliberately intended to be subject to seasonal changes in the water-level. There is plenty of stone around the shore which could easily have been used to raise the height of the islands if this had been seen as desirable. The difference between the summer and winter water-levels of the lake is at least 1m. The platforms may have been placed so high up on the shore that they were only islands in the water during the winter. But it is more likely that they were built for use in the summer, being surrounded by water then; in winter, when the water-level rose, these sites would have been inundated. The islands would therefore express the lake's temporality, as their visibility/invisibility would be a way of telling the lake's seasonality.

In this narrative the islands were used during the summer and were meant to be inundated in the winter, when the people left the lake for other places, or at least they might have been used to show that it was not always the right moment to be out on the lake. They may have been used as solid platforms on the muddy foreshores of the lake — places that people returned to year after year after year. This interpretation is supported by evidence from other sites that suggests short-term but repeated use of the same site. Excavation of sites like Bay Farm, Carnlough, has revealed substantial knapping-floors but very little evidence of any structures. Phosphate testing has not supported an intensive use of the site either. At Rough Island, Co. Down, Dalkey Island, Co. Dublin, and Ferriter's Cove, Co. Kerry, both faunal remains and artefacts suggest short-term uses of the sites (Movius 1940; Liversage 1968; Woodman 1989; Woodman and Anderson 1990, 382).

Site I at Clonava showed three layers of stratification, with some fen-peat in between, also indicating repeated use of the same spot. That the sites may have been used on numerous occasions is also suggested by the failed attempts to carry out a refitting of the lithics. For example, at Newferry numerous blades of high quality were found, but despite all efforts they could not be found to derive from the same core, seeming rather to belong to different production occasions. Among other things, this implies that people brought new blades every time they visited the site (Woodman and Anderson 1990, 381). As indicated above, a refitting of the selected Lough Gara material would fail as it contains such a variety of stone. This could be interpreted as representing a similar scenario, as artefacts of different types of stone could not have been produced on the same occasion from the same core. This evidence could also, if interpreted in the same way as the Newferry material, be taken to represent many different visits to the lake, and in this case to the small man-made islands.

I am adding the interpretation that the islands and the fishing²⁴ were connected with the deposition of artefacts such as Bann flakes and other items along with the cores. The sites were probably solid platforms on the muddy foreshores of the lake, where people came together year after year. The height of these crannogs is around 0.5m, so they may have been inundated for half of the year. To see the crannog rising again above the water would be a signal of the year's and the site's renewal, and would enable people to reconnect with what happened in the past, or at least with what happened the previous summer. In this way the sites would have comprised a semi-closed deposit,²⁵ as opposed to a closed or an open deposit. We would not, as in the case of normal watery deposits, be talking about the permanent disposal of objects but only about a temporary difficulty of recovery.

It is often pointed out that the Mesolithic in northern Europe had no monuments, and that this fact is important for understanding the whole Neolithic lifestyle (see e.g. Thomas 1991; R. Bradley 1998, 31). But I think that these Mesolithic platform crannogs may have to be seen as conveying a certain monumentality. This first narrative is built on the assumption that many, but not all, of the small stone platforms found on the shores of Lough Gara today derive from the Mesolithic period. The fact that they were built of stone gave them a durability, which can also

be seen in the survival of some of the organic material. The material evidence also seems to indicate that people may have returned to them on repeated occasions.

In my interpretation the islands may have been places from which to fish, but they would also have been more than this. If they were connected with the deposition of the artefacts, and if these were charged with meaning involving the ancestors, then this has to be incorporated into our understanding of the crannogs and the activities that took place there. Another aspect that has to be considered is the temporality of these islands. To draw the interpretation together we can say that the presumed fishing on the small platforms was a temporally and even seasonally restricted activity, and simultaneously involved a negotiation of ancestral identities.

Small and many

What is important to realise is that these islands were not only restricted in height: they were also spatially limited. Many of them may not have measured more than 5–10m in diameter. This means that they could not have held a large number of people. Their limited size carries implications for the ways in which groups were formed, and we could also consider here what these monuments ‘did’, i.e. how their spatiality might have worked for people at the time. Their small size would have made them more exclusive spaces than the natural islands in the lake.

If we are to believe Cross and Raftery, these small platform crannogs would have been located side by side in a number of bays around the lake, and in many instances just off some of the natural islands in the lake. There could have been groups of five to eight sites in the same bay, if they were contemporary. The existence of so many sites side by side could still be interpreted as a special type of unity, even in their dispersal.

Another factor that might be of importance for our understanding of these small platform crannogs is that they can be seen as miniatures of the larger, natural islands in the lake. As Preston (1991) has argued, to create miniatures is a way of world-making and a way of taking control of a situation — making the world more manageable. It is possible that while the islands might not have been built for this purpose, they may have produced this effect. The crannogs would have contributed to the construction of shared worlds in people’s minds.

The meaning of the finds from the crannogs

That the material from Lough Gara includes flakes of many different but local stones may represent a context where people from different but fairly local areas came together. Drawing on the ancestral metaphor of the core–artefact–débitage collection as well as the evidence for the deposition of human bodies in water, we could suggest as one possibility that these artefacts may also have represented people. If this was the case, the rearrangement of flakes in between the different sites in the lake would signify the mixing of people. The platform crannogs may then represent a yearly get-together, where members of different groups mixed and created alliances for the new year, perhaps those people who decided to accompany each other on the trips inland and to the coast. These would not necessarily have been large groups. According to this narrative, these smaller groups socialised and fished together during the summer, and when the summer’s activities were over their new union was confirmed by the deposition of flakes on one of these small platform crannogs. If the flakes were deposited with cores, it may have meant that people would have renegotiated their blood identity and exchanged it for the new contexts and constellation of people symbolised by the bounded space of the small platform crannog.

If the flakes could be interpreted in this way, the small islands formed a context for these unions. If the flakes were deposited there and submerged for the year, it may have meant that the

union should last for this length of time as well, until the next year, when the flakes were accessible again and the social contexts — the group alliances — could be remodelled.

If we again ask the question ‘What do crannogs do?’, one of the answers could be that the platform crannogs served to stabilise and seal temporary unions of people, confirming their identity for the year, when people moved inland to hunt pigs in the forests during the winter.

Platforms through the Mesolithic

It was noted earlier that not all the platform crannogs in Lough Gara could be connected with lithic material. Bearing in mind Woodman’s warnings about disregarding sites that do not produce the expected material culture, it is important to look also at that type of site. This would include platforms without any time-specific artefacts, like those on Valencia Island and in Mitchellstown East. These two seem to date from an earlier phase of the late Mesolithic than the platform crannogs with lithic artefacts. It might be time to involve the other finds-free platform crannogs in the narrative again. Perhaps what we see in the material is an earlier phase, in which identity did not need to be established and emphasised by artefacts deposited on these islands. If this is the case, the distribution of platform crannogs in relation to the finds of lithic artefacts represents a concentration of spatial activity in the three main areas during the latest phases of the late Mesolithic.

According to the third narrative

For the people who left their traces in Lough Gara, the lake would have been a summer lake. People had gathered here for as long as anyone could remember. Most of the small groups that were here last year returned from the sea, but new groups also arrived. After the winter and the spring, when the rivers were full of water, the time for visiting was over and it was time to stay for a while at the lake.

People gathered here at first to fish and to socialise, and at some stage small platforms were put down, creating a distinct place in the water. If we follow the evidence from Valencia Island and Mitchellstown East, these early platforms were built at the lake’s edge. It was not the custom at this stage to leave any belongings behind on the islands when the waters rose and it was time to leave again. The building of all these platforms caused small groups to form —prescribing a division into the smaller groups — but in a general sense most people joined together in their activities.

The platforms in these central areas were still in use, and people saw it as apt to continue to meet in their small groups during the summers. At the same time they congregated in three larger groups around the lake in the summers, and each year they broke up into smaller groups for the winter months. The temporary, yearly unions in the smaller groups may have been built on promises to an ancestral place, but by the symbolic deposition of a flake belonging to their own ancestral group on a particular platform crannog a new bond was created for the year, and sealed by water. Only next year was it possible to renegotiate the set-up of a new group, by a new deposit of flakes and a rearrangement of those put in place at the last meeting at the lake.

Attitude to the water

We have seen that all recognisable human activity in the Mesolithic took place in the border zone between land and water, both by the sea and at the inland waters such as Lough Gara. Most probably people lived on the fish in the lake, but the items found in the zone also indicate a connection with other places in the landscape. The human activity on the shores can be seen in collections of flaked

stones and of animal and sometimes human bones. In this zone there may have been an amalgamation of fishing, living and the creation of stone artefacts. The zone may also have been a place where alliances of smaller groups were formed. Given the heavy vegetation, these waters would, together with the mountaintops, have been the only open places where it was possible to be in direct contact with the sky, and where the three elements of water, air and earth would meet.

The forests in general during the Mesolithic period seem to have been fairly unaffected by humans. Leaving aside the question of whether the material from the lake should be seen as representing small platforms or depositions from natural islands, the waters must have been of vital importance to people at this time. If people lived on the fish — perhaps even identified themselves with these water creatures and moved with them, as suggested by Woodman — the rivers and streams would have been like lifelines running through the landscape.

What does not fit the evidence for intensive use of the lakes is the rare evidence for canoes from this period. The results from Brindley and Lanting's large-scale radiocarbon dating of wood from dugout canoes gave no strong evidence for the use of canoes at this time. Most date from later periods. The one canoe with a Mesolithic date comes not from Lough Gara but from Carrigdirty, Co. Limerick (Lanting and Brindley 1996; O'Sullivan 1996). Malcolm Fry (2000, cat. no. 112) offered evidence for a dugout canoe in use in the period 5490–5246 BC, while many belong to the medieval period, as in the dating series of Brindley and Lanting. The waters would have been places where the passing of time could have been noted, especially if there were small built features in the water that were only accessible at certain times of year, like the small crannog platforms.

It has been noted in many recent studies (e.g. Bohlin 1999; R. Bradley 1998; 2000) that many people leading a hunter-gatherer lifestyle were involved in shamanism (Eliade 1964; Vitebsky 1995). The water surface as a boundary between the world above and the world below may have been very significant for people at this time. Descola has written an account of people calling themselves Achuar, living and fishing in the riverine maze of the Amazon, and their way of understanding the water may be of interest for the present study of Lough Gara. According to their beliefs, the surface of the water acts like a membrane between this world and the other world (Descola 1997, 134–6). For people in the Mesolithic the boundary zone between land and water may also have been a liminal place where it was possible to cross between the underworld and the world of the living. All the traces of human activity in this zone may represent ways of dealing with this boundary—perhaps even a way of negotiating human creativity, and transformation of the environment.

Social fictionalities

Probably both the forests and the waters were important for people during the Mesolithic, but it is only at the water's edge that human activity is clearly visible to us today. Practically all human traces from the Mesolithic have been found by water.

Our view of how people inhabited the lakeshores and the waters depends on which of the three narratives we support. In the first the artefacts were seen as having been eroded out from sites higher up on the shore. The second saw the finds as deposits at the water's edge, while the third suggested that the artefacts were semi-deposited and used on the small platform crannogs. In all three the natural islands and other distinct topographical features in the lake were of importance. What they have in common is their more or less bounded spaces, and our interpretation of people's social lives will of course be affected by this.

With support from excavations mainly from other locations than Lough Gara we may decide

to go with the third narrative, in which people would have constructed their groups through the use of the small platform crannogs in three main areas around the lake. As shown by the layered stratigraphy in other sites as well as the analysis of artefacts from Lough Gara and elsewhere, these platforms would have been places that people returned to on numerous occasions.

Adding to the idea of short-term visits is the limited height of the islands. These sites could only have been built to be accessible for part of the year, as they would have been inundated easily. The fairly small size of the sites would have allowed the inclusion of only a limited number of people in the activities on these islands. The third narrative would support Woodman's (1978, figs 60–1; 1986, 13–15) idea that people were moving around in smaller groups, as opposed to Cooney and Grogan's (1994, 20–2) argument about a more settled late Mesolithic. My argument, however, is not primarily built on economic reasoning. I have shown that the archaeological material in itself has a temporal element and that the sites would only have been possible to use during certain parts of the year. I have added to this the idea that the platform crannogs may have been important in the creation and maintenance of the identities of these small groups in their yearly cycle. Erika Engelstad has pointed out with regard to sedentism and mobility that these concepts can be applied not only to a site-specific location but also to a landscape. In the movement between a summer camp and a winter camp people could have regarded themselves as settled in a landscape (Engelstad 1990, 32). Bearing in mind that most of the types of stone in the analysed assemblages are found locally, it is possible that even though people may have moved seasonally they identified themselves with the wider landscape around the lake. This, however, requires more thorough study.

The idea is that the use of these islands may have created 'imaginings' about people fishing together and uniting with each other for the year, until they returned and rearranged themselves again. As Berger and Luckmann (1967, 13–15) have discussed, 'reality is socially constructed', and the islands may have been a part of how people in these times constructed theirs. If we just look at the 'production' connected with the islands, either the traces of artefact creation found or the presumed 'exploitation' of wetland resources, these would have been intimately connected with the whole idea of these islands. No one can argue that it is economically rational to build islands in a lake that already contains natural islands and shoals, large and small. Such activities only make sense if they are seen as embedded in a whole package of ideas about groups, ancestry and seasonality. The islands would have given the activities meaning, and vice versa. Together they created the rationale for each other. As I see it, the platform crannogs were important for the creation of loyalties in small temporary groups in that people may have been sharing the landscape experience of seeing the platforms emerging from the water and becoming accessible. The groups of people could then be rearranged. The creation of new and temporally limited ancestry was symbolised by new combinations of flakes and cores deposited on the islands. These activities do not exclude the possibility that people fished or hunted birds together at the same time. However, we do have less evidence for these activities. Perhaps the use of the islands was a way of keeping a world together, a world that threatened to drift apart towards the end of the period.

However, the way people saw themselves and the islands was about to change. This was a shift in what was seen as important in life. The lifestyle in which the smaller groups, the seasonal change of location and the fishing were centre-stage was to be changed. Altogether, there was a transfer of loyalties.

The use of the islands and the lake year after year may have changed the place itself. Human interaction is to a great extent built on habits and routine behaviour, but when the routines have been in place for a while they are transformed into institutionalised orders. In this way one particular construct of reality becomes more permanent when a 'Let's do it again' changes into a

‘This is the way to do it’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 77). The islands, large or small, bearing in mind their topographical distinctness, would in this case have provided people with a ‘pre-monumental’ experience of space as well as with memories. Such an experience has often been argued in connection with Neolithic monuments, where these seem to mark out and create a long-term commitment to the landscape (see e.g. R. Bradley 1998, 51f.). The repeated use of the islands may have worked in the same way — that is, while at one level they may have served to maintain stability, their repeated use also held the seeds of change.

8. LEAVING THE ISLANDS — THE NEOLITHIC

The start of the Neolithic period in Ireland is as much a debated issue here as elsewhere. It is commonly held now that the period started around 4000 BC and lasted to around 2400 BC. However, the Neolithic is a period from which we have weaker evidence of activities in the waters of Lough Gara in general. People were still in the area, but they lived in a different way and had other loyalties than before. In the following chapter we are going to try to get an understanding of how this change came about and what life might have been like around the lake at this time — we will try to see how people's ideas of responsibility may have changed and how material culture played a part in this change.

The period could be discussed in terms of the first evidence for formal burial of the dead, and the first appearance of built monuments. It could also be seen as an economic phenomenon, being often connected with the first occurrence of domesticated cattle and cereals. Recent excavations in Ferriter's Cove have revealed bones from domesticated cattle dating from the late fifth millennium BC (Woodman and O'Brien 1993, 33). This date would be about contemporary with our dates from Inch Island. There is also other evidence for early farming. An early cereal pollen grain was identified in a peat core from Cashelkeelty, Co. Kerry. Peat from around this find was radiocarbon-dated to 4950–4470 BC (A. Lynch 1981). This date for the introduction of farming has been queried and it is often held that reliable evidence for early cereal cultivation stems from the fourth millennium (see O'Connell 1987; Monk 1993). Early field systems such as at Céide Fields, Co. Mayo, suggest that farming was quite organised early in the Neolithic (see Caulfield 1983; Caulfield *et al.* 1998). Woodman (2000, 5) has pointed out that farming was evident at an early stage, and that in areas such as Munster farming arrived unaccompanied by monumental sites.

However, despite these early dates, the evidence does not mean that everyone's life after this would have been a life as a farmer. As Zvelebil and Rowley-Conwy have pointed out, there could have been quite a lengthy period of overlap between the different 'economies'. People could have been partly hunters and gatherers and partly farmers, or the farming and foraging lifestyles could have continued in parallel (Zvelebil and Rowley-Conwy 1986, 86; O'Brien 1999, 266ff).

In economic terms there are two ways of seeing the transition. An often cited example is Case, who first postulates that the introduction of farming led to an economic surplus that was invested in megalithic tombs (Case 1969). This explanation only works if we rely on the earliest dating of cereal pollen, but the material evidence more strongly suggests a simultaneous use of tombs and domesticates in Ireland. The second viewpoint suggests that the Mesolithic lifestyle had to be given up owing to a food crisis, and that the shift to farming was made to secure the food supply (Rowley-Conwy 1984). Burenhult (1980) has argued, on the contrary, that people became settled in Carrowmore in the late Mesolithic because of the abundance of seafood. The processual interpretations are impossible to prove, but as they are economic and therefore comparable to modern industrial logic they are seen as totally 'normal' or as common sense by the academic community, and therefore they are not questioned to the same extent as other interpretations.

In a development-optimist spirit the transition to a farming lifestyle has often been seen as an 'improvement': people adopted farming because it offered them a better life. However, farming imposes many other demands on people, compared to the life of hunter-gatherers, not only in relation to the land but also in terms of time-scales and planning (see Meillassoux 1972; R. Bradley 1993; 1998). That there might not be any 'improvement' in a farming lifestyle can be

appreciated even from an ethnocentric viewpoint. For example, Sahlins (1972) has shown that there is no real advantage in a farming life, and that the reliability of the food supply might be dearly bought. A farming lifestyle ties people down and the number of hours spent at work is often higher than for foragers. There is nothing empirically better about life as a farmer compared to being a hunter-gatherer; the issue to deal with is why one lifestyle was seen as better than another.

On the other hand, compared to the economic arguments, the period can also be seen as a time when people altered the way in which they perceived themselves and their surroundings. The Neolithic was a change of mind as much as anything else (see Thomas 1991; R. Bradley 1993; Tilley 1996, 72). One theory is that monumental sites such as megalithic tombs affected people's way of appreciating time and space, which was an important precondition for accepting a farming lifestyle. This interpretation is the reigning paradigm in British archaeology today, but it has been argued that it does not apply directly to the Irish material, which shows a different sequence in the Neolithic (see discussion in Cooney 2000a, 35–8). Here instead the material shows very early evidence for both houses and farming. In the south of Ireland there is early evidence for farming, even without any preceding monumental archaeology (Woodman 2000, 5).

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the material around Lough Gara during these times and to gain a better understanding of how the lake was perceived and used in the Neolithic. I think that the use of the islands in the preceding period might have something to do with these early traces of farming and living in houses, and I will try to discuss why below. I will bring the discussion back to the last chapter and then forward again, and then show how the slightly different Irish Mesolithic might have led to a different Neolithic.

Burials/funerary monuments

As was discussed in the preceding chapter, there are no known formal burials from the Mesolithic. The only evidence for human bones comes from watery locations. It is not until around the fourth millennium that clear evidence for burial and a formal treatment of the dead can be found anywhere in Ireland. Early — even Mesolithic — dates have been claimed from Carrowmore in Sligo, but these have been questioned (Burenhult 1980; 1984; ApSimon 1985–6). Stefan Bergh has also obtained early dates from a passage tomb site on a mountaintop in Croghaun, Co. Sligo. However, he believes that it is best to be cautious and to leave these early dates aside for the time being, suggesting that the Irish passage tomb tradition starts at around 4000 BC (Bergh 1995, 107). Nevertheless the discrepancies and 'noise' in the material need to be looked at.

Plate 8 shows the monuments that can be attributed to the Neolithic in the wider study area. We can see that wider areas at this time were marked by an increasing number of monuments. There are few Neolithic monuments around Lough Gara. The intensity of site distribution has changed in comparison to the Mesolithic period, when most of the sites and artefacts in the study area were concentrated around Lough Gara and seem to have followed the rivers.

Megalithic monuments

Most Mesolithic material occurred near water, in many cases near islands or other topographically distinct places. It was argued in Chapter 7 that people may have returned to the natural islands in the lake on repeated occasions and that, if we accept the existence of the platform crannogs, they would have marked out a seasonal temporality in the landscape. The use of both the natural islands and the possible man-made ones would have given people a special spatial experience, almost a

pre-monumental sense of identity and confined spaces. It was also argued that the activities in these places may have drawn on this experience in the creation and maintenance of bonds between small, temporary groupings.

However, these places in the landscape seem to have received less monumental attention in the Neolithic in favour of other places in the topography. In the area nearest to Lough Gara there are two megalithic tombs of the Neolithic period, a court tomb west of the lake in Moygara townland and a portal tomb north of the Boyle River. However, there are no megalithic tombs on the natural islands in the lake which were so important to people in the Mesolithic. There are no monumental sites in Lough Gara in places such as Inch Island,²⁶ Derrymore Island and Emlagh, or any of the other topographically distinct places around the lake. This pattern is also evident both regionally and nationally as there seem to be no monumental sites from this period on inland lake islands in any other part of Ireland. Megalithic tombs are practically never located on islands in inland lakes. (In coastal areas megalithic tombs can be found on offshore islands).²⁷ However, the absence of the Neolithic period's most striking manifestation from any of the natural islands that were central to people's lives in the Mesolithic period is interesting and may have a bearing on how we should understand the perception of lakes and waters in the Neolithic.

Portal tombs

It has been argued that portal tombs differ in their location from other megalithic tombs, that they are often found in river valleys and other lowlands (Ó Nualláin 1983), but regional studies have shown variations in these patterns (see Bergh 1995; Cooney 2000a, 138). The portal tomb in Drumanone td is one of the tombs that conform to this pattern as it is situated near the Boyle River. There might have been a connection between this site and the water, although it is not situated in a visually striking topographical setting. Drumanone, however, shows a connection between late Mesolithic assemblages and a typical Neolithic monument. This portal tomb is situated near the stretch of river containing the Tinnecarra rock, which is the place where the river changes in character from slow-flowing to fast-flowing. Slightly to the east along the river are the areas from where many of the lithic artefacts were registered, such as Coolnagranshy and Drumanone td itself. Celia Topp excavated the tomb in 1962 (Topp 1962).

The tomb originally consisted of four orthostats with a large block resting on top (see Fig. 27). Inside the burial chamber at least nine cranial fragments were found, indicating that the tomb was used for the burial of many people. Rose quartz was present and one polished stone axe was found at the site. The excavator suggested that the stones in the tomb may have come from the nearby Curlew Mountains (Topp 1962). Among the burial remains and charcoal two Bann flakes were found, which could be taken as an indication that there was an overlap between a Mesolithic and a Neolithic lifestyle. That Bann flakes are found in similar contexts is not totally odd. A Bann flake and a number of smaller leaf-shaped flakes were found at Newgrange, for example. The excavator (O'Kelly 1973) argued that an earlier industry might have been removed during the construction of the mound. Woodman (1978, 314) acknowledged this argument and concluded that 'The Bann flake could be regarded as an undated stray, which might even date to a pre-Neolithic occupation'.

In a later article Woodman comments on the exceptionally early dates from the passage tombs in Carrowmore, Co. Sligo, in a similar manner. At Carrowmore, tomb 4 was said to date from 4790–4360 BC (5750 ± 85 BP), tomb 7 from 4350–3800 BC (5240 ± 80 BP) and tomb 27 from 3970–3700 BC (5040 ± 60 BP), which would place them in the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic (Burenhult 1980; 1984). These dates have been questioned (see Caulfield 1983;

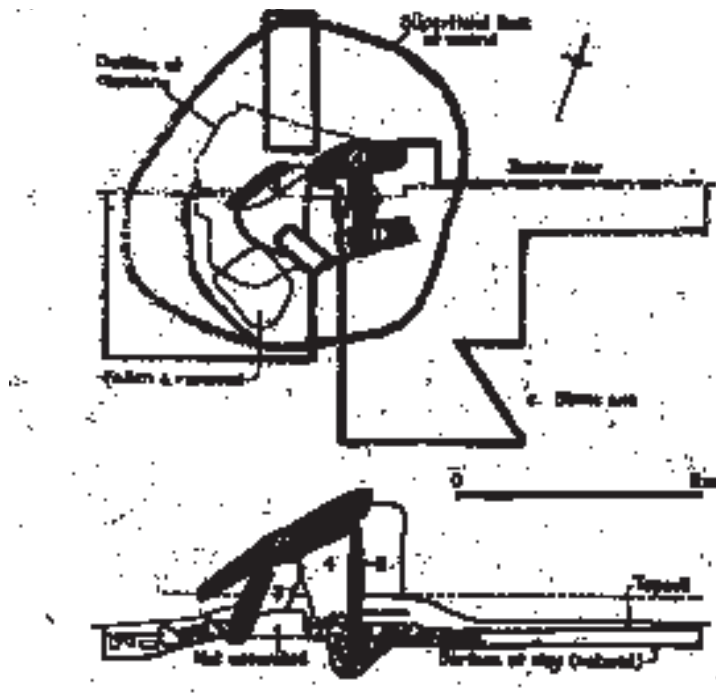


Fig. 27—Drumanone portal tomb (after Topp 1962).

ApSimon 1985–6; Grogan 1991; Bergh 1995; Waddell 1998). The alternative interpretation presents an idea that is just as interesting. Instead of seeing these dates as relating to the building of the tombs, it is suggested that they may represent earlier ritual sites, in use before the tombs were built (Woodman 1992, 304). This would mean that earlier places of importance were appropriated for later monuments, and were made permanent in stone.

It is possible that the presence of the Bann flakes at Drumanone could be interpreted in a similar manner as indicating reuse of the location. The reuse of this place in the Neolithic might show how people transformed the meaning of an earlier place of importance. The land on which the portal tomb was built might have been a place for meetings and perhaps religious activity at an earlier stage. After all, against the background narrative of the existence of the three larger groups in Lough Gara, this place can also be seen as the entrance to the inhabited lake, being located in the area where the Boyle River expands and where many finds of Bann flakes were made. If the area is interpreted in this way it would symbolise a place where gatherings took place before formal monuments were constructed. It is also worth noting that this reuse suggests continuity of location. There were also many places that received no attention in terms of monuments at this time, such as the natural islands. One reason for the locational continuity at Drumanone is that the place had a role in the Neolithic as well as the Mesolithic landscape. Tinnecarra, near the tomb, is a fording-point in the river. There is archaeological evidence that this fording-point was a place where many later roads met. But I will return to this point later.

Court tombs

There are also other megalithic sites near the lake but not in close proximity to the water and the islands. On the northern side of Mullaghatree are the remains of a court tomb (Fig. 28). While it is situated in a hollow, it overlooks a totally different landscape than that of the lake. The mountain separates the lake from the lands in the Ballymote/Tobercurry basin, and the tomb is located near

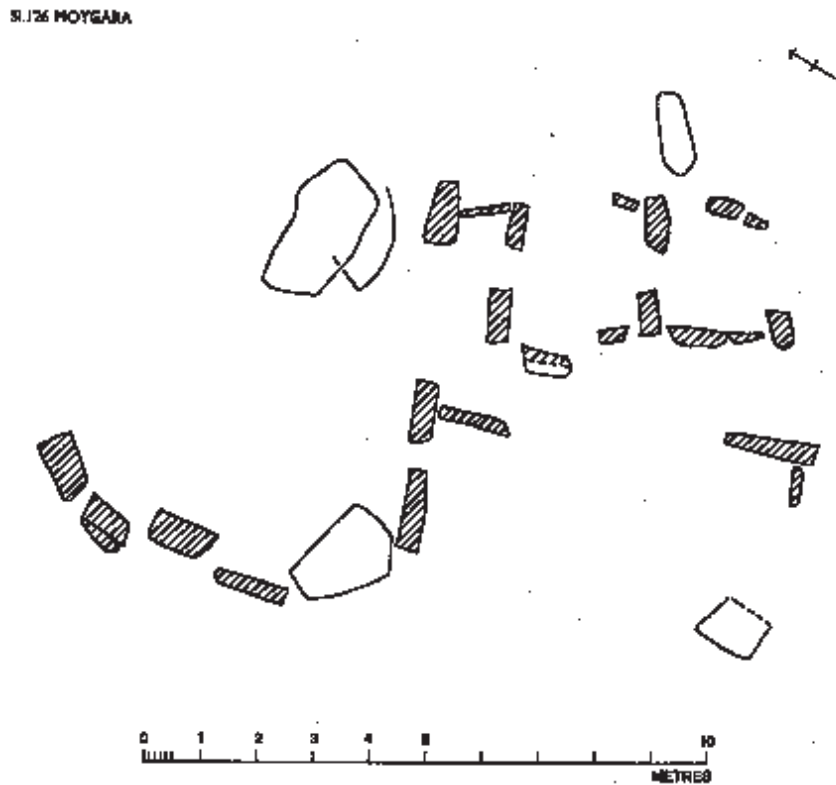


Fig. 28—Court tomb at Moygara (after Ó Nualláin 1989).

the source of the Owenmore River, which flows into the sea at Ballysadare. The tomb is out of sight of the waters of the lake. Court tombs are mainly distributed in the northern half of Ireland with a dense cluster along the Sligo/Mayo coast, while they are scarce in Roscommon (see Pl. 8; Ó Nualláin 1976).

These tombs are defined as having one or more courts leading into the burial chambers. The open courts have been seen as the place where the main ceremonies took place, where fires may have been lit and pottery broken. In the tombs there are often traces of collective burials, although some sites have produced no burials at all (Waddell 1998, 83). This may suggest that these tombs were only temporary resting-places for the bones, and that they may subsequently have been taken out for circulation among the living. Court tombs can yield finds of flint knives, arrowheads (lozenge and leaf-shaped) and scrapers; some of the flint artefacts show signs of burning. Sometimes stone axes are also found (Waddell 1998, 86). It is likely that a local group carried out their religious rites at this spot, just as they would have done at places like the portal tomb at Drumanone.

Cairns/passage tombs

Further away from the lake, but still important, is Keash Corran. The drumlin lands that surround much of Lough Gara can produce a feeling of disorientation. Keash Corran is topographically distinct and is a landmark that is clearly visible from a position in the middle of the lake. This mountain has a large cairn on its summit which may well be a passage tomb, and resembles both

Knocknarea and Knocknashee, two mountains which can be seen from its summit. It has been argued, by analogy with the passage tombs in the Boyne Valley, that these large cairns belong to the later phase of the passage tomb tradition, around 3000 BC (Bergh 1995, 107). On the nearby Bricklieve Mountains, to the east of Keash, lies the megalithic complex of Carrowkeel, with its many definite passage tombs. It is interesting to note that most tombs in Carrowkeel are located on the northern side of these mountains and in general neither face nor overlook the lake. Just south of the lake, at the top of Fairymount hill are the remains of a cairn that might also belong to this period. This is one of the places that the feestone chert found along the shore of Lough Gara could have come from.

Despite a survey carried out with Stefan Bergh, no cairn or other prehistoric feature has been located on the top of Mullaghatee, the mountain on the western shores of Lough Gara. This mountain would have been an obvious location for a tomb as it overlooks the lake and the neighbouring Ballymote/Tobercurry basin. Perhaps the absence of a cairn from the summit of Mullaghatee indicates that it was not considered high enough or sufficiently remote from the everyday activities of people. The evidence for activity on the western side of the lake is quite sparse, and there is more material evidence from the other side of the lake.

Barrows

There are clear signs that people used the megalithic tombs to focus on new parts of the landscape during the Neolithic, such as uplands and perhaps fording-points. The general distribution map shows concentrations of barrows not only on the eastern side of Lough Gara in Killaraght but also in the lands in the middle of the Ballymote/Tobercurry basin, in the middle of Roscommon and in east Mayo (see Pl. 8). Many of these sites are located on top of drumlins, with a smaller number in low-lying areas. This locational difference may signify a chronological distinction, where the low-lying barrows could belong to a different time than the ones in higher locations. Another explanation is that they may have carried different meanings.

As far as we know today, barrows are not closely datable and more research on the monument type is needed. There are arguments for their assignment to the Neolithic period, while they could also have been in use during the Bronze Age (and I will treat them in this way in the book). Charles Mount excavated one of the barrows in the stretch of drumlins beside Keash Corran. This site, at Rathdooney Beg, Co. Sligo, forms part of the Ballymote/Tobercurry concentration and is located on top of a drumlin. The barrow produced a Neolithic date. Material from the surrounding ditch was dated to 3930–3520 BC, and this is taken to represent the time when the ditch began to silt up. The barrow was only partially excavated, but it is seen as possible, owing to the discovery of surrounding kerbing, that this site might have been a passage tomb (Mount 1998; Cooney (2000a, 14) calls them kerbed mounds). Some of the other barrows surrounding this site dated from later periods and it is possible that the later sites imitated the larger Neolithic barrow.

Compared to the megalithic tombs near Lough Gara, which only occur singly, the barrows in the larger study area tend to form concentrations. On the eastern side of Lough Gara, and also to the south of the Boyle River, there is quite a large cluster (see Fig. 29). If we look at the distribution of barrows in the area near the lake we can see a strong concentration in the Killaraght region, emanating from around the Knockadoo–Brusna area. The sites, as grouped on the map, consist of ordinary barrows which could be described as circular earthen mounds with diameters ranging from 23m to only 6.5m. With their locations on the low-lying drumlins they form miniature models of Keash Hill with its cairn on top. It is worth noting that the drumlins

selected for the barrows, such as those around Knockadoo–Brusna, are not in contact with the lake and offer no view of the lake waters. There are no barrows on the drumlins nearest the waters. They are instead located in the area that in modern times is known as the plains of Boyle — an area known for its high-quality grazing land.

Given the morphological and locational resemblance between the barrow at Rathdooney Beg and many of the barrows on the eastern side of the lake, it is possible that many of them are contemporary and that the building of barrows in both places started in the Neolithic period. The Rathdooney Beg barrow is part of a larger complex of barrows, and the Killaraght sites also form a concentration. One possibility is that these barrows contain passage tombs which over time have been closed and covered over. This idea is supported by the fact that one of the barrows in Killaraght is surrounded by a henge and that there is another such monument in the vicinity (see below). The barrow concentrations also describe a new axis through the landscape, leading south-east/north-west, directed towards the setting sun, instead of following the line of the river (see Fig. 29).

Larger enclosures

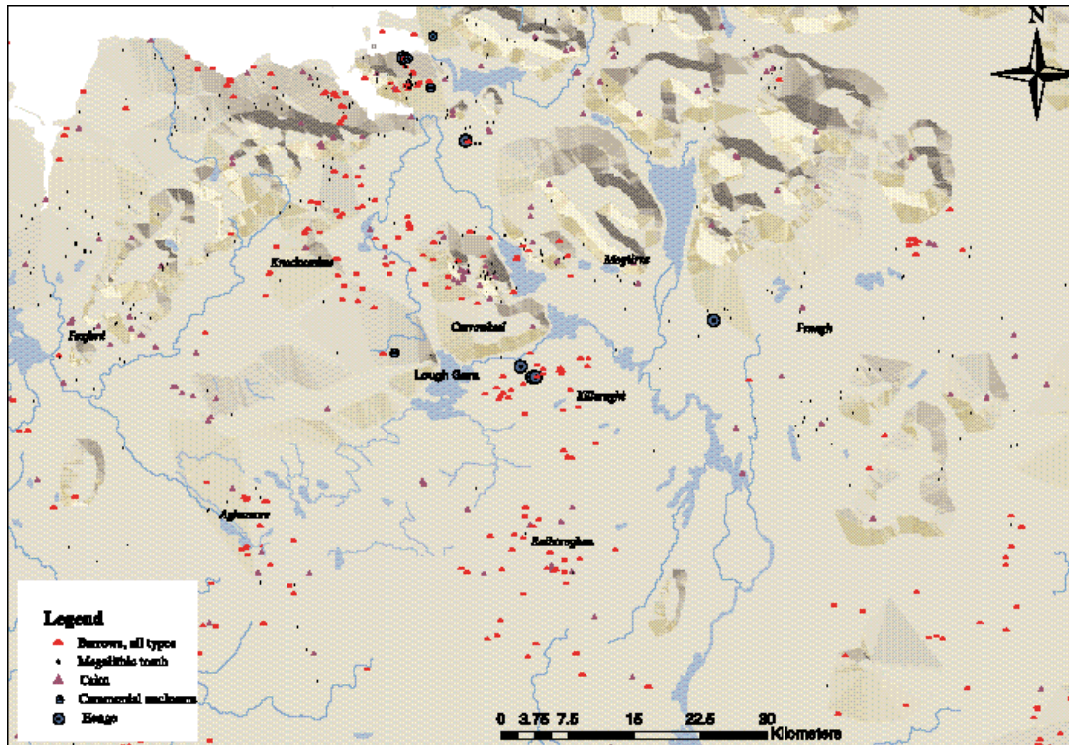
In the later part of the Neolithic larger enclosures like henges were built. Many of these sites have a diameter exceeding 100m, and are surrounded by an earthen bank. Such henges have often been found in connection with passage tombs (see Stout 1991). Therefore the existence of these henges next to the concentration of barrows to the south of the Boyle River may tentatively be taken as an indication that some of the barrows might be passage tombs.

In Ireland there are about eleven concentrations of henges. One of these concentrations, consisting of three henges, has been identified just south of the Boyle River. The first has a low-lying position in Ballinphuill td, next to the river but further east in comparison to the portal tomb of Drumanone. This site encloses a watery area and is focused on a turlough. The second henge is situated in Knockadoo–Brusna td, where a large circular bank incorporates a large barrow (see Condit 1993). This is similar to Ballynahatty, where an earlier megalith is enclosed by a henge, and the enclosure here also incorporates a tomb. The henge is located on the western side of the barrow and opens towards the setting sun and the other barrows. Another henge is situated nearby on slightly lower ground. Another possible henge, but with an unusual slope, surrounds another barrow in Killaraght. Other sites called embanked enclosures containing cairns/burial mounds can be found on the southern side of Rathcrogan (see Pl. 8). A structurally similar site with a slightly unusual location is the passage tomb in Rockville surrounded by a circular enclosure.

It is worth noting that there is a large enclosure around the large cairn at Keash Hill, resembling the site combination at Knockadoo–Brusna.

Burial patterns around the lake

If the dead and the living during the Mesolithic were connected with the temporality of the smaller platforms or the disposal of the bodies took place in such a way that no durable traces of them remained, the situation was certainly different in the Neolithic. If we follow the narrative with the platforms and the natural islands, connections could come and go and could be rearranged over different years. The megalithic tombs and the barrows had a different temporal permanency in the landscape—as compared to the platforms in the water, for example—being visible and accessible the whole year round. This permanency would give the opportunity to invoke memories of the dead at all times, perhaps creating long-term bonds between land,



Pl. 8—Map of possible Neolithic monuments in the wider study area.

ancestors and time. The building and use of these tombs would work to create new identities for people, identities more focused on land than on water. It would also realign their responsibility to each other and the land.

As noted above, almost all traces of Mesolithic human activity were found near the waters. During the Neolithic period, on the other hand, monuments were located in dryland areas. Near Lough Gara the portal tomb and the court tomb are both located away from the lake, and it was also observed that none of the natural islands in this lake were used for the construction of a monument. The barrow concentration to the east of the lake is not focused on the water but on an inland area. Most of the burial sites around the lake have no visual contact with the lake. Many other tombs in the area appear to be focused on uplands, such as the tombs at Carrowkeel and Kesh. With this in mind it can be said that human presence was more dispersed at this stage than in earlier periods or rather that people emphasised other areas monumentally.

In earlier research sites like portal tombs, court tombs and passage tombs have been seen as a developmental sequence, but later research has shown that they are nearly contemporaneous and that there are morphological similarities between the different tomb types (Cooney and Grogan 1994; Sheridan 1995; Waddell 1998; Cooney 2000a, 92–3, 138). There has also been a new focus on understanding the material in a regional setting (Cooney 2000a, 219–24). If the monumental tombs in the area are contemporary, it is not clear whether the lake and the lands around it should be seen as a unit. With burial monuments from the Neolithic on both sides of the lake, perhaps different rituals were carried out around the lake. Excavations of court tombs have suggested that rituals involving the lighting of fires and the breaking of pottery may have taken place in the outer court of the tombs. The bodies were taken into the tomb for a long- or short-term burial. It has

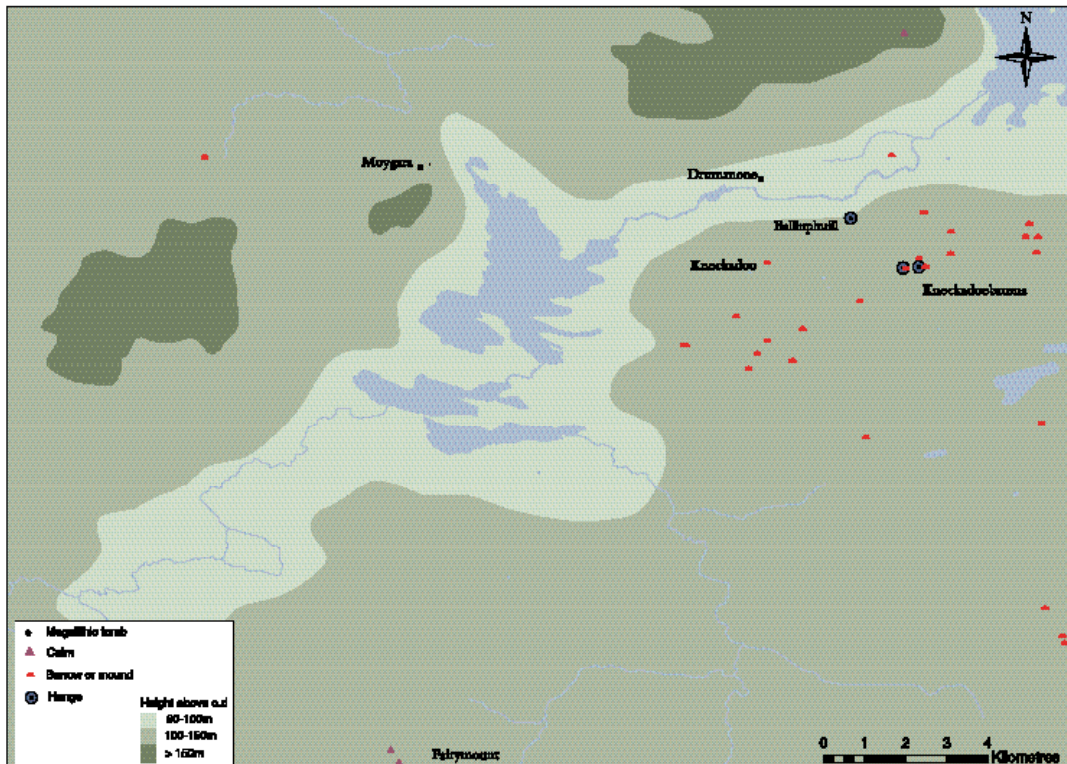


Fig. 29—Map of megalithic tombs, cairns, barrows and henges near Lough Gara.

been suggested that the tombs might not have been the final resting-places for the dead, but that the bones could have been taken out and circulated like relics (Cooney 2000a). At the same time another group may have been carrying out different rituals at Drumadone, where it was seen as more important to leave the skulls in the tomb.

These two megalithic tombs can be described as singular sites with quite a distance between them. In other places, such as at Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, there is a concentration of megalithic monuments which might possibly have been in use at more or less the same time (Cooney 2000a, 150). The only concentration of monuments in the area consists of the barrows in Killaragh. Powell (forthcoming, cited in Cooney 2000a, 114) has suggested that court tombs represent ancestral connections at a local level, while passage tombs would have been seen as referring to a higher level of descent, perhaps even to a clan system. Perhaps this is how we could interpret the burial evidence in the study area, with smaller communities in a lesser number around the lake and with a clan system built around the tombs in the Killaragh region, perhaps linking up other clans from the Ballymote/Keash area; this is one interpretation of the denser clusters of monuments that we can see at this time.

Many people have argued that the building of monuments indicates a commitment to the land (see e.g. R. Bradley 1993). If the dead and the monuments built for them had anything to do with the way people saw their loyalties, it seems clear that the waters were of less importance during this period. This is probably also what we can see signs of here around the lake.

Settlement

There is strong evidence that people during the early stages of the Neolithic led a settled life as farmers. No remains of Neolithic houses have yet been located near the lake. However, tombs are often taken as an indication of settlements (Ó Nualláin 1989; Shee Twohig 1990). Using this reasoning we could expect to see settlements from the Neolithic somewhere close to the lake. As there are a variety of monuments here, we know that people continued to dwell in the area during this period, although there are not as many sites here as further north in the study area, nearer to the coast. When discussing houses in the area around the lake we have to draw on examples from other places in Ireland.

Houses

Thomas (1996, 7–12) has argued that the house remains in Britain, and to some extent Ireland, are atypical structures and that our views of these dwellings are coloured by a modern framework of thoughts about houses and homes. There is, however, quite clear evidence for early Neolithic houses in the Irish material (see Grogan 1996a). Many new sites have come to light in recent years (see Cooney 1999; Dunne and Kiely 1999; Purcell 1999; McSparran 1999; McManus 1999). In this respect the archaeological material differs from the British material presented by Thomas (1996), which has left their Neolithic almost without any house remains.

In Ireland, the typical house is rectangular, with a porch at one gable being evident in some examples. There are also round houses, which seem to become more dominant over time, at least from the middle Neolithic onwards (Grogan 1996a, 59; Waddell 1998, 34f.).

The nearest excavated example of a Neolithic house comes from Ballyglass, Co. Mayo. This house is rectangular and quite large, measuring 13m by 6m. It has been radiocarbon-dated to 3700–2900 BC (4680 ± 95 BP – 4530 ± 95 BP) (Ó Nualláin 1972). It has been argued that this was either a house that people lived in or a cult-house (see Thomas 1996, 5; Topping 1996, 118; Waddell 1998, 54, note). There is also slightly earlier dating evidence for other houses. The rectangular house in Ballynagilly, Co. Tyrone, was dated to 4360–3750 BC (5370 ± 85 BP – 5230 ± 125 BP). These dates are Mesolithic and are not compatible with the material culture of pottery and flints associated with the house. It has been argued that the dates may derive from wood older than the buildings themselves (see Thomas 1988, 61; Kinnes 1988, 6; Baillie 1992, 18; 1995a, 64), i.e. that very old wood had been used in later houses. Early dates have also been obtained for two other rectangular houses in Tankardstown, Co. Limerick, in the range 3990–3770 BC (5105 ± 45 – 4840 ± 80 BP). If there were more houses with these dates, there would be room to argue contemporaneity with much of the later Mesolithic material by the lakes. In this context it is worth noting that Woodman has dated cattle bones from two of the Mesolithic sites discussed in the previous chapter. The first site at Dalkey Island, among a sequence of earlier dates, has produced dates such as 3760–3370 BC (4820 ± 75 BP) for animal bones from site V, and 4040–3650 BC (5050 ± 90 BP) for site II. The site at Sutton, Co. Dublin, gave dates of use of around 4350–3800 BC (5250 ± 110 BP) (Woodman *et al.* 1997). What is remarkable is how near in time the houses are to the Mesolithic activities in the water. As shown in the preceding chapter, many of the classic later Mesolithic sites lie in the date range 5400–5050 BP. A warning against putting too much emphasis on these dates has been issued (see Woodman *et al.* 1999, 145).

There is other evidence that has been taken as an indication that people had organised and divided the land at an early stage. Investigations by Seamus Caulfield in Mayo have revealed extensive pre-bog field systems (see Caulfield 1978; 1983; 1988; Molloy and O’Connell 1988).

There are also examples of pre-bog field systems from other places such as Glencloy, Co. Antrim (Woodman 1983), Donegal (Lacy 1983) and Kerry (Mitchell 1989), showing that land was enclosed at an early stage.

The dating of the early field systems at Céide has been queried (see Thomas 1996, 4; Whittle 1996, 239), but more corroborating evidence has since been recovered. Radiocarbon analysis of trees that overlay the field systems produced a date of 3200 BC. The field systems must pre-date these trees (Molloy and O'Connell 1995; Caulfield *et al.* 1998) and the fields would have been laid out in the Neolithic. No signs of pre-bog field systems have been recognised around Lough Gara, but it is not unlikely that people here also enclosed their lands and farmed at an early stage. The enclosures need not have been seen only as administrative boundaries but also as symbolically connecting various places. At another level enclosure reveals a new and different attitude to land than in the preceding period. However, the only evidence that people had changed their attitude to the land around Lough Gara comes from the tombs.

Grogan (1996a) has shown that some houses would be located on land overlooking water. If this is the case in the Lough Gara region there would be a zone of lakelands, followed by settlements and then tombs, located further inland.

Huts

While there is no evidence yet for rectangular houses in the study area, there is field evidence for another type of dwelling here. There are indications of a multiplicity of hut features on the mountains, near the passage tombs not too far from the lake. Given the assumptions about the location of Neolithic houses, these hut sites would take up another location in the landscape. At Carrowkeel in Mullaghfarna nearly 200 small hollows have been identified. These were stone-lined with entrance features, and Bergh (1995, 47) has suggested that they may be Neolithic huts as they are located near the Neolithic tombs and like them were covered by blanket bog. Huts have also been found near the cairn in Fairymount, on Knocknashee and on Knocknarea, where they have been excavated (Bergh 1981; 2000). They may date from the third millennium BC (Waddell 1998, 46). What I want to investigate further is how these could relate both to the rectangular houses and to the assumed platforms in the water.

There is a structural similarity between the relationship of these many hut features with passage tombs and the relationship of the presumed platform crannogs with natural islands. This similarity resides in the presence of a multitude of small sites that were connected with flint/chert-knapping surrounding a larger cairn that could be seen as 'island-like'. The island in the first case is situated on a mountain and in the second on water. In the existence of these huts one could possibly see plenitude comparable to that of the possible small islands. A similar multiplicity of settlement was in that case created near the mountaintops instead of in the lowlands by the waters. This could mean that a spatial structure from earlier times was transplanted into a new setting.

The mountain is an island or a lake

It was suggested that people might have transferred the structural meaning of the lakes up to the mountaintops, perhaps not primarily by moving the dead but by changing their monumental focus. The existence of a multitude of small hut sites surrounding a larger passage tomb as at Knocknarea or Knocknashee suggests that the smaller sites, in a similar way to the platform crannogs, were referring to something larger than themselves. In the Mesolithic the islands were a naturally distinct topographic feature that people focused on; in the Neolithic the focus was a

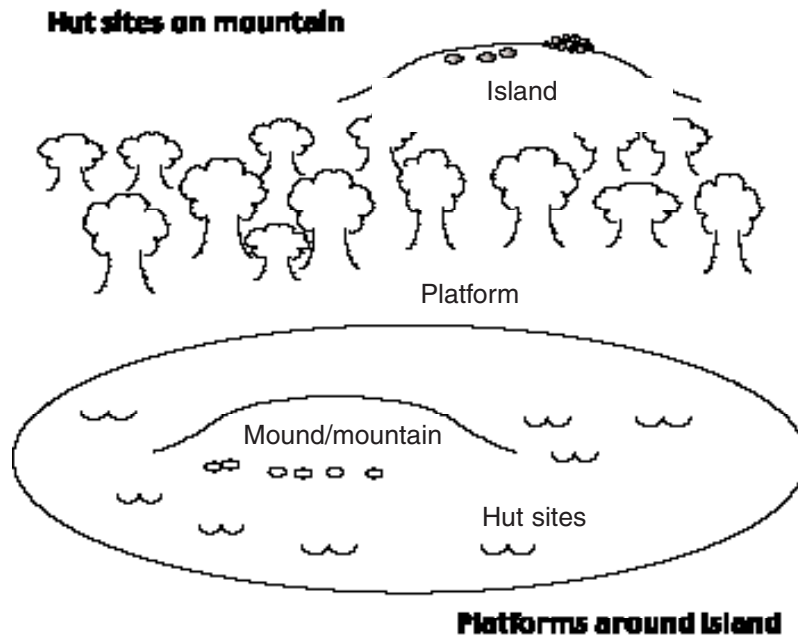


Fig. 30—The structural similarity between hut sites, cairns and platform crannogs.

man-made monument for the ancestors, often in uplands or mountains. By this argument it could be suggested that the mountain was manipulated to function as a lake and the cairn in the middle as an island to which the smaller hut circles related as platforms.

Figure 30 shows how the hut sites on the mountains compare to the presumed platform crannogs around some natural lake islands. In both cases the central feature — either the island or the mountain with a cairn — was surrounded by a large number of huts/platforms that were connected with the creation of artefacts. It could be suggested that some of the meaning that the islands and lakes had in former periods was transferred to an upland setting. These places were in locations that may have been experienced as remote from what may have been regarded as everyday life, which may have been focused on the drumlins and plains (this is where we find barrows and the other megalithic tombs). It is possible that the mountaintops were places of pilgrimage, and what is interesting is that the people arranging these places may have been drawing on a structural composition that resembles that of the lake islands and the platforms.

There would be a similarity in the landscape experience of the two places, in that both would have offered a vertical visual contact with the sky in an otherwise mostly forested landscape. However, there are also a lot of differences. The landscape experience from a mountaintop such as Keash is totally different from that from a natural island in a lake. On the mountain an understanding of how the different parts of the world are put together and composed grows out of the ability to see over wide areas, to recognise lakes, other mountains and forests, and to relate their location to your own. To stand on one of the natural islands in the lake offers a different experience. The islands provoke exploration of the world within, within yourself and the island. In general increased attention seems to have been paid to mountains and heights as compared to lakes and islands, while the mountains may, at least to some extent, have taken on the meanings previously held by the islands and the waters. One way to explain this is that the places created with the island symbolism on the mountains may have emphasised the need to be away from the

everyday and to search for some higher level of understanding and knowledge of the world — above the world. It may be worth thinking about whether the people doing this may have formed a kind of temporal bond in a similar way as the people using the platforms may have done. Similar activities in terms of flint-knapping were carried out here, but the ancestral bonds were articulated differently, as the huts are located near large cairns.

The crannogs

As there were no sites dated to the Neolithic period from Lough Gara, their existence has to be built on connections between sites and artefacts, which — as argued in the survey chapter — is one of the weaker methods of dating a site. Apart from the dating evidence from the site at Inch Island, straddling the boundary between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic, there is very little evidence for the use of any man-made islands in the lake that dates securely from the Neolithic period.

The excavated site in Tivannagh on the north side of the Boyle River may have had Neolithic layers, as the dated peat sample from the site indicated. It showed that parts of the structure pre-dated 3000 BC (J. Raftery 1957, 9), but the sparse material culture from the site is of only limited help in trying to estimate how much earlier the site may be. There were, however, some Bann flakes, which normally date from the Mesolithic period. Without access to this material, which is still not published, it is hard to judge how old the site is.

Another site from Lough Gara has recently turned up as an argument for Neolithic crannogs. This site is really a collection of pressure-flaked flints that may have derived from a crannog in Tawnymucklagh. It ‘produced Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowheads, lozenge-shaped arrowheads and a hollow scraper of chert’ (O’Sullivan 1998, 64). However, these artefacts differ from most of the lithic material in Lough Gara. A local collector, Mr Brendan McKeon, retrieved the items. According to local informants he had finds from many different places stored in a jar in the kitchen, and the connection between sites and finds would in this case not be totally clear. In the NMI files attached to the collection the connection between the finds and the crannog is no clearer than the connection between the Bann flakes and the presumed island: ‘The flakes came from between the south crannog and the shore or from the crannog’. The material is not that closely connected with the artificial island itself. The reference to the southern crannog in Tawnymucklagh is also ambiguous. There are about eight crannogs indicated in this townland, two of which are distinct platforms and six of which can barely be made out on the shoreline.

The connection between these sites and the artefacts is not totally clear. As shown, an overall look at the Lough Gara material shows only a small number of pressure-flaked artefacts and an even smaller number of hollow scrapers (see Appendix 3). The quantity is distinctly smaller than the Mesolithic material, which ought to support an idea of a lesser emphasis on the lake and waters during the Neolithic period.

There is possible evidence for Neolithic man-made islands from elsewhere, such as Island MacHugh, Co. Tyrone, which yielded Neolithic pottery and scrapers (see Davies 1950; Herity and Eogan 1977; Ivens *et al.* 1986), and a hoard of Neolithic blades was found at the crannog in Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath (O’Sullivan 1998, 62). Again, the difference between man-made islands and deposits may be hard to judge, and for the Neolithic in Lough Gara there are at present no structural remains to support the proposition for buildings in the water. It is possible that these sites were still in use in this period, but the evidence is not totally clear. The point is, however, not only that there might have been a lesser focus on the lake but that other places occupied people’s minds as well.

Artefacts

Stone axes are normally ascribed to both the Mesolithic and the Neolithic. Polished stone axes, however, seem to appear first in the Neolithic (Woodman 1977; 1978; 1985; 1992a), while ground axes can belong to the Mesolithic. They may have been produced into the Bronze Age (Pollock and Waterman 1969) and it is likely that they were collected as antiquities on early medieval sites. As R. Bradley (1990, 48) has suggested, the axes may both have been used and have been a symbol for the settled life, meaning clearance of land. At Lough Gara we have no direct evidence for the clearance of land (other than an unpublished pollen diagram) and we can, with reference to examinations in other areas, assume that people living in this area cleared grounds for farming and enclosed their land.

According to my records over 133 stone axes have been found along the shores of Lough Gara. Many of these have been retrieved from the same sites as the Bann flakes, and it could be argued either that they are contemporary with these flakes or that they are later. As many of them are polished it is possible that they are at least slightly later than the Bann flakes. What the location of the axes may tell us is that the practice of depositing stone objects on the shores and in the waters of Lough Gara continued into the Neolithic.

The main concentration of axes can be found along the Boyle River, and especially around the townland of Coolnagranshy on the south side of the river. This is on the opposite bank from the portal tomb of Drumanone. Smaller numbers have been found in places such as Derrymaquirk and Emlagh townlands. The next large concentration of ten axes has been found on Inch Island in the middle of the lake. One or two have been retrieved from townlands such as Falleens, Tawnymucklagh, Ardsoreen, Ross and Derrymore Island, all in Lower Lough Gara (see Fig. 31). The only place where stone axes have been found in the other two lakes of Lough Gara is on the shores of Annaghbeg. The stone axes that occasionally share their location with Bann flakes (as in Coolnagranshy) seem to have a more limited distribution, with a special focus on the north-eastern parts of the lake and the area around the Boyle River in particular.

Many stone axes from other places (about 20,000 have been found in Ireland) have been found at rivers and especially fording-points (see Sheridan *et al.* 1992; Cooney and Grogan 1994, 211–12; Cooney 2000a, 130). The material in Lough Gara ties in with this description in general, such as the large number of axes that have been found at Coolnagranshy where the river narrows, close to the tomb at Drumanone.

There are also some inland finds of polished stone axes, and this marks a difference from the artefacts connected with the Mesolithic. In this respect the finds also follow the movement of the monuments out into the landscape, away from the waters. One axe was found at Cuilprughlish, at the source of the Owenmore River. Two were found inland on the eastern side of the lake at Lissarlough and Lisserdrea townlands. Another axe was found in the graveyard in Monasteraden. Cooney (2000a, 208) has suggested that dryland finds may represent settlements, and perhaps that is the case with some of these axes. However, some of the stone axes may have been picked up and used as antiquities in the early medieval period. The axe from the graveyard might possibly be one of these. In other areas deposition of axes in watery places has been seen as part of a long-term, slowly changing ritual tradition (Karsten 1994).

If the stone axes represent a contemporary and slightly later time than the Bann flakes, the distribution shows a heavier emphasis on the eastern side of the lake, particularly around the area in the Boyle River near the portal tomb at Drumanone. Most of the axes, however, were found on the south side of the river. The emphasis on this part of the landscape can also be seen in the

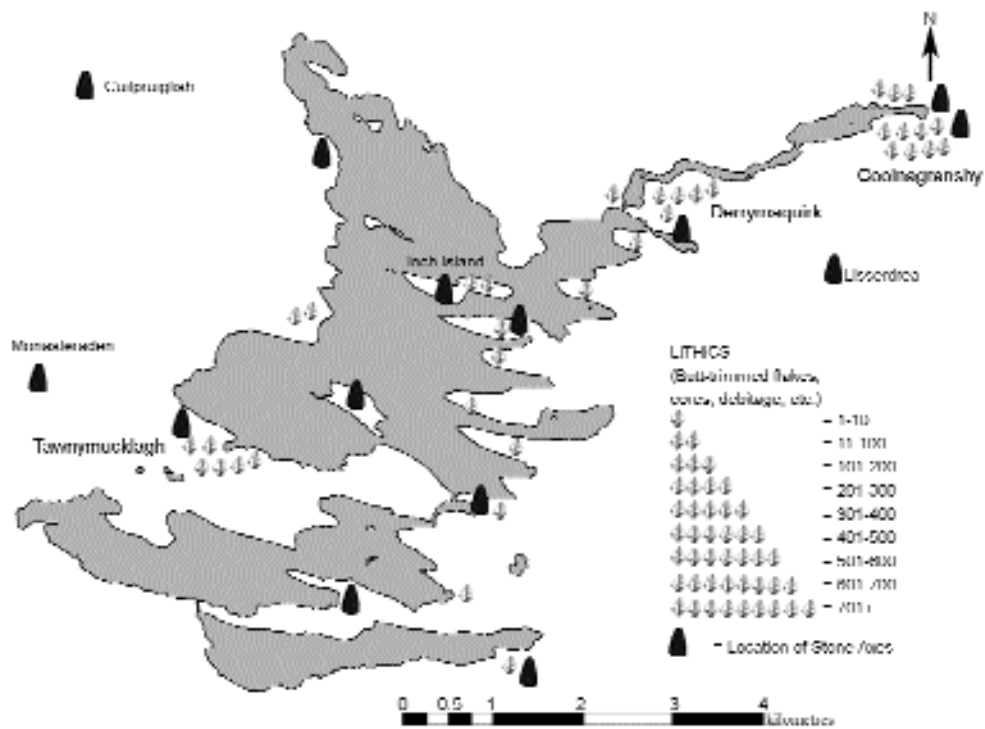


Fig. 31—Distribution of stone axes as compared to flakes in Lough Gara.

distribution of barrows, which are mainly located south of the river and on this eastern side of the lake. This is also the place where the henges are located.

Polished stone axes versus flakes

There are a number of differences between the two classes of artefacts found in the waters. The flakes have a crackly surface and have a relation to the cores which could be metaphorically interpreted as a form of ancestry (i.e. the cores can be seen as ancestors of the flakes). The polished stone axes do not display the same core–flake relationship. Instead they derive from a single stone that is ground down or polished to shape, and the surface is smooth. Here instead it is what was in the stone that mattered, the core itself that was transformed by precision, while the other pieces were left at the place of origin.

It has been noted in many studies that the polished stone axes are made of types of stone that are only available in particular areas. Many axes in Ireland are made of porcellanite that came from Tievebullagh and Brockley in County Antrim (Jope 1952; Sheridan 1986; Mandal *et al.* 1997; Cooney and Mandal 1998). By identifying the material of the polished stone axes it has been found that many derive from faraway locations, sometimes even from Britain and the Continent. It has been noted that many come from dangerous places (see Tacon 1991, 203–4; Tilley 1994, 53; Cooney 2000a, 194) and that their extraction may have been focused more on this characteristic than on the rationale of least effort and maximising the utility of resources (R. Bradley 2000). Emmet Byrne (1996) has sourced the stone in the Lough Gara axes, revealing some exotic types in the material. There are also a large number of schist axes that could derive

from a number of places in the wider region. However, Conor MacDermot of the Geological Survey of Ireland argues (pers. comm.) that schist has too wide a distribution to enable a determination of whether a stone is local or not.

It has been argued that the place of origin might have been important to the people who in the end acquired the axes, and that these items would have had biographies of their own (see Thomas 1996). This emphasis on distant origins in the case of the axes contrasts with the Bann flakes, a large percentage of which derive from locally available stones such as chert and sandstone. We can also see a variance in the tradition of deposition: in the earlier period the practice was connected with the negotiation of local and regional group identities, while during the Neolithic it was connected with long-distance contacts.

If the lithics in the Mesolithic period conveyed different ideas about ancestry by interchanging flakes and débitage from different origins with other cores, the manipulation of ancestry during the Neolithic period became more articulated through the use of monuments.

Attitude to the water

While there is no firm evidence that platform crannogs were built or used during most of the Neolithic in Lough Gara, there are other indications of how people related to the waters. Even though the lake was still in use at this time, the focus had also shifted to elsewhere in the landscape. It is likely that the waters, and especially the running waters of the river, were seen as places where depositions of suitable objects could be made.

This practice seems to have followed on from the Mesolithic in Lough Gara. Cooney (2000a, 189) pointed out that stone axes had a ritual as well as a practical aspect, and it is possible that the waters of the lake were seen as both practical and sacred at the same time. If we follow the interpretation that the Bann flakes are earlier than the polished stone axes and represent a reworking of local and regional identities and groups while the stone axes could imply imaginings of places further away, in this period these ideas of faraway places would have been connected with the waters.

There is some evidence for log-boats from the Neolithic, but just as in the Mesolithic the evidence is not as plentiful as on the Continent (Lanting and Brindley 1996; Fry 2000). Also, this evidence supports the view that the main attention seems to have been diverted away from the lake waters towards the land. This can be seen in distribution maps of monumental tombs. The dead, and perhaps also the ancestors, had been moved elsewhere. Hence the lakes and river might have lost some of their lived-in character, with people becoming more attached to land. Instead of being a living connection between places visited during a yearly cycle, the waters might have been seen as an impediment, a hindrance that had to be overcome and a boundary that had to be crossed.

If people were working the land and raising cattle this would also have created a different focus on the landscape and a different pattern of movement. Cooney remarked that cattle were also a piece of 'imported landscape', and that people learned to perceive the landscape when they followed the cattle over land in the Neolithic (2000a, 43, drawing on Gosden 1994, 25). However, the idea of following animals must have been in existence during the Mesolithic as well, with people following the fish runs along the waterways. These movements through the landscape went in other directions during the Neolithic. Instead of leading along the rivers, they would follow cattle-paths over the hills, sometimes crossing the waters. In this way the fording-points

over waters would become more and more important. We have the example of Drumanone, where the portal tomb may be located beside one of these fords.

People's changing perception of the landscape at this time can be seen not only in the absence of megalithic tombs from islands in inland lakes, such as Lough Gara, but also in the alignment of barrows, which do not relate to the flow of the river but follow a line of drumlins.

Social fictionalities

To a certain extent there is a lot of difference between the Neolithic and the Mesolithic periods, but at another level certain things remained the same. What is clear is that people lived in and around the lake during both periods, although their lifestyle might have changed from being centred on the lakes and waters to being more land-based.

The forests that may previously have been seen as alive and perhaps animated began to be cleared away and turned into pasture — the land was transformed. These changes and the more clearly evident building of houses and field systems seem to have taken place at an earlier stage than in Britain (the dating evidence almost suggests that some of the houses and the possible platform crannogs are contemporary).

Islands and the land

What is noteworthy in the Irish material is the comparably early advent of what has been called the 'Neolithic Package'. This means, for example, houses, field systems and megalithic tombs (we have evidence for at least the latter in Lough Gara). The reason why these sites developed so early here may have to do with what was happening already in the preceding period, i.e. that people here at an earlier stage gave up their earlier responsibilities to possibly seasonally limited groups and to the waters in favour of others. And I think I know one of the reasons for this. In Britain the advent of a farming lifestyle has been regarded as a result of the change of mind that occurred together with the building of monuments (see Hodder 1982; Barrett 1994; Tilley 1996; R. Bradley 1998, etc.). These sites have been seen as influencing people's thoughts by the way they made people experience space and think about time. The monuments could be said to have created loyalties to the land, and only after this change of perception did farming become feasible.

The sequence in Ireland is different, with even earlier evidence for settlement, and this may have been connected with people's interest in and activities around islands. I believe that the intensive use of islands, either natural or man-made, or both, is crucial for the understanding of the early arrival of the Neolithic in Ireland. Making use of islands gave people a special experience of space through their distinct boundaries and spatial limitations. The use of islands may have meant that people in the Mesolithic were already well used to living within enclosed spaces. In this way the step towards living in houses or enclosing land in fields would not be a dramatic change.

The change in perception of time that would have been required for the change to a farming lifestyle could also have occurred before the introduction of megalithic tombs by the repeated use of the seasonally accessible platform crannogs. Their use would have involved following a yearly pattern, with the platforms only accessible at certain, perhaps even predictable, times of the year. It is possible that certain groups returned to the lake year after year at the right season for the platforms to be visible and usable. The repeated use of the natural islands and the platforms may have given people a 'pre-monumental' experience similar in ways to the effect of megalithic

tombs on people's perceptions in other places at a later stage (see Hodder 1982; Barrett 1994; R. Bradley 1993; 1998). The islands would have made people think in a 'Neolithic' way before the Neolithic period. People were therefore not unfamiliar with the new lifestyle, and would be more ready to perceive it as beneficial, when argued to be so by others. However, their arguments would be built on knowledge that had developed over a long time, and would be partly based on people's spatial experience.

The return to the islands during the Mesolithic meant that long-term bonds had already been formed with certain places in the landscape, and may imply that these places were claimed by particular groups of people. Those in favour of change had the earlier register of formalised ideas to work on as a background for arguing that the Neolithic lifestyle was not only a favourable way to live but was also the 'natural' obvious answer and direction. To a certain extent this would also mean giving up earlier bonds to the forest, to the animals and possibly the spirits that lived there.

Water and groups

The transition from one lifestyle to another may also have changed the way people saw themselves as groups and the way they constructed their loyalties. If the depositions in the water from the earlier period were connected with the possible seasonal creation and reorganisation of temporary group identities, the Neolithic period may have been different. The building and use of megalithic tombs may have given rise to a loyalty to the land. What is also important is that the use of megalithic tombs made it possible to emphasise the link between people and land via arguments about ancestry. The use of these tombs would have fixed who was in the group and who had access to these sites. The fact that the dead were separated out from the world of the living and put in certain locations worked in this direction as well. These new loyalties may have implied a gradual dissolution of the bonds created through the activities by the islands and in the waters. This is evident from the fact that no megalithic tombs were constructed on any of the natural islands in the lakes. However, offshore islands in particular continued in use for other purposes throughout the Neolithic (see Cooney 1997b; 1998).

The tombs were instead constructed further inland and, as in the case of Lough Gara, away from any physical or visual contact with the lake waters. Settlements may have been located in the zone beyond the shore and inland. In many cases mountaintops and upland locations were used. It is possible to see in the case of Knocknarea and Knocknashee that the island-platform symbolism may have been transferred to a similar but opposite location in the landscape.

Cooney (2000a) has argued that people throughout the Neolithic lived in small-scale, mainly settled communities. It is likely that there were a few small communities centred on Moygara and Drumanone. Around Lough Gara the megalithic tombs are fairly well dispersed in the landscape. This contrasts with places like Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, where concentrations of tombs occur. There are also places like Killaraght, to the east of the lake, with concentrations of barrows. These places may be indicative of larger groups who started to put down roots in the landscape. Perhaps this would represent, as suggested by Cooney (2000a), the emergence of larger clans. This may have been the case in Killaraght. The choice of location away from the lake meant a further distancing from the waters as a source for the creation of loyalties. Towards the end of the period three henges were also built in the vicinity of the barrows, emphasising the continued importance of this area.

As shown, many things in life around the lake changed slowly, but many things also remained the same. Some ideas were built on the reworking of concepts that were already in place in the Mesolithic. There are also clear continuities, such as in the deposition of items in the water. Perhaps the deposition of the stone axes was a way to mitigate and to facilitate the actions of forest

clearance, and for some people these depositions may have represented a continued respect for the old ways of living.

Conclusion

During the Neolithic period we can see a movement out into the landscape away from the lake, with a distinct monumentalisation of the uplands, for example. However, it is likely that people, to some extent, continued to be at waters but their activities in these areas were not given the same permanency as in the uplands. There is widespread evidence in Ireland for an early advent of houses, the fencing of land and the formal burial of people, and this would also have been the case at Lough Gara. During these times there was a change of loyalties from the smaller temporary groups into larger, more permanent groups who may have felt that they had a year-round responsibility to their ancestors and the land. This responsibility was made permanent and visible through the construction of the monumental tombs. These tombs may not have been the main reason why people were rethinking their landscape and their links to other people. The use of islands in the earlier period may have formed people's expectations and imaginings about themselves, creating the mind-set and the pre-existing knowledge of time and place that might have facilitated a change in lifestyle. It may also be one of the reasons why the development in this area in particular, but also in Ireland, looks different from the case in Britain. The use of islands and other topographically distinct places can be seen as an additional explanation for 'pre-monumental' farming lifestyles here.

Towards the end of the period there is evidence in the form of henges for larger gatherings of people, but the old monuments still played a part in their activities and cultural imagination. Again this would have been a practice connecting with earlier events, but the building of the henges would change the way these monuments were perceived and used. In the Mesolithic and during the transition to the Neolithic the waters of Lough Gara were places of intense human activity, as shown in the concentrations of artefacts and débitage found along the shores. A characteristic of the Neolithic around Lough Gara is that other places captured human attention while the islands may still have had their place in people's cultural imagination. As discussed, while the islands may have continued to be places where deposits were made, there was an increased emphasis on places and alliances further away, and in this way people were abandoning the islands and their former island identities.

9. BETWEEN WORLDS — THE BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE

The Bronze Age is often said to start around 2400 BC. For the early Bronze Age there is quite substantial evidence for ceremonial sites, burials and metal artefacts, while information about everyday life is sparse. The early Bronze Age has been studied for its metalwork, and advances have been made in terms of classifications and in the understanding of the technological processes of production (see Harbison 1969a; 1969b). Cooney (2000b, 18), with support from Sherratt (1981), has suggested that the changes in people's location in the landscape might be due to changes in agricultural practices. Less research has been focused on the understanding of both the metalwork and social organisation. Studies of the later Bronze Age have to some extent also focused on metal objects (see e.g. Eogan 1965; 1974; 1983; 1994), but archaeology has moved towards an understanding of settlement patterns as well. This is mainly evident in the south of Ireland (Doody 1997; 2000; Cooney 2000b), where efforts have also been made to understand settlement in terms of hierarchies, drawing on processual models from Britain and using terms like 'status' and 'prestige' by way of explanation (see Champion *et al.* 1984; Cooney and Grogan 1994; Grogan *et al.* 1995, 54; 1996).

In this chapter, by analysing the context of the crannogs and other sites and finds in the study area, we will try to understand how people related to the waters and the lake during the stretch of time from the early Bronze Age until (and through) the early Iron Age. This is a period of around 2800 years (2400 BC–AD 400). After burials, settlements and stray finds, I will discuss the attitude to Lough Gara and try to interpret the evidence for late Bronze Age/early Iron Age crannogs in Lough Gara. This analysis will finish with a discussion about solidarity, loyalties and people's relation to 'production' and their landscape. This is a different approach from the 'hierarchical models' above. As we will see, there seems to be a stronger monumental attention to the lake at this time, and we will go into a discussion of what that meant for wider issues about the perception of solidarity and how people built fictionalities about themselves and others.

It was noted in Chapter 6 that there is a stronger signal from definite crannogs in use during the late Bronze Age and into the Iron Age. The general distribution map of crannogs (Pl. 1) shows them as occurring in a band through the northern half of Ireland. It can be argued that this map holds sites from many periods. But the distribution is quite concentrated and we know that this is the maximum area that they stretched over at any one time. To a certain extent this map can be said to show a regional pattern. Eogan (1974) has shown that there are regional differences in the metalworking tradition, at least towards the end of the late Bronze Age. Perhaps the crannogs from this period could be added to these regional differences.

Plate 9 shows sites that may have been in use or built during the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. It also displays sites from earlier periods. Notice how many of these sites connect up to earlier places of importance that were marked with megalithic tombs. Sites are not only found in previously important places, however. Some new places also seem to have been claimed during this period. Most sites tend to occur in concentrations in the landscape, with large empty areas in between. This pattern will be addressed throughout the chapter.

Burials

In Chapter 8 we discussed how the introduction of monumental tombs, for example, changed people's ways of perceiving their surroundings and themselves. There is much evidence that during this period people's attention may, at least to a certain extent, have been diverted away from the lake in favour of dryland locations. Also in this period monumental sites were built to contain burials, and some of the earlier sites were most probably reused.

These sites are located on both the eastern and western sides of the lake (see Fig. 32). The areas to the north and south of the lake are rather empty. None of the peninsulas or islands in the middle of the lake were used for monumental burials in this period either, adding to the impression that the lake was outside the main focus at this stage. What is interesting is that the burial monuments differ from the eastern to the western side of the lake.

Barrows

On the eastern side of the lake there are barrows of varying dates. The barrows of the mound type in Killaraght may date from the Neolithic or the Bronze Age, and we recognise them from the discussion and the maps in Chapter 8. It is not unlikely that these sites and the area around them were important as burial-grounds at the beginning of the Bronze Age as well. Further, it is likely that this area of burials was important right up to the Iron Age, as a number of ring-barrows can be found near the mounds in this area. The ideal ring-barrow is a circular ditch surrounded by a bank. Archaeologists think that this internal ditch was intended to keep the spirits in. This distinguishes them from the morphologically similar but later ringforts which have a bank with an external ditch, hence keeping things out. The grave-goods found in the ring-barrows, especially towards the end of the period, are in many cases no more than some animal bones and a blue glass bead, which suggests that there was no extensive social stratification expressed in the grave material. This can be gathered from analysis of the finds accounted for by B. Raftery (1981; 1994) or from the reports of the excavations of a barrow cemetery at Carrowjames, Co. Mayo (J. Raftery 1938–9; 1941). In Killaraght there is evidence that ring-barrows were attached to and built near the possibly earlier barrows, perhaps in order to make a connection with an earlier tradition of burials and ancestry. The barrows are located on the eastern side of the lake. From their drumlin heights the lake is rarely visible.

This argument is again supported by evidence from Rathdooney Beg, Co. Sligo, where a large bowl-barrow was built during the Neolithic (Mount 1995; 1998; 1999). Beside the mound was placed a smaller bowl-barrow and a saucer-barrow with burials dating from the Iron Age (Mount 1995, 84–7; 1998). Rathdooney Beg does not provide the only evidence that people in the late prehistoric period reused earlier sites for burials. A good example for this practice that has relevance for the understanding of the barrow cemetery at Killaraght is the barrow complex at Kiltierny, Co. Fermanagh, where a possible passage tomb was surrounded by a number of satellite mounds with burials from the Iron Age (B. Raftery 1981, 187; Foley 1988). A similar site complex with a large mound surrounded by smaller mounds is located at Knockadoo–Brusna. It is well known that reburials in earlier megalithic tombs, such as those at Carrowmore, took place in the Iron Age as well (see Burenhult 1980, 67f.). Comparisons can also be made with the barrow cemeteries at Granagh, Co. Galway, and Carrowjames, Co. Mayo (J. Raftery 1938–9; 1941; B. Raftery 1994, 180f.).

If there were such a continuity, it would mean that people on this side of the lake held on to the old ancestral places. It is possible to envisage that local identities were created and maintained

by reference to earlier places and perceived ancestral connections on both sides of the lake. However, the two sides of the lake differ considerably from each other in terms of monument types. In some places one can, just as at Lough Gara, notice a complementary pattern, with the presence of barrows on the eastern side of the lake indicating an absence of standing stones.

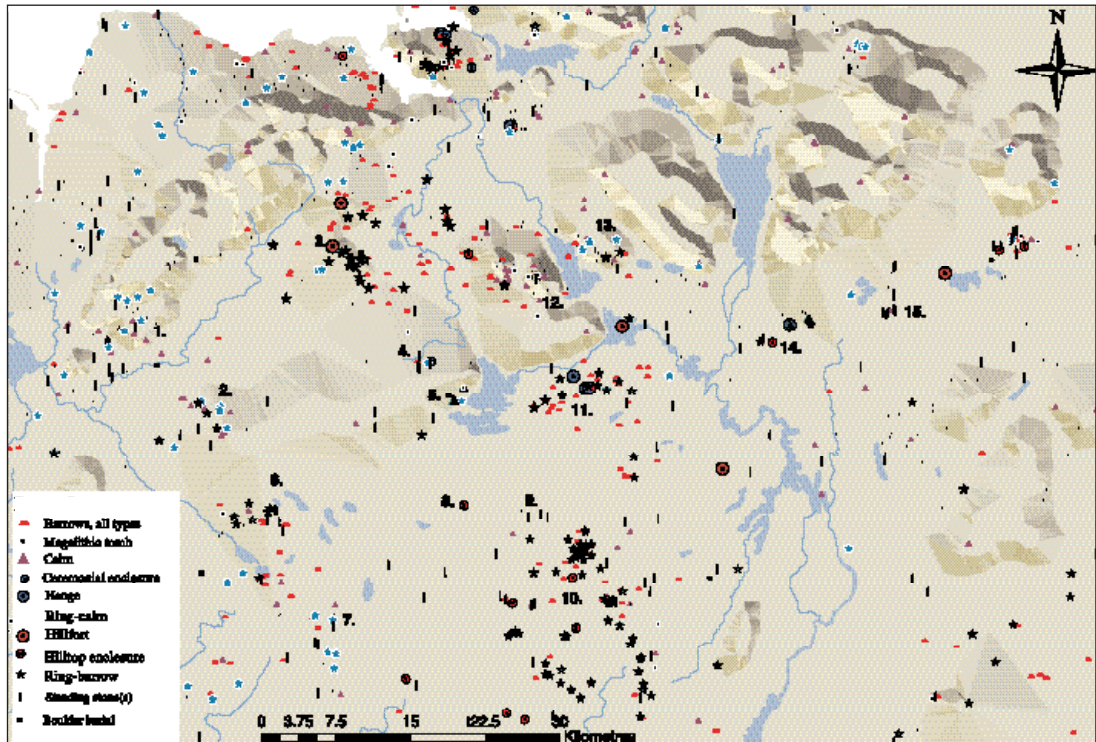
Bog bodies

On the eastern side of the lake there is also evidence for a completely different burial form. Another burial practice that is noted in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age is the deposit of human bodies in bogs. Worsaae (1842) had already proposed that bog bodies were ritually deposited. The practice of depositing bodies in wetlands seems to be found over large areas of north-west Europe and is commonly seen as being connected with Iron Age cult activities. That they were sacrificed has often been supported by the evidence of special bodily injuries (see Glob 1969; Stead *et al.* 1986, 178). Some researchers have questioned this proposal and suggest that people could have been left in bogs as a result of accidents, etc. (Andersen and Geertinger 1984, 117; Molleson 1986).

In the townland of Derrymaquirk on the eastern side of the lake such a bog body was found. Perhaps we should describe it as bog bodies, as more than one person was found in the peat in an area that used to be a bay of the lake. The skeleton of a young woman, the skull of an infant, approximately two years old, and some animal bones (sheep/goat, dog and antler) were found together in a grave dug in the bog. The piece of antler is of the utmost importance as it may have had significance in the religious beliefs of the time (see Fig. 33). A large stone had been placed on the stomach of the woman and behind the head was a piece of wood (Lucas 1961, 88–9; Ó Floinn 1992). Perhaps the stone was put there to make sure that the corpse did not rise from her grave. This practice has also been noted in a cemetery in Bettystown, Co. Meath, where a young adult female was buried away from the others, with a large rock on her stomach (J. Eogan 2000, 161). No date has yet been published for the burial.

Animal bones from this burial gave a radiocarbon date of 2340 ± 70 BP, which when calibrated gives a date in the transition between the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age (Ó Floinn 1992). More examples of human remains resembling the Derrymaquirk find have been found in watery places in the wider area. Another two bog bodies (a man and a child) were found in Sheegeragh td, Co. Roscommon, and deer antler was found nearby (Ó Floinn 1995b, Ro2, 230). This find is not dated, but resembles the discovery at Derrymaquirk. The human skeleton found in the bog at Kinnakinnelly townland, Co. Galway, was also found with deer bones and dated from the Iron Age. Another bog body from Gallagh, Co. Galway, has given similar dates. The bog body from Baronstown West, Co. Kildare, gave only slightly later dates and belongs in the time-span AD 240–400 with 95.4% probability (Ó Floinn 1995b, Ga1, Ga6, and Kd2, 226–7).²⁸ The evidence for grave-goods at Derrymaquirk and Kinnakinnelly suggests that we are dealing with formal burials. The body in Baronstown was covered in brushwood. It is also worth noting the connection between these bog bodies and deer antlers or deer bones.

It is important to note that burials in bogs focus on a totally different aspect of the landscape than, for example, megalithic tombs, barrows and wedge tombs around the lake. There have been no burials noted in these areas since the few traces in the Mesolithic. Numerous human skulls have been retrieved from the waters of Lough Gara, and I will discuss these further in relation to the crannogs in this chapter.



Pl. 9—Sites in the larger region that belong to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, and also to earlier periods.

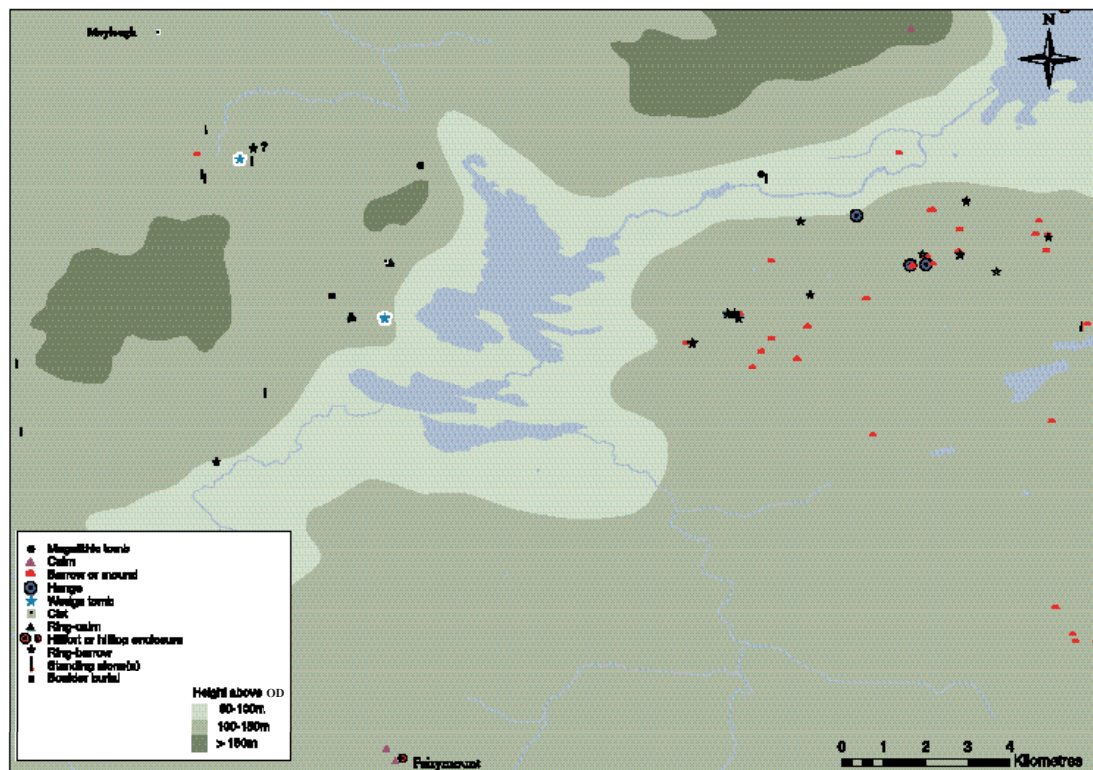


Fig. 32—Burial sites near Lough Gara of interest to people in the Bronze Age and Iron Age.

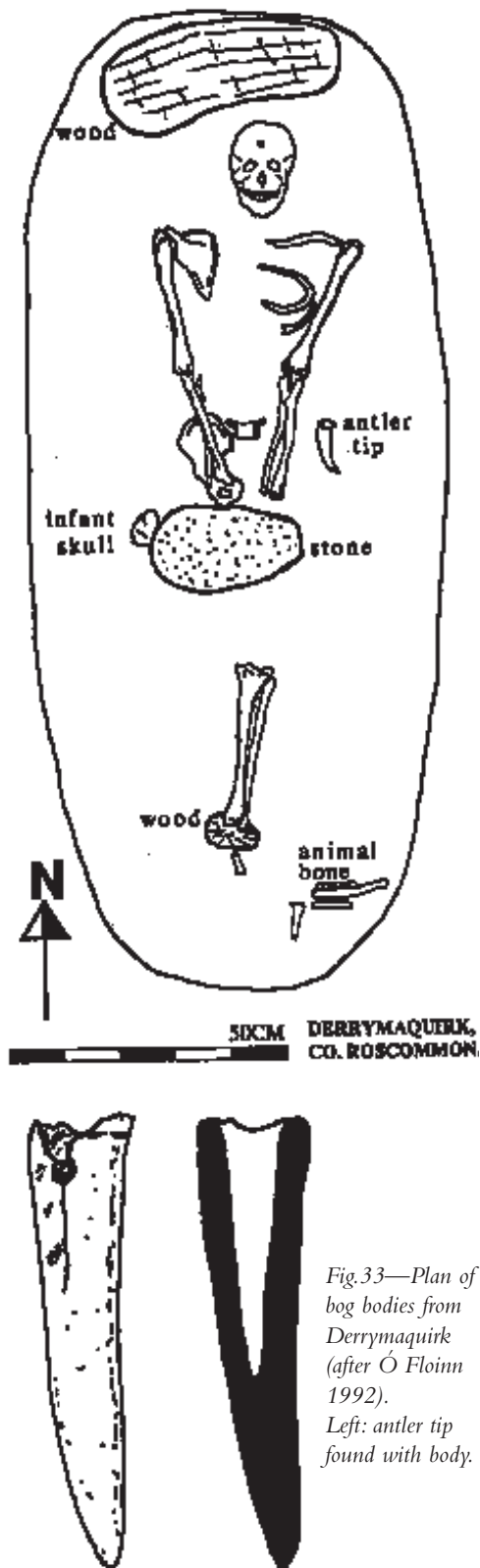


Fig. 33—Plan of bog bodies from Derrymaquirk (after Ó Floinn 1992).
Left: antler tip found with body.

Wedge tombs

We discussed above the general pattern on the eastern side of the lake, and the monuments on the western side differ somewhat. On the western side of the lake there are two wedge tombs. Most of these tombs were constructed in the period 2500–2200 BC (Brindley and Lanting 1992, 25–6). They are fairly common in east Mayo and north-east Sligo, but are only found in smaller numbers in Roscommon and on the other side of the lake (see distribution map in Waddell 1998, 93).

One of the wedge tombs is located in present-day Kilfree, the other in Monasteraden (Figs 32 and 34). These are areas that previously had no monumental sites. Both tombs are located at a higher altitude than the lake and neither has a lake view. This type of tomb is one of the latest in the sequence of megalithic tombs. They are constructed of stones on edge, forming, as the name implies, a wedge shape. They actually have the same shape as the contemporary flat axes of bronze or copper, although these axes are not normally found in the tombs. Their openings face west-south-west, towards the western horizon (see O’Brien 1999, 197). In these tombs (not that many have been excavated) usual finds include the cremated bones of several people and also of animals, together with pottery sherds. An early excavation of a wedge tomb in Moytirra, Co. Sligo, some kilometres north-east of the lake, showed that unburnt skeletons were also placed in these tombs. In this case the bones represented approximately six people, one of whom was a child. Another Sligo excavation showed a mix of burnt and unburnt human bone (Madden 1969; Rynne and Timoney 1975; Waddell 1998, 97–8). Some excavated tombs show no evidence for burials at all (O’Brien 1999, 209).

O’Brien (1999, 209) has suggested that these tombs could have been seen as ‘spirit houses’ at their time of use and that bones may have been placed in them or taken out for circulation. This might be one of the reasons why some of them were empty of bones when excavated. He has also advanced the idea that the Bronze Age

communities may have seen the tombs as entrances to the Otherworld.

It can be said that these tombs carried a monumental meaning, just like the earlier megalithic tombs, by being built permanently in stone. In some cases they were used for later burials. The excavation of a wedge tomb at Altar, Co. Cork, has demonstrated the occasional use of such a tomb in the period 2300 BC–AD 200, with both burials and food-offerings (O’Brien 1993a; 1993b; Waddell 1998, 97–8). It is therefore not unlikely that the two tombs on the western side of the lake were used for burials or sacrifice until the late Bronze Age, and that some of the other wedge tombs were used in the same way. These tombs may therefore have relevance for our discussions through the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age at least.

Ring-cairns

On the western side of the lake there are also two ring-cairns (see Fig. 32). These sites are unusual for the area in general. They are located at each end of present-day Monasteraden and are quite small, about 10m in diameter. Larger ring-cairns have been noted elsewhere and compare in size to the later cashels, 20–30m in diameter. The ring-cairns also resemble the later cashels, with their distinctive stone-built circular walls. It can be hard to distinguish between these two site types in a survey, as large ring-cairns may look like small cashels (cf. F Lynch 1979).

Both ring-cairns are located at a higher altitude than the lake, slightly above the Tawnymucklagh wedge tomb but not in any upland area. P.F. Wallace excavated one of them in 1977. The site, in Sroove townland (SMR SL 46: 0301–0303), was located in wet ground by a small stream running down from Mullaghatee (Fig. 35). The cairn was out of sight of the lake, although situated in an area that becomes flooded in winter, a marshy field. The whole construction of the ring-cairn rests on white lake marl, which indicates that the area at some stage was a shallow lake. Lake marl forms in water with a depth of 0.5m. The site consisted of large stones placed in two concentric rings, measuring about 8m in inner diameter and 15m in outer diameter. Probably the area between the rings was filled with cairn material, building up a wall which may have reached a height of 1.5m. In the north-east area of this cairn were two cist burials, with ‘multi-storey’ burials of two children and an adult. Hazelnuts were deposited with the burials, and also two pottery bowls of early Bronze Age date. No metal was found (Wallace 1973 and pers. comm.; Waddell 1990, 133; Waddell and Ó Ríordáin 1993, 131). Just east of the site there is a rise in the ground, behind which are two burnt mounds on the fringe of a small stream running from a nearby well.

A similar complex seems to occur in Clogher townland, where a ring-cairn and a number of burnt mounds are situated near what is today known as St Attracta’s holy well. This ring-cairn also consists of a small circular wall, about 5m in internal diameter. There are also standing stones recorded in the vicinity of the ring-cairn. Not far from this ring-cairn lies a small low cairn that may be of prehistoric origin, found during my survey of the area. The site is circular, about 2m in diameter, with an average height of 0.2m.

Cist burials

Yet another burial method, the cist burial, appeared during the early Bronze Age, and is normally seen as later than the wedge tombs. Cist burials are not in themselves as monumental as the sites discussed above. Some of them have no markers above ground and consist merely of stone cists underground in flat cemeteries, while others may have had mounds. They can also occur singly, and the burial tradition can be described as extremely varied (Waddell 1990, 16, 27–9).

In the cist the unburnt bones of a single skeleton can be found, but there are quite substantial

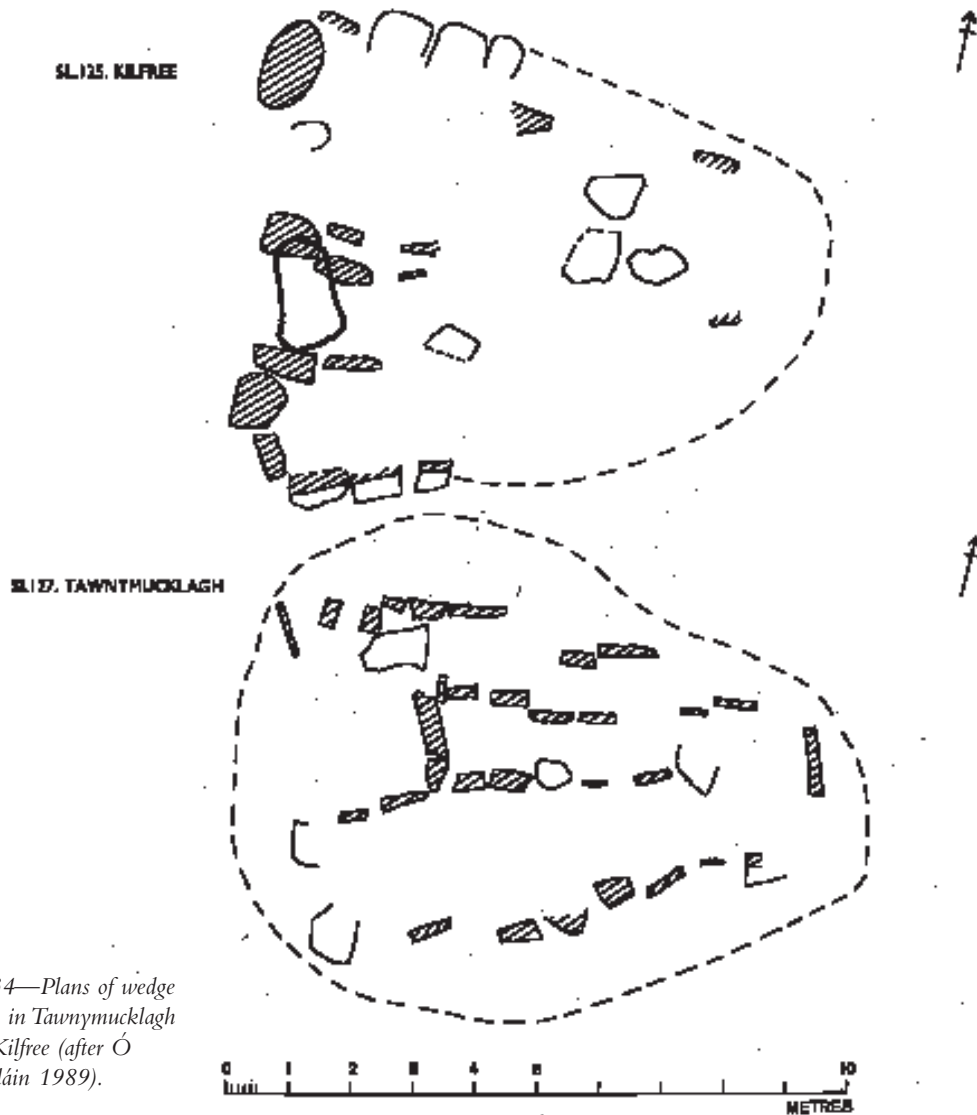


Fig. 34—Plans of wedge tombs in Tawnymucklagh and Kilfree (after Ó Nualláin 1989).

variations in the burials and often a well-decorated pot (Waddell 1998, 141, 142). A number of cist burials are recorded from the area, particularly on the west side of the lake. There are cist burials from Moylough and Stonepark, Co. Sligo, for example, but examples also occur on the eastern side, e.g. at Corroy, Co. Roscommon (see Waddell 1990, 130–3), although this site is located at some distance from the barrow concentration in Killaraght. None of these are reported to have had a monumental superstructure. One cist burial is recorded for the area outside Kilfree, and there is local information about a cist burial with a stone-lined box and decorated pottery found in a sandpit south of the present house of Coolavin near Monasteraden (Felicity MacDermot, pers. comm.). In our area perhaps the cist burials nearest to the lake represent resistance to the visual cult of the ancestors that is found during previous times.

The ring-cairn at Sroove could of course be argued to be a cist burial with the ring as an added monumental feature. The pottery found in it could be classified as belonging to the ‘Bowl tradition’ (which is both a burial and a pottery tradition) (see Waddell 1990, 130–3). Perhaps the

ring around the cairn was intended to keep the spirits in and may have been placed there to ensure that these ancestors did not trouble the living.

Standing stones

The dating of standing stones is not totally reliable (as is the case with many Irish sites). Some stones can be traced back to the Neolithic, when they have been located in or in association with megalithic tombs (Cooney 1996c; 2000a, 132). Others were erected quite recently as scratching-posts for cattle (see Lacy 1983; Cotter 1996). Some evidence, however, suggests their importance in the Bronze Age (see A. Lynch 1981, 74, 123; Waddell 1990; 1998) and into the following periods. Standing stones and stone rows also seem to occur mainly on the western side of the lake, both in Kilfree and in Monasteraden. There are no standing stones recorded from the Killaraght area. These sites again add to the number of stone monuments on this side of the lake. In Monasteraden the standing stones are located both on the slopes of Mullaghatee and at the entrance of a later ringfort, and there are two in the vicinity of the ring-cairn in Clogher.

In Kilfree there are a large number of standing stones on both sides of a small hill called Knocknashee.²⁹ Despite its small size, this hill offers a great view over the landscape. There are single standing stones in this area, as well as stone pairs and stone rows. Actually, together with the wedge tomb, these stones form a boundary around this small hill, emphasising its importance. This strengthens the view that Kilfree was a little world unto itself. At a broader level, standing stones and stone rows occur mainly from the mountains of Mayo down towards Rathcroghan in mid-Roscommon. The eastern side of the lake, like the area in north and north-east Roscommon, shows no evidence of standing stones at all in the area of the barrows near Killaraght.³⁰ In order to understand these sites we have to make comparisons with nearby excavated sites.

There are some excavated standing stones from nearby areas. John Waddell examined a ring-barrow, Daithi's Mound, with a central standing stone at Rathcroghan. It was found that the ring-barrow was cut from a natural gravel ridge. The site was dated by charcoal deriving from 'the lower levels of the surrounding stony bank', which produced a calibrated date of 'somewhere within the last two centuries BC'. A sample from the uppermost level of the bank was radiocarbon-dated to the first millennium BC. However, the excavation does not directly date the stone, which could have been put there either before or after the ditch of the site was dug (Waddell 1987–8, 34–5). The dating of the ring-barrow suggests that the stone may date from the early Iron Age.

Another single standing stone, also located near Lough Gara, was excavated some years ago at a small hill in Kiltullagh, Co. Roscommon, in the vicinity of some ring-barrows. There was no direct dating for the erection of this stone either. However, at its foot was found the full skeleton of a man, dating from the first centuries AD. There were also possibly slightly earlier cremation pits on the northern side of this stone (McCormick *et al.* 1995). Just as in the case of Daithi's Mound, there is no direct dating evidence for this stone, but the circumstances suggest that it was regarded as important at this time (and possibly also into the next period). Later excavations have also revealed cremation pits, covered by a slab, in which a pig was buried. The excavators believe that this represents 'the ritual slaughter of a pig' and they have 'anticipated' an early Iron Age date for the site. They also think, based on evidence from other burials in this cemetery, that the hill was used for burials well into the Early Christian period (Robinson and Coombs 2000, 179). Another standing stone was excavated at Cloonelt td, near Ballinlough, Co. Roscommon, without any conclusive results as regards dating (Gosling 1987–8, 27).

It is likely that the standing stones in Monasteraden and in Kilfree were in active use during

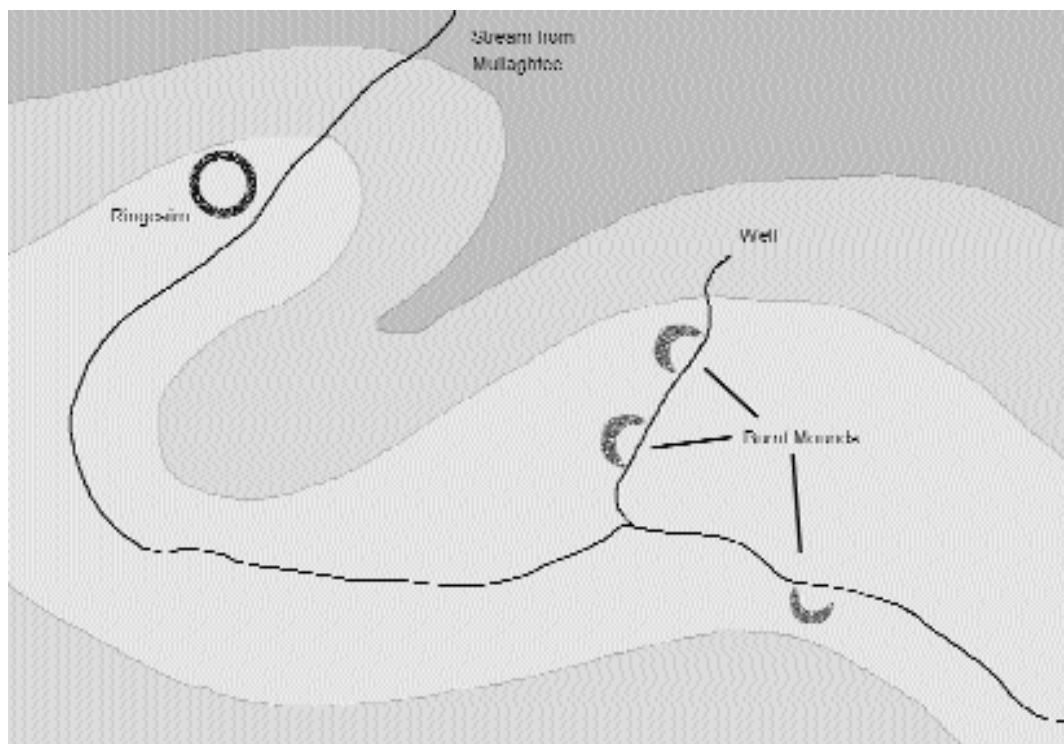


Fig. 35—Landscape relationship between ring-cairn and burnt mounds in Sroove, Co. Sligo.

the Bronze Age. Possibly they were also used into the Iron Age, if not later. It is likely that more than one person was buried around these standing stones, but as at Kiltullagh these burials may have had no individual markers above ground. The burials of a number of people may have been commemorated by a single standing stone. It has been suggested that the standing stone was such a widely used monumental form because of its anthropomorphic features and its effectiveness in humanising the landscape (Cooney 2000a, 132). It is likely that these standing stones represented people or ancestors both around the lake and in other places. In Monasteraden and Kilfree, as in other places in the region, the standing stones add to the concentration of monuments that seems to have accumulated during the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age.

Boulder burial

Adding to the concentration in Monasteraden is a site not normally found in this part of Ireland. Not too far from the second ring-cairn, but slightly higher up, lies a highly unusual site — a boulder burial. It consists of a quite large stone block resting on smaller stone ‘feet’, thereby resembling a small, short-legged portal tomb (Fig. 36). Normally these sites are found in counties Kerry and Cork. Material from under the stones in one of these sites gave a date in the late Bronze Age (Ó Nualláin 1972; W. O’Brien 1992). They have been seen as burial sites, but recent excavations have shown very little evidence of burials (W. O’Brien 1992; 1999, 221). Recently a few more sites resembling boulder burials have been found in Sligo, especially in the area around Tobercurry/Achonry. Similar sites have also been observed along the Swedish east coast during surveys and their contextual relationship with Bronze Age cairns has been suggested (Magnusson 1986b, 58).

Changing places with the dead

Gathering together all the burial evidence, it seems as if there were different burial patterns on the western and eastern sides of the lake. The southern and northern sides show no signs of activity in these periods. The eastern side of the lake, with its barrows, henges and the megalithic tomb at Drumanone, shows monumental activity in the Neolithic. Monasteraden and Kilfree did not have any noticeable monuments before the wedge tombs were constructed there in the early Bronze Age. Other studies have also noted moves into new areas in connection with this site type (see Mallory and Hartwell 1997, 23; M.A. Moore and Woodman 1992, 13–15; Cooney 2000b, 18). At this stage the wedge tomb may have been seen as a ‘modern’ megalithic tomb, perhaps mimicking the shape of the new metal axes. It is possible that the establishment of these wedge tombs symbolised new ways of thinking about community and the land, marking a locational break from earlier ancestral ties.

These two areas around Monasteraden and Kilfree probably continued to be used through the Bronze Age. In both areas cist burials can be found. With the exception of the ring-cairn, these sites are normally found without any durable grave-markers. As durability was a trait of the earlier monuments that were seen to connect the land with ideas of ancestry, these tombs had a different meaning. Perhaps, together with the move to new lands, they represented a revolt against the idea of connecting people through distant ancestors. If this was the case there would have been quite some tension between the way life and death were viewed in Killaraght and on the western shores of the lake. The people who built the wedge tombs may have taken the idea of the move from the ancestral lands further. The move was facilitated by changing their location and by establishing new monumental graves in these new places, thereby starting a new set of ancestors. The subsequent generations may even have tried to some extent to break with the idea of connecting the land to the ancestors. Their loved ones were sometimes buried in cists that had no markers to provide a long-term memory of these people.

However, the western side of the lake also acquired its share of monuments over time. The ring-cairns and the later boulder burial in Monasteraden and the standing stones in Kilfree were added to the other monumental sites in these areas. It is possible that over time these areas had created their new ancestral histories. On the eastern side also there seems to have been continuous burial activity, where the barrows over time were accompanied by ring-barrows. Although the monuments on the two sides of the lake are different in kind, they make use of the same type of long-term ideas, reusing earlier monuments. Possibly over time people forgot which was the original tradition. Towards the end of the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age the waters seem to have been drawn into the zone suitable for the dead. This is supported by the two bog bodies found on the eastern side of the lake, and by further evidence connected with the skulls found near the crannogs.

A comparison of the two active sides of the lake shows a greater variety of stone-built monuments on the western side of the lake, while the eastern side has more earthen monuments. There is a clear pattern whereby the standing stones are located on the western side of the lake and the barrows on the eastern side, suggesting that even if people lived in a similar manner they definitely died in a different style on the opposite sides of the lake.

A general pattern can be observed at a regional level which resembles the pattern around the lake. Concentrations of burial monuments from the Stone Age and the Bronze Age can be noted in many places in the landscape. These places will be discussed below after we have had a look at the sites normally classified as settlements.

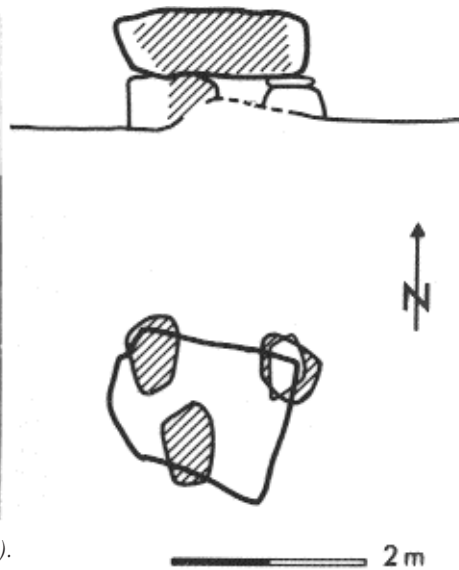


Fig. 36—The boulder burial in Clogher (after Ó Nualláin 1986).

Settlement

There are fewer ‘settlement sites’ from the Bronze Age, in stark contrast to the strong evidence for houses from the preceding period (Cooney 2000b, 17). Traces of dryland settlement in the early part of the period are particularly scarce, with somewhat more plentiful evidence towards the later part (see Doody 2000), but this evidence does not come primarily from the north-west of Ireland. Most comes from the south and from the east coast. Seamus Caulfield has, however, identified two possible Bronze Age houses in connection with field systems nearer to the study area. One site, a circular stone house with finds of a saddle quern and a rubbing-stone, is located at Belderg Beg, Co. Mayo, and the other is a circular bank inside a stone enclosure at Carrownaglogh, Co. Mayo. The first is suggested to date from the early/middle Bronze Age, the second from the middle Bronze Age (Herity 1981; Caulfield 1988; Doody 2000, 153). Apart from these two sites there is only scanty evidence for houses in the west. For the latter part of the period there is some evidence for the use of hillforts, as well as other enclosed sites (see Cooney 2000b, 22–3), to which I will return below. The Iron Age as such is a period for which settlement sites are almost non-existent, however.

Settlements are often assumed from the distribution of monumental burial sites (see Cooney 1983, 182; O’Brien 1999, 232; Cooney 2000b). Making a similar argument, I have shown in the study of tombs that there was a reorganisation of the landscape around the lake starting in the early Bronze Age, with a stronger emphasis on the western side of the lake. Cooney (2000b, 18) has suggested that the landscape at this stage would have been divided into several niches, with settlements separated from the places of burials and the places for deposition of metal artefacts. His argument is supported by results from Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, where there is evidence for movement of the settlement sites to higher altitudes in the landscape, with the deposition of metal remaining in the watery areas (Grogan 1988; Cooney and Grogan 1994; Cooney 2000b, 19). What may be pointed out in the case of Lough Gara is the continued interest in sites from the Neolithic into the Bronze Age. These sites were all located in positions slightly away from the lake, and new places were settled in parallel with this continuation. This proposition is, however, built on the

evidence of tombs and not on houses or other types of settlement. But there is one site type that is often seen as indicating settlements from the Bronze Age — the burnt mounds or *fulachta fiadh*, which are normally not seen as burials. And there are a few burnt mounds around the lake.

Burnt mounds

These sites, also called *fulachta fiadh*, often consist of a kidney-shaped mound of fire-cracked stones. The defining structure of a *fulacht fiadh* is that the centre of the mound has a trough that can hold water. This trough could consist of a hollowed-out log or could be built of different logs, but at times it could be a stone cist. Until recently it was held that this monument type was in use well into the historic period, but an extensive radiocarbon-dating programme has revealed that it dates in general from 2550–550 BC, and clearly belongs to the Bronze Age (Brindley *et al.* 1989–90, 28). However, some medieval examples have been found in County Wexford (Kieran O’Conor, pers. comm.).

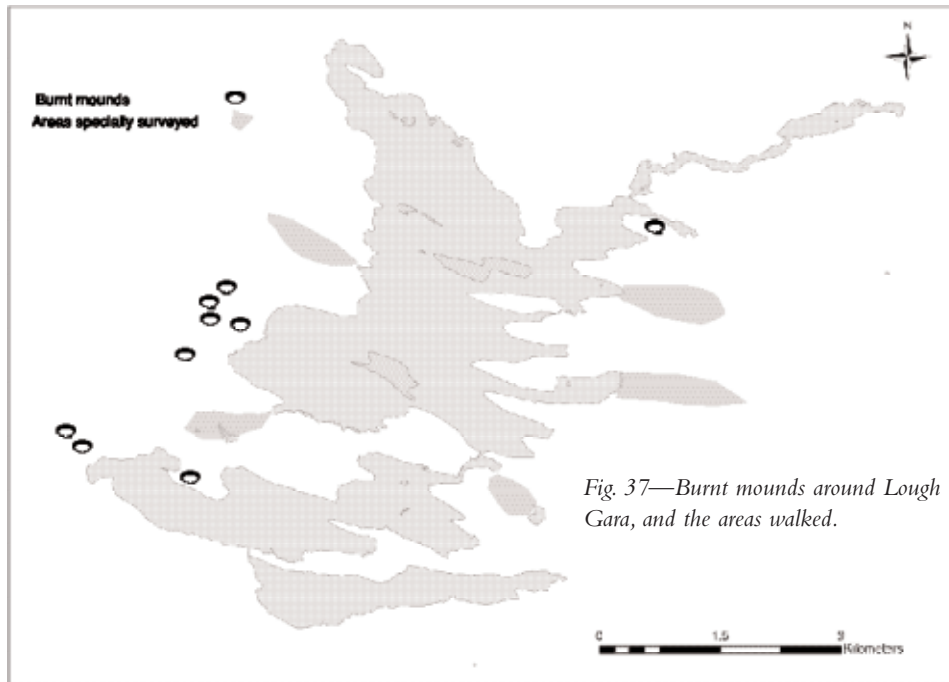
The trough in the burnt mound is seen as a cooking basin that was filled up with water. The water was brought to the boil by the addition of heated stones. As bones are rarely found at these sites and as the troughs are often man-sized, they have been interpreted as baths. What is certain is that they created steam. As Brindley *et al.* suggest, they may not only have been used for cooking; other interpretations involve activities that seem more or less impossible to prove, for example semi-industrial activities, washing of clothes, dyeing, leather-working, etc. As also suggested by Lucas (1965), these authors see burnt mounds as indications of settlements, i.e. the settlements would have been located somewhere in the vicinity of the sites. The large concentration of sites in a single area suggests a society consisting of ‘committees’ rather than families (Brindley *et al.* 1989–90, 32). Burnt mounds are often found in groups of five to six sites, for example.

The most common locations for these monuments are by small rivers and streams, but they can also occur near or on the shores of lakes. No survey of burnt mounds had been carried out for the area around Lough Gara, but after local people showed me some of these sites a survey was carried out in 1998. The study zone chosen was around a selection of streams and wetlands on both the eastern and western sides of the lake. The purpose of the survey was to see whether the contrast in the Bronze Age burial sites on both sides of the lake could be related to the occurrence of the burnt mounds.

Figure 37 shows the newly recorded sites. Most of them are situated on the high plains on the western side of the lake, high up in the landscape but well below the mountainous areas. The five sites in Sroove td are all below the mountain but above the lake. These burnt mounds are situated along the small stream leading down from the southern slopes of Mullaghatee, about 50–100m apart. Two of them are situated near the excavated ring-cairn mentioned above,³¹ suggesting that the settlements were not located far from the burials; only a small ridge separates the sites, and both are located beside waters that join downstream.

The next stream that was walked runs down from the graveyard in Monasteraden towards Tawnymucklagh Bay. One third of the way down to the lake three burnt mounds were located. There is also a small stone cairn here which may be the remains of a prehistoric burial. If this is the case, once again a burial is located near the burnt mounds. A third concentration of burnt mounds was located on the slopes just down from present-day Coolavin in an area of wet ground where the stream is led underground by a drain. This stream leads from the holy well in Clogher, and the ring-cairn and standing stones in this townland could well have overlooked this area in the Bronze Age.

The same number of streams and watercourses were walked on the opposite, eastern side of



the lake. On this side there were many recut drains which should have made it easier to locate sites, but none were found. The stream leading from the middle of the lake into the bog was also walked. No sites were found here either.

Around Lough Gara the burnt mounds have turned up predominantly beside small streams and often at heights on the slopes rather than nearer to the lakeshore. They are in the middle of the landscape with respect to height. What all the burnt mounds have in common is their location by what may have been slow-running water. The people making use of the mounds seem to have avoided the small waterfalls that exist in places by these streams. No burnt mounds have been recorded beside the larger rivers such as the Boyle, the Breedoge or the Lung, where the water is faster-flowing and the edges of the banks are steeper.

What can be noted from the sites around Monasteraden is their location near the monumental burials such as the ring-cairns and the standing stones, occupying the same position in the landscape. This would suggest that the living to some extent shared this altitude in the landscape with the dead. At a regional level burnt mounds can also be found in areas containing monumental burial sites (see, for example, the area around Killasser, which would further lend support to this idea). Perhaps this is a regional difference as compared with the evidence from Lough Gur discussed above. But it could be argued that these sites turn up where archaeologists go, and archaeologists are more likely to be found near monumental sites.

Hillforts and other large enclosures

Towards the end of the Bronze Age there is at one level more evidence to work with. A settlement type that is often claimed for the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age is the larger hillfort, or larger enclosed mountaintop (B. Raftery 1972). In recent years there has been further excavation and dating evidence that these sites belong to the late Bronze Age (see Mallory 1991; 1994; Warner 1994; Grogan and Condit 1994b; B. Raftery 1976; Cooney 2000b, 22–3; but see Bergh 2000 for

suggestions about Neolithic enclosures). I also think that there is a complexity of issues arising from the distinction between Neolithic hilltop enclosures, embankment enclosures containing earlier burial monuments and hillforts enclosing earlier monuments, but these questions are beyond the scope of this book. On the all-Ireland maps these sites mainly show a southern distribution. Hillforts have also been found in our region, however. Most notable is Knocknashee, Co. Sligo, which with its walls and internal hut sites measures 1.5km in diameter, as well as the smaller hillfort at nearby Muckelty (see Condit *et al.* 1991). A large enclosure has also been noted at the top of Keash. The cairn at Keash is surrounded by a low wall enclosing quite a large area and has been seen as a hillfort. Keash, the large blue mountain with its large cairn in the middle, is one of the principal landmarks to be seen from the lake.

What these three sites have in common is that they enclose burial cairns that may well date from the Neolithic and that they are located on distinct mountains in the Ballymote–Tobercurry basin. There is another enclosed mountaintop to the south of the lake on a less distinct but still visible mountain, at Fairymount. Here also a low wall encloses the top with a cairn placed nearby. This is the same area from which the feestone chert used in the Stone Age may have come. Even though these hillforts are located away from the lake they can be seen from it.

It has been assumed that the hillforts represent the top of a settlement hierarchy (see Cooney and Grogan 1994; Grogan *et al.* 1996, 38–42). However, in the case of the extremely large hillforts such as Knocknashee it must be wondered whether the architecture of the sites is inclusive rather than exclusive. This stands out clearly if the sites are compared to the later ringforts, which enclose a much smaller and more exclusive space. If the hillforts were inclusive, they would be supplying larger communal space — acting as gathering-places for larger groups. At another level, as they enclose earlier monuments they perhaps served a similar purpose to the local burial-places, providing a connection with the tradition of the ancestors. Another issue is whether the hillfort walls were defining or defensive. Perhaps they were both. What we can see from the few excavations of hillforts is that they have so far yielded only very few weapons, which would lend less support to their defensive aspects. If we ask what these monuments do, the answer might be that they enclose quite substantial areas, and are supplying some form of communal space.

Other large enclosed sites were also active during these times. For example, a large circle with a diameter of 150m enclosed the main mound at Rathcroghan. This is a trait of many ‘royal’ sites (Waddell 1998, 349–50). It has been argued that these sites represent the top of a settlement hierarchy, but they could just as well be seen the other way around as large public meeting-places.

Some evidence for lightly enclosed settlements or open settlements of the late Bronze Age has been found in Curraghatoor, Co. Tipperary, and at Lough Gur (Doody 1997; Cleary 1995). There are vague indications that early Iron Age settlement was centred on ringforts or other small enclosed dwellings, much smaller in size than the hillforts. This material is not unambiguous (see Lynn 1983). An excavation in the peripheral area of Lough Gara — in Lislackagh, near Swinford, Co. Mayo — has provided evidence of three small circular ditches dating from 200 BC–AD 140, in the Iron Age. These ditches measured 3.6–4.6m in diameter and were interpreted as huts. A ringfort wall enclosed the huts (Walsh 1995). Only a brief account of this site has been published. It is not clear whether the bank was a later feature. Judging from the finds, the site could also belong to the early medieval period, when ringforts are more common. The same problem is encountered with a site at Feerwore, Turoe, Co. Galway, where Iron Age habitation was found under a ringfort (J. Raftery 1944; Jope 1958, 80). As indicated, the evidence for any settlement throughout the Iron Age is practically non-existent. Perhaps we should start looking under the later ringforts.

The few traces of settlement or human activity that we have are quite substantial, however.

Near Lough Gara at Carrick-on-Shannon is the ‘Doon of Drumsna’, a large linear bank cutting off a peninsula in the River Shannon. It has a construction date of 2105 ± 35 BP (338–44 cal. BC) (Condit and Buckley 1989; Lanting *et al.* 1991). There are also some sizeable trackways such as Corlea 1, Co. Longford, which was dendrochronologically dated to 148 BC (B. Raftery 1990; 1994, 99). Bradley (1998, 71–2) has discussed how larger sites such as earthworks and henges would have involved a larger labour force. Following Pryor (1984, 8–12), Whittle (1988) suggested that these sites could be seen as ongoing communal projects open for building, renewal and modification at a level in society involving more people than a household. Larger projects could thereby have contributed to a sense of group identity. It is not unreasonable that the building of hillforts, trackways and long linear earthworks drew on similar symbols. The shapes and architecture of these sites contribute to a sense of communality.

Tribal nodes

If we look at the overall picture, bringing together the evidence for both settlements and burials, it seems that sites tend to gather in certain groups during the Bronze Age, not only around Lough Gara but also in other places (Pl. 9). The following sites in the larger study area may be discussed in these terms. I have decided to call these places *tribal nodes* and I will explain how I use this term below.

- (1) The area south-west of the Ox Mountains — north of the River Moy and east of present-day Foxford. In this area can be found a collection of megalithic tombs, cairns, wedge tombs and standing stones. This area also has a smaller number of boulder burials registered (but these have yet to be evaluated in the field). Burnt mounds have been located in between the various sites at this node. For more detailed information on the archaeology of this area see O’Hara 1991.
- (2) The hilly area to the west of Knock airport, south of the River Moy. For this area are registered a small number of megalithic tombs, a number of cairns and wedge tombs. There are also a series of ring-barrows and some standing stones. Just as at the first node, there are also numerous burnt mounds in this area. A small concentration of bowl-barrows occurs on a distinct hillock just south of Swinford.
- (3) The area around Muckelty Hill, a striking small mountain near present-day Achonry. The Muckelty node consists of, for example, a cairn on the mountaintop together with a hillfort enclosure (see Condit *et al.* 1991). Around this area can also be found a court tomb, a series of barrows and some wedge tombs mainly on the lower ground around the mountain. The ring-barrows are located nearer the mountain than the possibly earlier barrows. Without a study of the microtopography it is hard to see whether this area is the same node as the area around the larger hill to the north, Knocknashee. On the summit of this hill are among other things a passage tomb and numerous hut sites within a large mountaintop enclosure, a hillfort (see Condit *et al.* 1991). On the land north of the mountain there are two wedge tombs registered, and on similar ground on the south side of the mountain are a small number of ring-barrows, but not as many as at Muckelty.
- (4) The small node at Kilfree (as discussed earlier in this chapter).
- (5) The small node at Monasteraden (as discussed earlier in this chapter).
- (6) The area of high ground at present-day Aghamore between lakes Urlaur and Mannin. In this area can, for example, be found a cairn, some megalithic tombs, a series of barrows, cists, a

concentration of ring-barrows and some standing stones. Another seemingly smaller node is located around Bracklaghboy, south of Mannin Lake.

- (7) The area of slightly higher ground at Kiltullagh hill, south-west of Ballyhaunis. Here can be found some possible megalithic tombs, wedge tombs, barrows, ring-barrows and standing stones.
- (8) Mullaghnashee–Fairymount. On the summit of this gently sloping mountain can be found a cairn and an enclosure as well as hut sites. This site can be seen as a hilltop enclosure. On its slopes is a burnt mound. This node has fewer monuments than the others.
- (9) Belenagare–Drummin. For this area are registered a court tomb, a cairn and a set of standing stones. These standing stones are located around a low but prominent hill, Drummin. This area is located at a small distance from Rathcroghan.
- (10) The royal site of Rathcroghan, which as a complex holds over 50 sites from the prehistoric to the early medieval period (see Herity 1983; 1984; Waddell 1983; 1988; 1998, 347–54 and references). This node on a high plateau in the landscape contains barrows, ring-barrows and different forms of embanked enclosures. Most sites are registered for the south-eastern half of this plateau. South of Rathcroghan is the monument concentration at Carnfree (see Waddell 1998, 330, 353, 365 and references) and it can be debated whether these two places represent one or two nodes. It is also worth noting the two nearly linear stretches of ring-barrows that lead down to Roscommon town.
- (11) The area around Killaraght (as discussed above). In between Rathcroghan and Killaraght there is a small concentration of barrows and ring-barrows near present-day Elphin. Strictly east of these, at Rockville td, is what seems to be a possible hillfort consisting of a circular bank and ditch enclosure, *c.* 100m in diameter, located on a small hillock, with a possible passage tomb in the middle (RO 17-08901/02). This site is located away from the other prehistoric sites and in low-lying ground.
- (12) The area of Carrowkeel in the Bricklieve Mountains and Keash Hill. Carrowkeel has been discussed earlier for its megalithic tombs and hut sites. Keash's large cairn and enclosure can be seen as another hillfort. Apart from the megalithic tombs/cairns and cists on the mountains, there are many barrows on the lower drumlins, as well as a few ring-barrows on a small drumlin hill south of Keash.
- (13) Moytirra — the area east of Carrowkeel/Keash and Lough Arrow, on high ground. Besides megalithic tombs, cairns and a few barrows, this area also holds a few ring-barrows. The relationship between these two nodes would be an interesting subject for future research.
- (14) The areas around the distinct mountains of Sheemore and Sheebeg containing, for example, megalithic tombs, hilltop enclosures, ring-cairns and ring-barrows in a linear formation.
- (15) The area around Fenagh, consisting of a concentration of megalithic tombs and standing stones (Cooney 1979; 2000a); a third concentration is located south of Slieve Rusheen, Co. Cavan, unusually in low-lying ground. Together these three concentrations describe a line through the landscape.

What is interesting is that standing stones often occur on the lands between these nodes as if to mark out a connection through the borderlands, perhaps marking routeways. These places were, as we can see, in some cases built up — not always with a start in the Stone Age but definitely during the Bronze Age — by adding more monuments to earlier places of importance. The concentrations in the immediate vicinity of the lake are (4) Kilfree, (5) Monasteraden and (11) Killaraght. As shown, these concentrations consist of places with Neolithic tombs to which sites like wedge tombs, ring-barrows or standing stones were added. *Fulachta fiadh* have also been found

in these places, which means that the living were located not too far from the dead.

That monuments from different periods tend to gather in groups has also been observed in other places. Lohan (1993) has noted a group of ceremonial monuments from different periods at Moytura, Co. Mayo, and has argued for an awareness of earlier monuments among people in later prehistory. The location of Bronze Age monuments near earlier places of importance has also been noted in the south of Ireland (see P. Walsh 1993; see also Waddell 1981, 169). This means that older places of importance (such as places with megalithic tombs from the Neolithic) or even places that were established at the beginning of the Bronze Age were meaningful to people at this stage, such as Kilfree and Monasteraden. These sites were probably used in a continued creation of local ancestral mythologies. We know that many of these places, both large and small, were of importance from the Bronze Age into the early medieval period. Rathcroghan, a provincial centre during the Iron Age, was also important in the early medieval period (see Byrne 1973, 246; Herity 1983; 1984; Waddell 1983; Doherty 1984). It is also possible that the other nodes worked as tribal centres and that they were of importance over a long period of time. The excavations at the smaller node in Kiltullagh have shown that this place was used for burials into the early medieval period (McCormick *et al.* 1995). Even if the smaller nodes did not have the same significance as the royal Rathcroghan, they may still have been seen as important centres in their own tribal organisations. As the idea of tribal nodes is only being launched in this book I have not gone any deeper into the power relationships between these nodes: that will have to be saved for another time. I think, however, that the issues concerning a hierarchical landscape proposed by Grogan *et al.* (1996) may not be the only way to discuss the material. I cannot, for example, see anything in the material that would indicate that people in Killaraght on the east side of Lough Gara could have dictated the conditions for people on the western side of the lake.

What has not been articulated before and what I think is important to note is that within a region quite a large number of monument concentrations can be found. In the wider study area at least sixteen places were reactivated during this period, perhaps indicating that people were constructing their own local identities. While other researchers have observed that earlier monuments may have been important to people in later periods, the meaning of these concentrations together has not yet been identified nor fully interpreted.

I would like to explore what these places might have meant to people in terms of local identity and, as in earlier chapters, in terms of responsibility and solidarity, and I think that only with this background can we understand the activities in the waters. I will test the use of the term 'tribal' to illustrate that these places would have involved groups larger than present-day families. This may mean that people experienced a collective identity and that they were directly responsible to a larger group. However, the term has received much criticism in recent archaeological and anthropological debate. Much of the critique concerns how the use of stereotypical categories such as tribes and kingdoms blinds the researcher to local variance, and how the evolutionary schemes of Sahlins (1968) and Service (1962) may have worked in this way as well as in creating an ascending scale of civilisation. The use of these models in archaeology has often led to a preoccupation with resource control and management (see e.g. the archaeology of Renfrew and Shennan 1982). This has been called a 'checklist' archaeology which often focuses on the ranking and status of people (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 37). However, bearing these complications in mind, the term 'tribal' has been used to describe people's togetherness both in the early Bronze Age (see O'Brien 1999) and at the beginning of the early medieval period (Byrne 1971; 1973). O'Brien has discussed the concentrations of wedge tombs in the south-west of Ireland as important in the tribal organisation (O'Brien 1999, 244–56). According to him, these

tombs would be part of the construction of local identity and a way to express kinship (*ibid.*, 201). To use the term ‘tribe’ can on the one hand be justified by the fact that many of these places were referred to in later periods and might have been the focal points for the later historically attested *tuatha*. However, as Byrne (1971) has pointed out, the static use of words such as *tribes* and *tuatha* in historical studies could hide a considerable amount of change. This is not my intent, nor is any connection with the evolutionary models of Sahlins (1961) or Service (1962)³² intended. Neither is the notion meant to cast a shadow of ‘primitivism’ over the people from this time (for a critique of the term ‘tribal’ see Overing 1987; Rapport and Overing 2000, 364). In the last section of this chapter, ‘Social fictionalities’, I will try to show how the tribes that we have constructed from the archaeological and documentary sources may have changed over time.

The sites discussed above show some internal variation in the composition of monuments. The difference between the eastern and western sides of the lake is one example, with standing stones as a prevalent feature in the areas west of the lake and barrows to the east. But there are also differences between Monasteraden and Kilfree, which suggests that these localities would have constructed their identities in slightly different ways. It is possible that these places were called into effect through the burial of the dead and that people thereby were constructing solidarity with the ancestors, just as in the preceding period. This would have made people responsible to their ancestors as well as to each other, but as we can see during this period the monuments used to construct these identities differed.

In describing these places I have used not only the term ‘tribe’ but also the term ‘node’. I have chosen the latter because of its spatial meaning. The term ‘node’ is used to describe these locations as places where people may have focused their attention. However, none of these places are located on a natural, topographical boundary in the landscape, nor does the composition of monuments draw on distinct man-made boundaries other than the boundaries created in the monuments themselves. In many places the collection of monuments contains wedge tombs and standing stones. In these cases access to the area would not have been delimited by any visible means. In other places the area of focus was a distinct topographical feature such as a mountain or a low hill. Some of the nodes, like the hillforts and hilltop enclosures, were delimited by walls, but if we accept the dating of these sites they would only enter the equation towards the end of the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age.

The reason why I have used this term to describe them is to interpret them as places that might not have been delimited by external and fixed territorial boundaries, as in later times. They cannot be said to be territorially limiting to that extent. Instead I would like to leave open the possibility that the influence of the people who gathered at these places might have diminished with distance from these nodes in the landscape. These places with a variety of monuments (settlements and burials) could have functioned as places for summoning the powers of the living, the dead and perhaps also the Otherworld. These nodes grew and changed during the Bronze Age. If we accept the dating of the hillforts, the ‘hanging’ of their space, which is not territorial, occurred during the latter part of this sequence. If these places are seen as power points or nodes in the landscape, they might not necessarily have had any distinct boundaries. In most cases the nodes make use of heights or highlands. Only in very unusual cases were they placed by islands, lakes, rivers or other natural topographical boundaries. One example in our area of a tribal node located on a river is the concentration at Belenagare (9).

In the places outside these nodes only very few monumental sites can be found. This does not necessarily imply that these places in between were meaningless to people. It may be in these areas that the houses that some researchers feel to be missing in the material are located. The reason

why they have not been found may be that they left no monumental traces.³³ Another option is that these places were considered to be wilderness and slightly dangerous zones in the landscape. One possibility is that the sense of tribal solidarity was constructed with reference to these nodes, but that the tribe's influence on the landscape gradually lessened with distance from these places. The lands did not have boundaries as clear lines marked by any of these monuments. Instead, the landscape was seen to have areas that lay in the shadow of the tribal spheres of influence, such as lakes, bogs, and at times also rivers. These places were used and thought of by people, but in other ways.

It is likely that people during the Bronze Age may have gathered their communities around these intensively used places. One can say that these tribal nodes became institutionalised places in the landscape, meaning that people knew that these locations represented the larger community. These places were of importance to the later, historically attested tribes. However, as I will show, if we compare the use of these places with the use of watery places for building and deposition we can also see that the role of these places for the tribes may have changed over time. Over the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age these sites would have been added to and reworked, both physically and mentally, numerous times.

Artefacts

There are numerous stray finds from the area around the lake, the rivers and the wetlands — places that would have been peripheral to the nodes. As I see it, many of these can be regarded as deposits. During the Bronze Age considerable amounts of bronze were deposited in rivers, wetlands and streams. In earlier interpretations these finds were seen as valuables hidden during times of trouble, but now they are more often seen as ritual offerings, denoting the sacredness of rivers, wetlands, etc. (Eogan 1983; R. Bradley 1990 etc.; L. Bourke 1996). There were also numerous deposits of gold in the Bronze Age (see Eogan 1994). The deposition of gold has been taken to represent the existence of a hierarchical society.

As I will show, the practice of depositing items in watery places continued throughout the period and into the next. At one level, the practice of deposition could be seen as a continuation from the Stone Age, representing either stagnation or long-term stability. However, there are quite large variations on the theme. Many of the objects recorded from the area³⁴ were deposited in contexts registered as townlands of bogs. Often these townlands border rivers or streams.

The analysis of the finds from Lough Gara is arranged as moving from the south to the north-east with the flow of the water (Fig. 38). The Breedoge River is associated with the deposition of bronze objects. In a bog at Mullen townland a bronze spearhead was found. This townland borders the small Carricknabraher River that leads from the slopes of Fairymount into the Breedoge River. Further down the Breedoge River, at the bordering townland of Carrowreagh, a middle Bronze Age spearhead was found, as well as a spearhead from the late Bronze Age. A possible headstall consisting of two bronze horns, possibly dating from the early Iron Age, was found in a bog at Runnabehy. The nearby bog at Mantua, which borders the Breedoge River, held a gold ball that might belong to the late Bronze Age (a whole collection of these items were found further away along the Shannon at Tumna).

The Lung River, which flows into the lake from the south-west, was at this time also seen as a suitable place for depositions. An early Bronze Age flat copper axe was found in a bog near Ballaghaderreen and the river. In this river also a late Bronze Age sword was deposited (an early medieval sword was found in the same waters). Opposite the outflow of the Lung River, at the waters of Annaghbeg townland in the Upper Lake, a stone macehead was found.

No artefacts from the Bronze Age have been recorded from the Callow Lake, but in the place where the water flows out from the Upper Lake into the Lower Lake, at Clooncunny Bridge, finds belonging to this period were made. An early Bronze Age bronze dagger was retrieved from the shore, and according to local sources a collection of human skulls were also found in the waters here. In the bordering townland of Ardsoreen a late Bronze Age socketed bronze axe was found.

On the western side of the lake no flat axes, swords or spearheads have yet been found, at least near the lake. However, a bronze shield (NMI 1990:100) was found in the townland of Sroove. Wooden shields have also been found in Annandale, Co. Leitrim, and at Cloonlara, Co. Mayo. The latter has been radiocarbon-dated to 1200 BC, which is in the middle Bronze Age. There is also a wooden mould for making leather shields from Churchfield, Co. Mayo (J. Coles 1962; B. Raftery 1982; Hedges *et al.* 1991; Waddell 1998, 240–2). In many cases the bronze shields are seen to date from the late Bronze Age, which is the presumed dating for the Sroove shield. In the bog in Monasteraden a small pottery container was found, which held two late Bronze Age hair-rings of lead covered with gold (NMI 1989: 8–10).

In the middle of the lake at Inch Island a bronze sword (E20:581) was found; a La Tène sword (NMI 1958:56) may also derive from here. The latter was found in the thatch of a cottage in Cashel townland (see Rynne 1960). People living in this townland during the nineteenth–twentieth century had close contacts with Inch Island, and perhaps they brought the sword with them from the island and put it in the roof of their house. It is worth noting that no early Bronze Age artefacts are associated with this natural island.

Finds from the period were also made at the outflow of the waters from the Lower Lake into the Boyle River. On the shores of Emlagh td a plain ‘flanged’ axehead of bronze was found, and in the townland of Derrymaquirk ‘on the shores of Lough Gara’, another bronze sword was found (Eogan 1965, no. 516). Derrymaquirk, is a large townland bordered by bog, the lake and the river (this is also the place where the bog bodies were found). It borders the lake only near Cuppannah Bridge, where there may have been a fording-point at an earlier stage.

There are a few finds whose provenance is unclear. While the early Iron Age ‘Y-shaped pendant’ derives from Drumanone further up the river, it is unclear whether it was deposited near the water or higher up by the portal tomb. Some of the Iron Age items such as these and the numerous horse-bits have been found in watery places (B. Raftery 1984). These are normally seen as horse equipment, perhaps leading-pieces (B. Raftery 1994, 110). For Knockadoo, the townland with a large barrow, two bronze swords and two spearheads have been recorded; it is believed that these items belonged to a larger hoard, since dispersed. The barrow is situated at the ridge of a high drumlin, but by the drumlin’s northern side there is a turlough, a seasonal lake. The findspot was not clearly recorded and it could have been either dryland or the wetlands below the drumlin.

It is clear that items were deposited in the lake throughout the Bronze Age, on both the western and eastern shores. Crucial places like Inch Island lack artefacts from the early Bronze Age, which would strengthen the impression that the natural islands were given less attention from the Neolithic into the beginning of the Bronze Age, at least in a monumental sense. Towards the end of the Bronze Age Inch Island was also drawn in as a place connected with artefacts. However, many of the locations that were associated with the deposition of artefacts in the Bronze Age have also yielded finds from the Stone Age. This may suggest a continuity in the practice of deposition of artefacts in the water of Lough Gara, although possibly with an altered meaning as the type of items changed over time (an issue I will return to below).

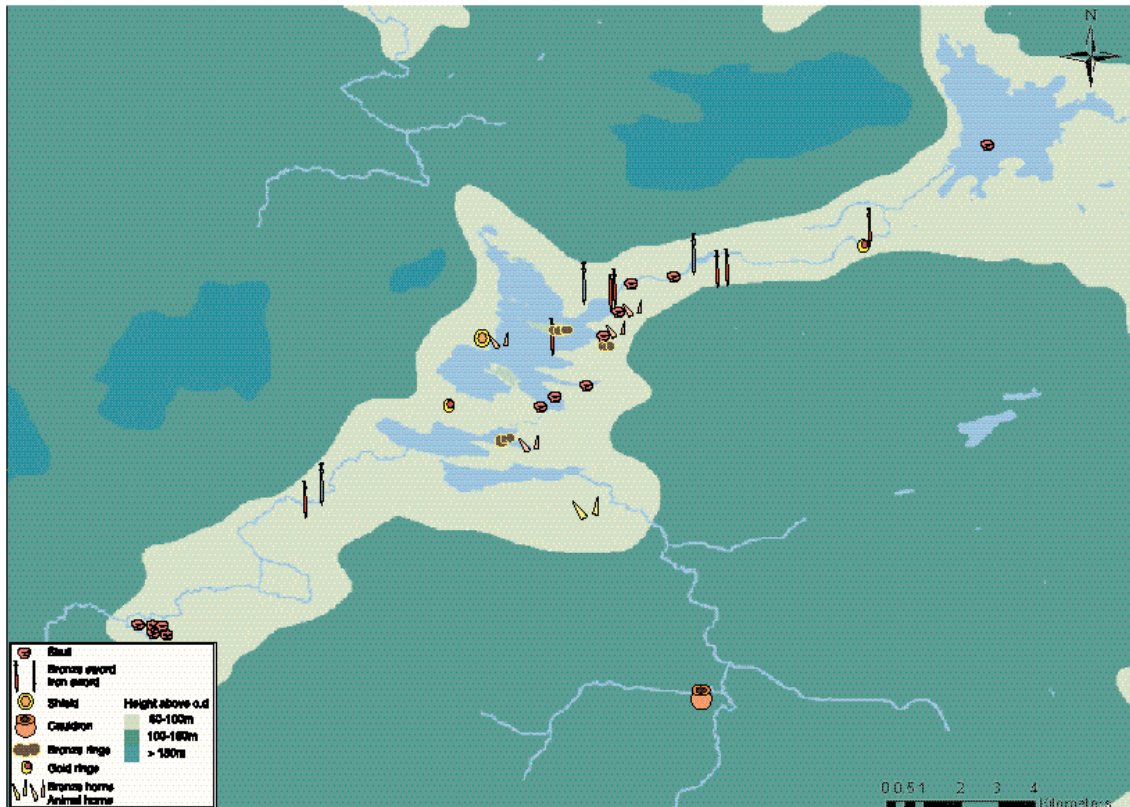


Fig. 38—Lough Gara: depositions in watery places.

Regional patterns

If we look away from the area analysed above, we see both similarities and differences. In the nearest area in the wetlands/bog outside Kilfree in the townland of Cuilmore and in the townland of Cloontycarn two bronze javelin-heads were found. Cloontycarn is a bog near the source of the Owenmore River, not too far from the place in Cuilpruighlish where a stone axehead was found. Otherwise the Sligo rivers seem to have produced fewer bronze deposits than other places.

While I have been searching in the Museum for dryland finds from the area nearest to Lough Gara, the larger patterns for the region have been obtained through the search of major finds catalogues (Fig. 39). From Eogan's catalogue of bronze swords (1965) it is possible to see that the deposition of swords stretches mainly along the rivers and continues out towards the Shannon, with a distance of 4–8km between each deposition spot. The flat axes (see Harbison 1969a) provide a connection to the east, and sometimes, just as in Lough Gara, the finds of the earlier flat axes correspond with the finds of swords in the next townland. It is worth noting that finds of skulls have been recorded along the major rivers, in many cases near finds of swords (Fig. 39).

Continuing east along the river, a stone macehead, a flat axe and a sword have been recorded from Boyle, along with a golden earring. This combination resembles the one from the lake and wetlands around Monasteraden, as described above. In Lough Key a human skull was found. The next place of deposition has been noted at Cuilmore Bridge, at Cootehall, where a bronze sword was retrieved (another bronze sword is recorded from further inland at Ardcarne). Further down the river, at Tumna, both a bronze sword and a large collection of small golden globes were found.

Along the river at Carrick-on-Shannon a large collection of flat axes from the early Bronze Age and a large number of bronze swords from the late Bronze Age have been retrieved, suggesting that the place was used for depositions for a long time.

Continuity and change in depositional patterns

Against this background the area around Lough Gara fits into the general pattern of deposition in northern and Continental Europe discussed, for example, by R. Bradley (1990). Often these depositions are interpreted as ritual sacrifices to water deities.

The distribution of finds shows that the waters, and especially the wetlands and rivers, around Lough Gara were seen as suitable places for the deposition of items. In numerous instances depositions seem to continue in places where Stone Age axes were deposited. Areas of deposition seem to occur at regular intervals in the landscape. This suggests that we are dealing with a continuing long-term tradition, possibly representing an institutionalised practice for the communities over time. Another observation is that none of the depositions were located near any of the tribal nodes. It is interesting to note that no deposits were retrieved from the only river near a node, at Belenagare. Overall, the locational continuity of the deposition of finds is interesting. It is clear that the final deposition of objects in wetlands and waters has a long tradition in the area, possibly stretching back to the Stone Age.

If the location of these finds suggests a general continuity, the items themselves portray some change. The sequence of artefacts runs from flat axes in the early Bronze Age to spears and swords

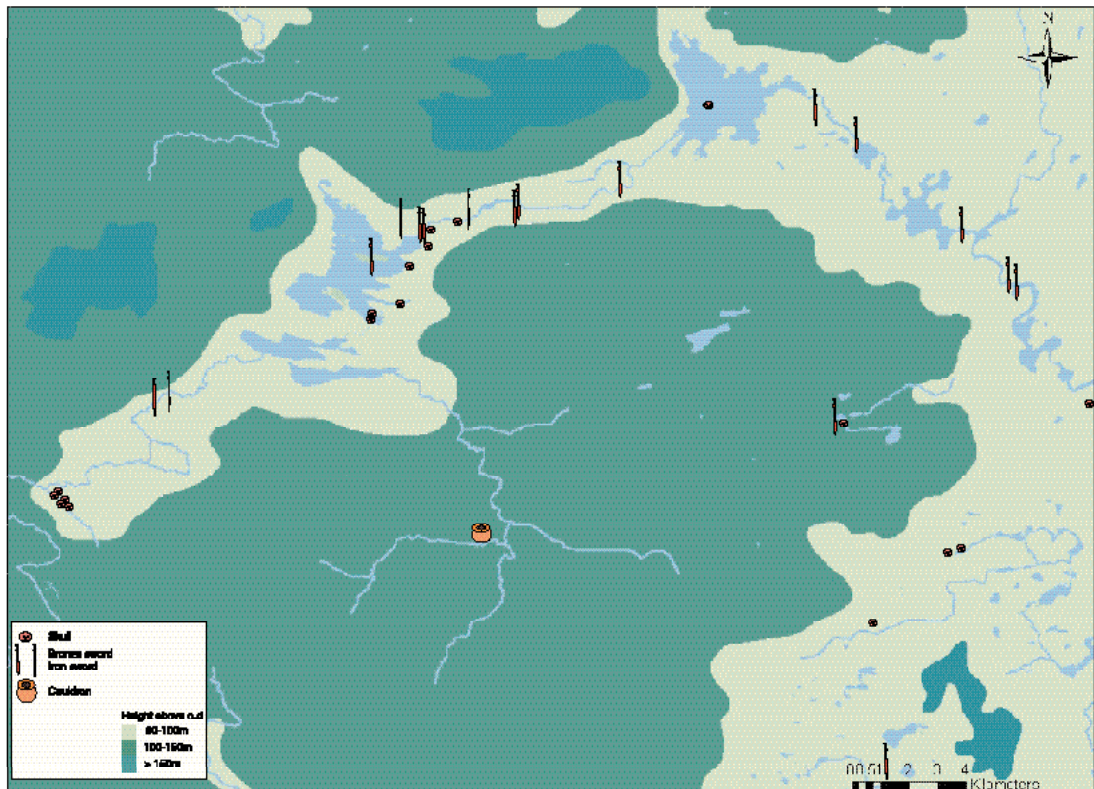


Fig. 39—Location of Bronze Age deposits and skulls in the wider region.

in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. In this way they show some similarity to the stone axes deposited earlier. While these finds demonstrate continuity in the way that objects for cutting were deposited in the waters, other items were added to the sequence in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. There is a trend of increased emphasis on ornaments in hoards from the Bishopsland period and on into the Dowris phase. Cauldrons were also deposited during this phase (Eogan 1974; 1983, 11–12). In Lough Gara at this stage we can find deposits of earrings and sunflower pins.

The deposits deriving from the following period, the early Iron Age, include objects associated with animals, such as horse-bits, Y- and U-shaped pendants etc., as well as swords, spears/spear-butts and cauldrons (see B. Raftery 1983). The overall sequence in deposition from the Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, then, runs from axes and weapons to ornaments for humans and weapons, to animal-related objects and weapons. In the category of animal-related objects from Lough Gara can be placed the two horns from the headstall as well as the U-shaped pendant. The latter belongs to a class of objects that are often interpreted as horse-harness fittings. The horns were supposedly intended to be fitted on the head of a human to give the appearance of a horned animal. In many other places cauldrons and smaller drinking cups have been found (see the Keshcarrigan bowl with an animal handle), which suggests a connection with communal drinking ceremonies towards the Iron Age.³⁵ Earwood (1989–90, 44), backed by the radiocarbon dating of wooden vessels, suggests that some of these fill ‘the gap between the late first millennium BC and the early medieval period’. This partial change in the composition of hoards from the late Bronze Age into the early Iron Age is normally not discussed as these periods are studied by different people and may be seen as different entities. The change in the composition of finds in the deposits may reveal how the old tradition of depositing objects was manipulated over time, and especially from the late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age. This is an example of interpretative drift and the manipulation of an institutionalised practice.

Most of the recorded depositions are of cutting weapons such as daggers, spears and swords. The finds from the eastern side of the lake contrast with this picture, with finds of a macehead, hair-rings and a shield further emphasising the difference of the Monasteraden side of the lake. At the same time it shows that the ‘newly’ established node had access to quite a lot of materials and might have been developing a different identity from that on the eastern side of the lake. The people in this area might not necessarily have been subordinate to someone higher up in a presumed settlement hierarchy.

Furthermore, there is no need to assume that this material belonged to particular individuals, or that it represents graveless burials that emphasised the status of the ‘owner’. Marilyn Strathern claims, with anthropological studies as a background, that the distinction between the individual and society is not always as clear for many people as was formerly thought (Strathern 1988; Gosden 1999, 132–3). If people did not see themselves first and foremost as individuals but as a part of a larger entity or body, perhaps as loyal to the tribe or the ancestors as suggested by the archaeological material, this would change their actions as well as their goals. This means that people may have directed their priorities and loyalties towards the good of a larger group rather than ‘optimising’ on their own behalf. People in a tribe may not have perceived themselves as totally separate entities and ‘individuals’. If we are discussing tribes, as I think we may be, the bronze items may not necessarily have belonged to a particular individual but to the tribe in general. The people who were depositing them in the watery places may have been doing so on behalf of a community, rather than disposing of items ‘owned’ by a person high up in the hierarchy. However, as I will discuss below, the use of the crannogs may change the way we look at depositions as well.

The crannogs

The foregoing discussion about tribal nodes and the changing roles of both these nodes and the deposits in watery places has some relevance for our understanding of crannogs, and the crannogs may also change our understanding of the former two. So far Lough Gara has yielded no structural evidence of wetland building in the early or middle Bronze Age. There are practically no traces of crannogs in use during the early Bronze Age in Ireland, although there might have been crannog-like activities in the middle Bronze Age in other lakes, for example at Cullyhanna, Co. Antrim (Hodges 1958; Hiram 1976), and Lough Eskragh, Co. Tyrone (Collins and Seaby 1960; B. Williams 1978; 1988). There is also some evidence from Knocknalappa, Co. Clare (J. Raftery 1942; Grogan *et al.* 1999).³⁶ During the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, however, there is a distinct pattern in the material both in Lough Gara and elsewhere. Our survey has shown that people at this stage deliberately constructed substantial artificial islands in the water, at a time when the tribal nodes had been in use for quite some time. Compared to the presumed platform crannogs from earlier periods, the late prehistoric crannogs are more distinct, with higher island bodies, and often consist of two or more parts, possibly joined together by causeways.

There are six sites that have been positively dated to the Bronze Age/Iron Age in Lough Gara, in the townlands of Derrycoagh, Ross, Sroove, Inch Island, Rathtinaun and Derrymaquirk respectively, but there may be even more. These could include sites which are associated with finds of Bronze Age objects, such as crannog KILA 040 in Ross townland, and sites that on morphological grounds may date from this period. It is also possible that earlier sites are hidden under many of the high-cairn crannogs whose surface layers date from later periods. This may mean that the number of prehistoric crannogs in Lough Gara has been underestimated.

I will try to describe these sites one by one, moving from the south to the north (Fig. 40). I will then attempt to interpret the social effects of the building of crannogs at this time.

Derrycoagh townland

The first site (KILN 007) positively dated to the late Bronze Age is located in Derrycoagh townland, just beside what in winter is a small natural island (sometimes in the summer too). The site lies quite far out in the bay, near the place where the water flows from the Upper Lake into the Lower Lake. Locally this stream connecting the lakes is called Accra. The site is only accessible by foot during the driest of summers.

Today the site appears as a low cairn of shattered and fire-cracked stones, about 15m in diameter and reaching a height of about 1m above its surroundings. At the northern edge of this cairn is a white rounded boulder. The main cairn is surrounded by smaller satellite mounds of shattered stones mixed with animal bones, no more than 1–2m across. There are traces of wood in the area, and on the southern periphery, at the edges of the stones, some vertical wooden posts can be found in a row. During our survey we also found pig tusks on the site and a concentration of animal bones on the northern side of the site. A sample of a vertical post and one of animal bone gave dates in the late Bronze Age.

A local man, Mr John J. Sharkey, reported this site and some finds to the National Museum in 1968. In his drawings a circle of wooden posts surrounded the site. In the letter accompanying the drawing an outer palisade is described; the wording suggests that there was an inner palisade as well. He also described the interior of the site: ‘This area is all brushwood and sods together with oak-logs like you found in the foundation of the crannog at Kings bay’. This wood seems

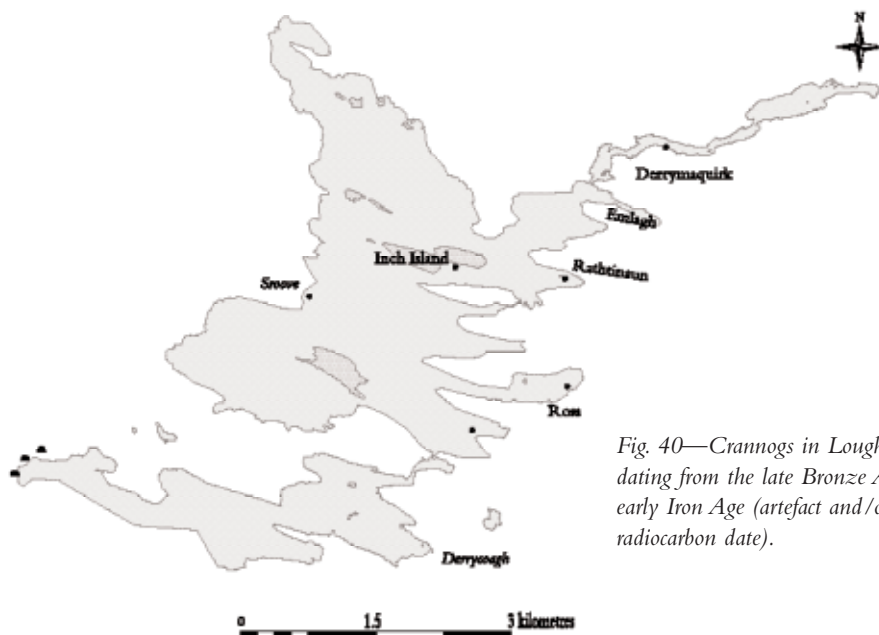


Fig. 40—Crannogs in Lough Gara dating from the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age (artefact and/or radiocarbon date).

to have decayed considerably since then. On the site, beside or just outside the outer palisade, a collection of bronze rings were found. In Sharkey's collection there were three double rings and two single rings of bronze (NMI 1968:408–12). Possibly they were linked together in some sort of chain. Ronan O'Flaherty has suggested that they may have formed a girdle, i.e. that they were joined together in a belt, and referred to the association of such a belt with the smith god Goibniu, mentioned in the early medieval sources (O'Flaherty 1996).

There are three other low-cairn sites in the same bay but these are closer to the mainland shore. There is no datable material to suggest that they belong to the Bronze Age. There are no monumental sites in the nearby lands,³⁷ and no burnt mounds were identified during the survey of the shoreline.

Ross townland

The next site with a date in the late Bronze Age is situated in the Lower Lake, at the southern side of the Ross townland peninsula. This site resembles the site at Derrycoagh in that it is located quite far out in the bay and is still surrounded by water during the summer months. It has a clear view over Clooncunny Bridge, where both the axes and skulls were deposited.

The site (KILA 046) measures about 11m in diameter and reaches a maximum height of 1.2m above the lakebed. It seems to be constructed of logs laid out on an elevation of lake sediments such as marl, and it is surrounded by vertical wooden posts. On top of this lies a loosely packed layer of irregular small boulders. No finds have been recorded from this site, but local information tells of a large human skull which was found on or beside the island and which was put back into the waters beside the site. We have not located this skull, but it may be the one registered as E20:733, recorded as having been found between this site and a crannog closer to the shore in the same bay.

On the other, northern side of the drumlin, in the next bay but the same townland, a number

of sites were recorded by Cross (1953). One of these sites, KILA 040, has been associated with a late Bronze Age coarseware pot. However, as mentioned earlier, the sites recorded by Cross do not always — and especially not in this townland — match up with any visible site in the right location, and therefore one can only speculate as to which of these sites the pottery came from. There is only one site located near the summer water-level in this bay, an irregular platform, which of course could be the site. There are also other potential candidates in the bay. What all of these sites have in common is that, unlike many of the other late Bronze Age/early Iron Age sites, they are situated higher up on the shoreline.

One possibility, which would be extremely interesting, is that the find may have belonged to a low-cairn crannog here, higher up on the shoreline. If this site was used in the Bronze Age too, it might have been active when the water was higher, perhaps in the winter, when the other sites were submerged. Its significance may have been that the sites would be temporarily submerged and hidden, only to rise above the waters when the time was right to use them. (The Bronze Age layers at Rathtinaun were separated by sand, and this is an alternative interpretation of the site's stratigraphical sequence.) The site in Ross is located within a quite large, almost penannular enclosure of seemingly shattered stones. The structure measures about 60m in diameter. The site could be interpreted as a water-henge or as harbour arms, as discussed in Chapter 6. Similar structures can be found further north in Lough Gara (beside Cuppannah Bridge) on the opposite side of Derrymaquirk townland. There is also a similar site in Lissergloon td in mid-Sligo (SMR SL 27:163:2). However, in this case the crannog is located outside the henge. A human skull was also found near this site in Ross townland (E20:734).

On the shoreline at Ross there are also a number of burnt spreads — small collections of shattered and fire-cracked stones. These suggest that fires were lit at regular intervals on the shoreline.

Sroove townland

On the opposite, western side of the lake there are also sites with late Bronze Age associations. In the water off Sroove townland there is quite a large Bronze Age crannog. This site is quite a substantial island, measuring 18m in diameter and reaching a height of 1.2m above the lakebed (KILC 021). As half the site is eroded away it is possible to see that it is built of a packing of white lake marl, piled together with a surface of shattered stones mixed with animal bones; among the bones were pieces of deer and cattle and a polished horn (NMI 1999:208). No other finds have been made from this crannog. Located in the same townland, but around the corner to the south, is another crannog that, owing to its location well out in the water, may belong to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age.

The bronze shield mentioned above was found in Sroove, but it is not provenanced as either a water or a dryland find. It is therefore impossible to know its context of origin. However, the two other shields in the nearby area were found in townlands containing wetlands or waters. This could suggest that the Sroove shield may originally have been deposited near the crannog.

Inch Island

In the middle of the lake, at the southern side of the natural Inch Island, there is also a substantial crannog. It is located quite far out in the water, but it is possible to walk out to it in a dry summer month. It measures about 21m in diameter and reaches a height of 1.5m above the lakebed (KILA 016). The surface consists of shattered and fire-cracked stones, and it is more compact than the other site, suggesting that it was added to at a slightly later stage. Another difference is that there

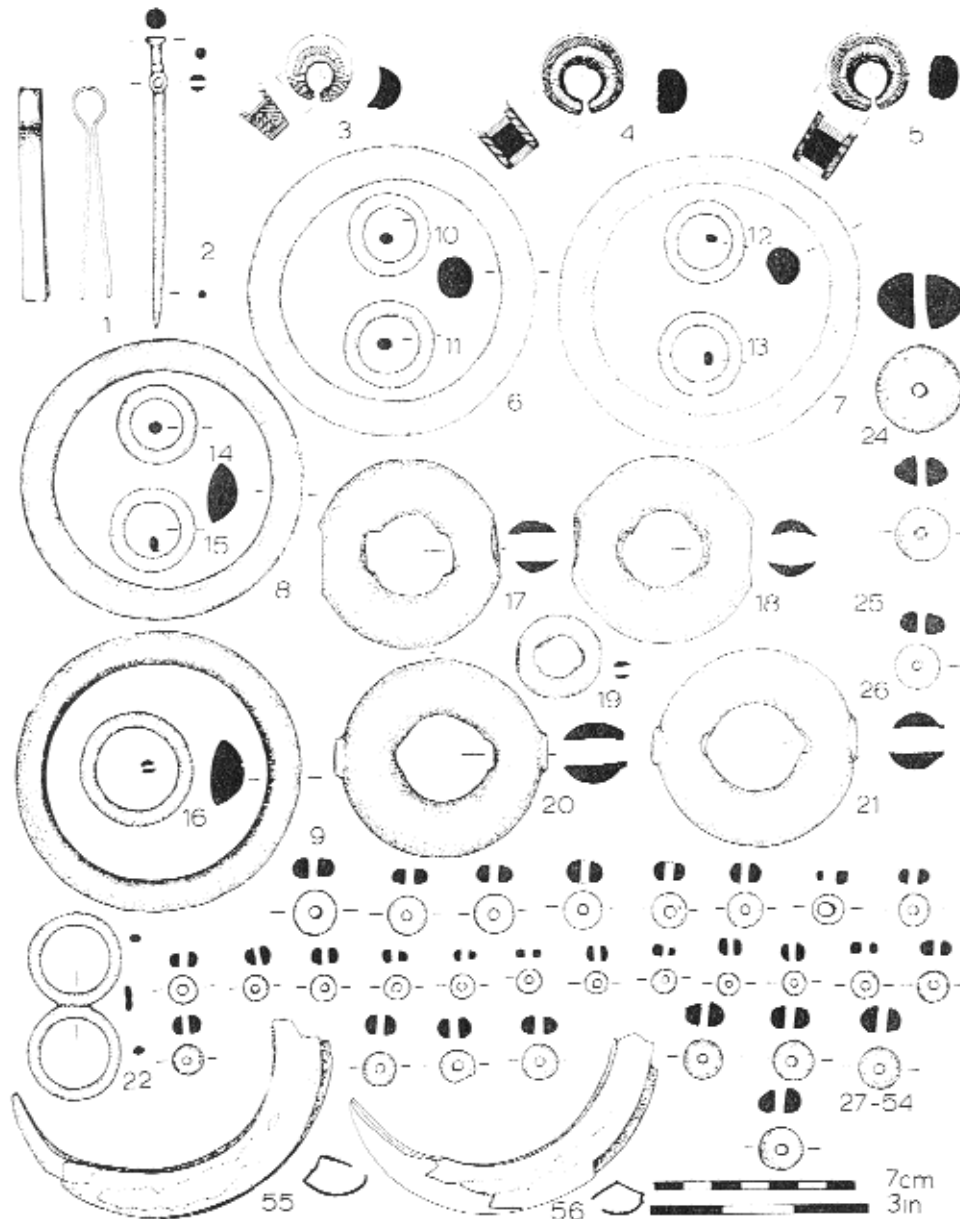


Fig. 41—Drawing of the contents of the hoard from Rathinaun (after Eogan 1983).

are no animal bones visible on the surface. Around the edges of the island is a wooden palisade. Four timbers from this palisade were dated to the early Iron Age and one to the late Bronze Age, showing that the site was used in the transition between the two periods.

A number of late Bronze Age finds have been made on Inch Island but have been published with no closer provenance than 'the lake shore'. It is possible that they are connected with this crannog. Just as at the crannog in Derrycoagh, a large set of bronze rings was found here — nine plain rings and one double ring (NMI E20:359–79) (Eogan 1983, 148–9). On the shores of Inch Island a bronze sword and a sunflower pin were found. It is also possible that a La Tène sword

found in the thatch of a cottage came from this island.

Rathtinaun townland

Rathtinaun, one of the three excavated crannogs in Lough Gara, Co. Sligo, contained layers from the late Bronze Age through to the early medieval period (KILA 018). The site may also have been used during the medieval period, on the evidence of the artefact material alone.³⁸ The crannog is situated quite far out in a bay on the eastern side of the lake, not far from Inch Island. Joseph Raftery excavated it between 1952 and 1955. During the Bronze Age it measured about 15m by 18m.

The base of the site seems to have been constructed by the piling of timbers and brushwood on a slight rise in the lakebed. The two late Bronze Age levels contained a number of fireplaces rather than a central hearth; many of them seem to have been in use at the same time (Fig. 42). On the foundation of the first phase seven fire-baskets and an arc of posts were found (J. Raftery 1957). Then the lake rose and deposited a layer of sand, on which a central area of cobbling was laid down and surrounded by brushwood. No houses were identified but again six hearths were found, one of which reused a hearth from the phase below. The fireplaces are located near the path that runs through the middle of the crannog, but they do not occupy a central position (see Fig. 42). Raftery writes that some of these hearths were quite substantially built, with walls of basket-woven hazel rods. These walls may have arched inwards at the top, forming a small roof over the fireplaces. They were fireproofed with a cladding of yellow clay. At the base was a hearthstone. Three of the six fireplaces shared the feature of having fire-baskets, while the others were ash and clay spreads (B. Raftery 1994, 33), the most rudimentary evidence possible for a fireplace and a hearth. Not only do these fireplaces have an internal spatial relation within the particular phase, but also, remarkably, reveal evidence for physical interlinkages between the two phases. One of the hearths in phase 2 makes use of a fireplace from the level below, representing a conscious connection with the earlier phase.

The fact that archaeologists often tend to overdo their search for houses in places where none really exist has been pointed out before (see Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Thomas 1996). However, if the hearth is where the house is, one could interpret the Bronze Age phases of Rathtinaun as Raftery did. In his opinion every hearth also represented a house (1957, 11). The site at this stage covered an area of 29m by 36m, which the excavator believed to have held ten houses altogether (although he could not have believed that they were all in use at the same time). It is important to bear in mind that this is a very small area to hold this number of houses. It is also striking that the houses seem merely to have been inferred from the presence of the hearths. A similar confusion seems to have occurred in the interpretation of another Bronze Age crannog, Ballinderry 2, where small wicker structures resembling the fire-baskets at Rathtinaun were interpreted as huts (Hencken 1942). They are of a similar size to the fire-baskets at Rathtinaun, measuring 1–2m in diameter. Recently the stratigraphy of Ballinderry 2 was reinterpreted. This new interpretation has moved the wicker structures to a much later phase (Newman 1997b), which also leaves the Bronze Age phases on this site without any clear house structures.

Possibly both Hencken and Raftery interpreted the structures on their crannogs as houses in the absence of any real evidence for their existence. On the one hand, Raftery inferred houses from the fireplaces, believing that they would have occupied central positions in these structures. Hencken, on the other hand, inferred houses from very small wicker structures. In a culture that views itself as mainly settled it is easy to be led into interpreting archaeological remains as settled people do — to find a house also means to find a home and safety. But even if the hearths were not houses they could still be of interest.



Fig. 42—Rathinaun, phase 2 (B. Raftery 1994, 33).

On the plan of phase 2 one can see the traces of a small path, possibly leading from the shoreline towards the centre of the island. On the north-east side of the site one can see where the path starts. There might have been an entrance on this side, which would have been facing the shore. The interior of the site seems to have consisted of an irregularly shaped brushwood floor, laid out around a central area of cobbling. On this floor there were three fire-baskets, one to the south, one to the west and one to the east. There were also other areas of ash and clay spreads. The layers of Rathinaun were continuously sanded over, which indicates that the site was built at a height which exposed it to temporary flooding, as discussed above.

Most of the finds are marked with an 'x' on the published map (see Fig. 42). It is evident that they were located around the area where the path starts and outside the site itself. A hoard was found at the crannog of Rathinaun, also outside the main body of the crannog, as can be seen from the map. This find of a small wooden box containing a variety of artefacts has been given a lot of attention. 'Inside the box had been placed a necklace of amber beads, rings of bronze, of pure tin and three of lead with gold-foil cover. There was also a pair of tweezers, a bronze pin and six boar tusks ...' (B. Raftery 1994, 34). Raftery interpreted the hoard as personal belongings hidden away in time of trouble. He connects it to a female, and has thereby gendered the information. Perhaps he is right, but without any corroborating burial evidence this has to be seen as just one among many possibilities. The evidence could also be read in another way, as showing that a crannog was a suitable place for the deposition of a hoard.

On the basis of the finds Barry Raftery has interpreted the crannog at Rathinaun as 'a simple domestic habitation' and a place that was used for bronze-working. Among the finds were 'sherds of normal, coarse, hand-made pottery ... as well as a disc-headed pin, a pair of tweezers, several rings, a possible cauldron fragment — all bronze — and a small penannular gold ring of the type

generally referred to as “ring-money”. Sixteen clay mould fragments indicate that bronze-working was carried on at the crannog and portions of several wooden vessels were also recovered’. The finds from the second phase included ‘two disc-headed pins, a pair of bronze tweezers similar to that from the lower layer, a bifid razor, a tanged chisel and a circular mount (phalera) of bronze’. There were also wooden vessels and potsherds, as well as some iron objects that may either be intrusions from the layers above or may signify the transition to the Iron Age (B. Raftery 1994, 32–3). What is interesting is that human skulls were found at Rathtinaun as well (E21:103, 181).

For now it is enough to point out that there are a number of similarities between Rathtinaun and the other crannogs in the lake. I will return to the issue of whether the crannogs can really be seen as ‘domestic’ when so many of the finds correspond to what elsewhere can be found in hoards and ritual depositions.

Derrymaquirk townland

The last site directly dating from the late Bronze Age is located at the shore of Derrymaquirk townland by the river. The site (BOYL 026) is at the foot of a large drumlin, on the opposite (southern) side of which is the Derrymaquirk bog where the bodies were buried. There is another crannog in this bog, but it has not been dated. It could perhaps belong to this period of prehistory (BOYL 078).

The radiocarbon-dated site measures 8m by 5m and has a height of 1m above the riverbed. It consists of a dense layer of shattered and fire-cracked stones laid out and mixed with the lake marl. This site is located in the same townland where one of the bronze swords was found, but no finds were made at this site — not even animal bones, which would have helped to further distinguish these sites from burnt mounds. It may be that what can be seen of the site today could be compared to the central area of cobbling at Rathtinaun or Derrycoagh. Based on morphological similarities it is possible that it was just like the site at Derrycoagh described by Mr Sharkey and had a surrounding area of brushwood and a palisade. This wood might similarly have been eroded away, or could have been covered by the river deposits. Two skulls were found in the vicinity of the crannog (E20: 731, 732).

In the townland of Drumanone further down the Boyle River can be found two sites that on morphological grounds can be regarded as similar to the Derrymaquirk site (BOYL 074, 075). They are of the same size and height and are constructed of similar materials, i.e. of shattered and fire-cracked stone.

Comparative discussion of the late Bronze Age crannogs

There is evidence that at least six crannogs in Lough Gara were in use during the later stages of the Bronze Age and into the early Iron Age. However, there is no evidence that the crannogs were added to between c. 80 BC and the beginning of the early medieval period. We can only assume that they went out of use or received less attention during these years. In an earlier chapter the existence of man-made islands in the Stone Age was discussed. It was thought probable that some type of platforms were in existence at this stage, but the evidence is not totally clear. It is during the late Bronze Age in Lough Gara that the first clear evidence for the construction of islands occurs. These islands are substantial, measuring 10–20m in diameter and reaching a maximum height of 1.5m above the lakebed. Many would have been surrounded by palisades. As all the crannogs belonging to this period can be classified as low-cairn crannogs, they would have been subject to the seasonal water-level changes, but to a lesser extent than the platform crannogs.

Possibly they might have been available during half the year, as compared to the platforms which may only have been accessible for a season or less. As it would not have taken a great deal of effort to collect stones on the shores to heighten the crannogs (as was done in later periods), we have to accept that it was the crannog-users' intention that the sites should become inundated when the waters rose in the winter. Rathtinaun's two Bronze Age phases, for example, were separated by sand (B. Raftery 1994, 33), and to avoid this the site could easily have been built higher, given the abundance of suitable stones on the nearby shoreline.

There are similarities between the late prehistoric sites in terms of architecture, but most striking are the similarities in terms of finds. It is also well worth noting the similarity between the finds from the crannogs and the finds normally found in watery depositions, such as swords, skulls, rings etc.

One of the questions to ask is how to understand the activities that may have taken place on these islands. Is it reasonable to see finds that to a large extent are comparable to hoards as reflecting 'a simple domestic habitation' (B. Raftery 1994, 32)? This is reminiscent of an issue from the early days of crannog research, when Talbot (1849) saw Lagore as a tomb. Are the late Bronze Age crannogs settlements or burials? As Brück (1999) reminds us, we have to start asking ourselves what a 'domestic' settlement is and how we use these terms. Perhaps we also need to extend our interpretation beyond seeing the discovery of sword moulds³⁹ as reflecting the fact that 'bronze-working was carried on at the crannog'. I think that there is more to learn if we let these categories, which are separate in western minds, become a context, as they seem to be on these sites. We must try to find the thought patterns in which, for example, the bronze-working was embedded. Possibly the crannogs represent an amalgamation of the present-day categories of production, burial and settlement.

Another question we have to consider is how the use of the crannogs with their material and spatial properties may have shaped people's ways of thinking. It is important to try to explore more deeply the material and spatial properties of these islands. What difference did it make that they were built as islands? Following on from this, we need to try to discover what role these islands had for the local communities around the lake at the time, and the implications for wider social issues.

Crannogs as places for deposits

As discussed above, a formal hoard was deposited at the edge of the crannog at Rathtinaun. The crannogs at Inch Island and Derrycoagh, and to a certain extent the one at Derrymaquirk, have yielded finds such as bronze rings or swords found off or at the edges of the sites. There are also similarities between the finds from the different crannogs in the lake, suggesting that similar activities took place on each of these sites. The finds in the wooden box at Rathtinaun compare well to the finds at Derrycoagh, where tusks and bronze rings were also found. Bronze rings were found at Inch Island. A polished horn was found at the crannog in Sroove. The finds from Derrycoagh and Inch Island were discovered off the crannogs, and several other finds have been made near Bronze Age crannogs both in Lough Gara and elsewhere. The published plan of Rathtinaun indicates that most finds were located on the edges of the island. This location has also been recorded for the rings found at Derrycoagh,⁴⁰ and the finds from Inch Island were located slightly off the site. Both the location and the character of the finds show connections with deposition. The list of finds or hoards located off late Bronze Age wetland sites could be lengthened. It could include finds from sites like Killymoon (Hurl 1995) and Ballinderry 2 (Hencken 1942), where quite distinct items have been found both on and off the sites. At

Killymoon a gold dress-fastener and a sleeve-fastener were found off the main mound (Hurl 1995). The Drumlane cauldron was also found off or near a crannog (Milligan 1885–6). (The wetland settlement at Cloonfinlough was only partially excavated and we do not know whether there were significant finds located outside the site.) A hoard was noted in the vicinity of the late Bronze Age crannog at Ballinderry 2 at Moyvoughly townland and probably from the bog; it consisted of nine Dowris phase objects (NMI 1944, 228–36; Eogan 1983, no. 14; Newman 1997b, 97). Many bronze swords have also been found just off crannogs (Eogan 1965, nos 114, 141, 142, 143, 266, 101?) or at other places that have had a tradition of deposition,⁴¹ in some places a tradition that may go back to the Stone Age. It could, of course, be argued that these finds were only eroded out from the crannog body and that their location is nearly meaningless. What leads me to think otherwise is that there is a certain similarity in the finds from the various locations, such as the swords, rings and skulls. It is most unlikely that the same types of finds eroded out from all crannogs. Another way to understand this material is to start thinking of the finds as intentional deposits made at the edges of or from the crannogs such as at Rathtinaun or Ballinderry 2.

A comparison can also be drawn between the deposition of skulls in watery locations and at crannogs. Knowledge about the deposition of skulls around the unpublished crannog of Rathtinaun seems to have come down to us through local information and lore. The information from people in the area corresponds with the finds in the NMI, but occasionally the local information is more precise as regards location. Adding to the information about numerous finds of human skulls from Lough Gara are records from elsewhere of human skulls found in association with crannogs. Human skulls have been found at sites like Ardakillen, Ballinderry 1, Ballinderry 2, Clonfinlough, Killyvilla, Lagore, Drumacritten 2 and Moynagh Lough (Wood-Martin 1886a, 90; D’Arcy 1900, 234; 1897, 397; Hencken 1936, 227–9; 1942, 17–20; 1950, 115–16, 198–203; Ó Floinn 1995, 144; Newman 1997b, 99 (citing J. Bradley (pers. comm.) with regard to a skull found at Bronze Age levels in Moynagh Lough). These skulls have not yet been radiocarbon-dated, but a Bronze Age date might be expected for at least some of them on contextual grounds.⁴² First of all there is a human skull from a late Bronze Age context in the ritual pool at the King’s Stables, Co. Armagh (Lynn 1977, 48). Another example is the late Bronze Age human skull that seems to have been in circulation for a while before deposition which was found at Raffin Fort (Newman 1997b, 99). Elsewhere skulls have been found together with bronze metalwork. R. Bradley and Gordon have shown that four out of six skulls from the River Thames dated from the late Bronze Age (R. Bradley and Gordon 1988; R. Bradley 1990, 108–9). In Ó Floinn’s gazetteer of human remains found in bogs four out of the five prehistoric specimens gave a date in the later Bronze Age or Iron Age (Ó Floinn 1995).

Newman (1997b, 99) has focused in particular on the finds of skulls with a dated late Bronze Age context such as Moynagh Lough or Ballinderry 2. But the deposition of human remains, and in particular skulls, in association with crannogs has been found on many occasions in Lough Gara. In the larger regional area skulls have been retrieved from lakes and from places of bronze deposits in waters. The presence of skulls on crannogs has also been studied as one of the burial traditions in the late Bronze Age (Cooney and Grogan 1994, 146). There are indeed great similarities between the finds from the crannogs and those in the deposits. I think it is likely that the crannogs at this stage were places where depositions were prepared and carried out. Although some of the finds may have ‘domestic’ connotations, the domestic must be understood as combined with the categories of burials and, as will be discussed below, production.

The finds on the crannogs of Lough Gara from the late Bronze Age compare well with the

material found deposited or in hoards in nearby rivers and wetlands but without any direct association with a crannog. Both metalwork and human parts were deposited in the two places. The golden hair-rings in the box at Rathtinaun can be paralleled by the two golden hair-rings found in the bog at Annaghbeg/Monasteraden. The sword(s?) found at Inch Island near the crannog are comparable to many other swords that were found as deposits in the Lung River, for example, or along the Shannon, which are places where the number of crannogs is very low.

I think that this pattern whereby deposits and hoards are found with regularity at the edges of the crannogs or off site is intriguing. One way to read this material is that crannogs played a part in the process of deposition in the water during the late Bronze Age. The crannogs could have been a place where the items to be deposited were made or prepared before they were left in the waters or the wetlands, both off the crannogs and in other place. A depositional ritual could involve many different steps; the items may have had to be transformed from ordinary objects into offerings suitable for water-spirits and gods. Perhaps they had to stay on the crannogs for a certain length of time before being deposited. The hoard at Rathtinaun may have been going through one such stage; the next step may have been to take it up again and deposit it in some other watery place. That could be the reason why it was marked with pegs.

Island space

The pattern of deposition of metal in water and the connection between production and death find many parallels in wider areas of north-west Europe (cf. R. Bradley 1990). What differs between the areas, however, is the construction of islands like crannogs in connection with these depositions.

In those periods for which we have no clear evidence for the construction of crannogs the depositions seem to have been performed at natural places such as rivers and bogs. However, the construction of crannogs would have changed both the nature of the deposition and the act of deposition. The deliberate construction of islands like the crannogs provided special places of firm ground for the deposition of these objects, perhaps giving the actions an architectural body structure and thereby institutionalising the tradition, fixing it in space. It has been noted elsewhere in Europe that deposits towards the end of the late Bronze Age and into the early Iron Age were connected with formalised structures. R. Bradley (1990, 179ff) mentions causeways or bridges for depositions, such as at Flag Fen or La Tène, or vertical shafts where offerings were made. However, what distinguishes the Irish material is that these acts of deposition may have taken place from particular islands built for the purpose. What has to be understood is both the formal placing of the practice of deposition as well as the particular meaning of the 'island'.

To obtain a clearer understanding of crannogs, and in particular those in Lough Gara, we need to look at how the depositions from these islands could have differed from the depositions that took place in other material circumstances on the Continent. What is clear is that the crannogs are more distinct places than causeways or bridges. Whereas a bridge is a place in transition, crannogs are not only places where it is possible to stretch out into the water and then to return but would also have provided discrete places to stay for much longer periods. Perhaps the crannogs provided accommodation for the caretaker of the deposits, a place where such a person or persons could have stayed for a longer time than on a bridge or causeway. This person may have been responsible for preparing the items before they were deposited.

On the islands a number of fires may have been burning, as suggested by the excavation of Rathtinaun. It is also possible that fires were lit on the shorelines, as suggested by the presence of burnt spreads at shores such as Ross. On the island at this stage there were deposits of animal

bones mixed with fire-cracked stones. On the one hand these may be taken to represent meals, but on the other hand they must be considered part of the building material of the island. The bones share and build up the context of the islands. The similarity in treatment of animal and human bones shown on the crannogs can also be seen in the bog burials, which were accompanied by animal bones. The evidence for the sanding over of Rathtinaun and the apparently deliberate choice of height suggest that the rise of the island above the waters may have been a part of the ritual. The image of an island rising from the waters is a classic symbol of regeneration. I have no evidence for the reuse of any older lake platforms in Lough Gara at this stage (as would be the case at Moynagh Lough). If that were the case, the return to the waters could have been understood in relation to people's involvement with and manipulation of the past.

The narrative that treats the crannogs as places where deposits were prepared and placed in the water does not, however, deal fully with what was so special about these sites as islands. If we focus on where in the landscape these islands are located we might better understand what they meant to people. Two of the crannogs, the sites in Derrycoagh and Inch Island, are built directly off natural islands. This indicates that the crannogs at this time signified something other than a natural island.

Not only did the building of the crannogs reactivate the natural islands that had been out of focus probably since the Stone Age,⁴³ but this location can also tell us more about what the crannogs may have meant to people. What the location beside the islands may also reveal is what type of islands people were after. The late Bronze Age site at Ballinderry 2 lay on what may have been a natural island (Hencken 1942, 1). The crannog at Drumlane, where the cauldron was found, was located beside what would have been a drumlin island (cf. Milligan 1885–6). The construction of crannogs beside natural islands suggests that part of the idea was to create man-made land, land of a different kind than the land of the natural islands. In earlier periods people may have been creating artificial mounds symbolising mountains (R. Bradley 2000), but in this period the creation is taken further. To some extent the crannogs were copies of natural islands. It is quite an extreme gesture to create islands. People may have been setting up their own island mythologies, or perhaps entirely special places had to be created for carrying out the powerful rituals surrounding the depositions. Maybe the people here were drawing on the idea of an Otherworld island where things happened in reverse to the everyday, mainly dryland world. In the dryland world people's lives followed cycles of birth, life and decay. In the wetland world this did not happen — things would keep forever. It was a world of a more eternal life, which did not show ageing.

Traces of production on the crannogs

In the presumed social hierarchy model advanced by Grogan *et al.* (1996) it has been claimed that these late Bronze Age sites were metal workshops that had a special place in the social hierarchy: 'smiths did not live in a social vacuum; they are unlikely to have been at the top of the social pile and were probably maintained by a social élite who would have provided both patronage and a demand for their products' (Cooney and Grogan 1994, 160). We have to bear in mind that this is mainly an assumption made by analogy with a processual archaeology built on a different material (see e.g. Champion *et al.* 1984, 180; Cooney and Grogan 1994; Grogan *et al.* 1996; Cooney 2000b, 23–4). It has been assumed that the different settlements such as hillforts and lake settlements represent different tiers of a settlement hierarchy. There is no evidence in the late Bronze Age burial material to suggest that metalwork was connected with social ranking; the material from the graves does not indicate any particular distinction between people. There is no

evidence that metalworking was carried out by lower-status bronze-smiths dependent on patronage. A conclusion has simply been drawn: if there is metalworking, there are hierarchies. As this model is only an assumption about the working of late Bronze Age societies there are many other interpretations that could be just as valid, and perhaps the strongest signals from the material are not related to a discussion about status.

Against this background it is possible to examine a more comprehensive narrative than that the crannogs were 'simple domestic habitations' or 'workshops', as these labels do not take full account of the material or make use of its full potential. Given the similarity of the finds in the crannogs and in many of the deposits, our understanding of the meaning of the activities on the crannogs has to take into account the connection between metal, water and death, and perhaps also rebirth. Comparable associations between metal production and death during the Bronze Age have been noted elsewhere (see Brück 1999). The metalworking on the crannogs cannot be seen as a purely functional, rational action according to modern norms, as a use of the term 'workshop' would suggest. Why go to the trouble of building islands for carrying out metalworking, especially in Lough Gara, where there are a number of natural islands of all sizes? Earlier methods of interpretation could have explained the crannogs by claiming that the smith needed to mark his status by being protected on these small islands. But any of the natural islands and shoals in Lough Gara would have served a similar purpose.

There are other places that have produced a similar collection of finds to the crannogs, besides the deposits in watery places. In the valley below Haughey's Fort, Co. Armagh, there is a small artificial pond surrounded by a low wall. In this pool of water, known as the King's Stables, numerous finds were deposited during the late Bronze Age, and have been retrieved during excavation. Many animal bones were found, and a human skull together with moulds for swords (Lynn 1977). Cooney and Grogan (1994, 169f.) suggest that the finding of skulls and moulds together may indicate that the latter may have been seen as more than a waste product in the production of metal objects in a late Bronze Age context, and I tend to agree. There is further evidence that people even in the early Bronze Age had a different approach to production. While there are few metal finds from wedge tombs in general, early moulds were found at three sites, at Loughash, Co. Tyrone (Davies 1939), Moylisha, Co. Wicklow (Ó hÍceadha 1946), and Lough Gur, Co. Limerick (S.P. Ó Ríordáin and Ó hÍceadha 1955). W. O'Brien (1999, 215) interprets this as evidence for the magical practices that were connected with metal-handling in certain places around Ireland during the Bronze Age. I agree with this interpretation and would like to add that it might also indicate that the moulds, the origin of the axes, needed burial just like people when their life came to an end. During the late Bronze Age, as shown, both moulds and human skulls were treated in a similar way. This suggests that metalwork may have been charged with magical properties during the late Bronze Age as well.

Sixteen moulds for the casting of bronze swords were found at Rathtinaun, and no comparisons have yet been found on any of the other unexcavated crannogs in the lake. The find type is, however, common on crannogs and wetland islands in other places. Moulds have been found on small island sites like Killymoon (Hurl 1995) and on the possible crannog at Bohovny, Co. Fermanagh (Plunkett 1899; Eogan 1965, 178–9), and at a 'wetland settlement' or in a bog (the evidence is not totally clear) at Tobermore, Co. Derry (Hodges 1954; Waddell 1998, 268⁴⁴), as well as at the sites in Lough Eskragh (Collins and Seaby 1960; B. Williams 1978). Wilde (1857, 91–3) describes moulds for casting 'celts' from the crannog at Lough Scur, Co. Leitrim, as well as a mould for a spear from Lough Ramer, Co. Cavan. These are clearly Bronze Age. He also discusses moulds from the Ballinderry and Dunshaughlin crannogs (*ibid.*, 93), but these are not necessarily

prehistoric.

That not only the metal objects but also their negatives, the moulds for casting, were deposited is an interesting issue (the wooden moulds for shields have also been deposited in bogs), suggesting that not only the cast objects like the swords, spears and shields were seen as important. Their origins — their negatives — were also charged with special meaning and importance and had to be buried or deposited. It has been noted elsewhere that the bronze items may have retained an exotic quality, as in many cases the metal would not have come from the nearby region; the items would therefore have carried the same meaning as the polished stone axes, whose material may also have derived from exotic places (R. Bradley 1990, 182). This would have been the case for the items in Lough Gara as there is no known copper-mine in the vicinity. However, the possibility of recasting objects makes it possible to transfer them and to give them a new local place of origin. The objects are in this way born again, re-created.

Returning to the observation that it seems to have been important that the islands were man-made, the creation of man-made ‘natural’ features is also obvious in the case of the pool at the King’s Stables and also at places like the water-filled henge in Ballingowan td, Co. Kerry (Connolly and Condit 1998). The pool was artificially constructed, and can be seen at one level of interpretation as the creation of a negative, the removal of soil leaving a depression which filled up with water. The crannog, on the other hand, can be seen as a positive, the addition of soil creating an area that fills up the water with land.

In the pattern of deposition the idea of positive and negative also seems to be of great importance. The similarities between the items found in the pool and on the crannogs include the skulls, the animal bones and the mould fragments. All these finds can be seen to represent an origin — in the first case the living human head, in the second case the animal body, and in the third case the sword, which could all represent the positive or the cast.

It is often the negative that is supposed to have been deposited on crannogs, while in the case of the swords the positive has been deposited in the waters. People seem also to have seen moulds as worthy of deposition. But they would have to be left in unnatural places. Perhaps they were so powerful, in their creation, that they required special islands to avoid contact with natural ground. Perhaps one can also understand the few mould fragments from the hillforts in a similar way, that they were made harmless if deposited in a hinged environment — at the other extreme of the elements — where they were closer to the sky. And not only the metal objects and their moulds but also human beings and animals were drawn into this creation of a narrative.

Becoming animals

If we pursue the idea that the crannogs were places for the preparation of depositions in later prehistory and that they may have been in use from the late Bronze Age into the Iron Age, this does not necessarily mean that they had the same significance over the whole period. As discussed above, there is a clear change in the items included in the deposits from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age, with a heavier emphasis on animal-related objects over time. There are indeed connections between the crannogs and the animal world. Animal bones make up the floor on many of the crannogs of Lough Gara. A closer look at the bone material reveals not only bones from the bodies of animals but also a definite representation of tusks and horns. The crannogs in Derrycoagh and Rathtinaun yielded boar tusks, while at the crannog in Sroove the remains of an antler tine were left on the surface. Antler tines were deposited with the bog bodies and two bronze horns (part of a metal headstall) which were retrieved from the bog at Runnabehy. A horn was also found with the bog burial from Derrymaquirk.

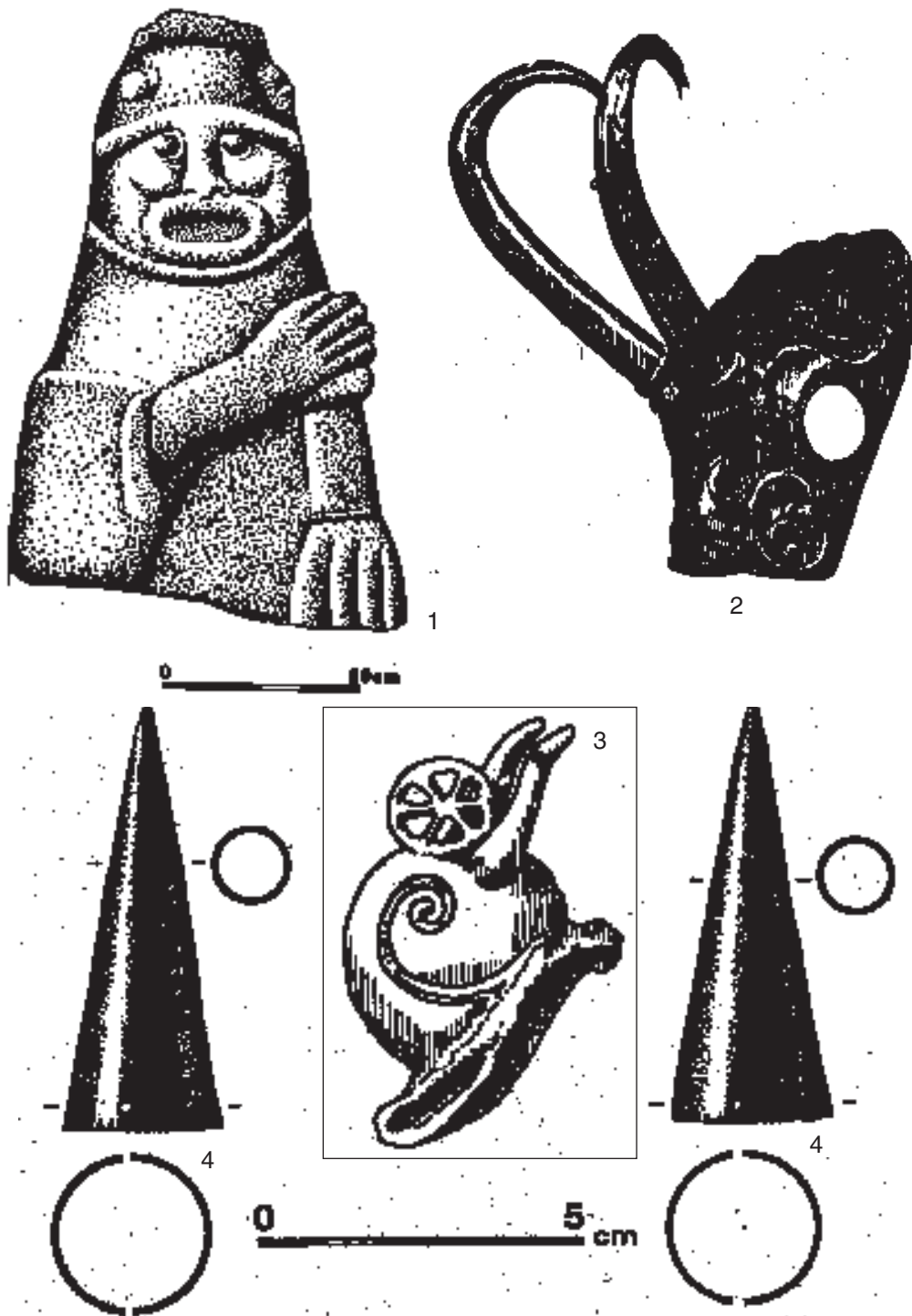


Fig. 43—The early Iron Age practice of attaching horns to human or animal headware. (1) The Tandragee idol, Co. Armagh. (2) Pony-cap with horns from the River Thames. (3) Bull-horned helmet on a Roman triumphal arch at Orange, France, early first century AD (after Green 1992). (4) Horns from Runnabehy Bog, Co. Roscommon (drawing courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland).

Anthropomorphic animals exist in the iconography of both Ireland and north-east Europe during the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age. Many of these figures have horns. There are humans with horns, such as the figure portrayed on the Gundestrup cauldron, and there are also serpents, birds, pigs and horses with horns (see Fig. 43). 'In all those instances horns appear to have been added in order to endow the animals with sanctity, an element of the supernatural, and visible aggressive force' (Green 1992, 234). From Ireland there are stone figures such as the Tandragee idol from County Armagh, which shows a human head with two horns. There are also other stone figures that may date from this period (see Rynne 1972; B. Raftery 1994). Green interprets the anthropomorphic images as showing that people at this time saw themselves as being more equal to animals than we do now, that they were less anthropocentric than people today. Although the animals were killed and eaten, there was a greater respect for them, as part of the world of humans and gods (Green 1992, 239).

There are also other kinds of evidence that animals were of special importance during this period. At Kiltullagh Hill, as mentioned above, a pig had been buried as part of the ceremony. Animal hooves were a part of the burials at the tumulus in Grange, Co. Roscommon, and have been seen to represent the association between people and animals in a possible totemistic setting (B. Ó Ríordáin 1997). Newman (1997b, 99) suggested that some of the cut pieces of human skulls found in watery places such as the King's Stables may have been used as ceremonial masks, an idea that may also be extended to places such as the crannogs. The finds of headgear in the form of horns for humans and animals gives further support to this interpretation. As discussed above, the whole sequence of deposits leads from tools and weapons to ornaments and items connected with animals in the early Iron Age, which may suggest ritual practices in which people dressed up as animals.⁴⁵ I will take this idea a bit further and suggest that some type of totemism or even animism⁴⁶ was being developed over time, and that this belief may have been acted out on the late Bronze Age and Iron Age crannogs. Perhaps people or clans saw themselves as related to animals (cf. Levi-Strauss 1962; 1966; Tilley 1991, 49–53, 96–100, 129) or, as the later documentary sources may indicate, as spiritually akin to metal items and to smiths (Mac Niocaill 1972, 3–4). The finds of ceremonial equipment such as the rings (which may have been components of chains), skulls, and horns and tusks in particular on the crannogs and in the surrounding wetlands may suggest practices in which people either transformed themselves into animals by dressing up, or in which animals were dressed up and reworked into fantasy creatures, for example horses with horns. The skull of the monkey found at Navan Fort (see Mallory 1985; Lynn 1997, 125; Waddell 1998, 340) may represent a similar ambiguous, shape-shifting animal, an animal nearly, but not totally, human. With the archaeological material from Navan Fort Lynn (1992, 44) has drawn attention to Irish tales about shaman-like people, one of whom was described by Ross (1970, 44) as wearing animal dress. Perhaps the crannogs in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age were places where these types of anthropomorphic, hybrid creatures were invoked and created, creatures with human heads and animal bodies that existed by the waters. The ceremonial equipment might possibly suggest the transformation of people into half-god/half-human figures. Also, when the metal was recast it became a shape-shifter, its character was remoulded and could be said to be drawing on the same metaphor as the artificially created islands. The water-level changes may have contributed to the liminality of these sites.

During winter the turloughs and water-henges would have filled up with water, forcing activity to shift to higher ground. Near the lakes are the turloughs of Knockadoo and the area around the henge at Ballinphuill which might also have been in use at this stage. Perhaps the different crannogs around the lake were used at different times of year to perform rituals drawing

on the regenerative symbolism of water, as well as marking out the positives and negatives created in a landscape that at different times during the year fill up with water.

The increasing emphasis on animals in the symbolism of the depositions and on the crannogs may mean that people felt a stronger affinity with animals towards the Iron Age. If animals played a substantial role in the belief system of the time, a gradual introduction of these elements into the practices that took place on the crannogs and in the rituals of wetland deposits could have been a manipulation of their meaning. This change of meaning might have strengthened tribal identities and promoted communality, which would have lessened the importance of the crannogs and the people carrying out the rites. This might be one contributory reason why we have a weaker signal in the crannog material from the time around AD 1 onwards.

Attitude to the water

There is very little evidence for the use of crannogs in Lough Gara in the period from the Neolithic into the early Bronze Age. This lack of evidence could even be stretched out to include the middle Bronze Age. As shown, the main focus for burial monuments and possibly settlements as well was at this stage located higher up in the landscape. Over time these places formed the tribal nodes. It is from the late Bronze Age that we have the first secure evidence for the use of crannogs. The new material from Lough Gara shows that these man-made islands were also in use during the early part of the Iron Age. There is no material evidence that the crannogs in this lake were in use in the later part of the Iron Age.

The radiocarbon dating series offers limited evidence for the use of log-boats during the Bronze Age (Lanting and Brindley 1996; Fry 2000). The practice of deposition, however, continued from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age. The composition of these deposits changed over time from consisting mainly of axes and weapons to the later inclusion of personal ornaments, ceremonial gear and skulls. Over time the depositions also included animal-related items such as tusks, horns and horse-gear. These finds may have continued to be deposited in the watery places at a time when attention had shifted somewhat away from the crannogs.

It is possible that the crannogs during the late Bronze Age changed the meaning of the depositions as they created places in the waters where items could be prepared before they were sacrificed. The building of the crannogs near the natural islands also reactivated the lake as a place in the landscape. Possibly the crannogs, which are not in the main located at fording-points, also redefined the places suitable for sacrifices. With the introduction of first skull depositions and then formal burial in the bog, the watery places became suitable locations for burial, which may have added a new meaning to these places in the topography.

From the early Bronze Age onwards there were differences in what was deposited on the eastern and western sides of the lake. This may suggest that the lake constituted a boundary between two or more nodes. The only clear settlement evidence that we have from the Bronze Age, the burnt mound, is also associated with water, but in this case with slow-flowing water higher up in the landscape. In contrast to the location of the burnt mounds, the deposits seem to have been placed near larger rivers.

Social fictionalities

While many of the traditions seem to follow the same lines throughout the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, such as the practice of deposition and the focus on upland areas for the construction of

tombs, there also seem to have been some variations on the theme. This section aims at putting the lake, and in particular the building of the crannogs, into a societal perspective, discussing the relevance of the crannogs and other sites in terms of solidarity and loyalty as we have done in the preceding chapters.

In the beginning of the period there may have been at least three communities around the lake. One was located around present-day Killaraght, the other two in Kilfree and Monasteraden. Possibly the later two were groups that had decided to break with the earlier ancestral ties on the eastern side of the lake. The western side of the lake may have been viewed almost as wasteland before this time. However, these lands took on a new meaning and became places that could be settled. They also signalled a new beginning. To realise that goal the tombs were built there and the ancestors moved to a new place, which made it easier for the living to do the same. More change was to come, and an effort was made to break with the whole idea of the ancestors and the land. With the cist burials the construction below ground was more important than the monumental constructions above. This was one of the concepts behind the cist burials: there was no idea of remembering too much of the past. In places, however, the cist burials also have superstructures. In Monasteraden the cist burials were enclosed in circles of stone, in the ring-cairns. Perhaps that was enough to keep the spirits in if they started to make trouble.

Tribal nodes

As we have seen, during the Bronze Age these places increased in historicity. Kilfree and Monasteraden would have been only two of many places that were chosen as locations for tribal nodes. These nodes were mainly located in uplands and consisted of concentrations of monuments from many periods; new monuments such as wedge tombs or standing stones were added over time, and earlier tombs like some of the Neolithic megaliths were reused for burials. At Monasteraden the monumental distinction starts in the earliest Bronze Age. The same pattern holds for Kilfree. While this trend holds for many of these tribal nodes, it is also possible to see differences between the way these places developed over time, suggesting that each node might have had its own identity. Common to them all, large and small, is that they provide central places, in most cases unenclosed, although the hillforts were hinged. At these places gatherings of larger groups may have taken place, but this seems to be in the latter part of the sequence, towards the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age.

Many advances have been made in our understanding of social institutions in the Bronze Age, mainly built on the results of the North Munster study. A settlement 'model' has been proposed in which hillforts were taken to represent the top of a regional hierarchy, with smaller enclosed hilltops and settlements by lakes as subordinate places. Below these again were the ordinary people, living in enclosed or unenclosed settlements like those at Curraghatoor or Lough Gur (see Cooney and Grogan 1994; Grogan *et al.* 1996, 38–9). However, Cooney (2000b, 23) points out that this model might only hold for this particular region. It is not totally necessary to take the interpretations in this direction. Hillforts, especially the univallate ones registered for Sligo (see Condit *et al.* 1991) as well as the hilltop enclosure in Fairymount, Co. Roscommon, and a number of other larger enclosures around Rathcroghan and Carnfree, are large features that could just as well be interpreted as communal places, including more people rather than excluding them. The other places reckoned as tribal nodes in this book show no real sign of exclusiveness in terms of hinged spaces either. Instead, many places seem to have a similar collection of monuments that probably were in use throughout the period. Furthermore, as discussed above, the few burials that belong to the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age do not seem to differ much

from each other in terms of grave-gifts.

The tribal nodes could have been represented by enclosed hilltops or royal sites like Rathcroghan, but also by smaller local concentrations of sites such as those at Kiltullagh, Monasteraden and Kilfree. While the nodes might have possessed central places of reference it is possible that their territoriality did not have any fixed boundaries, such as lines on a map. Probably they only faded out towards the edges, or were defined by natural places such as rivers and streams. It is possible, given the evidence from the burnt mounds located at the small node in Monasteraden, that people not only died but also lived near these nodes. It has been shown that not only did the burial practices on the eastern side of the lake differ from those on the western side, but the items deposited also differed.

Despite these differences, both sides of the lake have quite substantial crannogs dating from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age. Most activities during the early and middle Bronze Age took place higher up in the landscape, with both monumental burials and the burnt mounds. Already at this stage the lowlands and wetlands were used for deposition of metals. To understand the traces of production on the crannogs we have to put them into the context of the depositions that had taken place over a long period of time in the lake.

What do crannogs do?

To find out how the crannogs worked in the tribal communities they have to be contrasted with the tribal nodes. The late Bronze Age crannogs or lakeside sites have often been taken to represent small workshops or 'simple domestic habitations'. To understand what these islands were used for and also what difference they made in their materiality, we have analysed the finds both from them and from around them as well as the spatiality of these islands. It has been recognised that the islands held materials that they shared with many of the depositions in the lake and in other watery places. These depositions had taken place over thousands of years before these crannogs were built. Only in the case of the construction of these islands did the character of these depositions change slightly. To have a particular place from where the objects were deposited, and around which the deposits were focused, meant that the practice of deposition gained a permanency that it did not have before. The places of deposition from, say, the water's edge with no formal structures, such as houses, would have had a different meaning. In this way the depositions in Ireland differ somewhat from other European materials. By 'placing' the practice of preparing and carrying out depositions more permanently, people would have been changing and manipulating the long tradition of leaving things in watery places.

This permanency consisted of a built island. The metalwork has mainly been interpreted either as functional, where axes seem to denote woodworking, or as functionalistic, where metalwork in general is seen to denote social hierarchies. The axes may possibly have been used for woodworking, but what has to be considered is how their meaning (and the meaning of the landscape) changed when they were deposited. Skulls and wetland burials and moulds for swords make a strange combination in terms of interpretation of these sites as places for domestic activity and metal production. Instead I think that we have to see them as places where the dangerous origins of metal production were kept. The islands served to blend the categories of settlement, deposition and burial. Possibly some people took up at least seasonal residence on the crannogs. These people may have been responsible for and may have carried out and prepared the sacrifices to the water-deities. Possibly, given the evidence from the depositions, these activities were associated with animistic beliefs.

The use of the crannogs also worked to architecturally activate areas situated in between the

nodes in the landscape. During the early Bronze Age these edges of the landscape were only denoted by depositions but in the later period they began to be built in, with the construction of crannogs in these zones. The crannogs, the hillforts and the hilltop enclosures together encompassed both the high and the low places in the landscape in the sphere of human activity. In a tribal landscape mainly focused on the nodes, the placing of more permanent structures in areas away from these nodes would work to create a tension. This may have threatened the earlier established orders as some groups may have taken over the depositions. However, there is some evidence that the practices on the crannogs in turn were manipulated, and with an increased emphasis on animals the tribalism might have been reshaped again, strengthening the communal identities. Also towards the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age one starts to trace the concentrated efforts of large communal works, both in the building of trackways and in the construction of long communal features like the Doon of Drumsna (Condit and Buckley 1989). There are also larger communal deposits, such as cauldrons etc., which do not necessarily imply one individual depositor but which would symbolise plenty for many.

In this chapter we have used the term 'tribal' to describe people's ways of expressing solidarity, but the evidence of the archaeological material indicates that the structure of these tribes could have changed considerably. At the beginning it may have been more of an ancestral cult that continued in the development of the tribal nodes. Towards the end of the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age, while the nodes were still in use, more attention was paid to the larger tribal meeting-places or large-scale projects. The crannogs' role may at the beginning have been to create a place and to institute a role for officiants to carry out different stages of deposition, which may have acted as an effort to break with the earlier tribal ties and their structures. However, the contents in the rituals may have been manipulated and the inclusion of man- and animal-transforming objects may have changed the role of the crannogs as well. The crannogs' role in this change was to mediate and perhaps to create unifying symbols in terms of totemism or perhaps animism. The finds of skulls, moulds and items normally found in deposits suggest that they also served to mediate between production, creation and death, representing an amalgamation of our categories of settlement, burial and deposits. Despite our Iron Age dates for some crannogs in Lough Gara there is no material evidence for their use from the first century BC to basically AD 400–500. Until more evidence is at hand concerning the Iron Age, I think we can see this period as a time when people were tribal in the sense that the large communal identity was more defined than at other times, and if the crannogs in late prehistory temporarily represented a break with the tribes, it is possible that this break did not succeed totally. I think that with the inclusion of the animal or shamanistic symbolism the tribes managed to hold together, even if possibly in a new form.

10. IN MEMORY OF THE TRIBES — THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

There is very little archaeology visible from the later part of the Iron Age, but there are still some linkages between the two periods. The early medieval period (*c.* AD 400–1100) is marked both by a more visible archaeology and by the appearance of documentary sources to further aid our understanding of society and people at this stage. There is evidence for some quite large social changes at around the same time as the use of crannogs and ringforts become more pronounced. Many studies of the period have been criticised for overemphasising the picture of ‘saints and scholars’ or for focusing on metal production, which Tierney (1998) has called ‘techno-fetishism’. Other scholars, like Matthew Stout with his substantial study of ringforts (Stout 1997), have been criticised for portraying the period as too static. In the research history I pointed out how this period, like the Bronze Age, has been explained in processual terminology, such as status, hierarchy etc., which itself gives the impression that there was not much difference in people’s ways of perceiving themselves between prehistory and the early medieval period. In this chapter I will try to address these issues and to show elements of dynamism in between as well as within the latter time-period.

People around the lake

Near Lough Gara there was once a tribe called the Gre craige. The lake was at this time called Lough Techet.⁴⁷ The name is also mentioned, for example, in Tírechán’s *Life of Patrick*, dated to the late seventh century (Bieler 1979, 41–2). In the documentary sources this tribe is only touched upon briefly. There are other names in the early documents that bear similarities to the name Gre craige. There were people called the Artraige (the bear people), the Dartraige (the calf people), the Osraige (the deer people) and the Gre craige (the horse people). Mac Niocaill (1972, 3–4) saw these epithets as denoting the divinities of particular peoples. One possibility is that these names referred to totemistic protectors or to animal gods. They could be similar to the totems discussed in Chapter 9 which may have been associated with the loyalties constructed during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. Beside the Gre craige, other early tribal names in the area include the Ciarrige and the Luigne (see e.g. Charles-Edwards 2000, 39).

A number of changes in society have been noted in the documentary sources from around the seventh century AD (E.J. Byrne 1971; F. Kelly 1988):

- decline in tribal loyalties — the rise of dynasties;
- simplification of the kin-group — the family size decreases;
- fossilisation of the law-texts;
- monastic federations replace the territorial diocese;
- provincial kingdoms were formed on the basis of dynastic affiliations instead of the earlier territorial kingships.

The change could be described as one whereby the loyalties of people shifted away from a primary connection to the tribe towards families and dynasties. The dynasties did not name

themselves after a god or an animal protector, as had been the custom among the tribes. Instead they described themselves, with reference to people or ancestors, as Uí Bríuin, Uí Fiachrach, Uí Ailella and Uí Neill (see Fig. 44), or aligned themselves with new groups such as the Connachta (the descendants of Conn), the Eóganachta (the descendants of Eogan), etc. With few exceptions, ‘the Uí names generally refer to an ancestor who lived or was presumed to have lived in the fifth century or later’ (E.J. Byrne 1971, 151; see also MacNeill 1911, 82ff). The tribal names would have represented a deeper lineage than this (see Charles-Edwards 2000, 96–7). The change in names can be seen to reflect the transition from a society structured primarily on tribal affiliations to one built on descent from people rather than gods or animals. There was a new emphasis on lineage at the expense of the tribe.

These changes are recognised just after the time when it has been argued that crannogs and ringforts were becoming the normal settlement type, in the fifth–sixth century AD (Lynn 1983, 48, 54–7; Edwards 1990, 17). It has been suggested that the majority of crannogs and ringforts were used from the seventh to the ninth century (Stout 1997, 24). Ringforts are small circular enclosures, approximately 30m in diameter, which is similar to the size of the crannogs of this period. I believe that these sites play a substantial role in the societal changes that were later recognised in the documentary sources. As I will demonstrate, the change in architecture precedes or may go hand in hand with these social changes, which is an illustration of how the use of material culture could have affected the outcome of events, rather than only reflecting them. The rise of the dynasties occurs against the background of a decline in ‘tribal feeling’ that starts to be noted around the seventh–eighth century, as the dynastic families pushed the tribes into the background (E.J. Byrne 1971; Ó Cróinín 1995, 41–4). Some of the tribes disappear from the later sources (E.J. Byrne 1973, 233).

This does not, however, mean that the tribes or tribal loyalties disappeared altogether. The word ‘tribe’ is difficult to work with in many senses, and replacements for the term have been sought. It is supposed to stand for the Irish ‘*tuath*’, which is used almost throughout the medieval period. However, as Byrne (1971) has discussed, the reason for the complications in using the words tribe or *tuath* is that their meaning might differ over time. The general shift from a society of tribal loyalties to another more centred on lineage groups indicates that the bonds between people were set according to a new logic, that the grounds for solidarity were changed. It is of interest to try to understand the forces that were in play at the time, and in the extension of the inquiry to try to understand how this transition took place in the region around the lake. We will also look at the role of the lake itself and the crannogs in these changes.

Burial/ritual

Inscribed stones

We know very little about Ireland in the time around the birth of Christ and the following few hundred years. Archaeological material from between the later Bronze Age/early Iron Age and the early medieval period is sparse. Only very few graves can be directly linked to the Iron Age, but we know that earlier sites, such as old megalithic cemeteries or barrows, were of importance to people at this time. It is possible to suggest that people during those times expressed a loyalty to their dead ancestors (fictional or real) by burial in the tombs from the past, which perhaps would supply them with a deep lineage. As explained above, people may have seen themselves as loyal to a totem animal or thing, and earlier lineages may have been manipulated. Most likely the tribal nodes discussed in the previous chapter still remained important well into the early

been found on, for example, objects of bone. Many of the stones show people’s names and make use of the gentilic ‘X moccuY’ formula, which shows tribal affiliations, rather than the parantelic ‘X aueY’ (Mac Neill 1907; 1911; McManus 1991, 119–20, 180 n. 69; Charles-Edwards 2000, 96), but none of the stones in our study area show the gentilic formula. Most Irish ogham stones occur in the southern part of Ireland in counties Kerry and Cork, but there are also specimens from other parts of the country — for example, a line of stones leading from the east coast through Roscommon and north through County Mayo. Perhaps these stones are following a possible continuation of an old routeway, the Slige nAssail, attested by O’Lochlainn (1940). The line touches the southern part of the study area, although none of the ogham stones are located right by the lake (Fig. 46). As we could see on the maps in the previous chapter, the tribal nodes contained standing stones, but what is of particular interest is that standing stones also seem to be linking some of the larger nodes to each other. Many smaller nodes may consist of standing stones in combination with other sites. The ogham stones in the area have been found in these places and link up with the alignments of stones.

F. Moore (1998) has pointed out that the primary context of the stones varies a lot. Some are associated with graves, others can be found near early ecclesiastical sites or at prehistoric sites, and some have been deliberately moved from their original location. This is also the case for the stones in the study area, which is why it is of interest to discuss their context at a higher level, above their primary context. What is interesting is that these stones are connected with places that were of importance in earlier periods, these places that we have described as tribal nodes.

Recently McManus has applied linguistic theory for the relative dating of these stones (see McManus 1991), and we will take a closer look at the stones listed in the area with the help of

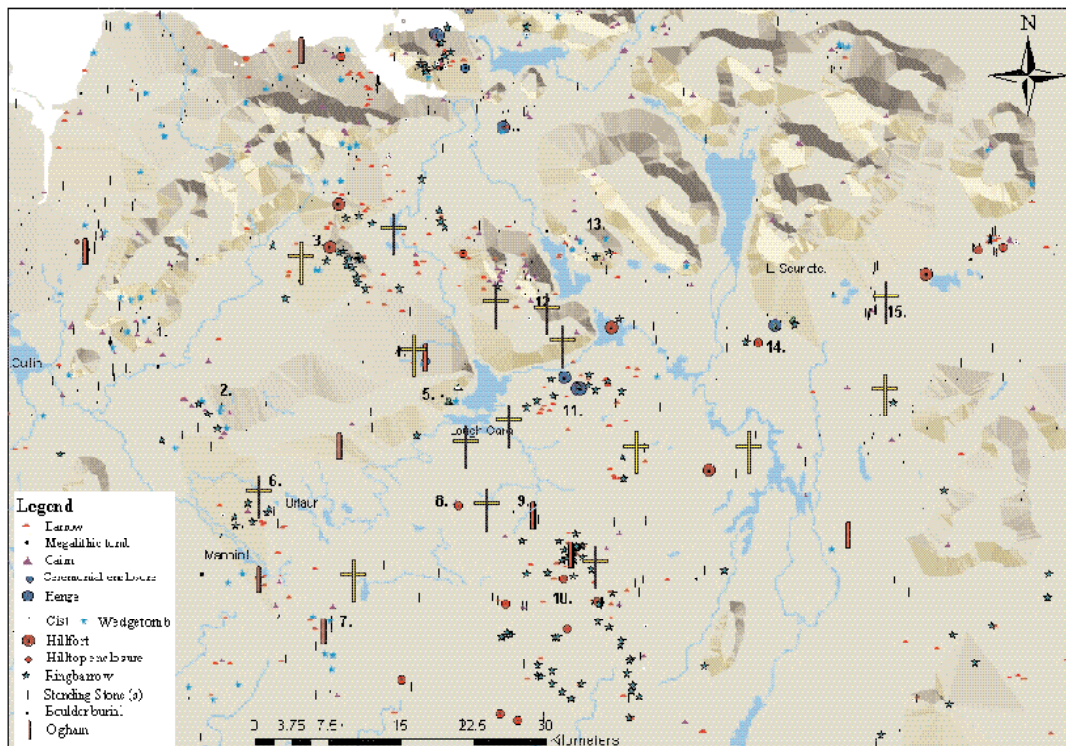


Fig. 46—Tribal nodes, ogham stones and early churches (see Appendices).

these dates. O'Muraile (2000) has connected the existence of the stones with the Ciarraige tribe, which is one of the population groups in the area. They are claimed to have a southern origin, in the part of Ireland with which the ogham stones are most associated.⁴⁸

The primary context of the first stone in the alignment mentioned above is in the roof of a souterrain. It is possible that it was moved there from another location. The stone's secondary context is at the royal site of Rathcroghan, where it probably originated. It reads 'VRAICCI' then 'MAQI MEDVVI', which means 'Fraich son of Medbh'. A second inscription on the stone reads 'QUREGSAMA' (Rhys 1898; Macalister 1945–59, vol. 1, 16, stone 12, 13; McManus 1991).

The next ogham stone is located at a ringfort by the small hill of Drummin td, bordering the townland of Tullaghan. This place has been mentioned as a possible tribal node at Belenagare. Here are two stones that Macalister thought might possibly be marking a grave, but only one of these bears visible ogham script. This stone is marked 'CUNOVATO' (Macalister 1914; 1945–59, vol. 1, 16, stone 11). McManus (1991, 94f.) has dated the script on the stone at Drummin to the first half of the sixth century. At the foot of the hill is yet another standing stone.

According to Macalister the next stone would follow at another place called Tullaghan in the townland of Ballybeg. This stone has for some unknown reason fallen out of later compilations and is not registered in the SMR either. This place is located south-west of present-day Ballyhaunis. The only information we are given is that the stone read 'QASIGN (i) MAQ [I]'; no translation is given (Macalister 1945–59, vol. 1, 8, stone 6).

The next ogham stone in Macalister's corpus that relates to the area is located at Rusheens East, at Kilmovee, just across the border in County Mayo. This place was also a possible tribal node. The stone was found as a kneeling-stone at St Mobhi's holy well. The top of the stone is broken off and it is only possible to read parts of the script. It says 'Alattos MAQI BR...'. (Macalister 1945–9, vol. 1, 7, stone 73). McManus (1991) has not offered any dating for this script, but has on the other hand translated 'Alattos' with 'gen. Alta, OI allaid "wild"'. There is a concentration of earlier sites in this place.

A little to the south of Rusheens East there are two ogham stones. The first is located in the townland called Island on top of a low mound. The place is described by Cochrane as dramatic, being on a gentle hill somewhat higher than its surroundings, thereby commanding a good view of both Croagh Patrick and the place where the boundaries of the large catchment areas of the rivers of Connacht join (Cochrane 1898, 399–405; see also Rhys 1898b, 396). He adds that the place has a selection of earlier monuments. The reading of this stone is somewhat uncertain: 'CUNALEGI AVI QUNANCANOS' (Macalister 1945–9, vol. 1, 5, stone 3). McManus offers no date for this stone either. A dating is given, however, for parts of the inscriptions on the second stone in the nearby area. The first reading of the stone at Bracklagh is 'LUGGADON MAQI LUGUDEC'; the second is 'DDISI MO (...) CQU S(?)L'. Macalister guessed that the latter reads 'DECUNS O MICILL'. The second should, according to McManus (1991, 65), instead be read 'DDISI MO...CQU SEL'. The dates for these stones are somewhat later than the single dated stone (stone 11) on the routeway from Rathcroghan to Rusheens East. The stones here are dated to the middle/second half of the sixth century (McManus 1991, 95–7) and to the late sixth–early seventh century (*ibid.*, 94).

It is worth noting that none of the three dated stones from the area belongs to the earliest stratum of linguistically dated ogham stones (that is, the early fifth century). While the stones' primary context varies, their secondary context is the same in that they are all connected with large and small tribal nodes. Their dates imply that these tribal nodes were still of importance at this time. They also suggest that the tribal nodes were contemporary with the strong evidence for

a reactivation of the crannogs in the sixth–seventh century, and that the inscription of the ogham stones could well be contemporary with the earliest use of the crannogs.

*Ogham mentioned in Tírechan's Life of St Patrick*⁴⁹

In the case of ogham stones there is a text that refers to what seem to be the same collections of stones that we have just discussed. The text is Bishop Tírechan's 'Account of St Patrick', a collection of local lore about St Patrick believed to date from the late seventh century (Bieler 1979; Ó Cróinín 1995, 55). This text is used by historians for example to locate centres for political groupings during the same century and for dating early church establishments. It gives a late seventh-century view of St Patrick's journey and missionary tours in fifth-century Ireland, and for us the most interesting part concerns his alleged whereabouts in east Connacht. In the following I am making use of a popularised translation by Liam de Paor (1993, 167), who has also given his opinion (in brackets) on where the places mentioned are located:

'Patrick came to Selc (between Rath Croghan and Tulsk, Co. Roscommon), where the sons of Brión had their halls. They camped on the ramparts of Selc and made their bed and seat among the stones. His hand wrote letters on the stones which we saw today with our own eyes'.

It is possible that this refers to the same stone as described in Rathcroghan, but the place might also be Carnfree. After following a track on the eastern side of the lake 'to the confines of the Crecrigi'— a part of the journey during which churches are either founded or blessed but no stones are mentioned — 'the saint returns to Airthic (Tibohine, Tullanarock, Elphin)'.

'And he went out to Drummut Cerrigi (Tullanarock), where he came upon two men fighting. They were two sons of one man, at odds with each other after the death of their father, who had been a coppersmith of the tribe of the Ciarraige airnen. They hadn't agreed to divide their inheritance' St Patrick then blessed them and they settled down and granted their land to the church. 'He founded a church there, in which is (the grave of) the craftsman Cuanu.'

The location of Tullanarock is problematic: there are two townlands with the same name in the area and both are situated near the road. One of the townlands is near Ballagherreen (which is discussed as an option by O'Muraile (2000, 169)) while the other is at Belenagare. Here we must recall that the ogham stone recorded from Drummin (stone no. 11) bears the inscription 'CUNOVATO', which seems similar to Cuanu, and the next townland to Drummin is Tullaghanrock, which would increase the probability that this is the Tullaghanrock mentioned. In this context it might be interesting to note that the name Cuanu is connected with the nearby church in Tibohine in a genealogy in the *Martyrology of Oengus* (see Stokes 1905, 76). In this story no claim is made that St Patrick carved the inscription, but he takes over and sanctifies what seems to be a pagan place:

'He continued his journey though the wastelands of the Ciarraige Airnie, to the southern plain, that is to Narniu (on the Roscommon–Mayo border). He came upon holy Iarnascus under an elm with his son Locharnach. Patrick wrote an alphabet for him ... He founded a church there and accepted Iarnascus as abbot...'

O'Muraile (2000) has suggested that Airnie is Mannin Lake. This might therefore be connected with the Bracklagh stone, which is located near the lake. St Patrick is here again associated with writing, even if we are not told that it is connected with an ogham stone (there are more places in Mayo where Tírechan mentions Patrick as giving away alphabets that may correspond with locations of ogham stones).

There are a number of issues that can be raised from this Patrick lore from the area south of the lake. First of all there is a question of simple source criticism: the dated ogham script from the area is later than the period 432–61, which is often seen as the time when St Patrick was active in Ireland. The stone inscribed 'CUNOVATO', for example, has been linguistically dated to the first half of the sixth century, so if McManus's dating holds, the stone was inscribed some 40–90 years after the saint's death. Still, the ogham of the CUNOVATO stone would have been at most 200 years old when Tírechan was writing, while the ogham inscriptions at Bracklagh are younger again. It is interesting that the Patrick mission is legitimised by reference to older monuments (a practice also noted elsewhere; see R. Bradley and Williams 1998). Their general location also shows that these nodes in the region around Lough Gara were still charged with power and were important in people's minds at this time.

In memory of the tribes

The ogham inscriptions can confirm none of the people mentioned by Tírechan. The people mentioned on the Bracklagh stone are not described as having a connection with the Ciarrige Airnen wastelands; neither were the Moccu Medb any longer directly associated with the royal site at Rathcroghan. Tírechan instead linked the site with the sons of Brúin, who were connected with the plains around Rathcroghan. The dynasty of Uí Brúin rose to compete for power in Connacht around 650, and grew into the most powerful political group in the eighth century (see Byrne 1973, 238–40; Ó Cróinín 1995, 60f.).

We will continue to search outward from the location of the ogham stones, but from a slightly different angle. As we know, it is possible that the inscribed stones show a slightly earlier picture of tribal affiliation in the area. Further, it is argued elsewhere that the ogham inscriptions display something called the 'maccu moccu' formula, relating descent to the tribal group rather than to a dynasty (Ó Cróinín 1995, 34).

Moore has brought to our attention the role of the ogham stones as a way of remembering. They would probably have meant more than the ordinary grave-marker at the time. He suggests that they could be connected with grants of land, tribal boundaries, church foundations, hermitages or — as emphasised — 'a combination of these' (F. Moore 1998). That the ogham stones tell us about the transition from tribal society to a more dynastic way of structuring power has been pointed out before (see MacNeill 1907; 1909; 1911). What is more important is that they also signify the transition from a largely oral culture to one in which writing became more and more important. Ong (1982) discusses how the use of written text and the advent of a written culture give a different structure to people's ways of thinking than an oral culture. For our discussion this suggestion is important when we contrast the different ways of remembering which would have been stimulated by sites such as the mounds or standing stones found at the nodes compared with a written memory such as on the ogham stones or for that matter in a genealogy. The latter could become more fixed in relation to specific people, given that many people or at least the people who mattered were literate. In terms of the ogham stones a particular 'someone' could be remembered, rather than slowly floating out of mind into the common pool of ancestral memories. Even though some of the stones assert a gentile belonging, the practice

of inscribing stones anyway focuses attention on one person in particular, which adds to the ambiguity in terms of reference and memory for these stones as one of their meanings.

In this way the writing on the stones breaks a long chain of memories that might have permeated monuments such as standing stones. It also shows ambivalence between a tribal system of a deep lineage and a tribal way of remembering, and a dynastic system built on the memory of a particular ancestral figure. It is well known that the latter were often more person-specific. The dynasties seem to have built themselves around a particular ancestor from the fifth century or later (MacNeill 1911, 82ff; F.J. Byrne 1971). Their way of remembering together with the written genealogies might have contributed to the creation of a new way of memorising as well as a new way of forgetting, forgetting the deeper lineages of the tribes.

Moore also discussed the ogham stones as memorabilia from another angle, examining their connection with grants of land, tribal boundaries and church foundations. The interesting point is that there is a possibility that they were not only used as memorabilia in the sense of grave-markers. McManus's study reveals a renewed attention in that ogham stones were mentioned in several of the sixth/seventh-century law-texts and this opens up investigations about ogham's role in land disputes (McManus 1991, 163–6; F Moore 1998, 25).

As well as resolving some of the contextual problems, such as the movement of stones from one location to another, a broader analysis might also help us to see a different pattern. What can be noted on the distribution maps is that all the ogham stones occur in or on the periphery of places that seem to have been of importance over a longer time, the places mentioned earlier as tribal nodes that are often located on elevated places in the landscape, and it is near to these concentrations that the ogham stones find their secondary context. Even though they might have been moved and reused in some other contexts, as suggested by the ogham stone in the souterrain at Rathcroghan (see also Waddell 1983, 33), they also point to a close connection with these sites. However, while the stones suggest the continued importance of these places, the use of writing also indicates a change in the meaning of the stones and the places in the way that they would be fixing memory.

Continuation of burial at the nodes

The ogham stones show that the nodes were in use at least as early as the sixth century, and this is also confirmed by burial evidence from both larger and smaller nodes. An increasing number of excavations suggest that there was a continuation in the use of burial-places from the prehistoric into the historic period. These places did not go out of use at the advent of Christianity in the fifth century. The practice of inhumation was introduced in the first century AD (not including the bog bodies). Many people were still buried with their own families or their ancestors up until the eighth century and it was not until then that the Christian burial-grounds started to be widely used (E. O'Brien 1990; 1991). There is evidence from the larger study area to support this statement. The excavation at Knoxpark, Co. Sligo, situated on a river which starts in the Owenmore, revealed a 'pagan' burial-ground that was later used for Christian burials (see Mount 1994). What is interesting is that burials both here and at Cabinteely, Co. Dublin, for example, occur together with the remains of iron production (see Conway 1999). Another excavation at Kilturra on the border between counties Mayo and Roscommon showed a similar pattern. This concentration of monuments consists of standing stones and two ring-barrows located on a hill with a good view. Some skeletal pieces from a disturbed context were dated to the later Iron Age, AD 70–420 and AD 262–600 respectively (Cribbin *et al.* 1994; McCormick *et al.* 1995). This site is located about 1km from the ogham stone in Ballybeg, Co. Roscommon, and

there are also other sites such as megalithic tombs and standing stones in the vicinity, which could indicate that it was a node. Further excavations around the foot of the standing stone in the complex revealed an extended inhumation burial dating from AD 406–532. There were also cremations in pits that were thought to be earlier. The excavators have taken the burial ritual to represent ‘a recently converted person who was buried among his pagan ancestors’ (McCormick *et al.* 1995, 94).

With this evidence as a background it is possible to say that many of the nodes in the area around the lake were important as reference places and places for the dead through the later Iron Age and well into the early medieval period. It is therefore possible that many of the places around the lake were also used into the period from which we have evidence for an increase in the use of the crannogs, in the sixth–seventh century AD.

The early churches and boundaries

The establishment of the early ecclesiastical sites did not occur in a vacuum. The new religion was introduced into the old pagan beliefs. As we will see, the ecclesiastical sites relate to the nodes in their own way.

Just like the ogham stones, the earlier ecclesiastical sites can be found near the nodes. As shown on Fig. 46, a number of early church-related sites such as holy wells, burial-grounds, cillins and churches are also located near these centres. It is likely that it was through these earlier ‘holy places’ or centres that the conversion to Christianity had to take place. Herity (1987, 134–7) has described this in terms of the Christians taking over the old sacral grounds from the pagans. If we work on this model in which the nodes would still be meaningful in the early medieval period but take a closer look at the variants in our region, this way of thinking can be further expanded and deepened.

It is likely that separation from the tribe also involved a spatial distancing from the nodes. As we have seen in the material from our area, the ecclesiastical sites are often located on the edges of the earlier nodes or out in topographical boundary zones in the landscape. Only some of them are located within the node itself (see Fig. 47). The two different locations could imply a changing relationship between tribe and church over time. Another possibility is that the location of the churches in relation to a node can reveal how the new religion was received in the various communities and different population groups. A church located within a node could mean that the newly established church associated itself closely to earlier institutionalised ‘ritual places’.

The early ecclesiastical sites can be traced both by documentary references and by archaeological evidence. One of the text-dated churches in the area, Basilicc (Doherty 1984), may be one of the earliest churches in Ireland, possibly dating from the fifth century (but see Charles-Edwards 2000, 45, note 135, for another opinion). It is situated near to but outside the area of Rathcroghan. Another possibly even earlier church that may belong to a pre-Patrician tradition could be the church site at Achadmore, situated within the earlier tribal node. In Tírechán’s *Life of Patrick* this site is mentioned as already having a holy man before being visited by St Patrick. There are also other early text-dated churches in the area, such as Killaraght, Tibohine, Elphin, Shankill, Tawnagh and Shancough, believed to have been in existence in the seventh century (see Bieler 1979; Gwynn and Hadcock 1988). Shancough is located near another collection of older monuments, near Moytirra.

Besides being mentioned in the early sources, early churches can be located by archaeological analysis. Sites can be screened according to the following criteria: apart from having church remains, the site should be inside a circular enclosure, near a holy well and with cross-inscribed slabs or bullaun stones (see Swan 1983). On the maps the early ecclesiastical sites are marked with

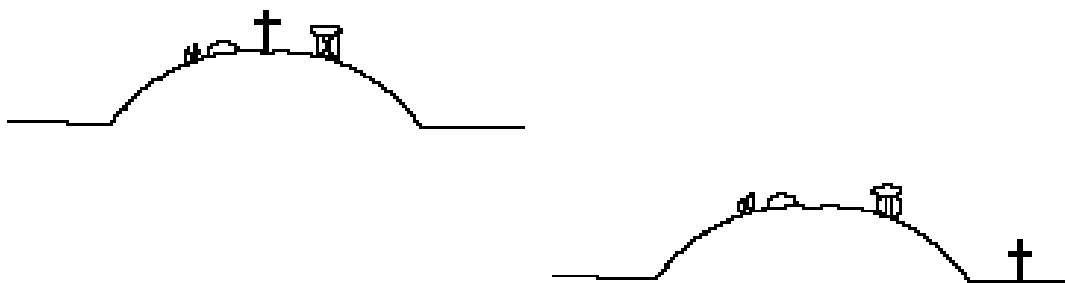


Fig. 47—Ecclesiastical sites reusing and incorporating monuments an an earlier place of importance as compared to an ecclesiastical site spatially distanced from the node.

a yellow cross. There are some church sites that only meet a limited number of these criteria; these are marked with an unfilled red cross. One church that has not been mentioned in the early documentary sources but that meets most of the criteria is Carrowntemple, outside the node in Kilfree. It has been suggested by Wallace and Timoney (1987, 45–6) that the site belongs to the early medieval period owing to the remains of a large circular enclosure (90–95m in diameter) and also the existence of souterrains within the church grounds.

In relation to the nodes, the churches are located either at the node itself, at its edges or out in the more peripheral areas (as I will show further on, they are often located peripherally in relation to the main settlement). Achadmore may possibly be seen as an extremely early ecclesiastical site and is located centrally to a tribal node. The overall pattern, however, shows that not only Basilic but also other early ecclesiastical sites often take up boundary positions in relation to earlier sites. Examples of this are the sites at Killanoan and Ogulla, situated on the edges of Rathcroghan, and Tibohine on the edges of Fairymount hillfort; Monasteraden is in the area of earlier monuments, Kilnamanagh has a boundary position, and Killaraght is located beside an earlier node. It is interesting that many early ecclesiastical sites take up boundary positions in relation to the main ringfort settlement (this pattern has also been observed elsewhere by Swan (1983)). Only rarely does an early ecclesiastical site occur in the middle of a concentration of ringforts or sites that were important in earlier periods. That early churches are located on boundaries of the tribal nodes holds true for the material in general. What is interesting also is that churches take up a position, either in connection with the nodes or in areas at quite some distance from them, sometimes even on natural islands in lakes (and off the coast). Their location could reflect both the difference in local methods of conversion and the difference in age between the church sites. As argued in earlier chapters, no monumental sites have been located on natural islands, and the last evidence for the use of the islands belongs to the Mesolithic. The churches can therefore be seen as deliberately placed on the outer boundaries of the inhabited, monumental landscape.

There are many indications in the archaeological material that the boundary zones took on a more important meaning during these times (see O’Riain 1972). To understand the location not only of the churches but also of the ringforts and eventually of the crannogs we will take a look at the documentary sources. In early Irish tribal society people’s legal rights depended on whether they were situated within the confines of their own territory. Inside his/her territory a person

was an *aurraud* with full legal rights, but if the boundary with another tribe was crossed the individual became a stranger, a *deorad*, with no legal protection at all (F.J. Byrne 1971, 132). To cross a boundary at this stage meant to expose oneself to danger as one's legal protection was at stake.

There are law-texts dating from the seventh/eighth century that describe this boundary mechanism, which applied to people, animals and things. The king was responsible for the relationship between different *tuatha*. On the one hand, the king and other members of the higher classes in society, the *nemed*, were free to cross the border to another territory, but the ordinary man was supposed to stay within his own *tuath*.⁵⁰ The only time when an ordinary person would go outside the boundaries would be to attend a fair (*oenach*), for example, or to go on pilgrimage (F. Kelly 1988, 4f.). That a king could enforce his own *tuath*'s law in another territory is first found in a law-text written in a later Middle Irish. This could only work if both *tuatha* were subject to the same overking (F. Kelly 1988, 23).

This all gives a picture of in general fairly isolated *tuatha*, whose boundaries were strictly maintained, however, this might not have been as strict as portrayed in the laws. Ordinary people were supposed to stay within these limits, and anyone who tried to wander out of this limited world ran the risk of becoming an outlaw, and then of being treated as a stranger. The existence of such sharp boundaries between different tribes must have shaped social life in very particular ways. It has been argued that this boundary mechanism was manipulated in the conversion to Christianity (Charles-Edwards 1976). The earliest Christians would have been considered strangers; as they did not belong to the tribe, they would have been social outcasts. But between the fifth century and the sixth or seventh century they rose from being seen as outlaws to being one of the *nemed* classes (*ibid.*). They even institutionalised the practice of pilgrimage, which negated the otherwise all-important bonds of tribe and kin-group and facilitated much more travelling.

It is commonly held that the early church was modelled on the structure of the early tribe. According to this view, each diocese was organised as a free-standing, separate, territorial unit. It was not until the seventh–eighth century that the church was remodelled according to the parochial system, which linked together the separate units of the church into mother- and daughter-houses all over Ireland (K. Hughes 1966, x; Ó Cróinín 1995, 149ff). However, voices have been raised against this view, suggesting that the early churches had no organisation at all and that conversion did not proceed at a very fast pace (Sharpe 1984, 241).

Charles-Edwards has proposed that the conversion to Christianity as well as the rise in status of the clerics came about by playing on the same exclusion mechanism as had been used by the tribe against other tribes and against strangers. In the sixth-century text 'The First Synod of St Patrick' the churchmen were told to create 'a *tuath* within a *tuath*'. The Christians should separate themselves from the others, the pagans, by not accepting either their gifts or their judgement. To break with these rules and to accept interaction with the pagans should be punished with excommunication, just like in a normal *tuath* (Charles-Edwards 1976, 55). By making use of the normal *tuath*'s exclusion practices the Christians rose from being *deorad* to being *nemed*, and the bishop in the end acquired the same status as a tribal king.

I think that we can look at the location of the early ecclesiastical sites with Charles-Edwards's reasoning as a background and suggest that, with local variation accounted for, the Christian establishments worked spatially to draw attention away from the nodes. As we will see, the boundary locations in the landscape became more clearly defined throughout the early medieval period, and I will argue that this change of spatial emphasis would also help to dissolve earlier tribal loyalties. However, it is important to bear in mind that there is archaeological evidence that the nodes were still important as burial-grounds at least up until the eighth century AD.

Settlement

The two main settlement sites associated with the early medieval period are crannogs and ringforts. I will try to discuss the relationship between these two site types and what they can tell us with special reference to the material around Lough Gara. In Stout's (1997) analysis of ringforts the monument type has been treated as static over the whole of the early medieval period. This work has been criticised by Monk (1998, 33), who has shown that the material holds more variation than first meets the eye. I will make use of parts of Stout's model, but also try to look at both local and temporal variation.

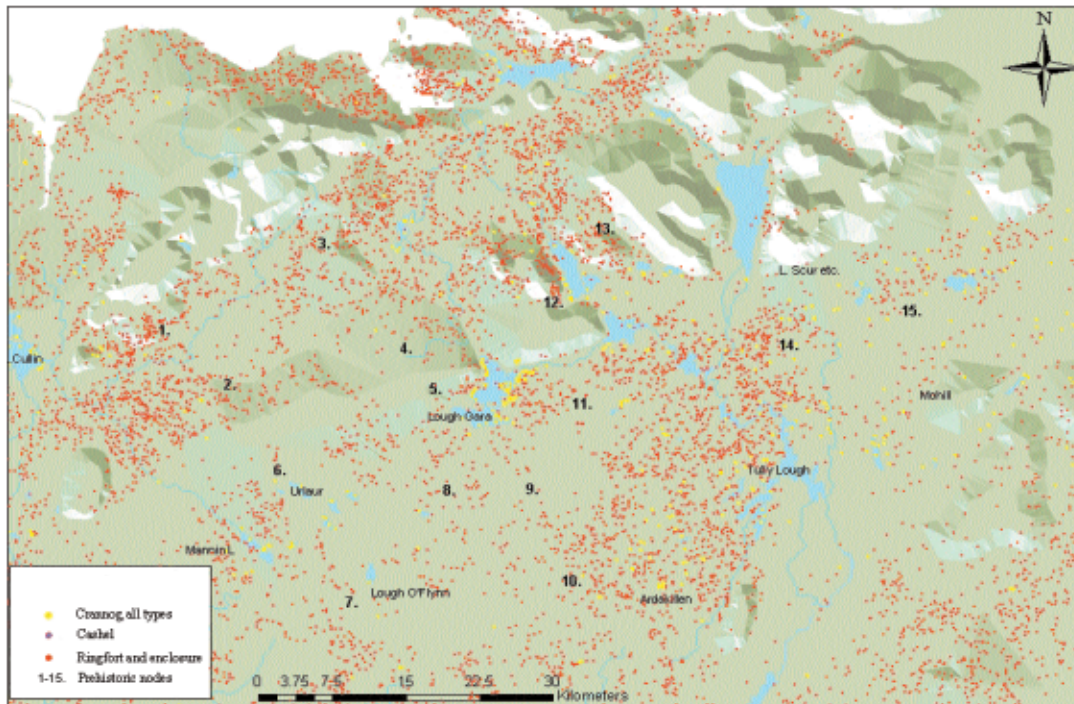
Plate 10 shows the location of the most common early medieval sites, such as ringforts, crannogs and ecclesiastical sites, at a regional scale. As we can see, there are ringforts on both sides of the lake, with more on the eastern than on the western side. At a regional level, however, Lough Gara has less ringforts than many other areas. The densest concentrations of ringforts occur in areas such as the Moy Valley around Swinford, in east Roscommon/south Leitrim and on the south side of the Ox Mountains in a stretch from present-day Ballymote and Tobercurry. There are up to seven or eight ringforts per square kilometre in certain areas. There are also smaller concentrations, such as those around Lough Gara, or ringforts strung out in bands leading from one area to another, perhaps following the line of contemporary roads.

The documentary sources provide information about the population groups living in the area at these times. We have already mentioned the Greccraige connected with Lough Gara. Among the other people in the area were the Uí Ailella, who had their territory between present-day Elphin and Riverstown, with a branch, the Maicc Eircc, around Boyle. South of them were the lands called Mag nAí, which were first connected with the Ciarraige and comprised the area from Roscommon to Belenagare, with the dynasty of Uí Briuin Ai monopolising the kingship from the late eighth century (Charles-Edwards 2000, 40–1, 561). F.J. Byrne (1973, 235) has described the highly populated areas with ringforts in north-east Roscommon as the lands of the Uí Bruin Sinna (see Fig. 44). These people would be seen as representing the upcoming dynasties. It is interesting to note that areas that are more populated may correspond to the larger dynasties, while less populated areas, such as the area around Lough Gara, may be associated with smaller subject tribes such as the Greccraige.

Another general pattern that can be seen on the map is that many crannogs also occur in locations peripheral to the main ringfort distribution and also in relation to the nodes — for example the crannogs centred around Urlaur, Co. Mayo, as well as the area just west of Fenagh, Co. Leitrim. As was discussed in the case of churches, a position on the boundary of the tribal nodes might have been important for manipulating the structures of inclusion and exclusion.

The ringforts

A ringfort can be described as a circular space defined by a bank of earth or stone (those with stone walls are called cashels), measuring about 30m in diameter. They are much smaller than the prehistoric hillforts. These sites have been understood from a utilitarian perspective, but like the crannogs they may have had other meanings. Excavations have shown that many of them contained houses; those without houses have been suggested to be cattle pens (see O'Kelly 1963, 124–5; Proudfoot 1961; Stout 1997, 33), and the idea of the ringforts' association with dairy farming has been further developed by McCormick (1995, 33). About two thirds of the ringforts date from the early medieval period and the seventh–ninth centuries AD, with some earlier and



Pl. 10—‘Typical’ early medieval sites such as ringforts and crannogs in the wider region.

some later sites. Much of the material culture from these sites belongs to this period as well (Stout 1997, 23–4). The ringfort at Lislackagh, Co. Mayo, might be one of the early ones (Walsh 1995). In terms of finds and dating it is quite easy to make comparisons with the crannogs, and to some extent the largest difference between the two is that the crannogs are located in water while the ringforts are on land.

Ringforts and nodes

As noted above, places with monuments from earlier periods were probably still used for burials well into the early medieval period, probably up to the eighth century. Plate 10 shows the relationship between the nodes and the ringforts. The number of ringforts at these places is lower than in other areas. That Rathcroghan has a lower density of ringforts has already been noted by Herity (1987, 134–7); this could imply that Rathcroghan was still of sacral importance and thus was left outside the main areas of settlement, despite holding good farming land (Stout 1997, 96). Killaraght on the eastern side of the lake looks similar. The barrow cemetery is to a large extent avoided by the ringforts. In Monasteraden the ringforts are situated mainly between the node and the mountain. Kilfree diverges from this pattern, with the ringforts located within the circle of the older sites. This means that even at a local level we can see variations in the relationship between settlement and tribal nodes. The map also shows that the ringforts are more spread out in the landscape than the tribal nodes.

Ringforts and everyday monumentality

Ringforts are Ireland’s most common field monument, with about 45,000 recorded examples (see Stout 1997, 53). While circular, and to some extent enclosed, homesteads have been found in earlier periods, it is in the early medieval period that they become commonplace. It is important

for our understanding of these sites to note their abundance. As they are settlements with distinct boundary walls, sometimes built of stone, they had a durability and presence in the landscape like other earlier monuments such as megalithic tombs or standing stones. However, their sheer number and the fact that they seemingly were people's homes give them the character of everyday monumentality, so that the everyday life of people took on a permanence in the landscape.

If we look at the ringforts as monuments we can see that a part of the landscape that formerly did not contain any large number of monumental sites was moved into and built on at this stage. Ringforts, like some early churches, can be found on some of the natural islands in lakes, e.g. Inch Island in Lough Gara (as noted in earlier chapters, the natural lake islands were not associated with monuments during either the Neolithic or the Bronze Age (Fig. 71)). However, even though the area around the lakes was settled, the density of ringforts around many lakeshores is less than in other places.

Taken together, the ringforts are spread out over the land in a way that earlier monumental sites were not. It is hard to know whether the ringforts overlie earlier settlement sites. If they do, the increased presence of ringforts suggests the monumentality of these places; if they don't, they represent a movement away from the tribal nodes out into the landscape. The earlier monuments at the nodes were concentrated in the landscape. In this respect the ringforts represent and create another attitude to the land and to the landscape, incorporating and imposing a more visible human mark on the land. If the hillforts represented the unity and protection of a larger group of people, the ringforts are more concerned with the unity of a smaller group and perhaps the protection of land.

Ringfort hierarchy

In the law-texts written down in the seventh–eighth century early medieval society is described as hierarchical (see e.g. F. Kelly 1988), consisting of a large number of small kingdoms (see F.J. Byrne 1971; 1973). Normally the ringforts are interpreted analogously to reflect a hierarchical society. Most ringforts have only one surrounding wall, while some have two, and a smaller number have three. The varying number of walls around the ringforts has been interpreted as showing a settlement hierarchy at present-day barony levels, with someone noble, such as a king, inhabiting the trivallate fort, a stronger farmer the bivallate fort, and the ordinary farmer the univallate fort (see Warner 1988; Stout 1997, 86–90).

Stout (1997, 85–90) developed a settlement model based on work in two baronies in the south-west midlands. In a further development of Warner's (1988) model, the ringforts in this area were interpreted in a way that linked topographical setting with status (see Stout 1997, 122–8).

Figure 48 shows the results of Stout's analysis. The ringforts are divided into the following five categories:

- C1 — low-status sites like small platform ringforts, belonging to poor farmers, located in lowlands;
- C2 — high-status sites like the bivallate or trivallate ringforts, centrally located;
- C3 — normal-status univallate ringforts, located on good land but not in any strategic place;
- C4 — military, large ringforts, located on a townland or barony boundary;
- C5 — extremely low-status sites like small enclosures located near high-status ringforts.

Stout's model did not include crannogs, but as shown in the research history they are often treated as 'high-status' settlements, perhaps similar to the trivallate ringforts. A search for multivallate sites was carried out for the area around Lough Gara, by consulting the sites and monuments records at Dúchas for an area from just north of Ballymote to just below

Strokestown. This area also covers the well-known crannogs near Ardakillen and at Clonfinlough. Information from County Mayo was not available as the survey for this county had not been completed when the map was compiled. This area is slightly larger than the normal ringfort investigation area. The purpose was to offer a comparable analysis incorporating crannogs, as this has not been done before. It might also throw light on the similarities between a less populated area, such as Lough Gara, and the more densely settled areas.

Figure 49 shows the univallate, bivallate and trivallate ringforts and crannogs. It was found that while there are some small ringforts located in lowlands just as in Stout's model, there are also many differences between the midland model and the material from around Lough Gara. In Stout's model the high-status sites — the bivallate or trivallate examples — were centrally located, while lower-status ringforts occupied the peripheries (Stout 1997, 126). Warner's (1988) analysis of Clogher, Co. Tyrone, shows a royal ringfort situated beside an early church and a prehistoric mound, which according to our model may have been a node. It was also situated within an earlier hillfort. Furthermore, the study of documentary sources has focused on 'the central position of the king's dun', emphasising its importance in society at the time⁵¹ (Charles-Edwards 2000, 528). Our investigation showed instead that many of the trivallate sites were located at the edges of the main concentrations of ringforts. They can often be found on the boundary with wetlands and bogs, rather than on drier agricultural land. There does not, however, seem to be any clear connection in terms of proximity between crannogs, lakes and trivallate ringforts (they seem to make use of different marginal areas in the landscape).

Neither does there seem to be any connection between the location of the trivallate ringforts and the earlier tribal nodes, as may have been the case in Warner's Clogher. If the trivallate ringforts represented centres of power, as suggested by the hierarchical model, the power in our area seems to have been removed from these places, further emphasising the impression of the increased importance of the margins. In some instances there is more than one trivallate ringfort within a concentration of ringforts, and they can be located near each other; for example we have the trivallate ringfort at Ishlaun (RO 8C-029), another one at Ballinphuill td (RO 8-046) or the one near Lissadorn (RO 16-107). This holds for both the larger and smaller concentrations of ringforts. In the area around Lough Gara there are two trivallate ringforts, both on the periphery of the ringfort distribution on the eastern side of the lake, but neither is adjacent to the lake.

The bivallate sites do not seem to occupy particularly central locations in the area. What is also interesting is that they can occur in long linear stretches, in places consisting of up to eight or ten bivallate sites in a row. There is a long belt of bivallate ringforts along the southern slopes of the Ox Mountains, for example. Furthermore, at the well-known crannog lakes in Ardakillen, Finlough and Clonfinlough, which are situated at the southern end of the larger ringfort concentration, a band of eight bivallate ringforts lead from the eastern end of the area towards the higher plains.

Along Lough Gara a similar line of bivallate ringforts can be found on the eastern side of the lake in Killaraght. These are not, however, near the lake. Only one bivallate site can be found on the western side of the lake, in the middle of the ringfort concentration in Monasteraden. This is a cashel with traces of one surrounding earthen bank. This combination is quite unusual, but comparable sites can be found in Mayo in the parish of Killasser (see O'Hara 1991). On the eastern side of the lake there is a linear stretch of bivallate ringforts on the eastern side of the drumlins, facing the plain that surrounds the early church site of Killaraght. Most of these sites have no direct contact with the waters of the lake. South of the lake there is a stretch of bivallate and also trivallate sites facing the massive Callow bog.

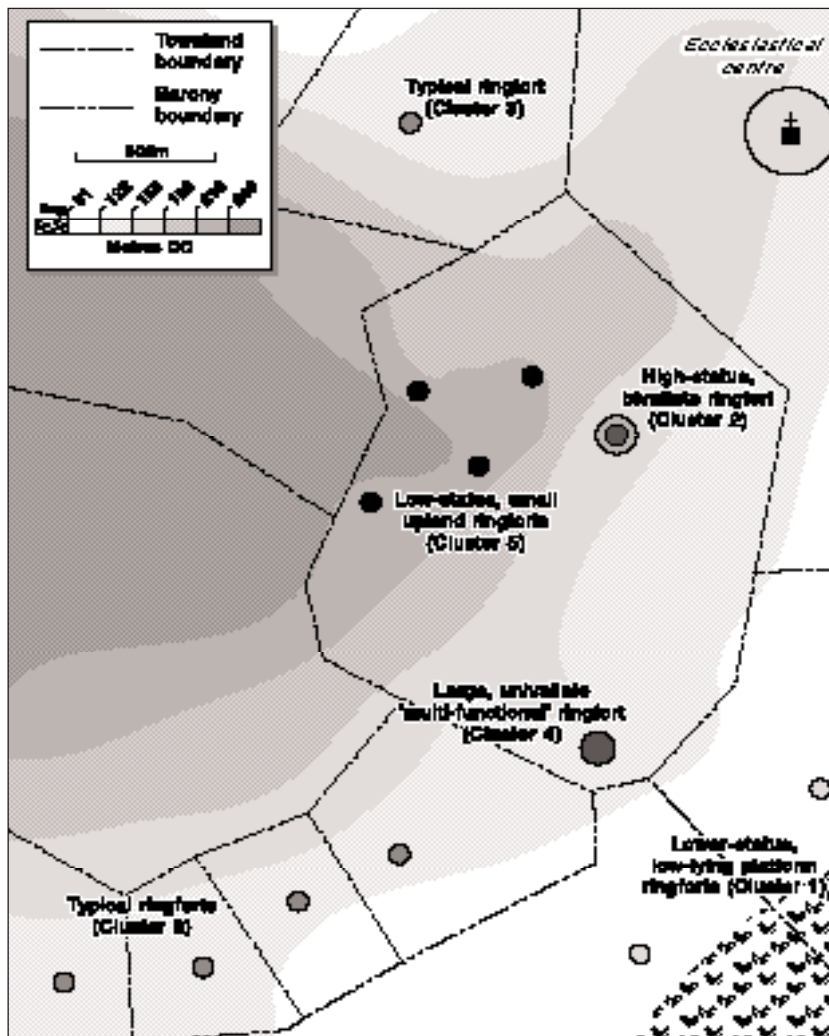


Fig. 48—Stout's settlement model (1997, 89, 127).

Although I think that the 'status' model has more bearing on the early medieval discussion, there is still room to work on a more nuanced reading of it, in particular by making use of the archaeological material. What is striking in the material is the large number of multivallate ringforts, which makes one wonder whether they really all were royal. As Monk (1998, 40–1) has pointed out, the number of multivallate sites might also be underestimated as the ditches have a tendency to silt up. For a recently published excavation of a trivallate ringfort see Shee Twohig 2000. Some explanation for the existence of more than one trivallate ringfort in an area could be found in a study of the documentary sources, which suggest that 'In many cases, at least, a king even of a single túath would have had more than one dun' (Charles-Edwards 2000, 258). This proposition is supported by evidence from County Antrim, and it is suggested that 'These duns facilitated the king's movement even around a small kingdom, making him more accessible...' (*ibid.*). A similar argument has been proposed for the 'royal' crannogs, i.e. that they would be only one of the royal residences (see Warner 1994). Our area might have been structured in a different

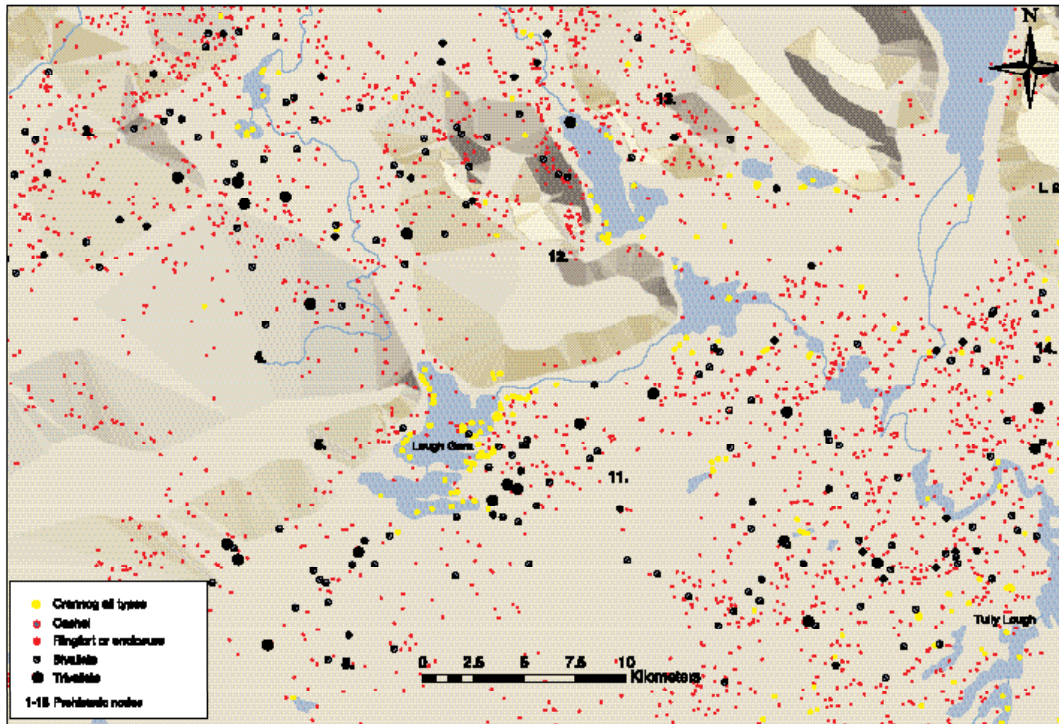


Fig. 49—Univallate and multivallate ringforts and crannogs in the wider region.

way, and the multivallate ringforts may require more explanation than simply the exercise of royal power. As shown, we have multivallate ringforts that are neighbours, and some that are no more than a few kilometres apart. Another suggestion is that ‘multivallateness’ was connected to status in society and represented the royal circuit. The documentary sources indicate that kingship was not directly inherited but that the king would be elected from a prominent ‘royal’ family, while the actual succession was gained through political struggle (see Charles-Edwards 2000, 91). Perhaps the multivallate ringforts represent the residences of people of the aristocratic families, with the possibility of becoming rulers. A place with many multivallate ringforts would then represent an area where royal power was more fiercely contested than in an area with fewer such sites, where it might have been fairly clear who was the ruler.

Conclusion

The ringforts in the area suggest a more visual, monumental settlement away from the nodes. Perhaps in the beginning of the period these sites were avoided out of respect, and we have to remember that people may still have buried their dead in these places up until the eighth century. However, over time this move out into the landscape would mean that the focus of life moved elsewhere, when the places in between the nodes were settled. We have also looked at the hierarchical settlement model proposed by Stout and have made comparisons with Lough Gara. We have shown that there is no clear connection between multivallate ringforts and the lake. Instead, we have noted that these sites were located further inland, in many cases near topographical boundaries and in locations peripheral to the main concentration of ringforts.

The crannogs

As we have seen, large elements of the archaeological material suggest a slow movement away from the nodes to a monumental emphasis on the peripheral areas in the landscape. The reactivation of the crannogs could also be seen in this light. The general narrative in recent early medieval crannog research has been concerned with questions of status. It has been argued that dynasties may have been making use of the lakes, emphasising their status and protecting their wealth on the crannogs (see Lynn 1983; Warner 1988; E. Kelly 1991a; Karkov and Ruffing 1997; Eogan 2000; O'Sullivan 2000). Some have suggested that kingship was claimed from the context of lakes and that, like the ringforts, they would be seen as royal dwellings (see Warner 1994). While this may hold for parts of the material, it is not the whole story.

There is at this stage of research no material evidence for the use of the crannogs in Lough Gara in the first few centuries following the birth of Christ. There is slight evidence from elsewhere that crannogs may have been in use during this period, but the signal in the material is not exceptionally strong and there are today only two possible indications of the use of crannogs in these centuries. An animal bone from what were originally perceived to be Mesolithic levels of the crannog at Moynagh Lough produced a radiocarbon date of around AD 300–400 (Woodman *et al.* 1997, 142, 1660 ± 70 BP) and must presumably have worked its way down from later levels. The other example is from Ulster. Stout (1997, 28) has published a date of AD 243–341 for a presumed crannog in Lismunchin.

Although there is strong material evidence that many of the crannogs of Lough Gara were in use during the early medieval period, the radiocarbon dates do not give any clear indication of when the building of crannogs started again here. However, many of the dendrochronological dates from crannogs in other lakes show increased activity towards the end of the sixth century, and it is likely that there was an increase in crannog-related activity in Lough Gara then also.

Figure 50 shows the location of crannogs that have produced dating evidence for use in the early medieval period. Both dating and excavation material show that crannogs of different sizes were in use at this time, from the fairly limited low-cairn crannogs with flagstone surfaces to the more extensive sites. With support from the excavation of Rathinaun (see J. Raftery 1957, 13–14) there is reason to believe that many of the high-cairn crannogs have artefact-rich early medieval layers. As shown on the overall distribution map, the crannogs also make use of areas peripheral to both nodes and the main ringfort distributions (Pl. 10). Ringfort distribution is often less dense in the vicinity of crannogs.

Morphologically, there are both similarities and differences between the crannogs used in the Bronze Age and those used in the early medieval period. These differences are of importance for our understanding and interpretation of these sites. It was shown in earlier chapters that distinct man-made islands existed during the late Bronze Age. While the height of the sites may have been similar in the two periods, with the crannogs towards the end of the period reaching a greater height, there are indications that the early medieval examples have a more consistent palisade. Another difference is that while the earlier sites could consist of two or more islands, sometimes (as in the case of Clonfinlough) joined within a palisade, the early medieval ones seem to have a more consistent singular island body within the palisade.

The distribution map also shows that the possible early medieval crannogs, like the ringforts, are quite plentiful. If all crannogs from this period are treated in the same way and are taken to be equivalent to the trivallate ringfort, we will end up with a similar situation. In Lough Gara alone there would be nearly 20 'royal' crannogs. Taken together, however, an analysis of the

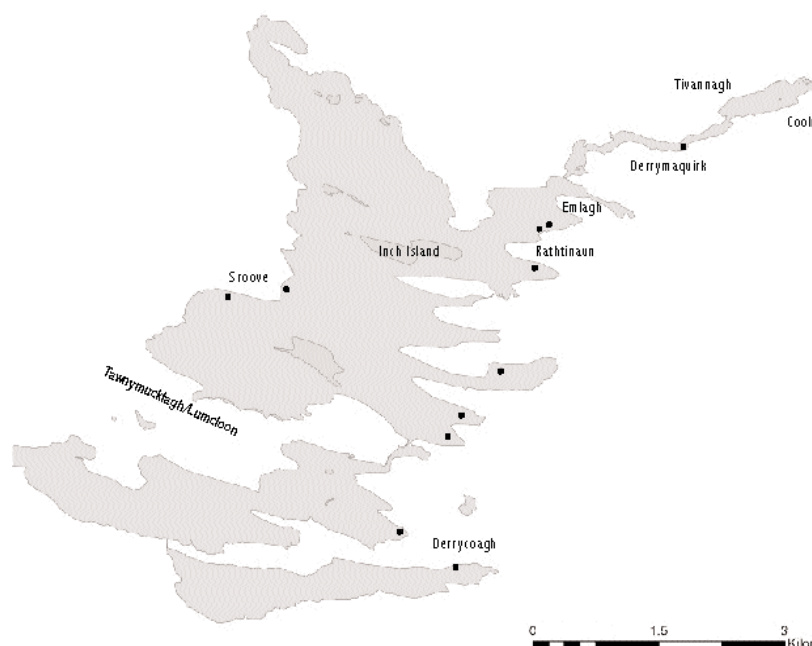


Fig. 50—Location of crannogs with early medieval indications in Lough Gara.

distribution of crannogs as representing royal sites ends up in the same complications as the analysis of the ‘royal ringfort’: there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians. One of the reasons why we may have got this impression is that most sites excavated with modern techniques have yielded many artefacts. (This was also in Hencken’s mind when he selected Lagore in order to find artefacts to tie into the historical references to the site.) These sites have all been of the ‘high’ type, while not many sites of the low crannog variety have been dealt with or have made their way into the general debate. A contributory factor is that no distinction has been made between high crannogs and low crannogs; they have all been treated alike. The large ones set the rule for the small ones.

Our excavation and survey aimed to get an understanding of these sites. As will be shown, this excavation has a bearing on the discussion about how people may have changed their loyalties from the tribal nodes to other areas of responsibility.

The excavation of a low-cairn crannog

As there has been a bias in the excavated crannogs in favour of artefact-rich sites, we were interested in finding out more about the smaller sites in the lake. The survey, both in Lough Gara and in all the other crannog lakes in Sligo, showed that the smaller low-cairn crannogs are more numerous than the high-cairn crannogs. It was hoped that an excavation of a low-cairn crannog would provide material for a narrative not only about ‘royalty’ but also about other people.

With these issues and many others in our minds we decided to excavate a low-cairn crannog in Lough Gara. The basic aim of the excavation was to examine the relationship both between large and small crannogs and between crannogs sharing the same bay. Another aim was to find out more about social life on a ‘low-cairn’ crannog. It was of further interest to discover whether these smaller sites, like the larger sites, contained layers from many phases which could be analysed to see how the meaning of the site changed through time, and how the earlier site had been

materially reinterpreted. I call this method ‘interpretative drift’. Another idea was to look at this crannog in the context of the other archaeological material from around Lough Gara. I wanted to discuss the interrelationship between crannogs and between crannogs and other settlements. In the end, if the material allowed, I hoped to discuss the social context of the sites and their relation to ‘economic’ activities. As my reading of this material and the excavation is biased, I have tried my best to leave in redundant information so that the site could be read from another angle. I realise that my reading and my excavation may exclude many other important perspectives that could have been taken on the material, but that can’t be helped.

The area selected for excavation was the archaeological complex at Sroove td on the western shores of Lough Gara.⁵² This bay holds three low-cairn crannogs (Fig. 51), located just down from the low mountain, Mullaghatee, and the node which in the early medieval period contained the church site of Monasteraden and a small concentration of ringforts. Moving down from the farming land, the shore consists of scattered large to medium-sized boulders of sandstone and limestone. The shoreline slopes gently eastwards down to the lake. There is a boundary between the stony shoreline and what is now a grassy water-meadow. This represents an earlier shoreline.

Two of the crannogs are connected to this shoreline by stony causeways and are located in what in summer is a water-meadow. This fills up with water in the winter, when the sites become islands. The southern crannog (site 1) measured about 15m in diameter before excavation and about 1.2m in height above the meadow (Fig. 53). The cause-way measured about 18m from land and continued under the site out into the summer waters. It has

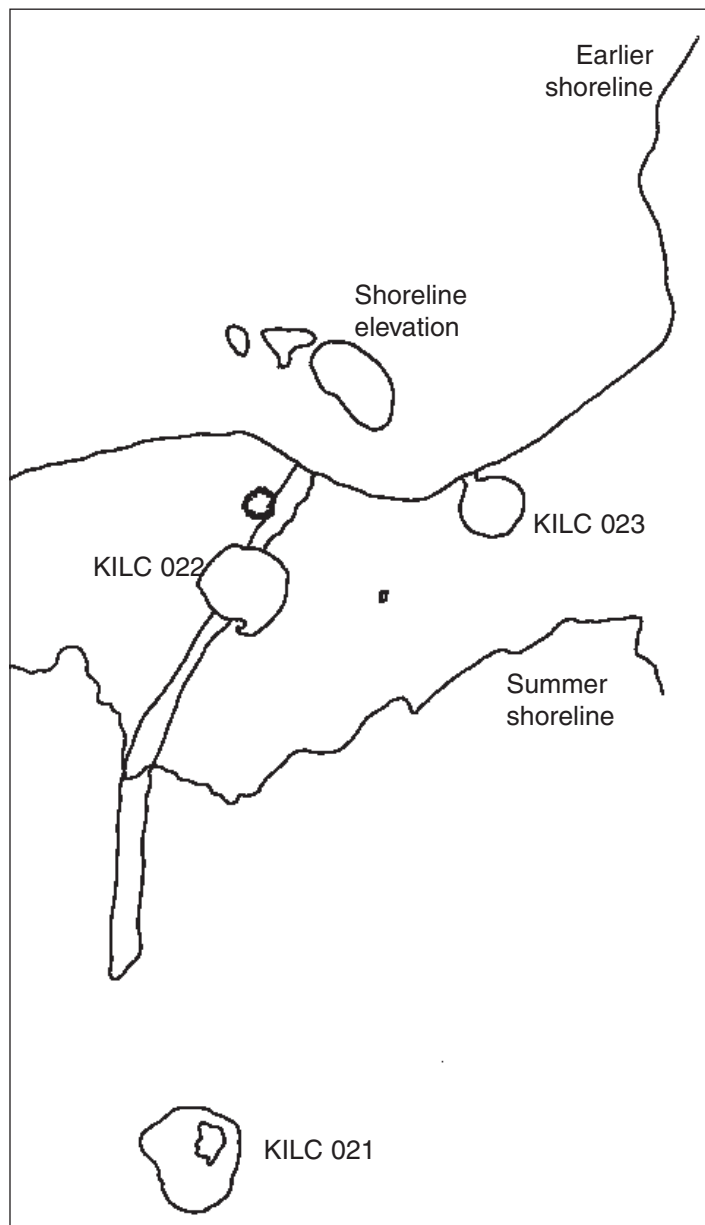


Fig. 51—The archaeological complex in Sroove td, Co. Sligo.

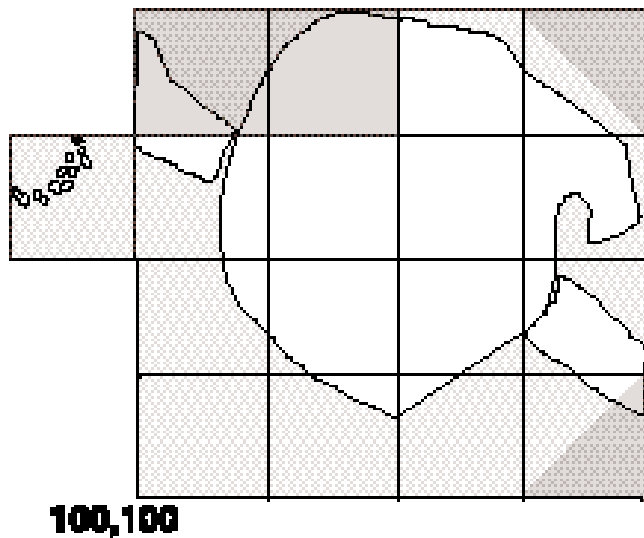


Fig.—52 Areas excavated.

a circle of stones attached to it, about 5.5m in diameter. The more northerly of the two sites (site 2) is slightly smaller, 11m in diameter and reaching a height of 1.1m above the water-meadow. Both sites have a surface of loosely set angular stones (of sandstone and limestone), with some smaller boulders in between. Just above the old shoreline in front of the southern crannog's causeway was a grass-grown soil elevation, measuring 18m by 10m, with a height of about 0.4m above the shoreline.

In the water to the west of these sites is a larger crannog, about 20m in diameter, reaching a height of 1.5m above the lakebed. We have found that this larger island dates from the late Bronze Age. The site was discussed in an earlier chapter as an island on which depositions may have been prepared. It is clearly visible in summer when the lake is lower. Only the top of the shrubs growing on the site can be seen above the waters in winter, when the two smaller islands are surrounded by water.

*Excavated areas*⁵³

It was decided to focus on the southern crannog and on the soil elevation at its causeway, not only because it represented a low-cairn crannog but also because of its distinct connecting features, such as a causeway, an elevated area on the shoreline and a circle of stones (no crannog excavation so far had looked at corresponding shoreline features in any detail).

Most of the southern crannog was excavated, except for a small area (5m by 5m) in the north-west corner of the site. We also excavated part of the soil elevation in front of the causeway with two trenches, the first 5m by 5m and the second 10m by 1.5m. In addition, we looked at parts of the causeway and the small circle of stones attached to it (Fig. 52). The excavations in Sroove were carried out and recorded according to the single-context method and will be discussed below in terms of contexts, features and phases. The matrix and more detailed context and feature descriptions can be found in Appendix 2.4.

The soil elevation on the shore

Before excavation it was thought that this site might represent a land structure that could be

connected with the crannog. At surface level it resembled a grass-covered burnt mound. It was nearly kidney-shaped with a slight depression located centrally at the edge of the site, but it could also possibly have been the remains of a house or of some other activity at the entrance of the site. The southern half of the mound was somewhat higher than the northern half. The site showed up as an area of richer grass.

The excavation has shown that the site represents neither a house on the shoreline nor a burnt mound. Instead it consists of sand that had been deposited naturally over a stone floor on the landward side of the causeway. This floor may have marked the entrance to the causeway.

The crannog and the causeway

The excavation of the crannog revealed a six-phase structure. As I will show, the crannog changed in character over its period of use. It can be dated broadly to the early medieval period. Under the crannog was a natural deposit of blue plastic clay, with a moderate inclusion of stones and boulders of white sandstone, C79. These stones were naturally deposited at the end of the Ice Age. They were surrounded by stone-flour, identified by geologist Conor MacDermot. This is taken as evidence that the excavation extended below the lowest cultural layers of the crannog.

As shown in Fig. 54, this context seems to form a continuous layer under the whole site. Blue clay of the same type has been located in a box-trench around the later palisade post in the south-west square, and also forms the walls of many of the post-holes on the site.

Phase 1 — the causeway

The first recognisable human activity at the site was the construction of the causeway leading from the earlier shoreline out into the waters. The causeway, F1, was built using the slight rise in the blue lake clay as a basis (see Fig. 54). Over the blue clay, along the line of the causeway, was a thin layer of blue mud mixed with sand, C47, which provided quite a compact and hard surface. It is likely that the hard surface was produced by trampling of the blue clay surface of the elevation. A small number of animal bones derived from the surface of the sand/gravel where it



Fig. 53—Site after removal of vegetation and before excavation.

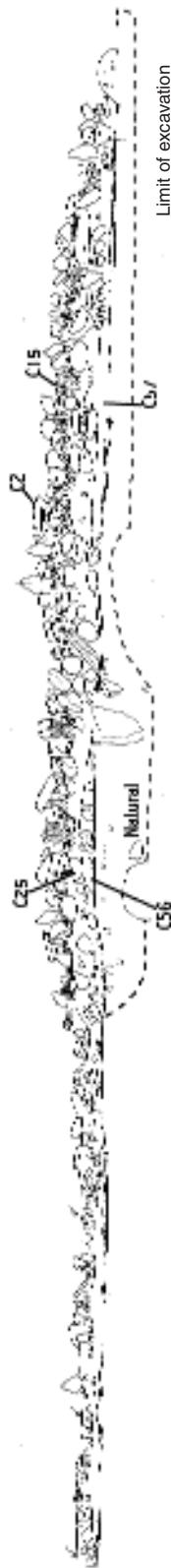


Fig. 54—North-south section through the middle of the site.

was mixed with the blue mud. These bones may derive from the construction of the causeway or from later activity.

The area where the causeway met the crannog was excavated, and while there were no signs that the causeway had a palisade or a railing, more information was obtained regarding the build-up of the causeway itself. The causeway was built by placing a series of large subangular boulders, C49, on the blue lake clay (see Pl. 11). These stones stretch in an irregular line from the water towards land, and they can also be seen protruding through the grass in the unexcavated areas between the crannog and the former shoreline. However, the large boulders do not continue all the way out into the lake. They are only in place on the third of the causeway nearest the shore.

The area around these boulders, as well as the rest of the causeway, consisted of a dense layer of shattered stone, C60. These stones can also be found under the whole body of the crannog, but in lesser concentrations (Fig. 55). In the same context there are also a number of smaller, rounded, quite weathered stones that form a sporadic edge along the southern side of the causeway rise. Some animal bones were found in this context, but it is important to bear in mind that part of the context, especially the ridge of the causeway, was exposed through many of the phases of the crannog. The bones recorded from this phase could therefore be seen as intrusions from above.

Both the northern and southern crannogs in Sroove have causeways connecting them to the earlier shoreline. The two causeways are built of stones and are of similar width, about 1m. There are, however, a lot of differences between the two. The causeway leading out to the northern crannog is only 1.3m long (a distance one could jump across) and consists of large stones that are only loosely set into the ground. The causeway connected with site 2 is much longer. The distance between the shoreline and the crannog is about 18m. This causeway also lies under the whole site and continues for some distance out into the water.

Close inspection reveals at least three similar causeways in the immediate vicinity of the excavated one. These run parallel to the main causeway, but none of them were used for the building of a crannog. They are less distinct grass-grown lines of shattered stones that reach out into the water. However, they do not contain the large angular boulders seen in the main causeway. Karl Brady has suggested that these stones represent the boat slipways that have been found in other lakes. The excavation can then show that slipways of this type pre-date the crannog.

Attached to the causeway is a small circle of stones, with a mid-stone centrally located, through which a trench was cut to investigate the stratigraphical relationship between these two

features. The quarter of the circle of stones nearest to the causeway was desodded and the trench was laid out to cover both the circle and part of the causeway. The stones of the circle were found to rest directly on the blue lake mud, just as the causeway stones did. It is therefore possible that the circle of stones is contemporary with the causeway, and hence pre-dates the crannog. The area inside the circle of stones contained no clear cultural layers but seems to have been sanded over at some stage. These sediments were sieved for fish bones but no remains were found. No artefacts were found either, so the purpose of the site is still unclear. Suggested interpretations include a Bronze Age house, a fish-pond or a small pool for children. None of these would explain the mid-stone, or the similar triangular arrangement of stones found on the northern side of the causeway. A smaller circle of stones can be found attached to the crannog causeway in Tawnymucklagh/Sroove (KILC 016–18), but nowhere else around the lake.

Originally the site was a path linking land and water, a path that implied and directed movement from land into water or vice versa. The shattered stones on the earlier shoreline which could be interpreted as an entrance feature may also belong to this phase. If this is the case it would have been a place to gather forces and to stop before moving out into the water on the causeway. Paths in the landscape have been discussed as leading from one point to another, presenting the landscape in a sequential order. Paths also 'bring forth possibilities for repeated actions within prescribed confines' (Parmentier 1987, 109–11; Tilley 1994, 30–1). A path is also seen as an expression of following in someone's footsteps, a movement which becomes the correct or the best way to go. The causeway of the crannog is a materially manifest path leading from the shore out into the water. As such it does not lead from one point to another, but it prescribes the way in which the water should be entered, and the water was the point or the place to be approached.

Phase 2 — the crannog of wood

The first crannog was built on the causeway. The second phase of the site comprises features such as a surrounding wooden palisade and a linear feature of post-holes, which may represent the walls of a house.

It is hard to determine how much time might have passed between the construction of the causeway and its reuse as a base for the crannog. What we know is that in the meantime a thin layer of white lake marl, C41, had formed (marl forms in specific environments and is proven to have been built up also during the Holocene⁵⁴). The marl was followed by a 2cm layer of fine sand, C7. These contexts lay up against the causeway at its edges on both its northern and southern sides. They never covered the causeway. In places features from above cut through the marl and the sand (Fig. 56).

The crannog lay 18m from the earlier shoreline. However, this does not mean that it was built in particularly deep waters, as the drop from the former shoreline to which the causeway is attached and the place where the crannog was built is less than 0.5m. This means that the people who built the island could have used the causeway or could have walked on a fairly firm lakebed of sand out to the chosen location. Access to the site was not hindered by unstable lake sediments such as marl or mud at this stage.

PALISADE AND CENTRAL POST

The place selected for the construction of the crannog was where the causeway reached its highest point. Here three large causeway boulders were laid out in relation to each other like petals on a flower.

The first step in the building of the crannog was to place a post in the middle of this formation



Pl. 11—The causeway of the crannog excavated at Sroove.

(see Fig. 57). This oak post, F2, was central to the whole external palisade. The distance from the post to the wooden palisade is in general 8.5m, which I take as a suggestion that the post was used as a compass to draw a circle around the site. Along this circle the external palisade posts, F3, were set down. If this was the case, the palisade must have been in place before the house, as the house walls would have obstructed the drawing of such a circle.

On the wetter southern side of the site the external palisade survived as a well-preserved curving line of vertical posts still *in situ*, C43. The line of posts is sometimes single, sometimes double. One of the palisade posts in this context was radiocarbon-dated to AD 560–1020. This long time-span means that a more precise dating of the site has to rely mainly on stratigraphy. Although the southern side of the palisade was well preserved, most of it, stretching around the eastern and northern sides of the site, appeared as a series of post-holes with mainly dark fill. This suggests that the posts were

pulled out or left to decay at some later stage in the use of the crannog. This part of F3 contained the contexts 86, 87, 114 and 117.

A box-trench was cut through the area of the palisade. It showed that the palisade posts, C43, were embedded in about 40cm of blue clay. The posts and their cut tips were surrounded by lake sand, which suggests that they were pushed through the sand above the blue mud (see Fig. 58). The innermost of the two posts was leaning outward towards the edges of the site, suggesting that the palisade was exposed to pressure from the building material. Some of the inner holes also slope towards the edges of the site. Together the posts and post-holes follow an arc around the site, which probably would have been almost a full circle with an opening for the causeway. The wood species analysis has shown that the palisade was built mainly, but not exclusively, of ash. The site would at this stage have been a causeway with a wooden circle around it.

THE HOUSE

At a later stage — whether a day or some years later — another structure was put in place. The reason why I suggest this sequence is that the circular shape could not have been put in place if there was some structure like a house hindering it, and none of the wooden posts still *in situ* were surrounded by dark cultural layers from above. An oval to rectangular pattern of post-holes, F4, is

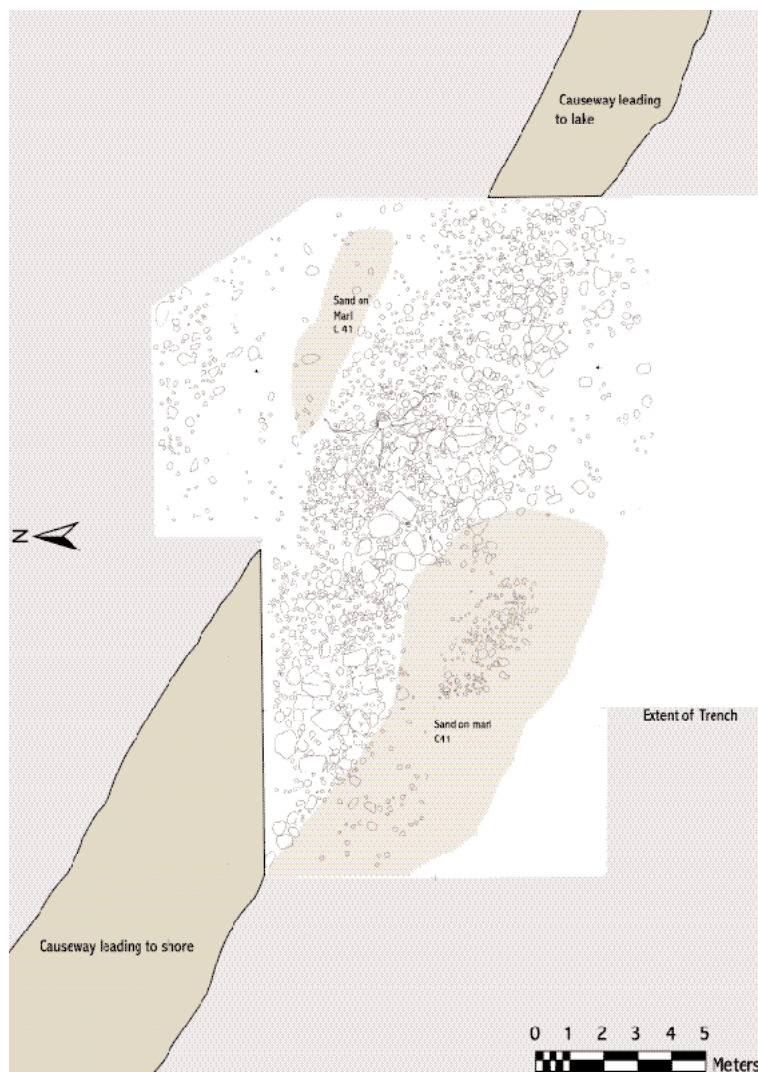


Fig. 55—Plan of causeway.

likely to represent the walls of a house (see Fig. 57). These post-holes are set more closely together than the surrounding palisade, and their diameter is smaller. This is particularly distinct on the eastern side of the house nearest to the water (see C114 and 121). This feature measures 6.5m by 8m internally. This measurement seems to be quite common for early medieval houses (see Lynn 1994, 90–1). On the southern side, which is nearest to the water, the wall posts were supported by a small stone packing, C97. This stone packing would have built up the edges of the house, distinguishing it and protecting it from the water.

A well-preserved bone pin was found in this stone packing (see Fig. 59). As this is not a place where an item would turn up as a result of being swept from or dropped on a floor, this pin may have been placed in these building materials deliberately. A 1m opening in the row of posts on the south-west side may represent a door. What lends support to this interpretation is that a piece of the brushwood floor from inside the house leads out through this opening. That the door was located on this side means that any coming or going from the house was out of sight of what happened out on the lake. It also hides the entrance from the other crannog. The location of the

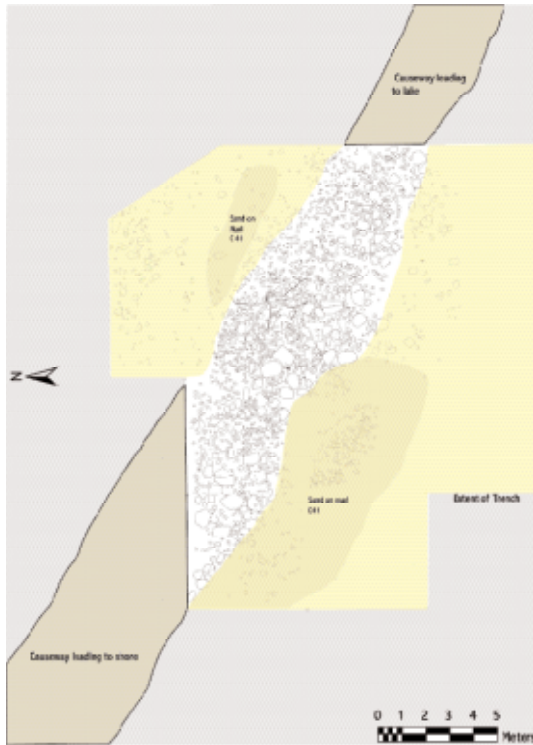


Fig. 56—Causeway overlain by sand and marl.

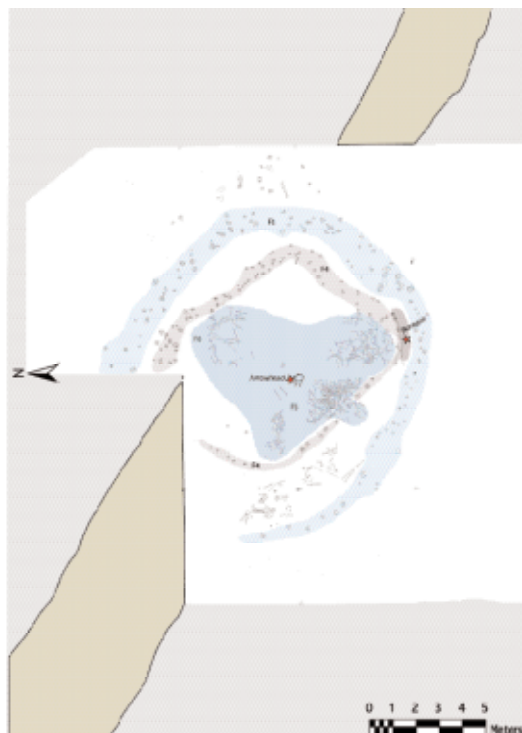


Fig. 57—Plan of phase 2.

door breaks with the symmetry of the causeway, the layout of which would have prescribed an entrance at the house's short end. Here instead the passage was blocked off by a substantial house wall. Anyone who entered the site would have been forced to turn aside to the right before entering the house, possibly walking down in the wetter areas in the south-west corner of the site before entering the house on higher, drier ground.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Although the walls may have been strong enough to support a roof, extra support could have been obtained from the central post or from some post inside the house, as can be seen on the plan. There are, however, no indications that the house had any internal partitions or that any area was screened off. Inside the rectangular area of post-holes were the remains of a brushwood floor, F5, up to 20cm thick in places. This floor consisted of twigs and branches of, for example, hazel laid out in a haphazard manner. It rested on the lake sand and on stones in the causeway. Twigs from this floor have been radiocarbon-dated to the period AD 770–970. Possibly the brushwood floor covered most of the internal area, but at the time of excavation it appeared as separate patches of brushwood. On the shoulder of the causeway in particular the brushwood was missing, probably because the preservation conditions higher up were much poorer. In general, the stratigraphy along the causeway is thin compared to along its edges.

The various parts of the brushwood floor, apart from being stratigraphically compatible, are also linked together by a deposit of clayey beige to grey soil, C45. A similar type of clay with small pebbles on top also overlay the brushwood floor in places, represented by contexts C56 and 76. I think that these layers represent the trampling and decay of the brushwood floor and that it is probable that the brushwood floor covered the interior of the house.

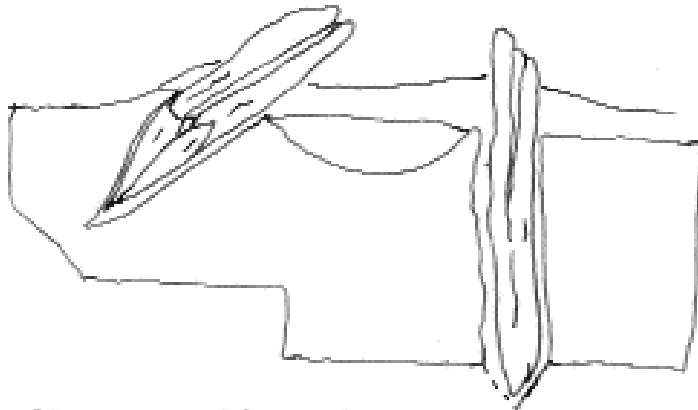


Fig. 58—Box-trench showing posts in palisade set into the blue clay.

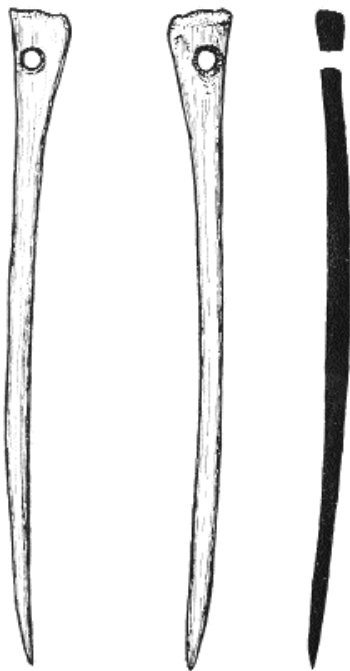


Fig. 59—Bone pin found in the stone packing, C97.

There is one possible trace of a hearth belonging to this phase. One of the causeway stones (F6) located between the door opening and the central post was fire-reddened and cracked as if exposed to heat. These indications of a hearth located near the middle of F4 support the interpretation that the rectangular structure was a house. The macrofossil analysis has also shown that samples from inside this feature show more 'domestic' activity than samples from outside.

There are very few artefacts to indicate what was happening inside the house at this time. What we know derives mainly from the macrofossil samples taken from a cake of organic matter that was part of the brushwood floor. The samples showed that people brought blackberries and raspberries onto the site and into the house. There was also evidence for four different types of grain (see Appendix 2). The presence of raspberries, blackberries and elder provides evidence that the crannog was in use during the summer and into the autumn. It has been questioned whether this brushwood floor was only a foundation layer rather than an

occupation layer. However, the macrofossils from this phase show a distinct difference from the phase above, and the existence of the grey layer C56 above the brushwood floor suggests usage of the area before the renewal of the site in the next phase. There are very few animal bones from this phase compared to the later phases.

One of the finds from inside the house was a thumb-scraper of flint (Fig. 60). This artefact type dates from the late Neolithic or the Bronze Age. It was found in the grey layers near the central post. Another lithic artefact, a black chert arrowhead, was found in the vicinity as well, also in the grey clayey layers. This artefact might have a Neolithic date. The grey clay layers overlay and mixed with the brushwood floor that dated from the early medieval period. Therefore these artefacts, much older than the crannog, must have been brought onto the site during the early medieval period. Older artefacts in early medieval layers have been noted on many other crannogs, and have been interpreted either as remnants of earlier crannog occupation or as having

been brought to the site intentionally or unintentionally (cf. Coffey 1906; Lynn 1983, etc.). It has often been suggested that they were unintentionally brought in with the building material, and it is often assumed that they came from the nearby shores. However, early artefacts have also been retrieved from sites like ringforts that are located higher up in the landscape, which ought to weaken the evidence for unintentional incorporation in the building material. At times when the finds of stone axes, for example, have been acknowledged as being deliberately brought to a site they have been interpreted functionally as linen-smoothers. However, the type of artefacts found at the crannog in Sroove could not have been used for any such purpose. I rather think that they were brought to the site as antiquities and curiosities. What lends additional support to this argument is that they belong to a layer dated to the early medieval period and that these two artefacts look distinct and may have been understood by people as items from the past.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

As noted, the brushwood continued out through the door. The area between the house walls and the external palisade was not very large, only 1–1.5m, so the space between the house and the lake was fairly limited, perhaps with only enough room for two people to pass. In places there seem to be dividers of this space, F8; perhaps these posts supported a surrounding timber deck.

While the palisade seems to describe a circle around the site, there are two places where it becomes distorted, F9 and F9x. On the northern side of the causeway, near the lake, there seems to be a small rectangular area stretching out into what was water. There is also a break in the palisade at the entrance by the causeway leading from the land. Here there might be the traces of a small arch of posts, suggesting an entrance feature. If it can be interpreted in this way, it might suggest that some type of action had to be taken while crossing the threshold of the site, such as leaving one's weapons or offering gifts.

There were no artefacts associated with the area outside the house.

Overall phase 2 is represented by the constitution of the site as a crannog. At this stage the site used a pre-existing causeway as a basis for the crannog's body, which rose 0.5m above the lakebed. The site was defined by the external palisade, and possibly had a small rectangular wooden house in the middle.

CONCLUSION

The building of this first, wooden crannog changed the meaning of the path from a place of movement into something that led to somewhere to stay for a short or long time in the water. The site was enclosed by a wooden palisade, while allowing for access from land via the causeway. However, the routeway into the house was diverted and controlled, as the gable end of the house would have met anyone coming to the crannog this way. The door of the house was instead put further to the south. Just as at Rathtinaun and Tivannagh, the door opened more towards the shore but direct access from the shore was blocked off (cf. J. Raftery 1957, 9–10, 12). A brushwood floor was laid in the house and a hearth was in use, but the house had no internal partitions, which meant that there was no distinction between rooms for living and rooms for sleeping. There seems to have been no distinction either between a public room and a private room, in contrast to modern-day living (cf. Parker Pearson and Richards 1994, 7). The artefacts found on the site make it possible to discuss both the activities that took place on the island and the personality of the building itself. Near the hearth were placed two items charged with meaning from the past — a small flint thumb-scraper and an arrowhead. These small artefacts provided a connection with former times. Outside the house a bone pin was placed in stone packing supporting the wall;

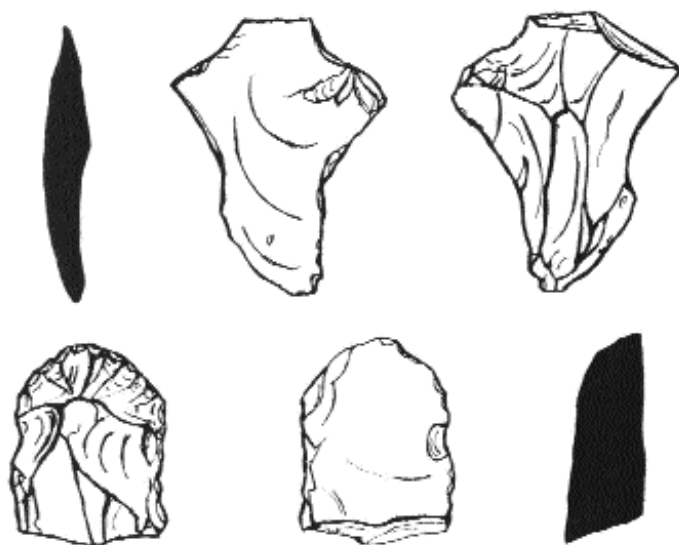


Fig. 60—Thumb-scraper of flint and black chert arrowhead

perhaps this deposition served to merge the meaning of the house with that of its people, giving the house a personality.

Phase 3 — stone floor surrounded by timber decking

After some time, while the causeway was probably still in use, the wooden structure was deemed obsolete and the crannog was rebuilt. Over the brushwood floor was placed a floor of flagstones and smaller boulders, F11. This feature consisted of two to three layers of stones placed in the middle of the crannog, roughly in the same location where the house was. At the bottom were often smaller boulders of sharp, uneven limestone. Higher up there was a larger component of flagstones. We tried to distinguish different features in this floor, such as partitions and levels. The way I see it now is that all these stones and boulders formed one unit that served to raise the surface, making the crannog's body higher, while the flagstones were intended to level the uneven surface created by these stones (Fig. 61). However, at the time of excavation the feature did not look like a level floor, so the stones might well have become displaced since the time when the surface was in use. The body of the crannog at this time reached a height of at least 0.8m above the lakebed.

Surrounding the boulders was a deck of quite long timbers, F13. Most of these were laid out almost alongside each other and they were present on both the south and north sides of the causeway, while some lay up against it. These timbers have been radiocarbon-dated to AD 600–900. Similar timber decking has been noted at sites like Lagore and Ballinderry 1 (Hencken 1936; 1950; R. Johnson 1999). The space between the stones and the timbers held black cultural layers, F13, which merged into lake mud on the southern and wetter side of the crannog. Again, the shoulder of the causeway had almost no trace of these cultural layers, which may have slipped down on the two sides of the causeway. While some cultural layers could be found surrounding the stones, some were also intermixed with them. These layers were most homogeneous outside the stone foundation, up to 15cm thick in places. Among the stones the black soil formed discontinuous patches, some more charcoal-rich, such as C28. My explanation for the discontinuity of these layers is that in many places they represent soil and cultural layers that slipped through the stone floor during usage and perhaps also during abandonment, when their



Fig. 61—Plan of phase 3.

texture became more liquidised by the wet conditions.

At first I was not convinced that the stones of F11 represented the floor of a house, as they formed such an uneven surface in places and there was no evidence for a drystone wall surrounding them. They could just have represented an open-air platform. Although some of the posts from the building below protruded through the collection of stones, that could have happened by pure chance. What convinced me that the stones corresponded to the inside of the house were the results from the macrofossil samples. One sample from the black, charcoal-rich soil in the area above the fire-reddened stone was compared with a sample from an area outside the stone floor at the timbers, but in the same stratigraphical position. The sample from the stone floor contained a more select sample of seeds than the sample from outside (see Appendix 2), supporting the theory that the floor represented an interior.

Further evidence for the existence of an inside and an outside was provided by the distribution of animal bones (see Fig. 62), which seem to be concentrated in the areas outside the house, and interestingly enough just outside the place where the door opening was located in the phase 2 house.

Given these results I think one could accept the strong likelihood that the stone floor represented the paving inside a house. However, the stone floor is larger than the area of the wooden house. It might have functioned as a skirting, with the posts sticking up through the gaps between the stones. It is very hard to drive anything through the compact blue mud and the shattered stones, and it is possible that the same post-holes were used also in this phase. This would then suggest that the walls of the earlier house were taken down before the stone floor was put in, and that the post-holes were reused.

If the general outline of the house remained the same in both phases, there are also signs that the hearth from phase 2 was reused. Almost in the middle of the stone floor was a concentration of charcoal-rich soil, F14. The remains from C28 were analysed for macrofossils. As charred remains were found in the sample it was deemed probable that it came from a hearth, which would have been located just above the fire-reddened stone belonging to the phase below. Unfortunately both these hearths were positioned where the N–S and E–W sections met, which made them less visible in plan, but they were picked up as areas of charcoal-rich soil and burnt bones. In phase 3 the house occupied the same position as in the preceding phase; it is also likely that the position of the fireplace remained the same. If this was the case, only the building materials changed, with the house's interior being more solid than the external wooden floor. That the site kept its significance can be seen in the stability and reuse of the same fireplace in the two phases. Rathtinaun also showed a reuse of the hearths between the two early medieval

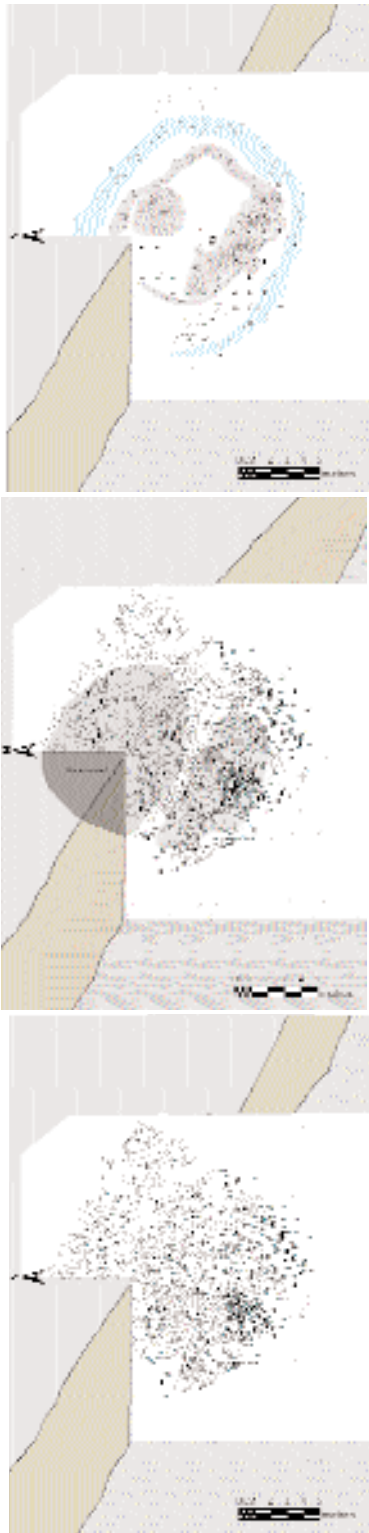


Fig. 62—Distribution of animal bones in phases 2, 3 and 4 of the crannog.

phases 3 and 4 of the site (J. Raftery 1957, 13). A similar pattern was observed in the excavation of the crannog of Drumdarragh in Fermanagh (Wakeman 1885–6, 374), where the hearths⁵⁵ from three phases were superimposed over each other. The two lowermost hearths lay strictly on top of each other and the uppermost was located only a few feet away from the lower ones. The hearths formed the connection between the different phases of the crannog at Ballinderry 1 (Hencken 1936, 108; O’Sullivan 1998, 123–4). Taken together, the evidence for hearths from numerous crannog sites has also been given a special significance by the vertical connection through the layers in the island.

It is possible that the external palisade stood throughout this period. It is likely that it was pulled up towards the end of the period, however. This is implied by the fact that the post-holes in the northern half of the site were often filled with black cultural soil belonging to this phase.

FINDS

Most of the finds come from this phase. They can be discussed spatially, in terms of what was found within the house, in the house walls, and outside the house in the timber decking, and they can be further discussed symbolically, in terms of what they meant in the ascription of meaning to different parts of the house.

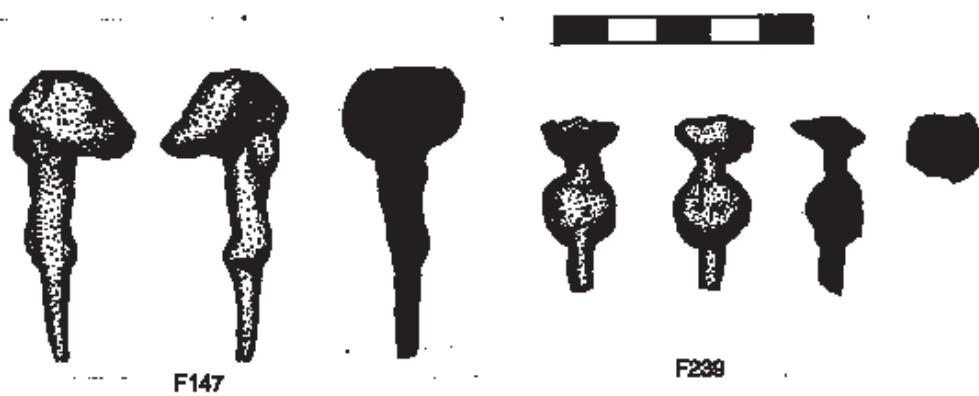
Most of the finds from this period were related to personal appearance. Inside the house, near the fireplace, a fragment of a lignite bracelet was found, not far from a comb fragment; there were also a number of bone beads. Further back in the house towards the north-east, more or less in the wall, were a few iron nails and a bone pin. In terms of activities, this phase has produced a small bone needle and a knife (Fig. 63).

Outside the house were found some more iron nails, as well as the head of a ringed pin, again emphasising the importance of personal appearance on this site. There were also some small bronze studs which would have been fastened on a leather strap of some type, possibly to cover rivets and to decorate the strap (Fig. 64).

Most finds were made either within the area of the stone floor or in the area between the earlier door opening and the southern entrance from the causeway.

CONCLUSION

In this phase the outline of the house was retained but its floor became more solid, and it was surrounded by a timber



F147

F238



F235

F242



F153



F241

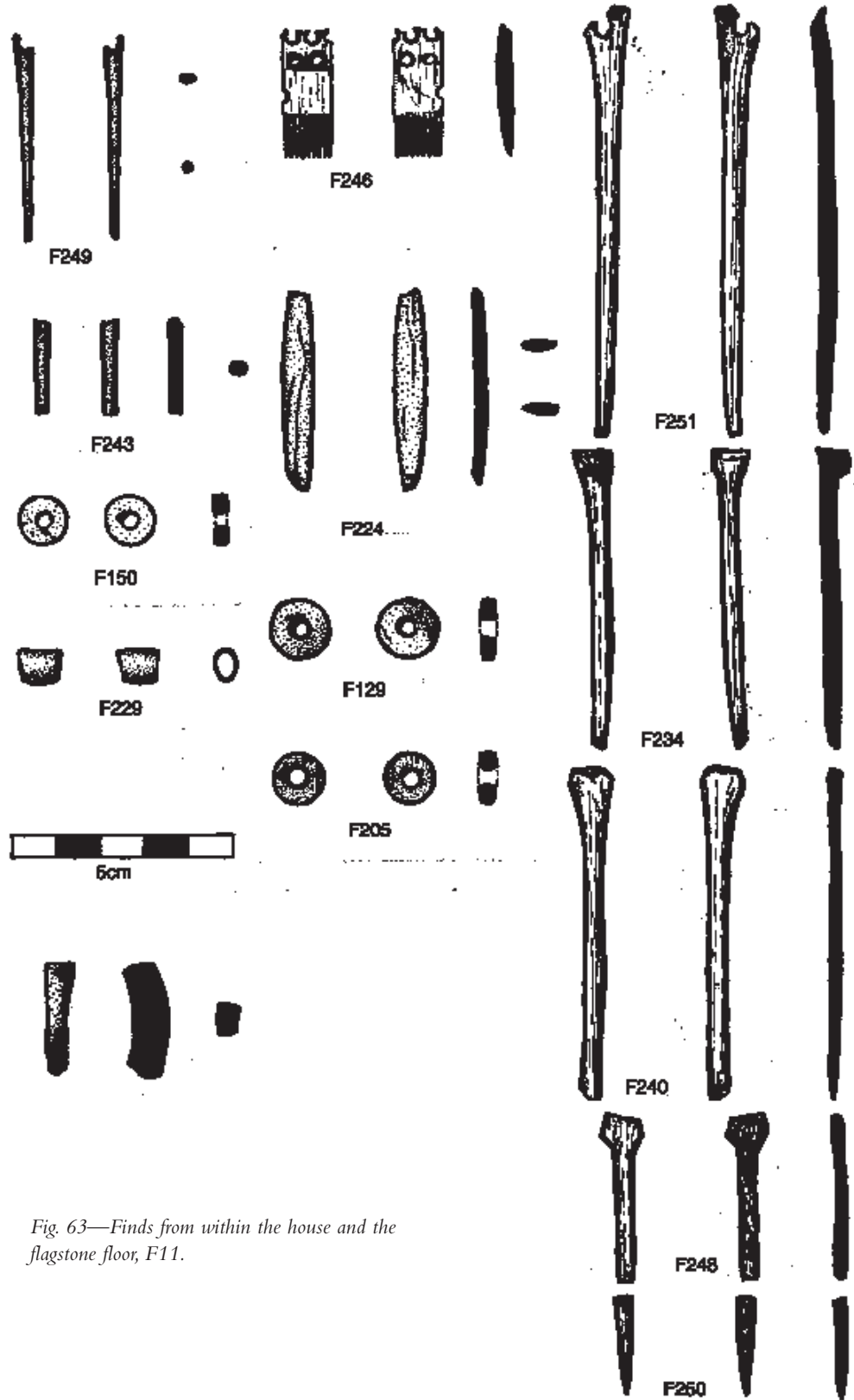


Fig. 63—Finds from within the house and the flagstone floor, F11.

deck. It probably still had walls of some organic material. Inside the house were found a needle and a lignite bracelet. A knife was found at the back of the house. Beads, pins and bracelets were also recovered, from both inside and outside the house. As the latter are all artefacts connected with personal appearance, this could imply that not only the house but also the whole island became personified and personalised.⁵⁶ What remained stable in terms of use of space was the location of the fireplace, where the earlier building was directly connected to the present one. Stability can also be seen in the fact that the place of activity was between the causeway and the door of the house, the south-west corner was still in use. A difference between this phase and the earlier was the introduction of animal bones, which had not been found in any great numbers in the phase below. From this phase we have the remains of a number of personal items from within the house, such as a needle and a knife. A house where personal items are left around and incorporated into the building becomes alive. A tidy, cleaned-out, sanitised house is dead; this house may have been regarded as alive.

Phase 4 — a uniform stone and bone floor

After some time had passed, the site was covered with a continuous layer of small shattered and fire-cracked stones, mixed with smaller fractions of animal bones, F15. There were smaller stones in the middle of the site, such as C9 and C15, while slightly larger stones can be found around the edges. This feature was approximately 10cm thick all over the site. These stones served to neutralise and even out the gaps between the stones of the earlier floor, as well as the distinction between an outside and an inside formed by the timber decking (Fig. 65). Now the whole island was covered in the same distinct material, and probably the wooden palisade was covered over. In general this layer was fairly anonymous, with no special features. It is possible that the island at this stage was used as an outdoor platform. Many of the post-holes were filled with the dark cultural layers from the phase below and not by shattered stones, indicating that the posts may have been pulled up at an earlier stage, probably after F13 had formed. This act reveals the decreasing emphasis on the boundary in the crannog's later phases. Analysis of charcoal from this layer has indicated that many pieces came from hazel and that some bore cut-marks. This is a vague indication that some type of wickerwork was present on the surface. It is only possible to speculate that this represents traces of screens or other features put up on this otherwise fairly even surface. The stones in this phase were mixed with animal bones. Distribution maps of the bones show that they covered almost the whole area, with some concentrations in certain places. Very few bones have been found outside the site. Charcoal and animal bones from this floor have been radiocarbon-dated to AD 600–900.

What was interesting, however, was the larger stone blocks, F14, found in places together with the F15 stones. These rectangular flagstones had their footings in the F15 stones, which means that they were put in place before these shattered stones. On the south side of the crannog the flagstones were set in an open box formation, while on the north-western side there were about ten stones apparently forming an edge of the site.

It is possible that these stones were meant to be uprights. If this was the case they might represent a stone-clad channel leading into the site on the north-east side, opening up towards the water. This might have been a harbour arm. Figure 66 shows what this harbour arm might have looked like. The site at this stage would have had different levels, with the middle part somewhat higher than the surrounding berm. The reason for this would have been both the deliberate raising of the centre in phase 3 and the natural tendency of the material to spill out around the edges of the site.

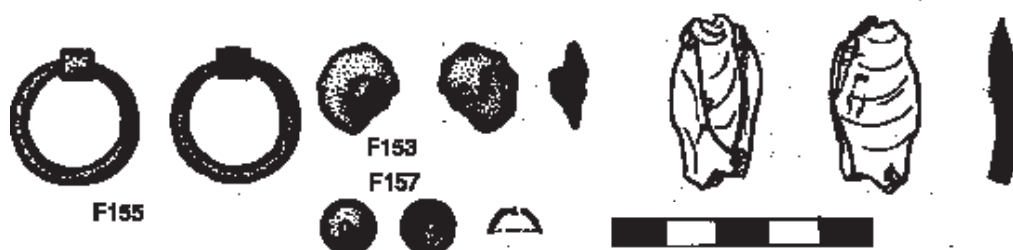


Fig. 64—Finds from outside the house, cultural layers, F13, among timber decking.

Another feature in this phase deserves a mention. In the south-west corner of the site, which seems to have been an active spot in earlier phases also, was found a small bowl-shaped depression, F16, that may be interpreted as the shape of a small bowl-furnace for iron-smelting. This feature appeared as a bowl-shaped impression in the floor of the shattered and fire-cracked stones. Its walls consisted of evenly set F15 stones. It measured about 40cm in diameter and was 15cm deep (Fig. 67). In experiments with bowl-furnaces O’Kelly used examples with similar measurements (30cm in diameter and 20cm deep). Excavated specimens such as those from Rathgall, Co. Wicklow, and Clogher, Co. Tyrone, are also of similar size. They seem to range in diameter from 40cm to 50cm, with a maximum depth of 25cm (O’Kelly 1961; B. Raftery 1976, 347; Swan 1973; Fanning 1981; B.G. Scott 1990, 159–60). The furnaces at Moynagh Lough were also of similar size, 35–45cm in diameter (cf. J. Bradley 1993). Near F16 were found remains of slag, some pieces of which had the red clay remains of the furnace attached to them. There was also a large heavy stone that may have served as an anvil (Fig. 65). The presence of charcoal, some of which was vitrified, on the site could of course also be interpreted as connected with the iron-working process.

The amount of slag is not very large and may not represent any extensive iron-producing activity on the site. However, in many instances the amount of slag found in early medieval contexts from, for example, ringforts is limited to some 10kg (B.G. Scott 1990, 99), and Moynagh Lough did not produce any large quantity of slag (J. Bradley 1993, 80). Scott (1990, 160) suggested that bowl-furnaces, although primarily associated with ore-smelting, could have been reused for bloom-smithing or as forging-hearths. For more experimental work with bowl-furnaces see e.g. Tylecote 1986, 132ff. By analysing the use of space on the site in this phase it can be noted that the main concentration of slag is located in the south-west corner of the site. This is the side nearest to the shore that was the centre of activity in phase 3. One piece of slag was also found in the middle of the site.

As regards raw material for iron production, we located many pieces of so-called penny-ore — smaller stones surrounded by iron-panning. Dr Gert Magnusson inspected this material and suggested that iron could have been extracted from it. This type of ore is not mentioned in any detail in Scott’s (1990) discussion of iron sources in Ireland. O’Kelly has discussed the use of iron-pan from bogs as raw material in iron production, and iron-pan was found during the excavation of the ringfort in Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (O’Kelly 1952, 35–6; B.G. Scott 1990, 215). The possibility that penny-ore was used in the production process needs to be further investigated, and it is possible that the lakes were much more important sources of ore than previously acknowledged. During our excavation we noted how iron-pan still formed around the site, and it is important to bear in mind that this substance was also present on many of the animal bones from the site. The iron-pan may not be the result of any conscious collection activity but may be due to natural formations along the shore.

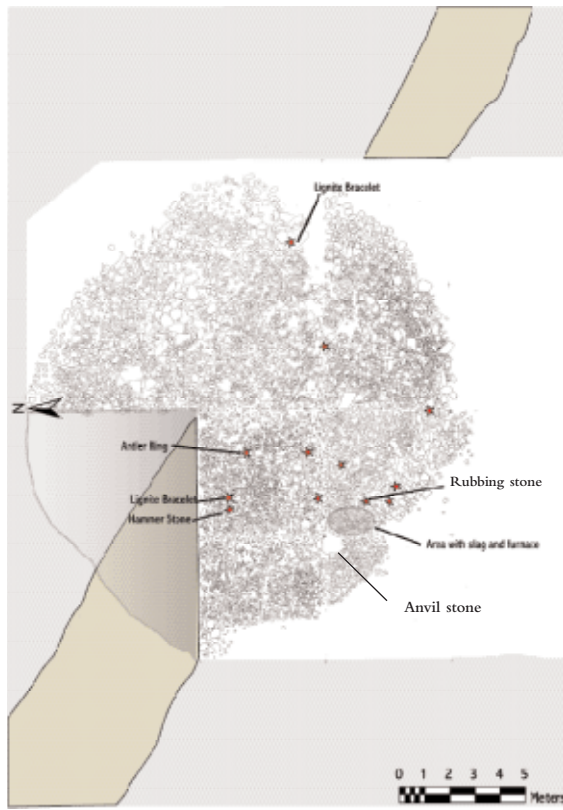


Fig. 65—Plan of phase 4, shattered and fire-cracked stones.

Other finds from this phase include an antler ring and a number of smooth white stones (cf. Bofeenaun, where they are also associated with iron-working, and Moynagh Lough (J. Bradley, pers. comm.); smooth white quartz stones were found near the fireplace at the crannog in Lough Naneevin, Co. Galway (Kinahan 1866–9)). White stones like these have also been found deposited in other sacred places, for example in front of megalithic tombs. Interestingly enough, traces of iron production have quite often been found in connection with ecclesiastical sites and with megalithic tombs (see B.G. Scott 1990, 149, appendix). A tracked stone was also found, which may have been a reused runner for a saddle-quern stone, as well as an egg-shaped stone. A lignite bracelet was found in the sand on the periphery of the site (Fig. 68).

The distribution of animal bones differs from that in phase 3. The spatial analysis of the bones shows a different pattern than that of the artefacts. In this phase the animal bones can be found all over the crannog site and not just in the south-west area outside the former door. This indicates a different use of the site, now involving the whole island rather than only the area nearest to the shore. How can all this be understood in relation to a floor of bones, horse skulls and other animal skulls placed at the site's eastern edge, nearest to the water? The presence of bones as an element of the building material has also been noted at the crannog in Moynagh Lough (J. Bradley 1985–6; McCormick 1985–6). It is worth noting that the areas outside the body of the crannog did not produce any large amounts of bones or finds. This is an indication that the bones were not seen as waste and simply dumped over the edges of the site but rather were saved and used as building material. The many animal bones from this phase could also be connected with the iron production. Experiments in Wales suggest that they played a role in regulating the temperature of the production process (Eoin Grogan, pers. comm.).

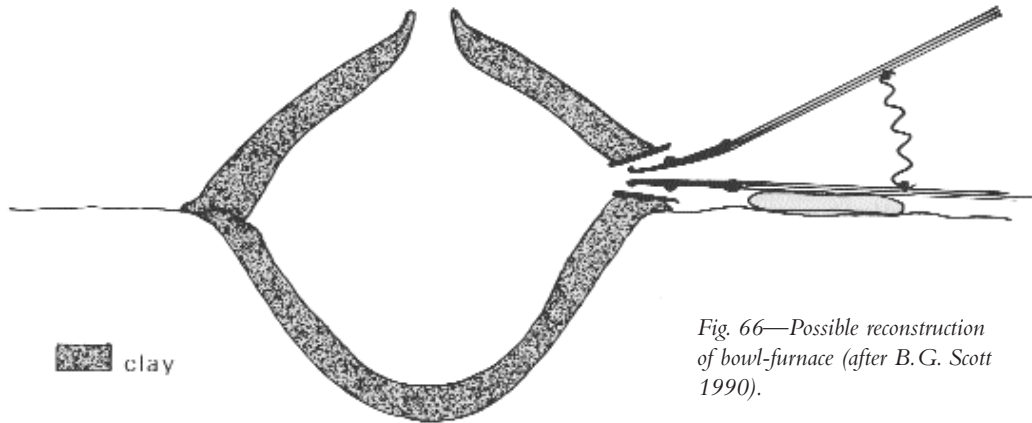


Fig. 66—Possible reconstruction of bowl-furnace (after B. G. Scott 1990).

CONCLUSION

In the fourth phase all the former spatial differences were done away with, and the whole site was covered in shattered stones and fragmented bones. Comparable bone floors have been found at Moynagh Lough and Lagore. While there is no sign of a central hearth in use at this time, there are other smaller practices that can still be seen as linked to earlier activities on the island. The first similarity is the existence of animal bones on the site. The bones were not only the remains of food but were also incorporated into the building and the floor. The activities changed from textile-working and carving into a token iron production. There was continued stability in location, with the south-west corner remaining the focus of activity. Another change from earlier



Fig. 67—The bowl-furnace depression.

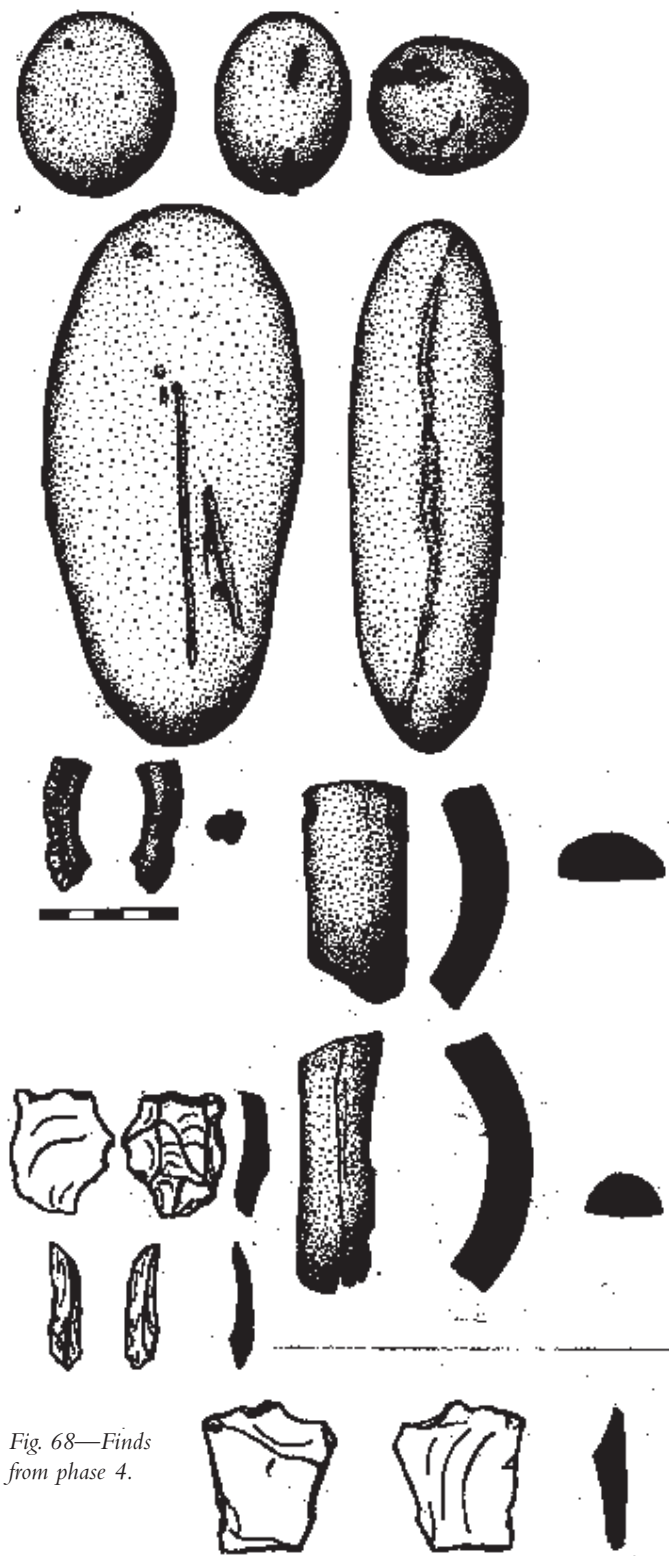


Fig. 68—Finds from phase 4.

phases was the lessened emphasis on the boundaries of the crannog over time.

Phase 5 — the stone cairn

The latest building activity was the placement of one layer of angular and subangular boulders, F17, over most parts of the site, with a particular concentration on the western area, towards the lake. This gave rise to a central elevation. It is likely that the stone floor from phase 4 was still in use and served as a berm at this stage. The stones were loosely packed and no artefacts were directly associated with this phase. The other crannog in this bay has a similar superstructure. On stratigraphic grounds this cairn would belong to some of the later phases of the early medieval period. However, most high-cairn crannogs have their mid-cairn located on the shore side of the site. To some extent this comparatively low cairn of stone resembles the mid-cairn that can be found on the larger crannogs.

One way of interpreting this phase is that it represents a raising of the floor of the crannog, and that at some earlier stage it had a superstructure of some perishable material, such as planks. Another way to explain these layers is that the site was never finished. The crannog in Sroove was not built up into a high-cairn crannog during the later medieval period, like many of the crannogs on the eastern side.

Phase 6 — decay and reuse

The latest phase consists of the recent remains, where the edges of the island were sanded over and trees and dense shrubbery grew on the site, C1. In this phase we find artefacts such as Coca-Cola cans and cartridges which suggest that the site was reused for recent duck-shooting, implying long periods of waiting hidden in the shrubs of this small cairn on the shoreline of Lough Gara. The site has now been rebuilt with a core of stones and excavation material. A single ash tree grows on the site and it will soon be covered in shrubs.

Interpretative drift

We have followed the building and use of the causeway and crannog in Sroove over time, and have observed how it has both changed and stayed the same. Before we compare the crannog in Sroove to other, more materially prominent crannogs I want to discuss how the site grew in its own historicity and how the repeated use of this site may have mediated change. The Sroove crannog is one of the few for which there is a published stratigraphy and spatial recording of the finds — a precondition for carrying out such an analysis.

Reuse and old artefacts

Not only does the crannog in Sroove reuse an earlier causeway (and an earlier crannog bay) but also — just as is the case with many other crannogs — early artefacts were found in late layers. In the lowermost early medieval layers there were also artefacts that were made long before that time (the chert arrowhead and the flint thumb-scraper that were found near the central post and the hearth of the crannog). As mentioned in the research history, many earlier scholars had run into problems with such material. Both these artefacts and the use of crannogs represented a ‘backwardness’ to, for example, Wood-Martin (1886a, 35, 160; see Chapter 4). Later researchers such as Coffey (1906, 113), Hencken (1950, 10) and Lynn (1983) seem to have solved the problem by regarding the earlier artefacts as having been brought in accidentally with the building material of the crannogs.

The lithics from Sroove are of types that could be found along the shore of the lake, which would suggest that they could have been brought in with the building material. There are two possible arguments against this idea. The first is that ‘old’ finds seem to occur with some regularity in early medieval crannogs, but this type of find has also been recovered from other contemporary sites such as ringforts, which would be located further away from the shore. The second argument is that people at this time had, as we have seen in the use of the nodes, a long tradition of involvement with monuments from the past, i.e. that earlier sites were meaningful to them. If earlier sites were meaningful to them, why would early artefacts be meaningless? Related ideas have also been put forward by Swift (1996). People were at this time living in what Williams (1998) has described as a ‘history culture’ in which things from the past mattered.

The reuse of an earlier site for the building of a crannog has often been understood from a practical viewpoint, whereby a shoal in the water ‘attracted’ people because it was much easier to build an island at that particular spot. However, in view of our reasoning about the material and the stratigraphical evidence from Sroove that old artefacts were brought in and placed in later layers on the crannog, we have to adjust our interpretations. I think that the reuse of sites as well as artefacts may have been meaningful to people at this time. It is possible that this reuse was an expression of the spatial distancing and breaking out from the earlier tribal communities.

I think that by the reuse of the crannog people felt that they could leave certain parts of their past behind and start something else somewhere else. They built a crannog. The house, and possibly also the island, was personalised by the inclusion of the bone pin in the stone packing support for the wall. In comparison to the late Bronze Age crannogs, which may have been places from which sacrifices and depositions took place, the early medieval crannog in Sroove was different. It was a place for living and settlement.

From house and home to iron production

If we compare the crannog in Sroove with itself over time we can see that its meaning may have altered slightly. A house on an island in the water was slowly changed into a place for the production of iron. Let us take a closer look at how this may have happened and how it may have affected people's loyalties.

				Activity	Bones	Phase 4
Boundary	House	Hearth	Personality	Activity	Bones	Phase 3
Boundary	House	Hearth	Personality			Phase 2

Fig. 69—Interpretative drift at the crannog in Sroove from phase 2 to phase 4.

Architecturally the crannog, with its palisade and its situation in the water, had quite distinct boundaries right from the start. These boundaries would have worked to separate the people on the crannog from people on land or elsewhere. They would even serve to emphasise the locational distance from the node. Most likely the use of the crannog would have strengthened the identity of a small group of people at the expense of the larger community that would have been present in the period before. However, over time there was a lessening emphasis on the boundaries of the island. Figure 69 shows how the conceptual meaning of the crannog may have changed over time with use.

What also seems to have changed slightly over time is the connection between the island and items related to personal appearance and personality (Fig. 69). As mentioned above, it is possible that the house and the crannog with the help of the foundation sacrifice were given a personality of their own. The link between people's appearance and the crannog continued in the following third phase, when the house was rebuilt with a stone floor. In this phase also items connected with personal appearance were left behind. However, now the items were not deliberately deposited in the building. It looks more as if they were dropped in and around the house and no one cared to pick them up. They may have been swept to the side of the crannog, and hence became a part of it. In the following fourth phase there was no connection between the site and any directly personal items. This phase revealed traces of an activity such as iron-handling, while the preceding one was linked to the activity of sewing. There was also an increasing amount of animal bones in the material during these two phases.

Phase 4 shows disengagement from many of the traits of the two earlier phases of the crannog. There was no longer a house on the island and no hearth that connected to the preceding phase. The boundaries and palisade were filled over with stones and were seemingly not as important to maintain as before. The meaning of the island had drifted away from being primarily connected with people and settlement to an association with activities and iron production, as well as with animal bones. At this stage, however, the crannog had developed its own history.

Bailey, who has worked on similar layered material in the east Bulgarian tells, has suggested that the sequence of houses, rebuilt in almost the same places, represented the biographies or

genealogies of the tells (Bailey 1990; 1996, 146). This could be an interesting way to look at the reuse and interpretative drift of the crannogs as well. At the later stages of its use in the early medieval period our crannog in Sroove may have taken on the meaning of having had a ‘genealogy’ of its own. It may have been connected with stories about different people who had lived there, as well as the activities they were involved in. It may have had a genealogy strong enough to support the people who used it as well. If this was the case, the crannog would have contributed towards the severing of older loyalties and the creation of new ones.

What I describe as interpretative drift are the small changes that occur in the ways events or places are reinterpreted when people become involved in certain activities. In order to pursue such a discussion it is possible to look at a site’s own referential practice, to compare the site with itself and to see what changes and what stays the same over time. What I want to investigate is how the crannog in its materiality forces a narrow or a wide material reinterpretation and what that may have meant. Is it possible to see how the architecture leads people from ‘let’s do it this way’ to ‘this is the way to do it’? This means asking whether the lifestyle on the crannog became institutionalised, firstly in relation to itself and secondly in comparison with other sites.

Conclusion

The changes in the material interpretation between the phases of the crannog is what I call interpretative drift. All these activities could be taken to represent the ongoing life of a crannog, where people in their everyday activities drew on norms and institutional orders. People who used the crannog were living there and over time changed the emphasis, first using the crannog for textile work and then for iron production. The crannog therefore became a part of the context for these activities. They have to be understood perhaps not so much in relation to an ‘optimal’ use of resources as in relation to a creation of genealogies of people and places.

The connection to the past provided by these activities could be seen as a conceptual *axis mundi*, which held together the interpretative drift while perhaps also facilitating it. Interpretative drift is the slow, almost unacknowledged shift in someone’s manner of interpreting events as they become involved in a particular activity. This term can be used to discuss the shift in meaning of the various layers in the crannogs.

I think that the merging of the houses and the symbols of people’s bodies on the island lays the basis for the analysis, where the island over time also came to represent the small group who used it as one body. The crannog, by its delimited body, and the reiteration of crannog life led to a realignment of responsibility, making one body out of a small group. The production played a part in this practice, for example. The island would work to collect them, uniting them and cutting them off from the rest of the people. In a certain way it enabled their actions. In other ways it disabled them from creating other contexts in which to live.

Comparison to other sites

The crannog in Sroove and other crannogs

In the same bay at Sroove there is another low-cairn crannog. Morphologically it is similar to the excavated site, but we do not know with any certainty what may have happened on it. The only thing apparent is that its main body faces away from the excavated site, as if the two crannogs were built to respect each other’s privacy. As shown, on the excavated site all the main activities took place in the south-west corner, where the door is also located, which means that the activity areas faced away from the other low-cairn crannog in the bay.

If we move out into Lough Gara, there are more low-cairn crannogs comparable to the

excavated site. There are even some sites dating from the early medieval period that are even smaller. There are also a number of high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara and, as discussed before, these are probably low-cairn crannogs that were heightened during the later phases of the early medieval period or at the beginning of the later medieval period (Fig. 70). The crannogs that I am about to discuss are of the high-cairn type such as Rathtinaun and the 'royal' site at Lagore. Both these sites were higher and larger than the crannog in Sroove.

Rich crannog, poor crannog

That crannogs have been portrayed as royal dwellings is due to the fact that many of them, such as Rathtinaun and Lagore, have yielded a rich and varied artefact material and/or that they were mentioned in the documentary sources as important (see e.g. Warner 1988). From both these sites the finds could be counted in thousands. The crannog in Sroove represents a smaller site, both in size and in that it produced considerably fewer finds than the other sites (around 60). In the following I will try to compare the kinds of finds from some of larger sites with the finds from the crannog in Sroove. As I will show, there is quite an interesting correspondence between the finds from this small low-cairn crannog and some of the high-cairn crannogs. As mentioned before, at the crannogs which we will use for comparison there was no clear stratigraphic division of the finds, as there was at Sroove. A phase-by-phase comparison might have been very informative. That, however, is not possible.

No finds were associated with the first phase of the causeway. In Sroove's second phase objects from an earlier period were found, the thumb-scraper and the black chert arrowhead. Lagore also had an earlier artefact in its foundation layers — a large wooden human figure, dating from the Bronze Age (Hencken 1950; B.J. Coles 1990). It is rumoured that one or two polished stone axes were found in the early medieval layers at Rathtinaun, but it is unclear whether these belonged to a foundation layer. Both larger and smaller crannogs may have early artefacts in later layers.

In both the second and third phases at Sroove there were finds connected with personal appearance — the head of the iron pin, the bone pins, lignite bracelets, bone beads and combs. The same sets of personal accessories have been found at Tivannagh and Rathtinaun (J. Raftery 1957, 10–12) and Lagore (Hencken 1950). The main difference is that the items from Sroove showed less variation in materials than the other two. Instead of bone beads the other sites have beads of amber and blue glass. The same difference can be found in comparison with, for example, Lagore (Hencken 1950; Eogan 2000): where Sroove has lignite bracelets, Lagore has bracelets of lignite and coloured glass. Pieces of a blue glass bracelet have been found outside the high-cairn crannog at Emlagh on the eastern shores of Lough Gara (KILA 009). The pins from Sroove are of iron or bone. The other sites seem to have had a larger variety in material and types, including a number of ornamental pins of bronze (see J. Raftery 1957, 11–13; Hencken 1950).

In the third phase the Sroove crannog produced evidence for sewing, with the find of the bone needle. The larger crannogs, such as Rathtinaun, showed evidence for the same activities, with finds of spindle-whorls and needles (see J. Raftery 1957, 13). Lagore corresponds to this as well, with finds of weaving-tablets, spindle-whorls and needles (Hencken 1950; Eogan 2000), although in this case there is no stratigraphical location for the finds.

From the fourth phase we have some pieces of slag and a furnace-bottom, found together with an antler ring, some smooth white stones and a tracked stone. The remains of furnace-bottoms were found at Lagore, as well as traces of other metalworking or glass-working activities. These types of activities could also be identified at Tivannagh and Rathtinaun. The difference between the crannog in Sroove and, for example, Lagore is the quantity of debris, with the latter site showing much more slag. Lagore and other sites with larger amounts of metalworking debris have

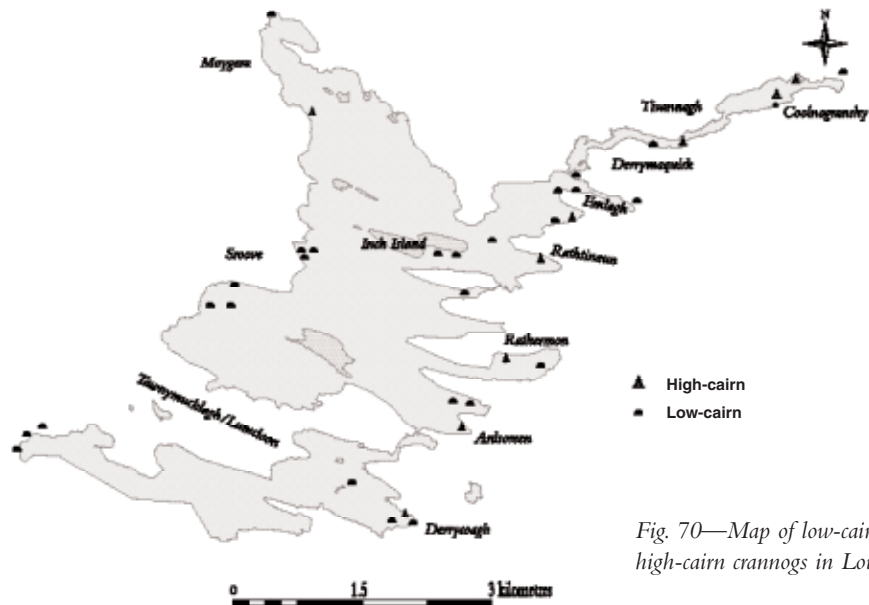


Fig. 70—Map of low-cairn and high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara.

often been identified as political centres, and the metalworking has been perceived as representing specialists working under the patronage of a dynasty (B.G. Scott 1990, 100). As we can see, metalworking was also connected with smaller crannogs.⁵⁷ Iron slag has also been found within the ecclesiastical enclosures in Monasteraden (NMI 1986:127) and Carrowntemple (NMI 1979:82).

The only category of finds for which we can make no comparison between the high-cairn crannogs and the low-cairn crannog in Sroove is weapons. Lagore produced weapons (Hencken 1950) and Rathinaun yielded spearheads and a shield boss, although no weapons were found at Tivannagh (J. Raftery 1957). The only artefact at Sroove that can be considered slightly defensive is the knife. Another difference between the finds from Lagore and Sroove is the ‘slave-collars’ found in the former (see Hencken 1950). Such slave-collars have often been taken to represent the taking of hostages, but Scott (1990, 105–7) has also suggested their use as dog-collars.

Eogan (2000, 81) has interpreted the finds from Lagore as showing the lifestyle of a leading, royal family. In comparison with the finds from Sroove there are indeed differences, but there are also similarities. The crannog in Sroove compares quite easily with Lagore and the other crannogs in terms of categories of finds. The difference is that Sroove seems to have a lesser variety of types within a category, e.g. ornaments, and less variation in material as well. The composition of the finds and materials shows that a ‘lifestyle’ like that at Lagore might have been shared by more people than the royalty, although perhaps not all people had access to all types of materials, such as coloured glass or large amounts of bronze. Despite this, the similarities in the ‘kinds’ of finds show that at an overall level there must have been some type of common understanding of the activities that should take place on a crannog.

Perhaps one can see the lifestyle of the royalty in these very differences in the archaeological material — activities such as the taking of hostages (slave-collars) or warfare (weapons). The crannog in Sroove showed very few defensive elements. It was situated on a shallow sandy shore, easily accessed (although access would have been controlled by causeway and palisade). Furthermore it lacked weapons. Another difference is that the royal sites appear to be slightly more spacious. Comparison of the finds does not only tell us about the difference between royalty

and commoners, it also reveals something else. I think that the comparability with other sites shows that even a crannog like the one at Sroove can tell us something about adherence to social norms both for the rich and for the less well-off.

In terms of structure too there seems to be a fair amount of comparability between the 'poor' crannog and the 'rich' crannog. They both seem to be associated with houses in the early medieval period. There also seems to be less and less tangible evidence for structures towards the end of the period on both the 'rich' and 'poor' crannogs (cf. Warner 1994).

Crannogs and what they do

I think that the crannogs in our area represent a manifestation of a further move into areas in the landscape that were not utilised before. On the one hand there is evidence that crannogs were in use during the late Bronze Age. What is different in this period is that they become more plentiful and that they represent settlements. The excavation of the crannog in Sroove has shown that during the early medieval period it was not only the upper classes in society that used crannogs and moved out into the landscape. Islands were also built and used by people who did not have access to the same amount of material wealth as others. There are even smaller low-cairn crannogs than that excavated at Sroove which date from the early medieval period, and these too have to be brought into the picture. These sites measure 8–10m in diameter and have no associated finds, so it is not clear what activities were connected with them. The reactivation of the crannogs would further emphasise a locational break with the nodes, as the crannogs are located in other places compared to where the nodes are.

As suggested earlier, the crannog in Sroove may have acquired its own personality over time. As with tell sites, it has a genealogy or a biography (cf. Thomas 1996). It is possible that the use of the crannog further strengthened the identity of a small group or kindred associated with the site. This would in turn lead to a further breakdown of earlier, possibly tribal identities.

If the analysis is directed towards the understanding of production, the context of the crannog has to be taken into account. It is interesting to note that the iron production was most evident in the latter phases of crannog use, when the island may have acquired the sanction of long usage. It has been proposed by B.G. Scott (1990, 101), following G. Magnusson (1986; 1987, 282ff), that the few traces of iron production on many Irish sites imply that it was only one of many activities that took place on a farmstead or settlement. There was no question of any craft specialisation. What we learn from the crannog in Sroove is that the production was located at a place which during the early medieval period had taken on its own historicity.

Comparison between crannogs and ringforts

Long-term occupation

There is evidence from both documentary and archaeological sources that some ringforts were also occupied for long periods (although this does not necessarily imply that their meaning remained static over time). When excavated, some ringforts, e.g. Dressogagh Rath, Co. Armagh, and Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, have shown multiple layers of occupation (Collins 1966; Hamlin and Lynn 1988, 44–7; Lynn and McDowell 1988; Lynn 1989; Edwards 1990, 22–3). There is also other documentary evidence, such as the following poem, that suggests their long-term use:

'The fort opposite the oakwood.
Once it was Bruidge's, it was Cathal's

It was Aed's, it was Ailill's
 It was Conaing's, it was Cuiline's
 And it was Maelduin's —
 The fort remains after each in his turn,
 And the kings asleep in the ground'.

This eighth-century poem deals with a ringfort that seems to have been used by seven different people, perhaps of the same family (see Murphy 1956, xvi; Stout 1997, 115). This fort is connected with a dynasty historically attested in the sixth–seventh century (Smyth 1974–5; Charles-Edwards 2000, 528). (Stout has used this quote to support his analysis of ringforts, making sense of them on the same distribution map.) It is likely that the ringforts, just like the crannogs, were places that also grew with their own historicity and that may have been occupied by generation after generation. The ringfort, like the crannog, may well have represented a kindred or a lineage group with its own history, as suggested by the poem. Such an interpretation is supported by the contemporary law-texts which see the kin as circles around a person, the circle of kin (F. Kelly 1988). It is possible that the circles around the ringforts and crannogs also carried this meaning. However, even though there is both documentary and archaeological evidence that ringforts, like crannogs, were used over long periods, this does not necessarily imply that they meant the same thing over time. In the same way as multiperiod crannogs, the meaning of a reused ringfort may have been changed over time. They could also have come to symbolise material genealogies.

Private space

Besides the issues of 'historicity' and long-term use, the two site types could also be interpreted in terms of social space, and I want to take this a bit further. I think this is another aspect that is important for a better understanding of the spatial and architectural distinctiveness of these sites.

What is interesting is that the documentary sources can be used for a lot more than the reconstruction of political histories — they could be used as the basis for an early medieval landscape study as well. The documentary sources tell us how the landscape was perceived, and it seems that people's homes were the influential centre of their lives. For example, the law-texts show how space near the house and respectively further away was graded. This is reflected in a geographical consideration of the severity of a crime. It was considered a more serious offence to steal from near a house than from a place in the wilderness. The finder of lost property was entitled to a larger share if it was found away from the home place (F. Kelly 1988, 128–9, 147; see also Charles-Edwards 2000, 106–8). In the law-texts one can see a ranking of space from home, to road, forest, mountain and strand. The landscape would then have been perceived as secure near one's house and risky at its edge: and it was not homogeneous — as mathematical space — but meaningful and graded. It is possible that people in Monasteraden felt like this about their landscape, where the mountain and the lake would have been a wilderness at one stage where no one or nothing was really safe, and that safety would have been maintained near the home place.

As was pointed out earlier, both crannogs and ringforts can be characterised by their distinctive surrounding boundaries, either walls of stone or earth or palisades and water. In so far as architecture and buildings are a part of the ordering of the world, they can enforce social practices and meaning (cf. Parker Pearson and Richards 1994, ch. 1). The distinct boundaries of these sites would have offered the architectural possibility of dramatising differences in social space and also, in societal terms, of excluding some while including others.

Just as in the case of crannogs, there has been an academic quibble about the dating of ringforts; some (e.g. Caulfield 1981) hold that the site type originated in the Bronze Age, but most

people believe that they began in the early medieval period (see Lynn 1983). Whichever way one wants to see the material, the plentiful use of ringforts and also crannogs in the early medieval period represents a downscaling and a ‘privatisation’ of space compared with earlier periods. This is obvious if the larger hillforts are compared with the ringforts, but can also be seen in a comparison between the rarely hinged nodes and these later sites. Communal space does not seem to have the same importance in the architecture during the early medieval period as in the preceding period.

What is prominent in the architecture is instead the smaller enclosed spaces. The ringfort walls, as Charles-Edwards has pointed out, protect people’s private space, and private space was of the utmost importance in early Irish society (Charles-Edwards 2000, 105, 107). This emphasis on private space can also be found with the crannogs. It is possible that while people socialised with each other it was with the understanding that the social rules of the house had to be respected, and the ringfort’s walls showed clearly where the rules of that special kindred started.

That the privacy of the house was of great importance to people at this time is well attested in the documentary sources. The privacy of family life was contrasted with public life *i túaith*, where people ran the risk of being satirised, gossiped about, or otherwise losing face. It has been pointed out that the physical layout of the ringforts could well be connected with the protection of people’s privacy as much as anything else (Charles-Edwards 2000, 106–7). The ringfort walls have been considered a defence against violent attack or cattle-raiding (which Charles-Edwards thinks is unlikely), but they are just as likely to have constituted a meaningful defence of private space. The same interpretation may hold also for the crannogs. The maintenance of private space in these contexts would lessen the risk of being shamed in public.

Interesting in this context, and what will also be important for our understanding of change within this period, is the lessened emphasis on the borders of the sites that can be observed towards the end of the sequence. This is true not only of the crannog in Sroove but also of other settlements. Both site types can possess architectural features that break or perforate the boundaries. Some of the crannogs, like the one in Sroove, have more or less hidden passages in terms of causeways. Some of the ringforts have an equivalent in the underground passages, souterrains, that in places lead from the inside of the fort to the outside, or otherwise lead along the cashel wall. These passages are discussed as belonging to quite late in the sequence, around the eighth–ninth century (Warner 1988). What is interesting is that souterrains can be found without a ringfort, implying that the importance of a boundary wall around a settlement diminished over time.

Compared to the earlier hillforts, both ringforts and crannogs reduce the space available for ordinary social action. While some of these sites were larger than others, there was nowhere to gather large crowds. The focus shifted from the inclusive public space of the hillforts to the exclusive private space of the ringforts and crannogs. Another difference between the hillforts and the ringforts is that the latter were more dispersed in the landscape, protecting and defining land rather than people. This again shows a different attitude to the landscape during the early medieval period.

As noted above, the boundaries of these sites would have ‘given room’ for dramatising social differences, and their architecture would separate the people whose privacy was protected behind the walls from the people who were left on the outside, perhaps in shame. While archaeologists often pride themselves on the ability to find out about the people who did not make it into the headlines in the documentary sources, these people have not yet been brought into the picture with the help of the archaeological material, partly because the archaeology has focused on the upper classes of society. Instead the reverse is true — the documentary sources mention the landless people left on the outside, those who were not allowed into the community of people

who inhabited the raths. However, Monk (1998) has shown that there is some potential for finding the material remains of these people in a more intensive study of the small hut sites found outside some of the ringforts (hut sites of a comparable type have been found outside a trivallate ringfort outside Ballaghaderreen).⁵⁸ Architecturally these sites are dependent on the ringfort. A similar pattern can be found in some constellations of crannogs, where a larger crannog has a smaller support site by its side. The documentary sources discuss people who were dependent on others for their actions in society. It is clear that dependency was not seen as a good characteristic at this time (as compared to other values in the late prehistoric period).

Interesting in this context is a comparison with the law-texts, where one of the sureties backing a contract is also called *rath* (ringfort). The word *rath* was here used to symbolise people's legal capacity (see F. Kelly 1988, 167). It is likely that the meaning of the material rath or ringfort to some extent was similar. It could be that the material rath, the ringfort, was also a symbol for the lineage group's legal capacity, and it is not unlikely that the building itself became a metaphor for the family/lineage's right to act in their world.

In a number of places, both in law-texts and in other documentary sources, there is mention of people who were not entitled to hold any contract, the *fuidir* or *bothach*, who are described as living in huts (cf. F. Kelly 1988, 33–6). They would be the people who did not have the same acknowledgement in the community as the people living in the ringforts; they would not have the same rights as others. If these people stayed on the same land for three generations, they did not achieve the same historical validation as the ringfort- or crannog-dweller; instead, their status was further reduced, and they were adjudged to be a part of the land. These people were called the *senchléithe* (see also Patterson 1994, 153). It is possible that they were not seen as full members of society.

The implication that crannogs may have stood for the ability of the kindred to act in society adds another dimension to our understanding of the crannog's role in society. These sites would have represented the legal standing and possibility of action of those on the inside of the boundary. For those on the outside a site like a crannog would have been a symbol of their own social exclusion from what was perceived to be a community at this time.

The relationship between crannogs and other sites in Lough Gara

At one level the early medieval sites such as the crannogs and ringforts show a repetitiveness in their architecture, and it would be easy to take this as a sign of a static society. There also seems to be another set of similarities in the position of these sites, where the boundary zones seem to have been preferred locations for settlement. Despite the repetitiveness in the way the ringforts are related to the early churches, or the churches to the nodes, or the crannogs to the ringforts, there are small but important differences between these places. These differences may tell us about the build-up of local identities involving both new and older monuments. They may also reveal how the local communities drew on the symbolic structures that were present in society at the time.

A closer study of the area around the lake could throw light on the relationship between crannogs and ringforts at a local level. To date, the only studies on ringforts, such as Stout's, have been carried out in areas without crannogs. Such a discussion could also have a bearing on the understanding of life in a less populated area — perhaps even of a small subject tribe such as the Grecrigi. One of the questions we will deal with is whether the increased attention paid to the lake at this time meant that it was seen as uniting rather than dividing people, and a special emphasis will be put on the area of Monasteraden. The area around the lake will then be compared with the nearby concentration of ringforts in places such as Kilfree, Tibohine and Kilmovee that are small but not near the lake. I will try to develop the idea that although we are dealing with architecturally distinct monument types such as ringforts, crannogs and ecclesiastical

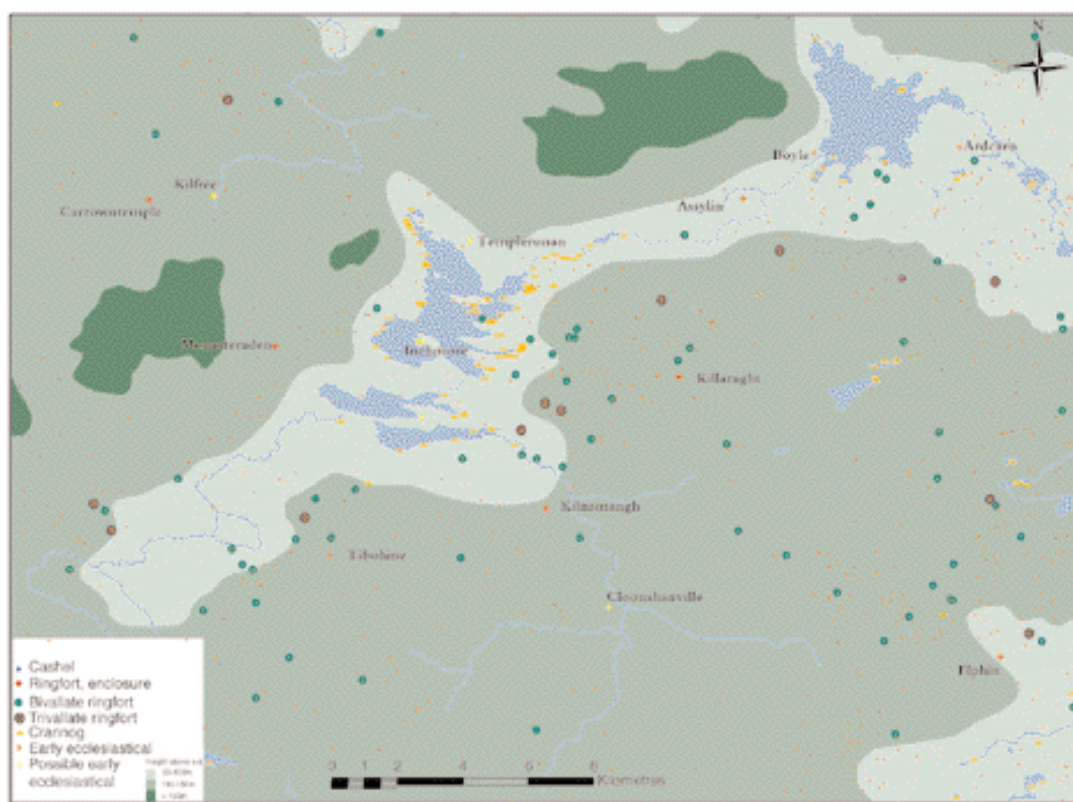


Fig. 71—Distribution of crannogs, churches and ringforts around Lough Gara.

sites, there is also local variation in the way these common denominators are used. In the preceding chapter we saw that the areas on the different sides of the lake, such as Kilfree, Monasteraden and Killaraght, might have had their own tribal nodes around which their identities would have formed, and these areas would have continued in importance during this period.

THE AREA IN AND AROUND LOUGH GARA

When it comes to discussing the area around Lough Gara the question is whether materially we can see it as one unit. As mentioned in the documentary sources, the lake and the lands around it were connected with the Grecrigi, but the material culture suggests differences between the two sides of the lake, as well as the possibility of many centres. The law-texts prescribe that a tribe ought to have one church, one poet and one king, and, as we will see, the pattern around Lough Gara deviates from this. Swan (1983) has analysed the number of early ecclesiastical sites per parish and has come up with a pattern in which occasionally one parish can have more than one church.

One way to bring about a discussion about the unity of the area is to look at the distribution of ringforts in general and to assume that a concentration of ringforts also represents the extent of a community. However, the outer boundaries of such a group can be rather sporadic. Most ringforts around Lough Gara (about 60) are located on the eastern side of the lake (Fig. 71). There are about 25 on the western side and only a handful in the zone leading north–south through the lake. The four trivallate ringforts are located on the eastern side of the lake at the edges of the

main ringfort concentrations. There are also sixteen bivallate ringforts on this side of the lake. Most of them are situated on the edges of drumlins and none of them have any visual contact with the waters, nor are they generally located near the lake. Together with the trivallate sites they form almost a ring around a flatter area in Killaraght that has been left without any monumental sites from the early medieval period, such as ringforts. This is the area of the barrow cemetery that was discussed in earlier chapters. In the middle of this ring is the early medieval church of Killaraght.

On the western side of the lake there is only one bivallate ringfort, in the middle of the small concentration of ringforts. Ringforts are quite common on this side of the lake also; one is located only about 200m away from the excavation area in Sroove. It sits just on the shoreline, which it uses as part of its outer boundary; this makes the site unusual. Further south on the same shoreline there is another ringfort, with a small low-cairn crannog dating from the early medieval period in the waters nearby. However, most other ringforts, especially on the western side of the lake, are located at some distance from the waters higher up on the slopes of the mountain of Mullaghatee, suggesting a social as well as a spatial distance between the crannogs and the main ringfort settlement.

While the mountaintop is free from settlements there are three cashels along a small stream running down from the mountain. Further down, on both sides of the same stream, between Mullaghatee and the present-day village, there is a small concentration of ringforts. These sites may have been a small village, as people lived more closely together than in other parts of the lake. This group of about ten ringforts occurs in an area a little more than 1km square. However, the idea of living in a ‘nucleated settlement’ seems to have been despised in early Ireland, seen as suitable only for serfs (Charles-Edwards 1984, 170–1). The only possible bivallate cashel, in Monasteraden, is located in the middle of this spread. This cashel is unusual as it has one surrounding earthen bank, resembling the sites from Killasser, Co. Mayo (cf. O’Hara 1991). Here the multivallate ringfort did not take up a boundary position as elsewhere — it was more central to the rest of the ringforts. If the bivallate ringforts represent a higher standing in society, this location could have signalled that, in this case, power was exercised through being in the middle of the settlement. With only one bivallate ringfort it is hard to argue for any major settlement hierarchy in Monasteraden at this time. The only high-cairn crannog on the western shore of the lake is situated at Moygara, much further north along this shore.

In general there are only minor variations between the sites in Monasteraden, looking at them from the outside. People from one ringfort in the village would easily have recognised the layout of a neighbour’s ringfort. The short distance between the sites also suggests a connection and the existence of a small village during this time. The law-texts mention the cooperative farming that took place on kin-land (F. Kelly 1988), while the ringforts mark out each household’s outer boundaries, prescribing their private space.

Many of the ringforts both here in Monasteraden and elsewhere would have had houses on the inside, and these would have been where people lived much of their lives, engaged in handicrafts of different types, just as on the crannogs. Iron slag and furnace-bottoms have been found in some ringforts, suggesting that metalworking took place within the household (see B.G. Scott 1990). While some smaller animals like pigs would have been brought inside the ringfort walls, most farming activities were carried on outside. Most people were engaged in cattle-herding, and the cattle and other animals grazed in the surroundings of the ringforts.

It is possible that there were more people living in Monasteraden at this time than merely those who left their traces in the ringforts. These other people could have inhabited small huts in the areas in between the ringforts, but we have found no remains of any such hut sites outside the ringforts in Monasteraden. The concept of *senchléithe* may be more applicable to a place more

stratified than Monasteraden. Compared to the people enclosed within the ringforts, the people outside would have run a considerable risk in staying on the same land for generations. There is no evidence in the archaeological material for any extensive social stratification among the people living in the ringforts on the western side of the lake (if we follow Stout's and others' interpretations of the significance of multivallateness). There is only one possible bivallate ringfort, and no trivallate site. Nevertheless there might have been people who lived in huts and therefore were not considered full members of society, in that they lacked full legal capacity.

The ecclesiastical site in Monasteraden is located just outside the main concentration of ringforts. It shares its location with earlier sites such as standing stones and the ring-cairn. The graveyard and early ecclesiastical site are surrounded by a stone wall, therein resembling a large cashel. Inside the walls are a souterrain and a bullaun stone. A small distance away is a holy well. These components fulfil the requirements for an early church site. However, the existence of souterrains in ecclesiastical enclosures is not so common (cf. Swan 1988, 5). According to Gwynn and Hadcock (1988, 398) this is an early monastery that was probably founded by Aedhan O Fiachrach (d. 570: *AU*). There is, however, no direct connection between the site and the reference, so that the text-dating of the site is only indirect and has to be supported by the archaeological analysis. The same saint is also connected with the ecclesiastical remains at Cloonohill in Corran, Co. Sligo (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 377; O'Rourke 1889, ii, 192, 380–1; H 262). With its high boundary wall, the ecclesiastical site in Monasteraden seems to follow the social norm of excluding/including people and marking out graded space, although the monastic enclosure is slightly larger than the average ringfort in the area. Ceremonies of different types were performed inside the enclosure, but the boundary wall suggests that these were only for a select few. Iron slag is often found on these early ecclesiastical sites. This implies that the religious community engaged in the same activities as every other ringfort- and crannog-dweller; it also shows that there was no real opposition between the sacred and the profane, that the one was embedded in the other.

The site would have held a small church and graves, and it is possible that people eventually started to bury their dead here. But from the beginning the church may have been a place for the practice of religion only. It has been mentioned elsewhere that burial near churches only started in the eighth century (E. O'Brien 1992). It is worth noting that although the ecclesiastical site makes use of quite distinct boundary walls it is still located next to earlier monumental sites such as a ring-cairn, a small burial cairn, a boulder burial and a wedge tomb. If people in Monasteraden behaved like people elsewhere, it is possible that these places were used for burials well into the early medieval period. This area tends to be avoided by the ringforts, creating a division between the valley of the living and the valley of the ancestors and of the dead. The ecclesiastical remains in this way addressed earlier areas of sanctity, by juxtaposition with them, except that the architecture was more exclusive. One possibility is that the church made use of the power of the earlier ancestral places in the conversion of the people of Monasteraden.

The crannog at Sroove and the other crannogs on this side of the lake are located at some distance from the main concentration of ringforts. This suggests that they did not play a role in the everyday life up in the village but rather represented a turning away from the community and an effort to take the idea of privacy even further than the ringforts. The small crannog in Sroove also shows that people who were probably not of high rank had access to the same type of materials as the royal lines. There are even smaller crannogs in the bay that date from the early medieval period. Perhaps these were used by the people who were living in the huts. One possibility is that they could have been used to avoid becoming serfs, by being settled too long on the same land, as the crannogs would still have represented a different type of land.

If we look at the areas on the other side of the lake, it is not self-evident that Lough Gara united people at this time. The archaeological material shows a moderately empty area, leading north–south through the middle of the lake, which was sparsely settled in these times. It contains a few cashels but otherwise very little visible activity, just as in most earlier periods. Neither is there any strong evidence for crannogs through the central axis of the lake. Here are instead three ecclesiastical sites — one at Annagh, another at Inchmore, and one at Templeronan — but none of these are clearly datable to the early medieval period. At Annagh there are the remains of a graveyard, an altar and a holy well (SL 46:26). It is not possible to classify the site as clearly early medieval on the basis of the field evidence. What is missing is a surrounding enclosure or a cross-inscribed slab. The next site to the north is at Inchmore (SL 46:3801–03). It consists of a rounded enclosure with building remains and a possible souterrain. The site has a graveyard tradition, which is referred to by O’Donovan. There is a reference in the OS Letters, no. 418 for Sligo, that might refer to this site: ‘There was an old burial place in Annagh townland on ground which runs like a promontory into the lake, near Mr Mc Dermott’s house in Sroff, which is on the opposite side of the lake. It is also near Clooncunny.’ This reference could either be to the remains at Inchmore or to a place in the next part of the lake which holds the townland names mentioned. On the basis of the field evidence this place is slightly more likely than Annagh to be an early ecclesiastical site.

The northernmost ecclesiastical site in the central area of the lake is called Templeronan (SL 45:1101–02). Here can be found a church ruin and a rectangular graveyard. I have not found any traces of a circular surrounding wall which would have strengthened the argument for an early date. One positive piece of evidence, though, is the unregistered holy well with Patrician associations to the west of the site. None of these three sites can be convincingly deemed to be early medieval, while they cannot be totally ruled out either.

Lake churches and churches located in the wilderness are quite common in the early medieval period. If one follows the flow of the water downstream along the Boyle River there is another possible early church site at Coolnagranshy. Further down the river is the well-attested early medieval ecclesiastical site of Assylin/Mocmoynes (RO 5:20), where both cross-inscribed slabs and the remains of an early church can be found. Altogether these water and riverine churches form a band along the Boyle River and from the north of the lake right through the middle of the lake. This band coincides with a low ringfort density, again demonstrating the location of churches in less densely populated areas. None of these sites are located next to any node as none of these were centred on the lake. Their existence, if they are seen as places of pilgrimage, emphasises the central line of the lake as a peripheral place and further strengthens the view of the lake as a place that divided rather than united people on the different sides of the water. However, the crannogs and possibly also the ecclesiastical sites challenge this division.

EAST OF THE LAKE

On the eastern side of the lake there are more high-cairn crannogs and more ringforts. The land on this side consists of small drumlins forming small dryland islands. Almost every one of these drumlins has one or two ringforts, but despite the somewhat larger numbers of ringforts the settlement here is more dispersed than on the western side of the lake, suggesting that the community was less closely knit here.

There are also more multivallate sites on this side of the lake, but they are not located in the land nearest to the lake. According to Stout’s hierarchical model, the ringforts could mean that this area was more stratified. But given the sheer number of multivallate ringforts, there may be too many to form a steep settlement hierarchy. There are one or two near the lake, but most of

them occur in a linear pattern further inland and they do not seem to relate primarily to the crannogs. Instead they seem to form a circle around an area of flatter land. In this circle there are sixteen bivallate ringforts, and three trivallate ringforts are located at the edges of the ring. From the trivallate ringfort in Lisserdrea to these sites form a circle around an area of good, well-drained farming land, measuring about 3km by 2km. One reason why this area was left without settlement may be that the people who built the ringforts preferred the undulating landscape of the drumlins to wide, flat stretches of land. Another reason could be that this area, which also stretches out a bit to the north-west, contains quite a substantial barrow cemetery, which was of importance in the preceding period. To the east of this is an area with very low settlement density and another lake with crannogs.

The ringforts form almost a circle around the plain where the remains of the early medieval monastery of St Attracta are located. The complex consists of a graveyard, a church and a holy well (SL 47:81–83). The monastery is well attested in the early medieval sources and was probably founded in the sixth century. The saint is mentioned in documentary sources from the seventh century, and is supposed to have been the daughter of the druid Talan Cathbadin and to have received the blessing of St Patrick (Bieler 1979; Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 39). The monastery of St Attracta, like the ecclesiastical site in Monasteraden, is located on the boundary between the living settlement and areas of importance in earlier periods, a possible tribal node.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological material suggests that the two sides of the lake may have constituted relatively separate entities, just as in the preceding period. But if the ecclesiastical sites situated along the middle stretch of the lake belong to this period, both they and the crannogs may have negated the role of the waters as a boundary zone, bringing the two sides of the lake, and perhaps also the two communities, closer together.

The area south of Lough Gara

If we move the analysis a bit further from the lake other patterns can be seen. The area south of the lake was called Airteach in the early medieval period. Crossing the Breedogue River one is met by the large Mantua bog to the east. There are only a few ringforts here, but many of them are bivallate or trivallate.

Situated in this area of low ringfort density are the remains of an early ecclesiastical site, Kilnamanagh. This site is classified as an early church by Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 394), who make a reference to Tírechan's Life of Patrick (80) and connect the church with St Patrick and Bishop Do-bonne (Dabone). This reference is not found in de Paor's (1993) translation of Tírechan's journeys. However, the fact that Tírechan mentions the church means that we should consider that wasteland churches were in existence in this area at least in the latter half of the seventh century.⁵⁹ This site is not located near any node nor beside any ringfort concentration. This may suggest that the church here had to draw on the institutionalised practice of exclusion in order to interest people in this area. With people also starting to bury their dead here it would have made this move permanent.

The area south of the lake from Kilnamanagh through Tibohine and west towards Ballaghaderreen is also sparsely settled. There are crannogs in the southern part of the lake but, just as elsewhere around the lake, most of the ringforts are located further inland. This area has even more dispersed sites than Killaraght and Monasteraden. It seems that the number of ringforts decreases the nearer we move to the wetlands around the lake.

Because the ringforts in this area are so widely dispersed it is difficult to find any distinct

patterns in the material. It may be possible to identify a small concentration of seven ringforts on the northern slopes of Fairymount Hill. There also seems to be a concentration of about twelve ringforts nearer to the Lung River at the townlands of Lissian and Cappagh. The bivallate ringforts seem to be scattered with no distinct pattern as they can occur together with a few univallate ringforts as well as on their own. The only place where a distinct pattern occurs is in the aforementioned townlands of Lissian and Cappagh and a bit further to the north-east, where there is a line of ten bivallate sites, and one trivallate site, facing an area of wetland and bog. With this evidence it becomes even harder to sustain the idea of settlement hierarchy. Their location facing the bog and in seemingly unpopulated areas also makes one wonder about the defensive explanation. What are they defending themselves against in the bogs? Possibly our explanation that withdrawal and privacy were valued is more likely.

There is an early ecclesiastical site here as well. This church at Tibohine is not located on an earlier tribal node either, and is quite a distance downslope from the hilltop enclosure at Fairymount, in a position that is not striking when it comes to views. The church is located at the edge of the spread of ringforts facing uninhabited areas to the south and the sparsely inhabited stretch towards the lake in the north. We know a little from the documentary sources about this place. According to Gwynn and Hadcock this church seems to have been founded in the late sixth century. It was called Tech-Baiten in Airtech and may have been founded by St Baiten Mac Cuanach. This saint connects Tibohine with two other sites, Taughboyne in County Donegal and Teaghbaiten in County Westmeath. Furthermore, there is a connection with Columcille and Iona (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 406).

On the other side of the Lung River there is another concentration of ringforts. The presence of ringforts is particularly strong on the south side of the mountain, but there is also a concentration nearer to Ballaghaderreen. Again the wastelands are met by a line of bivallate and trivallate ringforts. It is worth noting that there are three trivallate ringforts within a very limited area. In connection with these ringforts there are also a number of hut sites. Monk (1998) has suggested that hut sites should be included in any analysis of the early medieval settlement pattern (as they could represent another, less distinct type of private space, and dependency). Possibly here is a place where such dependency is expressed. These sites could of course be compared to the earlier hillforts and hilltop enclosures, where a similar, but not identical, material might have expressed and articulated a belonging rather than a dependency.

This concentration connects up to the area around Kilmovee. It is not clear whether this group of sites could qualify as a node: the only 'old' site is a megalithic tomb in the townland of Rusheens East. Instead we have a collection of specifically early medieval sites, such as a well, an ogham stone, cross-slabs and bullaun stones. There are possible tau crosses in the graveyard. One possibility is that this area grew up around an early ecclesiastical settlement rather than an earlier node. However, just as in other places, the ringforts seem to avoid the area of these sites. It could be argued that, although they are more dispersed than the ringforts nearer to Rusheens East, the concentration of ringforts around Lissacul should be included in the pattern. At the edges of the total concentration there are a number of churches, such as the one at Glebe, and many church-related sites, e.g. burial-grounds, killeens and holy wells.

There also seem to be a number of multivallate ringforts forming a shield on the side where the ringfort concentration faces the stretch of road leading north to Monasteraden.

The whole settlement meets wasteland in almost all directions. The most isolated area is that situated between Rusheens East and the Bracklaghboy area, together with the mountain between lakes Urlaur and Mannin. These lakes contain crannogs, as well as a number of very isolated church sites. It is interesting to note that the crannogs here occupy the same isolated position as

a number of wasteland church sites. The area has no connection with Lough Gara.

Besides at least one road leading into this area, there also seems to be one leading away. This is so far based only on limited evidence, but such a roadway, implied by ringforts laid out in a linear pattern, may start at Lisacul (the fort in the corner). This stretch, consisting of six ringforts, follows a path that soon turns northward towards Lough Gara, leading to the next concentration of ringforts which starts near a church site at Kilrooan. It is interesting to note that none of the lines of ringforts are laid out near or along the Lung River.

On the road

Beyond this area there are a handful of sites, some of which are multivallate ringforts, that stretch out along the present road towards Monasteraden. There are not many sites recorded either up towards the mountain or down towards the river. There is a killeen at Tulachan Mór, and further on along this road, on the borders of the two villages, one can find the Kilcolman church site, which might, like the ringforts, belong to this early medieval period. Kilcolman graveyard is mainly new, but there is also an earlier part, consisting of a rectangular elevation with a ruined stone church. O'Donovan says that there are references to a monastery at a place called 'Magh Luighne'. The monastery is mentioned in the Life of St Columbkille and in *AFM* for the years 671 and 770 (OS Letters, Sligo 275). The only place that bears any resemblance is the area around the Lung River; perhaps this refers to Kilcolman church, or to a place near Rusheens East, or even Bracklaghboy.

Kilfree

Another small concentration of ringforts can be found in the area of Kilfree, just a little to the north-west of Monasteraden. This area is surrounded by a wide zone of boglands. These wetland areas hold very few sites from any period, which makes Kilfree look isolated. However, as we have seen, Kilfree was a focus of activity in earlier periods.

The number of ringforts here — only five — is much smaller than in Monasteraden, but many of them are larger than average. None of these sites are recorded as multivallate, hence it cannot be argued that Kilfree at this time was subject to a hierarchy. As discussed in earlier chapters, Kilfree has a number of earlier sites that seem to be located around the small hill of Knocknashee. Just as in Monasteraden, the ringforts are located to one side of these earlier sites, but they surround Knocknashee.

There are two possible early ecclesiastical sites here. One is a holy well with an altar and a cross-inscribed slab near a large circular enclosure which may be ecclesiastical or a normal ringfort, in the townland of Kilfree, situated on a slope (and with the water leaping down underground). This site is positioned just at the fringes of the ringfort cluster. By its location it completes a circle around the ringforts, together with the old monuments. In this way it seems to act in concert with the earlier monuments. This circle borders areas where there are no ringforts.

The other ecclesiastical site, at Carrowntemple (SL 44:5601–03), is located about 1km away from the set of monuments discussed above, at a slight distance from the circle. Carrowntemple faces a large area of bogland where the settlement density is extremely low — Cloontiabog. Out in these wide wastelands there are only a handful of ringforts and a number of killeens.

Carrowntemple is well known for its early medieval grave-slabs, both those with clearly Christian motifs and others. Some of these stones show simple crosses, triskeles and other motifs. One of the slabs stands out from the rest as it shows a 'human-like' figure with a head and two ears. The figure's head is surrounded by a circle. The body is quite small compared to the head.

Behind the figure there is quite an intricate cross pattern (Wallace and Timoney 1987, 53–4). At the holy well and barrow in nearby Kilturra among a number of small stones there is a somewhat similar figure. This one has a circular head, like the Carrowntemple figure, but the eyes are two dots and the mouth seems to consist of ogham script. Interesting in this context is that the next townland is called Ogham. One possibility is that these stones belong to a similar tradition to the ogham stones, where the stones represent people or specific individuals, except that they are expressed in a different medium.

Wallace and Timoney believe it likely that the ecclesiastical remains at Carrowntemple are of an early medieval date, partly because the site has a large circular enclosure as well as souterrains. There is no early documentary mention of the site, but the church is mentioned in the medieval sources for the year 1307 (Wallace and Timoney 1987, 46f.), which implies that it was in use then as well. The presence of the souterrain, however, means that it should be included in the analysis for the early medieval period. The placename *tempull* implies a later stratum in the Christian establishment.

Two ecclesiastical sites within such a small area, together with the existence of the slabs, suggest that it might have been a place of pilgrimage. Kilfree seems to be the complete opposite of Kilmovee in the way that the settlements are located inside the circle of earlier monuments. Furthermore, one of the two possible early ecclesiastical sites lies on the same line as the earlier sites, with only Carrowntemple located slightly on the outside.

All in all, there is no evidence for any settlement hierarchy in this area. It appears self-contained, with a strong religious identity.

Conclusion about the communities near and far away from the lake

In drawing together the archaeological evidence from the areas around the lake, it is possible to see that the areas which had distinct monumental identities during the Bronze Age continued to show activity in this period. Kilfree seems to have continued as a distinct unit, in the same way as Monasteraden and Killaraght. Most places had either one or two churches; if the church is seen as uniting people, this would have meant that the areas around the lake could have worked independently of each other.

What is also shown, however, is that areas that formerly had no monumental sites, located in the north–south axis through the lake, were now becoming settled. There are in this period some, but not many, ringforts located in these areas. Despite this the lake can still be seen as dividing people. The crannogs also show a division into a western and an eastern group, leaving the middle free of settlements.

As shown, the crannogs (both low–cairn and high–cairn) are located mainly along the eastern and western sides of the lake and along the Boyle River. With the small exception of the crannogs in the Callow Lake, the north–south axis in the lake is left without sites. If most people lived in the ringforts that by and large outnumbered the crannogs, the crannogs would have been seen as located at a slightly peripheral place by the lake. By comparison, the few ringforts that are located nearest to the lake are often univallate ringforts, but on the eastern and southern sides of the lake can be found a few multivallate forts. However, both the denser concentrations of forts and the linear stretches of mainly bivallate and also trivallate sites are often found away from the lake. It is interesting to note that many of the multivallate sites are neighbours and stretch out in linear patterns along boundaries of the bog, or other areas with only very little evidence for settlement. Trivallate ringforts also neighbour each other in the area near Ballagherreen.

The area nearest the lake could be defined as an area of avoidance, leaving the western side of the lake nearly free of sites. On the eastern side of the lake there are more ringforts. The

multivallate sites that occur in abundance link up to each other as neighbours, but they tend to be more focused around the open ground around the church sites in Killaraght. What is noticeable here is the large number of so-called high-status sites (both crannogs and ringforts) on the eastern side of the lake. It is not clear whether the lake should be seen as uniting the people in the area at this time, and whether the ringforts in Monasteraden only should be seen as an extension to the sites in Killaraght.

That the crannogs seem more attached to the ringfort sides of the lake, while still keeping their distance, suggests that the unity of the lake was not a completed affair. In order to move away from the possibly static analysis of the characteristics of each community we will try to analyse what the waters, as well as the 'settling' of these waters, could have meant to people at this time.

Attitude to the water

We have seen that there are many similarities between the use of crannogs and the use of ringforts in the early medieval period, and how the developed historicity of these sites as well as their emphasis on private space might have affected social issues. It was also clear that lakes were not centres of settlement. Often the ringforts actively avoided the lake. None of the nodes were ever located on lakelands. However, in order to get a more precise understanding of the crannogs we ought to find out more about what the waters meant to people. In the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, lakes like Lough Gara were places where human skulls and bronze items, such as swords and personal ornaments, were deposited and it is likely that the lake at this time was situated in between different tribal nodes. Analysing the sequence of deposited items, it seems as if many had to do with both transformation and shape-shifting of humans, metals and animals. Perhaps these half-humans subsequently evolved into the lake monsters that every so often occur in early medieval documentary sources.

Common monsters

There are indeed a number of documentary sources that show that people in the early medieval period perceived waters to be infested with monsters. According to Tírechán, even St Patrick had problems with crossing waters — he even had to bless and curse rivers (Bieler 1979; de Paor 1993, 172). A fact that would make them even more risky was the perceived presence of monsters and snakes in the waters. Monsters are recorded both in lakes and at sea. In a recent article in *Peritia*, Borsje (1997) accounts for numerous texts where water-monsters are mentioned. These texts range from the Old Irish *Echtra Fergusa maic Leiti* (eighth century) to later medieval texts. The Old Irish text deals with a monster that lives in a loch (Binchy 1952; Borsje 1997, 154). The following quote describes how the king encountered the monster:

'He dived under the loch,⁶⁰ he saw there a muirdris, a fearful water-monster which kept alternately inflating and contracting itself like a smith's bellow' (Borsje 1997, 166).

There are also later references to lake monsters, for example in the *Acallam na Senorach* (twelfth century). These monsters were seen to be connected with the ebb and flow and were able to create waves or dangerous whirlpools. Apparently they were able to suck in water, which would cause the waters to ebb, and to spew it out to create a flood (Borsje 1997). In *Vita Columba* it is mentioned that some monks who went astray were attacked by a monster from the depths, which could only be overcome by a blessing of the saint (*ibid.*, 158; Anderson and Anderson 1991, i, 19).

There are also annalistic references to monsters encountered in inland lakes, which shows that the creatures were not only seen as fiction but also had a historical reality for people living at this time. The medieval historian Aron Gurevich has, for example, shown that people in medieval Europe did not distinguish between real and imaginary to the same extent as we do (Gurevich 1985).

It may be that the deposition of items in the water continued into the early medieval period. Religious items such as book-shrines, bells and crosses have been found both in and around crannogs and in other watery places (see O’Kelly 1965; Harbison 1981, 231ff; E.P. Kelly 1991a; 1993b). A book-shrine was found 20m out in the water from a small crannog in Lough Kinale, and a cross was found at Tully Lough; both of these can be seen to date from the eighth century AD (E.P. Kelly 1993b, 168). Around the site were also other finds from the seventh to the seventeenth century (Farrell *et al.* 1989). On the shores of Lough Gara, at Clooncunny, an iron bell (E20:761) was found. These finds are normally interpreted as accidental losses in the water or are thought to have been eroded out from crannogs where they were kept for safety. There are, of course, mentions of accidental losses (one of these is from Lough Gara).⁶¹ Contributing to this interpretation is the fact that the early medieval period is usually regarded functionally. The crannogs are normally interpreted functionally as safes, but this does not explain the occurrence of religious items in other watery places, such as the Moylough belt-shrine found in a bog, the reliquary shrines found in Lough Erne, etc. There could be reason to open up a discussion about whether these finds may be a continuation of the depositional practices of earlier periods.

There may be evidence for the continued deposition of swords in the water well into the early medieval period. A sixth/seventh-century sword has been retrieved from the Lung River (see Rynne 1974). Another iron sword of a seventh/eighth-century type was found in the Boyle River at Tivannagh (NMI 1998:37). In both these places bronze swords and other deposits from earlier periods have also been found. A quick search in the Museum register lends some support to this pattern. At the townlands of Bunnafinglas and Coolcrunnaun along the Moy River, Co. Mayo, three swords were found during dredging. In a 1km-long area along the river two Bronze Age swords were found. There was also an iron sword which was determined by the Museum to be Viking Age, i.e. early medieval. A polished stone axe also comes from the nearby area (NMI 1963: 69–71). This may be further evidence that the tradition of depositing objects in the water continued in the early medieval period.

Aitchison (1996) has also suggested that the practice of depositing items in the water continued in this period, basing his argument mainly on documentary evidence. He drew attention to a passage in Tírechán’s writings that describes how pagans made votive offerings at a well called Slán in Findmag (see Bieler 1979, 152–5) and noted that a similar text can be seen in the later *Vita Tripartita*. The reference was used by Aitchison to make a connection with the depositions in water during the late prehistoric period. I think that these texts would also have a bearing on their contemporary society, i.e. the seventh century, as one more piece of evidence that ‘ritual’ deposition still took place in the waters. One way to see it is that the objects were placed there in response to a belief that a lake or some other wet place had become infested with monsters, which just as in the former period needed attention in the form of offerings. Then the religious objects found in the watery places might represent a saint’s blessing.

What do crannogs do?

There seems to be both archaeological and documentary evidence that people during the early medieval period saw the waters and lakes as liminal places — places where people could enter and exit the Otherworld, and places where the deposition of swords and religious paraphernalia

probably continued to be practised. The waters were also seen as connected with the oceans, and some of them contained monsters.

As shown by the excavation in Sroove, crannogs were not only for the upper classes of society, but also for other, possibly less well-off people. Perhaps we should discuss crannogs in the same terms as ringforts. It is possible that they were built to attain the same privacy as the ringforts, but their context in the water is charged with greater meaning than the ringforts' location on land. The crannogs in this period have more definition as settlements than in the preceding periods. The difference in relation to their use in earlier times is that people moved their everyday life out to the sites, they actually physically moved out into what were the peripheral and dangerous parts of the landscape.

This in turn would over time in the early medieval period have changed the meaning of these boundaries and made them more commonplace. Perhaps this also affected and de-dramatised the borderlands that were maintained quite strictly in earlier times. The answer to what crannogs 'do' is that over time, by their physical presence and use, they alter the meaning of the boundaries. In the following social interpretation we will try to see how this might have affected the tribal and dynastic loyalties in the area.

Social fictionalities

We know from the documentary sources that society changed a lot during the early medieval period. Despite this, some archaeological studies have treated the period as static (see Stout 1997). However, a lack of 'new' sites in the archaeological record does not have to mean that people's lives did not change, and they may have perceived themselves and the landscape differently over time. One of the ideas put forward is that if a building such as a crannog or a ringfort — or for that matter a tribal node — is reused, even the smallest deviation in the material reinterpretation of the site, either as a deliberate action or just as a small subconscious drift in the course of events, could drastically change the meaning of a site that superficially appears stable. As we have discussed, one of the major changes had to do with people's loyalties changing from a focus on a deeper lineage to being three- or four-generation kindred. This would mean a simplification of the kin-group and a decrease in family size. Another change is that provincial kings took over from territorial kings, i.e. the hierarchy of power connected larger areas than before. These kings were normally affiliated with a dynasty.

These changes have been explained by Mytum (1992, 103) as due to plague, famine, social unrest ... and population increase. The explanation is self-contradictory and does not really make use of the archaeological material at hand. There have also been more materialistic ways to explain the change in the early medieval period. Researchers such as McCormick have suggested that the changeover to ringforts was a result of new farming methods. At this stage people would have concentrated mainly on dairy farming. This created a need for smaller circular⁶² enclosures where cattle could be kept, such as the ringforts (McCormick 1983; 1995). This explanation does not take into account the reason for the construction of the crannogs.

I have in this chapter suggested that the ongoing use of crannogs and ringforts, as opposed to the larger enclosures, hillforts and nodes of earlier periods, slowly contributed to the breaking up of old loyalties and to the construction of new ones.

Boundaries

The more modern studies of in particular ringfort, but also of crannog, distribution are focused on the parish level (see for example Stout 1997; Monk 1998). Although these studies have been useful in many ways, the existence of the tribal nodes in the landscape around Lough Gara suggests that there might be other patterns. These may perhaps only be spotted at a regional level that might be crucial for our understanding of events in the area. Presumably there are at least three, perhaps more, chronological stages that with the help of documentary sources can be separated from each other. The first is the establishment of the tribal centres — the change in ways of remembering suggested by ogham stones and the early churches that were placed in relation to the nodes, either at their edges or in their centres. The material politics behind this is how an outer boundary was established. This boundary was thereafter broken into by the location of crannogs and ringforts, followed by a fragmentation of space and society and a concentration on private space.

Figure 71 shows the occurrence of churches, ringforts and crannogs over the broader region. Presumably on this map we have at least, as I have already tried to show, three phases belonging to the early medieval period. My argument is that primarily in the documentary material we can see three different ways of existing socially, through the tribe and the territorial kingship and as the dynastic families, eventually building up into part of a provincial kingdom. In the following I will try to outline a general course of change in the early medieval period in this area. This outline, self-evidently, is only a sketch and needs to take more local conditions into account. I hope that it could be a start for discussions.

Starting to remember the tribe, 400–650

At the earliest early medieval level on the maps we can see activities near some of the tribal nodes. Ogham stones seem to have been placed in these locations, indicating their importance into the early medieval period. In relation to, for example, earlier standing stones or barrows, the writing on the ogham stones made a difference. Most monuments at the nodes could have worked as places where particular people were remembered at their death, before eventually fading into the line of memories of the ancestors. And there is ethnographical and documentary evidence that people without written language can carry long lines of information in their minds. The written memory of a particular person is something different, and against this background the ogham stones can be said to ‘kick-start’ a new way of remembering people, being focused on one person and not on a long line. Some of these stones show the ‘x muccoi y’ formula denoting membership of a tribe, while others even at an early stage show a shorter lineage, ‘x avi y’, meaning ‘grandson of’. But although the earlier inscriptions are referring to a longer tribal context, the act of writing down a particular individual’s name changes the circumstances for memorising. Possibly, and unintentionally, this is a way of remembering that is more suited to a dynastic succession rather than to the maintenance of tribal loyalties.

The location of the ogham stones also informs us that many of the tribal nodes were still in use during the sixth century. Evidence from excavations shows that some of the nodes were still in use for burials well into the early medieval period. This suggests on archaeological grounds that the switching of loyalties from tribe to dynasty or from tribe to kindred was not yet complete at this time. Possibly devotion to the ancestors was still of some importance.

Parallel to or later than the initial use of the ogham stones at the nodes is the establishment of the early ecclesiastical sites. At the time of conversion the earliest Christians had to work within the tribal system. Our distribution maps have shown the relationship between the location of these ecclesiastical sites and the nodes. There can be three combinations in the location of the

sites: the church can be located in the middle of a node, as at Achadmore, or at the edge of a node, as at Basilic, dating from the fifth century, or well away from the nodes. There might be more of a chronological difference in this material than I have taken account of. Perhaps the location of the churches also tells us about how the relationship between the tribes and the new religion was negotiated in the different communities. Either the church was added to the collection of sites on a node, being treated equally to the others, or it used conversion methods built on social exclusion, as suggested by Charles-Edwards (indicated by location in a boundary zone).

A further look at the ringforts in the region shows that these also made use of boundary zones in the landscape. This, together with their (and also the crannogs') specific architecture, can be analysed in order to discuss tendencies that might be connected to larger changes in society.

The distribution map of ringforts shows that they tend to occur in larger and smaller concentrations, such as the massive number around Swinford and the much smaller clusters around Lough Gara. It was noted that the ringforts often avoid the nodes and are more generally spread out in the landscape where there are no earlier monumental sites. Given the everyday nature of these settlements, it might be fair to describe them as a form of everyday monumentality. What they represent, besides being people's homes, is a monumentalisation of the landscape, drawing areas in between the nodes into the built-in environment. It is clear that areas near lakes, and sometimes even islands in lakes, were built on at this stage. This is a new way of encompassing the landscape and drawing it into the realm of the man-made world.

The ringforts may be uni-, bi- or trivallate, and the number of surrounding walls is often taken to represent the status of the occupants. The distribution maps show that bivallate sites often occur as neighbours, and that trivallate sites, often equated with royal lineages, are located on the peripheries of the other settlements, not always on the best lands. Another pattern is that the trivallate forts never occur near a tribal node. If they are taken to represent 'power points' in the landscape they also contribute to a change of focus in the landscape, moving attention away from the nodes. The crannogs too seem to be located peripherally in relation to the tribal nodes (as noted, monumental sites are seldom found beside lakes). However, in this region the trivallate ringforts and the crannogs make use of different peripheries in the landscape.

Taken together, the crannogs and the ringforts during their period of use helped to shift the emphasis away from the nodes and out to other places (peripheral locations seem to have been favoured). What crannogs and ringforts have in common architecturally is their distinct definition of private space, either by boundary walls of soil/stone or by water and a palisade. Both the architecture and the location emphasise the importance of withdrawal from the public sphere. The documentary sources show clearly that the public sphere could be a dangerous place owing to the risk of being satirised and of losing face (at least around the seventh century). The strong demarcation of space may have been a defence against gossip as much as anything else. We also know from the documentary sources that dependency was despised and denoted low status. The private space and the detachment from other structures could be understood against this background as well.

Compared to the spatial structures of earlier periods, such as hillforts or, for that matter, the nodes, ringforts represent a downscaling of social space. This would contribute to an 'agency' of excluding more people from the activities that mattered to many. The downscaling of social space, together with an emphasis on the boundaries in the landscape, would have created a climate of diminishing interest in communal affairs in favour of smaller-scale social interaction and withdrawal from the tribe.

How we analyse these changes and their impact on society depends on when they began. As I have shown, some crannogs may have been in use during the late Bronze Age, while there is

only some vague evidence of their use during the late Iron Age. It is not until the sixth–seventh century that the signal in the material becomes really strong again. This means that the downscaling of size in places for social activity as well as the change in ways of remembering happened before the larger changes towards social downscaling that are noted in the documentary sources around the seventh century. I think that the changes in material culture discussed above actually contributed to these social changes rather than being the result of them. For example, the building and use of a crannog may have promoted a life of privacy, cut off from the larger tribal affairs.

The next question to be discussed is why it happened in this way. Earlier models were built on the premise that the building of crannogs and ringforts arrived as something new in the early medieval period. Lynn (1983) regarded the phenomenon as due to influences from northern Britain. This cultural-historical explanation does not (even if we were talking about a new idea) add very much to our understanding of why such ideas were adopted in the different societies. McCormick's materialistic suggestion is equally open-ended and does not explain why ringforts were built; dairy farming was introduced elsewhere (for example in Scandinavia) without the necessity for a circular ringfort enclosure. Here, however, both crannogs and ringforts were seen as totally apt, and although the identification of a change in farming practices at this stage is important, this change does not provide an understanding of why the change went in this direction.

Another way of looking at the change is that it came about because internal powers within the tribe withdrew from the common people for political reasons, in the same way as it was suggested that the early Christians should do in the first synod of St Patrick, to create a tribe within the tribe.

As I have shown, in the building and use of crannogs and ringforts we seem to see people living in a 'history culture'. We have seen, for example, in the excavation at Sroove how 'older' artefacts were brought onto the site. Many early medieval crannogs also show the reuse of earlier structures in the water. We know from documentary sources that prehistoric mounds were important places for the promulgation of law, etc. There is evidence that the ringforts and crannogs refer back to earlier sites in terms of architecture as well. Thus the reuse of earlier material culture at these sites at one level drew on cultural codes that were already in place (the importance of referring to an older tradition), but they were also manipulated to suit new purposes.

I think that this, together with possible internal power struggles, is the reason why towards the end of the seventh century we see a downscaling of the social system. People were turning inwards towards their kindred rather than outward towards the tribe. In the manipulation of the boundary zones too we see a higher level of tension in society at this time.

Intensification of the fragmentation, 650–800

The privatisation of space had already begun at least in the early part of the early medieval period. It has been suggested that this put a heavier emphasis on the smaller lineage groups rather than on the tribes. But much archaeological material suggests that the close connection to the nodes was not yet broken at this time. There is evidence that people were buried at the nodes until the eighth century. It is only at this stage that people may have broken to a larger extent with their tribal, and perhaps more pagan, identities.

During this period both the crannogs and the ringforts continued in use, and they seem to carry on at least until the tenth century. They therefore straddle the period during which people broke their ties with the tribal nodes and began to bury their dead in Christian ground. It may have been the creation of these sites' own material genealogies, as can be seen in their constant

reuse, that finally made the nodes less important. Instead these sites took on the meaning that the nodes had carried before and assumed the mantle of tradition.

Centralisation and high kingship, 800–1100

The use of ringforts and crannogs was both a symptom and a cause of the fragmentation of society. But it is important to point out that it was a fragmentation into kindreds and perhaps families rather than individuals, as Mytum (1992) has suggested. A kindred creates other forms of solidarity than individuals. There is evidence in the latter part of the early medieval period for a further weakening of the local tribes in favour of the dynasties. But what is also more obvious is that there is a centralisation of power in fewer hands. During these days the institution of high kingship started to tighten its grip on society. The opportunity for this was provided by the weakening of local loyalties to each tribe, combined with less strict definition of the boundaries between people.

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the crannogs and the ringforts had a role in this development, and were at the same time an expression of the change. Pilgrimages may also have played a part, creating a desire to go beyond the limits of a given territory. The breaking of tribal bonds can also be seen in the change in burial customs that started around 800, with more and more people favouring the church ground over the tribal burial-place.

A lessened emphasis on the private boundary can be seen in the architecture at this stage, with souterrains occurring on their own in the landscape and, as shown in our excavation, crannogs without palisades.

11. MEDIEVAL STORIES — THE LATER MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The later medieval period starts around 1100 with church reforms following the synod of Rath Bresail, in which the dioceses were reorganised (F.J. Byrne 1984, map 24m, 26ff, 101; Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 2). Changes were also introduced with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169, and in many places the earlier institutional structures were changed. The Irish high kingship was abandoned at this time. On archaeological grounds, however, the period can be said to start with changes in material culture — the influence of Romanesque architecture and changes in the shape and materials of the buildings, and the arrival of Continental orders such as the Cistercians (O’Conor 1998; O’Keeffe 2000). Historians often argue that the period ends with the Tudor reconquest of Ireland in 1534. It has been debated when the period ends archaeologically, and O’Conor (1998, xi) has argued that, while there were political changes in certain areas in Ireland, the material culture in most parts of the country may have remained unchanged for a much longer period. The political events of the Tudor period may only have affected the everyday life of people in general to a limited extent. Instead, the end of the later medieval period could be seen as the time when settlement types such as tower-houses, crannogs and cashels were finally abandoned in the seventeenth century, according to O’Conor (1998, xi). The later medieval period is divided into high medieval (c. 1100–1350) and late medieval (1350–1600) (see Duffy *et al.* 2001, 17).

It has been pointed out by historians such as Nicholls (1987, 397ff) that Ireland differed to an extent from the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages. This difference has been treated as an embarrassment by certain researchers, who have been trying to argue that Ireland measured up to European standards (e.g. Ó Corráin 1972). Others have pointed out that if such a difference existed it is worth studying in its own right (O’Conor 1998). It is also important to bear in mind that while there is both documentary and archaeological material for urban areas, the archaeological material in particular for rural areas is not that extensive (O’Conor 1998, 15–16; 2001, 329–30). This would also hold true for the area around Lough Gara, where a detailed social interpretation has yet to be outlined. It has been argued by many that archaeological research into the later medieval period has been neglected because of nationalistic ideas. The later medieval sites were connected with the period when Ireland was subjugated by the Anglo-Normans and colonial powers and were not perceived as suitable to supply a model for the Irish nation (see Barry 1987, 1; O’Conor 1998, 9–12). Instead more attention was paid to prehistoric and early medieval archaeology, which would provide a more glorious background for the new Irish state. Again, the existence and the possibility of the continuous use of crannogs in Ireland could be seen as an oddity if Irish culture was supposed to ‘measure up’ to feudal Europe and would not make Ireland fit into the general framework of progress.

In this chapter I will discuss the crannogs and other sites around the lake through the later medieval period. As the defensive and military aspects of these sites have been dealt with in depth elsewhere (O’Conor 1998, 94–101), I will focus more on the social impact of these sites and what they could have meant to people in these times. However, my dealings with this period are not especially far-reaching as the material present is not that strong.

Lordships around the lake

Towards the end of the early medieval period we could see a centralisation of power and the rise of kings who joined together more than one *tuath*. The high kingship was established as an institution. The centralisation continued in the beginning of the later medieval period, with kings taking responsibility for larger territories as well as for more administrative and legislative duties (K. Simms 1987, 10–12). Turlough O’Conor dominated Ireland from his Connacht base, making use of the Shannon waterways already in the first quarter of the twelfth century, and so did his son Rory, who succeeded him (Ryan 1966, 8, 11, 20; Perros 1995, 117). This way of organising society, with a trend towards national unity under a high king, vanished with the coming of the Anglo-Normans (K. Simms 1987, 12). In 1175 the Anglo-Normans captured Limerick; this was important for the control of the Shannon waterways and weakened O’Conor power (Perros 1995, 120). After a good few stormy years Connacht was eventually granted to Richard de Burgh, but it was not until c. 1250 that the situation had stabilised enough for the establishment of Gaelic lordships instead of the earlier kingdoms (Orpen 1912; Knox 1902–3; Edwards 1938–9; Nicholls 1972, chs 2 and 4; K. Simms 1987, ch. 2; Duffy *et al.* 2001, 40). Society could at this stage be seen as more decentralised than before.

In the later medieval period the lake was divided into two parts, as shown in Fig. 72. To the east was the lordship of Moylurg, connected with the MacDermots. To the west, but including Killaraght and the whole of Lower Lough Gara, was Coolavin, which belonged to the O’Garas. The O’Garas had until the thirteenth century been connected with the much larger area called Sliabh Lugha, further west. They were moved to Coolavin by the Anglo-Normans and were linked with this area from the fourteenth century (MacDermot 1996, 411–12), when the lake was seen as theirs. However, on Fig. 72 both the Callow Lake and the Upper Lake seem to be excluded from Coolavin. These areas seem to have been connected to a branch of the MacDermots — the MacDermot-Gall (MacDermot 1996). The Callow Lake would have been a part of Moylurg, the land of the MacDermots proper, which was slightly larger than Coolavin, although none of these territories are particularly large. Loeber (2001, 282) has commented that many of the lordships in north-east Connacht were comparatively small in size, and we can see that here in the area around the lake. There were, as the map shows, further changes in the political landscape of the region throughout the period.

Burial/ritual

The division of the lake can also be seen earlier. At the synod of Rath Bresail the two sides of the lake were assigned to two different dioceses. The eastern side fell to Elphin, and the parish of Killaraght on the eastern side was assigned to the diocese on the western side of the lake, Achonry (Ordnance Survey Map of Monastic Ireland 1964; 1970). As shown in Chapter 10, many churches were established in remote locations in relation to other settlements. They were placed either on the edges of the ringfort distribution or in areas that would have been seen as wastelands, such as islands in lakes or off the coast or in the middle of bogs. Some of these earlier establishments were used in the medieval period as parish churches (see also examples in Barry 1987, 140).

The ecclesiastical site at Carrowntemple is one example of an early medieval establishment that continued in use into the later period. There are high medieval references to the church at Carrowntemple in Kilfree. It is entered in the 1307 taxation as ‘Kelnafrych’. This ecclesiastical site is most likely to have been established in the early medieval period (O’Rourke 1889, vol. II, 364; Wallace and Timoney 1987, 44). A cleric from Tibohine is mentioned in the documentary sources (*AFM* 1230), which means that this place was still in use. The church at Assylin on the Boyle

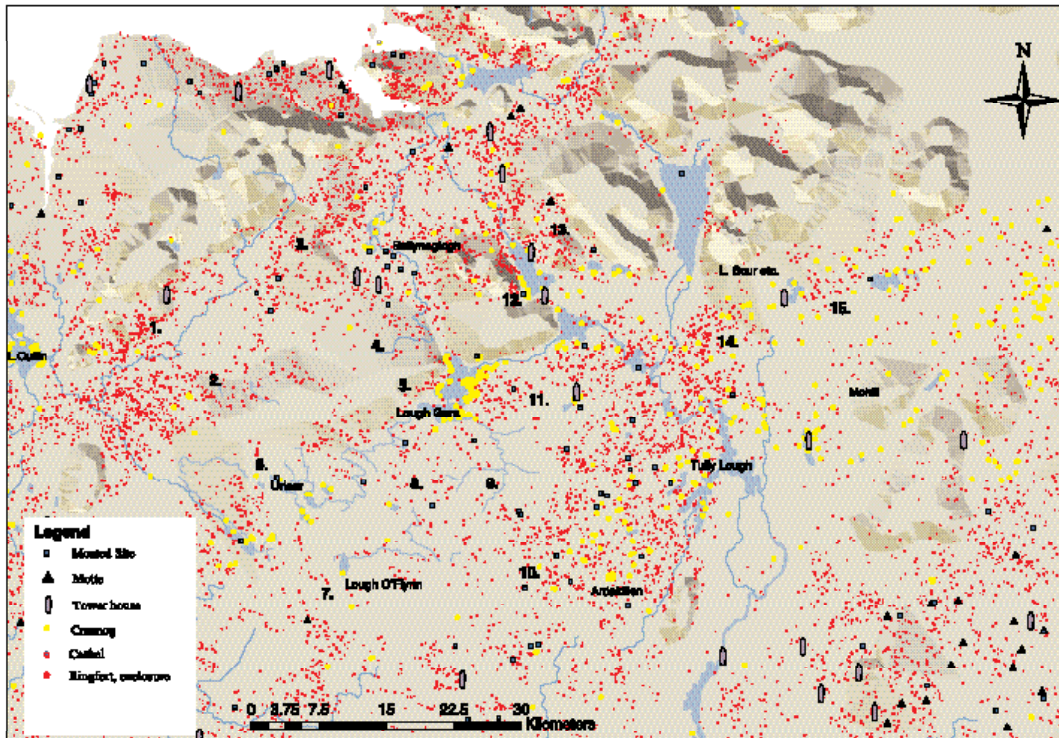


Fig. 72—Political map of lordships c. 1534 (after Nicholls 1976).

River was also important into the medieval period (see Watt 1987, 321). There is also evidence that the church at Killaraght on the eastern side of the lake continued to be used and had developed into a monastic hospital run by nuns at this time (Ordnance Survey Map of Monastic Ireland 1964; 1970). However, there seems to be little documentary evidence for the use of other church sites around the lake, such as the one at Monasteraden. The sites in the middle of the lake at Annagh, Inchmore and Templeronan may need more study.

In general, the major monastic foundations and houses, especially of the Continental orders, seem to be concentrated more to the east around Lough Key rather than around Lough Gara. The Cistercian abbey in Boyle was erected in 1161 and consecrated in 1220, and the town later grew up around it (Stalley 1971, 100; Barry 1987, 149). In Lough Key there was also a Premonstratensian foundation on Trinity Island (Barry 1987, 162). According to Nicholls (1987, 436), it is unusual for Cistercian orders to establish themselves on the site of an earlier church, and Boyle would be one of only two places where this happened. There was also an Augustinian foundation at the northern edge of this lake at Inch MacNerin, and at the outflow of the lake, at Knockvicar, was a Franciscan congregation. The other large lakes also have their share of medieval church establishments, with the Dominicans located at Ballindoon Abbey on the northern shores of Lough Arrow (see Ordnance Survey Map of Monastic Ireland 1964; 1970).

Lough Gara, however, seems to have been outside the interest of these Continental orders, with no documentary evidence for their existence in the area at these times. The only documented Continental order near the lake, although quite far south, is at Cloonshanville, near Frenchpark, where the nearby congregation at Kilnamanagh from the preceding period may have continued in existence, but this is not shown in the documentary sources. On the eastern side, the Continental orders' activity seems to be focused mainly on the axis between Ballymote,



Pl. 12—Distribution of ringforts, moated sites and castles near Lough Gara.

Achonry and Templehouse Lake, which is at some distance from the lake (Ordnance Survey Map of Monastic Ireland 1964; 1970).

At the same time as this centralisation, there is also evidence that the ecclesiastical sites attracted much of the specialised craftwork. During the early medieval period there is archaeological evidence that metalworking took place on crannogs and ringforts as well as on ecclesiastical establishments of any size. We also saw that some of this metalworking was devoted to the production of personal ornaments such as brooches and ring-pins. Towards the later medieval period there seem to have been substantial changes in the organisation of metalworking. Apparently both metalworking and teaching (see Henry 1970, 6) were centralised in towns and larger monasteries. The manufacture of finer and ecclesiastical items seems to have been a hereditary trade and followed certain families, probably protected by patrons. Ó Floinn mentions Donnchadh Ua Tacain and Gillacrist Ua Mochain, and says that ‘in later medieval times a branch of the family were erenachs of Killaraght, Co. Sligo, and hereditary keepers of the cross of St Attracta’ (Ó Floinn 1979). In this way there is a locational concentration as well as a possible concentration of activity away from the shores of Lough Gara in favour of the larger centres around monasteries such as Boyle Abbey.

During the later medieval period there is also evidence for a possible renewed attention to and reactivation of earlier monuments. As discussed in Chapter 10, some of the sites at the nodes may have lost some of their importance and meaning for people in general during the early medieval period. The reactivation of these sites may, however, have had a slightly different meaning than when they were nodes in a tribal landscape. Approximately in the middle of the medieval period, after the Anglo-Norman invasion, some of the sites at tribal nodes came into use as assembly sites. Earlier burial mounds were of importance well into the high medieval period and seem to have

been used as places for the inauguration of Gaelic kings (see F.J. Byrne 1973, 27). Liz FitzPatrick, who has done considerable work in this field, has observed that while earlier burial mounds could be used as places of assembly, in certain cases people could also have used conspicuous ringforts for this purpose (FitzPatrick 2001, 360). Watt has noted that Carnfree, Co. Roscommon (with a range of prehistoric monuments), was used as the inauguration place of the O'Conors, for example, in the year 1310. Similar rites have been noted at Carn Amhlagaid, Co. Sligo, where the O'Dowds had one of their inauguration sites. According to the sources, one of the ancestors would be buried in a cairn here and the place would, like Carnfree, be used for inaugurations (Watt 1987, 320–2). FitzPatrick also mentions that the O'Conors had a temporary inauguration place opposite Assylin, at Termon td on the Boyle River (FitzPatrick 1998). Probably it was located here on account of this well-renowned ecclesiastical site, but there is also some quite substantial prehistoric archaeology in the vicinity, with the henge in Ballinphuill td and the portal tomb at Drumanone. Watt (1987, 321) also suggests in relation to the inaugurations that people may have been drawing on the connection of these places with 'origin-myths' (meaning a statement of events in the remote past that are seen as a justification of existing institutions). It is uncertain where the O'Garas might have had their assembly site, but there is no site near Lough Gara that has been claimed as one; more documentary evidence may be needed to bring clarity to this issue. Neither the node at Monasteraden nor the one at Kilfree have any such material associations. In the discussion on settlement I will point out a site at Ballynaglogh where a later medieval abbey with a fish-pond and outbuilding is located adjacent to a large mound, which might imply such associations.

Overall, in terms of ecclesiastical sites and Continental orders there seems to have been a movement away from Lough Gara in favour of Lough Key. There was, however, as the example of Carrowntemple shows, still local usage of the early medieval establishments at this time. Furthermore, the old nodes regained their meaning as assembly sites for not only the Gaelic lords but also the Anglo-Norman lords in the latter half of the high medieval period, and this may be taken as a sign of acculturation (FitzPatrick 2001, 359–60).

Settlement

Most medieval research has been focused on the remains of sites like castles, mottes and tower-houses that would represent the settlements of the upper echelons of society, the 'lordly' sites, while housing for ordinary people has been less well understood. Life in rural societies outside the Anglo-Norman areas still remains to be investigated (Barry 1987, 51, 100; O'Connor 1998). Neither is there any real archaeology to show lordly sites before the tower-houses, dating from the fourteenth century, although there is documentary evidence that people resided in built structures (Duffy *et al.* 2001, 23). Especially for the latter part of the period and into post-medieval times, the settlements seem to have been transient, and it has been suggested that people lived in easily moveable houses that would leave few visible remains (Nicholls 1976, 9; 1987, 403; Barry 2000, 118). This could be one of the reasons why we have problems in identifying settlements in the area from this period. Another one is that people may have continued to use the ringforts (an issue I will return to below).

Moated sites, castles and mottes

The sites new to this period are first of all the mottes, mainly seen as an Anglo-Norman building, and the general distribution of mottes in the eastern part of Ireland is often taken to mark their frontier, but the issue is more complicated than this (Barry 1987, 37–46). The distribution map (Pl. 12) shows a few mottes in the region, but there are none by the lake. Parts of the dense

concentration of mottes can be seen on Pl. 12 in the area towards County Longford and County Westmeath on the other side of the Shannon. There are, however, a number of moated sites, which are normally seen as lordly residences if found in Gaelic areas (O’Conor 1998, 87). This may have been the case in Lough Gara.

The moated sites can be described as more or less rectangular or wedge-shaped ringforts, surrounded by a bank and ditch, which may have had a house or a garden in the middle, roughly with a thirteenth/fourteenth-century date (Barry 1977; 1987, 84). They are much less numerous than the ringforts. Often this settlement type has also been associated with the Anglo-Normans, but more and more of these sites have been observed in what would be termed Gaelic Ireland. There are a number of moated sites around Lough Gara, many — but not all — located near rivers or lakes (Pl. 12). At the Lung River between the lake and Ballaghaderreen there is one possible moated site. Along the Breedogue River there is another in the vicinity of the Breedogue at Frenchpark Demense. In the Callow Lake are the remains of a castle, near a crannog which is called Bawn’s Island on the Ordnance Survey maps. Nicholls (1987, 405) suggests that ‘Bawns of Sod’ may refer to some type of fortified enclosure of late medieval date. This site may, however, be a high medieval moated site that was later rebuilt and fortified in stone.

There is no moated site on the Upper Lake or on the Lower Lake. However, at the point where the lake meets the river, at the present Cuppanagh Bridge, are the remains of a moated site (SL 45: 0702). This site in Kiltybrannoks td also has a water-enclosure at its waterfront, which may be a water-henge from the Bronze Age, possibly reused as a harbour at this time. There is also a moated site in Killaraght higher up in the landscape, at some distance from any waterways or from the lake. Instead it is situated in an area that was more or less avoided by the ringforts, near the plain of Killaraght. Possibly this site was located here because of the proximity of St Attracta’s monastery, which would have continued in use into the later medieval period. Near here are the remains of a roadway that was in use in this period. Along the stretch of the Boyle River from Boyle up to Lough Gara there are no other sites except the monastic settlements that can be tied to this period.

Even if there were no moated sites on the Lower Lake, there are still other medieval sites that could be discussed. If the waterways are followed south through the lake from the moated site in Kiltybrannoks, passing the western tip of Derrymore Island, a castle will be found.⁶³ This site, referred to as Castlepoint on the OS maps, consists of a large mound, not unlike a motte, with the remains of a stone building on top of it. Around the edges one can see a bailey-like enclosure. This site emphasises the importance of the waterways shown by the location of the moated sites. It is text-dated much later than the Anglo-Norman arrival in Ireland, but this does not mean that it was not in existence earlier. On dryland on the western side of Lough Gara, near the court tomb, is Moygara Castle, built in the late medieval period, probably in the sixteenth century. It has been argued by O’Conor (2001, 344) that the Irish rarely built stone castles before 1400. This site is not really built on the shore, but it overlooks the northern parts of Lough Gara. The northern areas are not to be seen as a routeway as the two rivers are connected to the southern side of the lake. There also seem to be a number of earthwork sites along the rivers, which might need a further visit to ascertain whether or not they are moated sites.

At a regional level concentrations of moated sites can be seen (Pl. 12). There is one such concentration in the area between present-day Ballymote and Bunnanadden, Co. Sligo, where six moated sites can be found just along the stretch of the Owenmore River and its tributaries, further strengthening the view that the moated sites in this area are located by rivers or other routeways. In the middle of this concentration is Ballynaglogh Abbey, which in turn is situated next to a prehistoric tumulus. There is also a line of moated sites along the north coast of Sligo.

Two other concentrations of moated sites have been noted by O’Conor (1998, 62, fig. 20). The first is located south of Lough Key and is believed to be connected with the MacDermots of Moylurg. The second, more southerly group were connected with the O’Conors. On our map we can also find a concentration for example between Claremorris and Castlebar. Perhaps these places were centres for other lordly families.

It has also been noted that the tower-houses in Sligo often occur in a lakeside position (O’Dowd 1991, 8). Tower-houses started to be built in Gaelic areas after 1400. Many of the tower-houses in these mainly western areas may date from the late fifteenth–sixteenth century (Cairns 1987, 1, 6; Sweetman 1999, 169–70; O’Conor 2001, 330). There is only one tower-house near Lough Gara. This is located near the excavated crannog in Sroove and is probably quite late. It was used by the MacDermots after they were moved from their settlement in Lough Key. Moygara Castle can also be argued to be an extended form of tower-house. Barry (1987, 181) has described the building of the tower-houses as showing a decentralisation and a strengthening of local power bases in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

If we look at the location of these sites in the landscape we can see that they have been built in areas that formerly did not always have a dense concentration of sites. Compared to the ringforts, the moated sites have more lakeside and waterside locations, showing that during this period the ‘zone of avoidance’ around the lake and waters was further broken into. The area between ringforts and lakes was being settled. This supports the proposition that the formerly avoided lakes were becoming commonplace, or more a part of the lived landscape. For Gaelic areas the understanding of the moated sites may need to be approached from this angle, bearing in mind what these border areas meant to people in earlier periods.

Cashels/ringforts

If the moated sites, tower-houses and castles were connected with the lords in this period, less is known of the ordinary people and where they lived. One possibility is that they continued to live in ringforts and cashels. In our case this would mean that the ringforts with their ‘long biography’ would carry a different meaning compared to the ‘new’ sites such as the moated sites, for example.

However, the common view is that ringforts and cashels went out of use towards the end of the early medieval period (Lynn 1975, 45; S.P. Ó Ríordáin 1979, 31–3; Edwards 1990, 18–19; Stout 1997, 22–31). Others, such as Proudfoot (1970, 40–5) and Barrett and Graham (1975, 34–6; see also Graham 1980, 34–9), have argued that ringforts were used throughout the medieval period. However, as O’Conor (1986, 95–104; 1998, 89) has pointed out, their arguments are built on the somewhat scanty occurrence of medieval pottery on ringfort sites, which might not be strong enough evidence for the proposition. Instead there is a need to look at other evidence from documentary sources and cartographic material as well as other archaeological sources. Nicholls (1987, 404–5) also has preferred to see the ringforts as continuing in use during the medieval period.

Most excavated and published ringforts are located in eastern Ireland, where the Anglo-Normans had most impact on the settlement patterns. It has been argued that this excavation bias might be one of the reasons why we know so little about settlement in areas outside Anglo-Norman control, and that there might be more evidence for medieval occupation of these sites outside these areas (Proudfoot 1970, 40–5; Barrett and Graham 1975, 34–6; Glasscock 1987, 227; O’Conor 1998, 89–91). Two ringforts that are often discussed in this context are Garrynamona and ‘Thady’s Fort’ in County Clare, which were argued by the excavator to have been used well into the medieval period (Rynne 1963). This interpretation has been criticised by Glasscock (1987, 228) and Edwards (1990, 18–19), as the finds were not associated with the surrounding bank but only with a later house within these banks. Barrett and Graham (1975, 35) also argued



Fig. 73—Stone packing and stratigraphy at Rathinaun (*Dúchas The Heritage Service*).

that there was no evidence for the late construction of this site, but instead for its continued use. There is more evidence for the use of cashels during these times (see O’Conor 1998, 89–94).

There are therefore reasons to include ringforts in the narrative, and it is possible that some of the ringforts/cashels in the study area were still in use in the later medieval period. This is also the reason for their inclusion on the distribution map (see Pl. 12). If this is the case, there is reason to continue to observe the patterns in the material that were shown in Chapter 10, with concentrations to the east of Elphin and around Swinford, but with a lesser amount of settlement in the areas in between.

It is also important to investigate how later settlements have related to these sites which possess an everyday monumentality. It has been suggested that the ringforts may have been used by ‘non-castle-owning freeholders’ in the later medieval period (Duffy *et al.* 2001, 64–5; Loeber 2001). With the evidence for castles and moated sites in areas near the lake the landscape would have been divided according to status at this time.

Conclusion

It is possible that some of the ringforts in the area were still in use during the later medieval period. If these are taken as a point of reference, the moated sites are located even nearer to the lake. This suggests a strengthened connection between Gaelic lords and water, both in a symbolic sense and in connection with transport by water, along rivers and lakes. In this respect the lake was still of importance in this period. However, the important ecclesiastical houses at this time show that the main emphasis was centred around Boyle, with the Cistercian monastery as well as a market-place. There are no inauguration places near Lough Gara, while one is noted for the O’Conors at Termon, near Boyle. Not much work has been done on the O’Garas, but as far as I know they did not have an inauguration place near the lake. The waters may have had more meaning for the lords, but the main centres of attention were places like Boyle or Achonry.

Crannogs

If there is doubt about the use of ringforts in the later medieval period, there is evidence for the use of crannogs at this time. For example, the crannog at Island MacHugh, Co. Tyrone, has produced evidence for habitation in the thirteenth/fourteenth century (see Davies 1950; Jope 1952; Barry 1987, 19). With the help of the intensive survey and the dating programme from Lough Gara we have been able to point out some morphological features of the later medieval

crannogs. There is reason to believe that the high-cairn crannogs with dense stone packing have top layers dating from the medieval period, and there is at this stage of research no evidence that the smaller, low-cairn crannogs of Lough Gara continued in use. One of the high-cairn crannogs (BOYL 038) in Lough Gara has produced a medieval date. The sample came from the stone packing in the top layers of the site. There is also stratigraphical evidence from Lough Gara that dense stone packing may be a feature of crannogs in use during the later medieval period. The stratigraphy from the excavated crannog in Sroove shows a sequence from wood to shattered stones; these layers dated from the early medieval period. This was followed by a collection of fairly large equal-sided stones that were put there at a later date, perhaps in the medieval period. As discussed, there may be reason to believe that this crannog was never finished.

Figure 73 shows that the top layers of Rathinaun also consisted of dense stone packing and a spread of larger stones. It is known that some of the artefacts date from the medieval period, and therefore it is likely that the stony top layers belong to this period. By this argument the crannog at Bawn's Island could be included in the collection of medieval crannogs in Lough Gara. This is a high-cairn crannog with a surface of grass-grown stones. On the shore are the remains of a ruined castle. O'Connor (1998, 84) has argued that the proximity of another medieval site could be taken to indicate that a crannog was in use during the period; this would further support our argument that the high-cairn crannogs are of later medieval date.

If we look outside the area of Lough Gara for evidence that high-cairn crannogs were in use during the medieval period we find some support. The high-cairn crannog in Cloverhill Lough, Co. Sligo, has yielded mortar from the top layers of its stony plateau. The crannog of Ardakillen (Loch Caircin), Co. Roscommon, also has top layers of stone. This site may be mentioned in the *Annals of Connacht* for the years 1293 and 1467. As can be seen on Fig. 74, the site looks like a stone-built cashel, with a floor and a surrounding wall of stone. These stone features seem to rest on more organic layers, suggesting reuse of an earlier site. Furthermore, the island on which Clogh Oughter Castle was built has been referred to as an 'artificial pile of rocks' (Davies 1942), adding to the argument that high-cairn crannogs may belong to the later medieval period.

Most of the high-cairn crannogs in Sligo share some distinct internal topographical features. The first of these is a mid-cairn situated slightly off-centre on the island. Normally these cairns measure 6–7m in diameter, and are nearly always on the side of the island nearest the shore. It is possible that they represent the remains of smaller stone-built features like houses. The mid-cairn is often surrounded by a plateau of stones stretching out for about 6–8m in front of the cairn, while it is often shorter, only 2–3m, on the shoreline side, giving quite a drastic drop. If the mid-cairns represent houses, it is possible that this plateau represents the outdoor areas where activities could have taken place, like a diminutive bailey. The plateau often has a gradual to distinct slope down towards a berm that also forms the edges of the site. The berm often consists of shattered and fire-cracked stones and measures from 2m to 5m in width. Some high-cairn crannogs have jettys and small harbour features. This may emphasise their connection with water transport in this period.

In later parts of the period, there is pictorial evidence that castles were built on crannogs. One example of this is a site at Augher at Lough Coura, Co. Offaly (Nicholls 1987, 406). O'Connor (2001, 335–6) has also pointed out that crannogs or small natural islands such as the Rock of Lough Key, Island MacHugh and Clogh Oughter had towers or tower-houses built on them during the later medieval period. All these sites were connected with Gaelic and possibly Anglo-Norman lords. Today there is no evidence that the low-cairn crannogs continued in use during the later medieval period. Therefore it may be argued that the use of crannogs by ordinary people decreased during this period. They may have used the lakes in other ways or moved to other places.



Fig. 74—Section through Ardakillen (after Wood-Martin 1886a).

Interpretation of island space

These sites can only be interpreted on the evidence of the survey information as no plans of the medieval layers of any crannog have been published to date. One possibility is that the crannogs at this stage held small stone-built houses, which survive today as rubble. Some may also be collapsed island cashels (see Kinahan 1872–3, 11). The stone houses may be represented by what look like mid-cairns on the high-cairn crannogs. The mid-cairn has in most cases a distinct outside area, in the shape of a platform. Perhaps the berm was used as firm footing around the edges of the island, which would have facilitated the landing and mooring of boats. Furthermore, it is probable that such a berm may be the remains of an earlier crannog, perhaps early medieval in date. One distinct feature is the height of these islands, which would make them less susceptible to water-level changes, unlike the lower sites from earlier periods. This structural feature adds to the impression of durability produced by the stone surfaces.

What is also important is that the high-cairn crannogs were built to a height that would ensure that they were less affected by floods in the winter. The high-cairn crannogs would have a much more prominent and stable presence in the landscape all year round than the low-cairn crannogs would ever have had. This is one of the greatest differences in the sites of this period (which I will discuss further below).

Activities on the crannogs

If most types of crannogs from the early medieval period were connected with production in one form or another, we do not have enough evidence to be certain whether this was still the case with the later medieval crannogs. In the documentary sources islands are mentioned as defensive ‘lordly’ residences (O’Conor 1998, 79–84). There are later medieval finds associated with crannogs from other lakes, but they have often been given only a cursory treatment. However, Ó Floinn (unpublished) has noted medieval artefacts such as knives and pottery from Lagore crannog that were not included in Hencken’s (1950) excavation report. Pottery and iron artefacts believed to be of medieval origin have also been noted on other crannogs, but it is considered impossible to draw any lengthy conclusions about the use of these sites on the basis of these artefacts. O’Sullivan, for example, is not sure whether these artefacts represent a short-term or long-term occupation of these sites (see O’Sullivan 2001, 403–9).

The documentary sources give a hint of what happened on some of the islands and crannogs, but these references deal with the lordly families and not with people in general. They do, however, show that people died on islands and lakes at least during the high Middle Ages.

AFM 1258: O’Connell lying on his death bed on Lough Beathad (O’Conor (1998, 81) presumes that this refers to a crannog in Lough Veagh, Co. Donegal; Kinahan (1886a) connected the reference to Derrybeagh Lake instead).

AC/AFM 1282: Cathal O’Farrell died on Inis Cuan.

AC 1293: Magnus O’Conor died of sickness at Ardakillen, ‘Lough Cairrgin’, which probably refers to the crannog here.

ALC/AFM 1343: Derbhail died on Inis Doighre.

In that people died on the islands, these references suggest a fairly stable settlement and occupation. They may also hint at the meaning of these islands at the time. It would be of interest to carry out a study of later medieval island imagery and symbolism in the documentary sources. It is clear that the sites were used in a lasting way, and that they were not only places for temporary safe refuge but also places that were stable, safe and peaceful enough to die on.

As shown in Chapter 10, all types of crannogs seem to have been connected with activities such as iron production and metal-handling. (This seems to have been one of the main uses for the crannog in Sroove during its latest phases.) They could be treated as localised craft centres, contributing to the cultural imagination of what it meant to be a kindred or a family at the time. Given the limited evidence for later medieval artefacts from crannogs, we do not know whether these activities continued to be connected with crannogs or whether the larger ecclesiastical centres in places such as Boyle or Ardcarne took them over. Many of the smaller crannogs seem to have been abandoned. If these represented people who were less well-off, it may mean that they left the lake in the later medieval period.

Location

Of the twelve high-cairn crannogs in Lough Gara, eleven are located on the eastern side of the lake and the Boyle River. Only one high-cairn crannog has been recorded on the western shores of the lake, near Moygara Castle. Smaller numbers of crannogs seem to have been in use during this period, and it is possible that the ‘folk crannog’ from the early medieval period went out of use during the medieval period, leaving only the high-cairn crannogs active. In other lakes there is often no more than one high-cairn crannog. In such lakes as Lough Talt and Balleygawley Lake the crannogs are located next to important mountain passes that would have been used during the medieval period. The Glencar high-cairn crannog is situated in a mountain pass. The Ardakillen and Strokestown crannogs are situated along a well-known routeway over land, the Slighe Assail, which may have been in use during the early medieval period (O’Lochlainn 1940). It is important to take into account this pattern in the material. As shown, routeways not only on water but also on land may have been of importance for determining which crannogs were built up into high-cairn crannogs.

Monumental islands

There is evidence that both natural and man-made islands were in use during the medieval period, and these and the crannogs can be referred to in the sources as *inis*. The natural islands mentioned include Eo-inis in Lough Oughter and Inisfree in Lough Gill. Here we should also mention islands like Inis Doigre in Drumharlow Lough, situated in the flow of the Shannon, and ‘the Rock of Lough Key’, situated in the next lake to Lough Gara (O’Conor 1998, 82–4).

As shown, the sequence in crannog-building led from organic materials to the incorporation of more and more stone in the island, especially in the medieval period. In prehistoric archaeology, the building of sites in stone is often taken to indicate an intention of long-lasting durability, and it is possible that this idea should be taken into account for our understanding of the medieval crannogs — that they were at this stage more deliberately built to last. R. Bradley (1998, 71) has discussed the monumentality of some sites in the sense that they were constantly

visible. The high-cairn crannogs with their increased height would have worked in this way, making the sites more resistant to water-level changes.

It has been argued by Nicholls that the lordly system was dependent on one strong man who exerted both political and military influence on the lordship (Nicholls 1972, chs 2–4; Duffy *et al.* 2001, 40). The crannog built of stone or ‘the Rock’ may have had a symbolic meaning in supporting such a person, emphasising the solidity and longevity of his rule. Perhaps the stone island would lend weight to the idea that his power was natural and beyond questioning. As noted in previous chapters, sites with earlier connections were seen as powerful, and perhaps the high-cairn crannogs carried such meaning also in this period.

Pairing of sites

O’Conor has noted that in certain places moated sites can be found adjacent to crannogs. He has suggested that the spatial relationship between the two site types implies contemporary use. In Cloonacleigha Lake there is a high-cairn crannog with a moated site adjacent to it on land. A similar combination can be found, for example, in Lough Key, where a moated site is located on the shore in the vicinity of the Rock. There is also a moated site on the natural island of Inistirra in Drumharlow Lake, Co. Roscommon (O’Conor 1998, 82; 2001, 338–40). Similar pairings of sites — for example multivallate ringforts and crannogs — have been found at Cro Inis in Lough Ennell. Warner (1994) has therefore argued for a connection between kingship and lakes during the early medieval period. Such a connection cannot be seen directly through the archaeological material in Lough Gara, with the multivallate ringfort located further away from the lake. However, during the medieval period a connection between a moated site and a crannog can be found in the Callow Lake. There are also a number of other medieval stronghold sites that can be found by the lake near the crannogs, as mentioned above. This suggests that the idea that crannogs were associated with the ‘upper classes’, which may not have been the case in this region in earlier times, has some validity for this period. No one has yet dealt with what the ‘pairing’ in itself might have meant and it has mainly been treated as a dating method. Did this doubling of structures mean that the lords had an abode for everyday activities on land and a place to withdraw to on the islands?

The meaning of water

There is no available evidence, as far as I am aware, that the practice of depositions in water continued during the medieval period. There are to my knowledge no medieval finds from the waters of Lough Gara, apart from some woodworking axes, one from the Lung River and one from Mahanagh. There is also a medieval sword (sixteenth century), retrieved from a log-boat near Eagles Island in the northern half of the Lower Lake (Hayes-McCoy 1964; Duffy *et al.* 2001, 67). This is near the place where the western side’s only high-cairn crannog is located. This sword, owing to its find-context away from the earlier places of deposition and in a log-boat, cannot be seen as a deposition in waters. There is reason to believe that this practice slowed down and disappeared during the medieval period. Rynne (1969, 15–19), however, has identified some sixteenth-century swords from the River Corrib, Co. Galway, although these were located further downstream than the prehistoric weapons from the same river.

Most information on how people related to the waters comes from documentary sources. There are interesting landscape poems in the *Dindshenchas* that may show how people perceived water such as rivers and lakes. The following poem explains how Lough Gara got its name (Gwynn 1913, 411–13):

‘They tell of a warrior with numbers of troops whose name was Dechet of fiery force: he was a mighty man, a lord of lands, a staff for clearing roads.

Glass mac Caiss had authority by covenant over strong Dechet son of Dergor: by him a rath was raised to be for all time far-famous beyond all raths.

The mighty man built a rath of surpassing strength Suide Ruaid, above the royal cataract: Aed Ruas son of famous Badorn was leader of the shouting troops of the eastern tribes.

This is the reward given by the king Ruad, grandson of Mane Miscoth, to Decet — a fair compact — the noble produce of the red cataract.

The children of Ailill and only they, until the coming of Doomsday, own the produce of Ess Ruaid — no hasty gift, as Dechet got it, no sorry bargain.

In the territory of Ailill, lord of steeds, a tower was built — it was his last award, that there should not be among his children (famous conjunction) strife nor division for the future.

Dechet ate his portion, by standing usage, after ending the bright cold work, on the plain of Mag Lunga — knowest thou the carouse that brought trouble upon Dechet?

He grow drunk and mad by turns, his seemly bearing forsook him, it was the noise of one doomed before his dissolution: he plunged in the lake and was drowned utterly.

Hence, from the heroic repast, is called Mag Lunga, laden with crops: its enduring name was granted assuredly to the warrior as they tell.’

It is important to bear in mind that the landscape during the medieval period also had a cognitive dimension, and that places like lakes and rivers were ascribed different meanings. Lough Tecet was not the only lake to be named after a person said to have drowned in the waters; this was also the case with, for example, Loch Neill and many other lakes (Gwynn 1913, 404–7). Many of the landscape poems discuss how the lakes got their names after drownings; there is also mention of burial cairns in the water. Lough Key, for example, was said to have burst out around the burial cairn of a druid (*ibid.*, 401–3). Perhaps this may have been one way of relating to earlier crannogs under water. Other sources show that lakes and waters were still places connected with strange creatures such as monsters and snakes (see e.g. Borsje 1997). This means that at least during parts of the period the lakes also retained their somewhat mystical character, possibly connecting them with a pagan past. The ruling families may have made use of this imagery in establishing their dominance.

It can also be seen in the documentary sources that the lake became associated with the ruling families:

AC 1256:18: Aed son of Fedlim O Conchobair plundered the territory of Mac Richard Cusin to avenge the slaying of O Gadra on him. After that he broke down his castles, killing all the inmates, and took possession of the hole of Lough Gara.⁶⁴

AC 1285:6: Ruaidri O Gadra, king of Sliab Luga, was killed on his own lake by Mac Feorais.

These quotes show that the entire lake was considered to be in the possession of one person. This

is a major difference from the early medieval period, when we saw the presence of many people of possibly different social standing in the lake.

There seems to have been a continued emphasis on churches on islands, and while none of the islands in Lough Gara contain the securely attested remains of a medieval church, island churches were definitely located in places such as Lough Key, Lough Arrow and further away, as at Devenish. Places of pilgrimage such as Lough Derg are also well known.

Boats by water

As implied above, there was a further emphasis on water, with settlements like moated sites located closer to the waters. Increased interest in the waters can also be seen in the extensive radiocarbon dating of log-boats carried out by Lanting and Brindley, in which it was observed that most log-boats date from the period AD 1450–1700. In Lough Gara there is evidence for one log-boat at Clooncunny, dating from 990 ± 20 BP, and another (with the somewhat contradictory location of Clooncunny at the mouth of the Boyle River) was younger again, dating from 330 ± 20 BP (Lanting and Brindley 1996, cat. nos 41a, 42a). These dates give strength to the argument that the waterways gained in importance during the medieval period, as suggested by the location of the moated sites and the castles around Lough Gara and elsewhere.

Social fictionalities

The medieval period at one level represents an ongoing centralisation of power. More power is gathered first into dynastic hands and by the ruling lineages as well as by the church. But there is only very little evidence for what happened at local level, such as in the areas around Lough Gara. The overall material evidence with which to build a social interpretation may at this stage not be strong enough to carry a more intricate discussion.

It has been observed that the practice of deposition of items in water at this time had nearly ceased. The attitude to the waters can only be discerned from the landscape poems, which often connect lakes with people who drowned in them. Many lakes, like Lough Gara, are also said to have gained their names this way.

Most evidence indicates that the lakes were taken over by the ruling families; such a scenario is possible, given the quote about the O'Garas from the documentary sources. The O'Garas were at this time the lords of the lake. If the lakes were taken over by these lordly families, we could probably expect to see less of ordinary people around the lake as compared to the period before. This proposition is also supported by the fact that we have no evidence for a continued use of the low-cairn crannogs in this period. The indicated loss of status in the later part of the early medieval period that F. Kelly (1988) has described may be represented in the decreased evidence for the use of the folk crannogs in the later medieval period as compared to the early medieval period.

The increased monumentality of the crannogs with a heavy stone packing may also have worked symbolically to support the image of a strong man, the leader of the lordship. The takeover of the lakes by the leading families in this region also changed the meaning of the lake itself. At a broader level we can see how the political emphasis shifts away from Lough Gara in favour of Lough Key through the later medieval period. However, the narrative concerning the crannogs in this period mainly deals with the lords in Gaelic Ireland, and what is still needed is to find out where people in general lived and died.

PART V — SPEAKING WITH A DIFFERENT RHYTHM

People were using lakes in all periods; people were always building on their islands. I hope, now that I am trying to gather my thoughts, that I have been sensitive enough in my interpretations to have moved beyond such static statements. To say that people were always using lakes begs the questions of in what way and why. There are certainly traces of human activity beside lakes, and even in terms of built islands, in nearly all periods. What is noteworthy is the tension between this enduring presence and the increasing and sometimes decreasing attention paid to these places. It is necessary to be sensitive to the varying rhythms in this material. Between times, there might be similar lakes, lakes understood in similar ways by people now and then, but it can never be the same lake, the same island.

12. INTERPRETATIVE DRIFT — A SLOW SHIFT TOWARDS BELIEVING

The modern use of crannogs

What have been fixed, maybe too fixed, in this book have been the questions asked of the material. I have been exploring how people over time might have used the islands to create, manipulate and maintain structures and fictionalities about social responsibilities. An important issue has been how the crannogs have been involved and drawn upon in a variety of human activities, either because they lingered on from the past or because they affected things directly in the present.

We know that the crannogs of Lough Gara have been drawn upon recently in order to create unity and solidarity among the communities around the lake; whether this effort fails or is something to build on for the future has not yet been revealed. The only thing we can say is that these communities are struggling against a fairly strong network of administrative structures based on counties and not centred on borders.

As things stand, we do not really know when the crannogs of Lough Gara were physically abandoned. We have evidence from both the archaeological material and from folk memory that the crannogs were in physical use until quite recently. The early modern and modern use of crannogs is today much under-researched. Some of these sites were in use up until the sixteenth or seventeenth century, when they were seen as places of rebellion (see Hayes-McCoy 1964, 9–10, 16, 20). In terms of archaeological remains from Lough Gara there is not a great deal to work with at the present moment in time. It is therefore hard to answer the question of when the crannogs of Lough Gara went out of use. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is material evidence that some of them have been used for duck-shooting as well as for distilling poteen. Through our interviews we found that one crannog has also been used as a hen-house and another as marking the limits for safe swimming. What we don't know is when people stopped dwelling on them, in houses and huts, and what they may have meant to people then.

As shown, there is evidence that crannogs have been in use over time in Lough Gara, but there also seem to have been periods when the lake was given less attention and when people focused more on uplands or other places, and this is of course also the case today. Because crannogs may have figured in many different periods, they have created problems for research. To some antiquarians and later researchers the crannogs represented either an awkward or a desired stagnation, depending on their attitude to native culture. One aim of this book was to follow the region centred on Lough Gara over time and to appreciate what these islands may have meant to people over time. In Part IV of the book we followed the lake and the crannogs from the Mesolithic into the modern period. Part III dealt with what the crannogs have meant to people nearer to the present. However, as we have seen, despite the reuse and rebuilding of these islands, what may on the one hand look like stagnation on the other hand comes across as change. The meanings of the crannogs have been read both internally and externally. Internally the site itself can be analysed in terms of what was found — artefacts and features. Such an analysis would deal with how it was spatially structured and used. Externally the site can be contextualised in relation to the rest of the landscape and in various social narratives over time. The crannogs that we have studied are in this way slow 'shape-shifters', and their meaning has both changed and stayed the same over time. The method I used to study this slow shift was called 'interpretative drift'.

Institutional interpretations

I would like in this study of the crannogs of Lough Gara to return to some of the questions raised at the beginning of the book. I also want to continue to discuss how we can deal with the social interpretation of the crannogs, as well as this very particular double notion of change and ‘un-change’ connected with these islands.

Out of time

Other explanations have had to restrict the crannogs’ use in time in order to understand them. Here I think of Lynn’s (1983) work, which proposed that crannogs as well as ringforts should be seen as early medieval sites. However, there is evidence that crannogs date from earlier periods as well. This phenomenon whereby sites in Irish archaeology, so to speak, drift in time is not confined only to crannogs and ringforts. As we have seen in earlier chapters, sites like barrows and standing stones, for example, seem to drift between periods as well, both in terms of construction and in terms of reuse. This also occurs with many other monuments such as megalithic tombs, and they may have been assigned a wide range of meanings over time. Instead of deeming this a hopeless archaeological material that cannot be properly categorised chronologically, it may have to be taken as a strength in the material that deserves to be researched and interpreted. As I have tried to show with the crannogs, such a long period of existence does not mean that the sites meant the same thing to all people at all times. It has been of interest to show that these sites were used in various social settings and may have affected people in many different ways over time. However, at another, but not complementary, reading this stability also carries a meaning as it forms an agency and a structure for further action. I think I have described one way to work with this material as its impact fades out, only to get stronger when activated during other periods.

Out of category

While the crannogs drift in time, their use and the way they work are not easily grasped either. Terms like ‘settlements’ or ‘industrial sites’ do not provide a fair interpretation of the material. In 1849 Talbot described the crannog of Lagore as a tomb. We know from our perspective that this description is not totally accurate and crannogs have most often been seen as settlements and workshops, but Talbot’s labelling has its point, bearing in mind that these islands at times are associated with human remains. To talk about the crannogs as production sites or places for domestic habitation does not do justice to the material either. This issue is about how the crannogs may be ‘out of category’, at least in our modern sense of the headings under which we define and study our material. As they are often connected with what we today call production (we have traces of lithic production, bronze-casting, textile work and iron-smelting from the crannogs, for example), this would in turn also mean that all these activities would be out of category.

I began my study with the critique of earlier explanations as economic. This critique was twofold: first of all it is ethnocentric to impose the market ideology of today on past societies that may have worked in different ways, and secondly the economic activities suggested for the origin and use of the islands do not explain the material. Fishing and fowling could just as well have taken place from boats or from the shoreline as from an island. The same question holds for metal production. Such an explanation does not deal with or explain the phenomenon of built islands. Instead of sticking with the utilitarian explanations of why, for example, production took place on the crannogs, I have been asking why it made sense to locate production there and in what way the use of the crannogs changed the meaning of this production, and vice versa. In the case

of the crannogs, institutional practices built on spatial ideas about regeneration and everyday exclusiveness have been forming frameworks for the production through time.

Interpretative drift

If the crannogs can be described as 'out of category' at a particular point in time, the way in which they might be 'out of category' changes over time too. To obtain any type of understanding of the crannogs, it is important to take their multiperiod nature seriously. The reactivation of the monuments may well have had a meaning for people in the past, and there might have been a connection between the 'past's past' and the 'past's present'. It was an inquiry into this 'ancestry' that Lynn (1983) defined away in order to get a clear scientific definition of the sites. This served to divert a research interest in these people's own sense of history and memory as well as issues of what their landscape might have meant to them. Other people have, as described above, also had problems with the fact that these sites we call crannogs were used over longer periods of time, perhaps epochs, as this use would imply that 'history' did not happen, that the crannogs symbolised the 'static' Irish people. However, this 'ancestry' does not have to be seen as static. What is important is to look at how the meaning of the crannogs may have changed around their own axis to find out how the perceptions of these islands both changed and stayed the same over time. One issue that we will work with in particular below is how we can appreciate the 'shape-shifting' of the crannogs and the way their meaning would have changed or remained stable over time, as well as the changing emphasis on watery places. By contextualising the crannogs against other sites in the landscape we can also see how these sites worked in a social sense. In what follows I will draw together the evidence from the different periods, seeing that our analyses have shown that these lake sites have been connected with the practice of deposition in the waters and that the shifting emphasis on the islands themselves is connected with and may have been used to create different types of responsibility.

As shown by the survey, excavation and dating of the crannogs, there are both differences and similarities in island-building over time, and while there might be a sequence in the way the crannogs were built, it is not a straightforward development. Instead the sequence is punctuated with repetitions and retakes. What the crannogs all have in common is the creation of a firmament in the waters. They would have been there to accommodate activities that otherwise, and possibly more easily, could have taken place on the shores or from a boat in the waters or from any of the natural islands in the lake. However, people chose other ways to carry out these activities (Table 7 shows the structure of this discussion). Their choices of how they lived and how their building worked could, as I have argued, be likened to material institutions, both reflecting and prescribing behaviour, with the crannogs being one of many institutions. While their role changed over time, so did people's ways of relating to, and connecting with, their drylands, and in order to understand the structures of solidarity in communities over time we also had to take these into account.

Mesolithic

The Mesolithic material is ambiguous in many respects and it is still not totally clear whether there is enough evidence for any crannogs from this period. Therefore I chose to work with three different narratives, one of which used the idea that there were small stony platforms deriving from this period in Lough Gara. In the Mesolithic, then, these were places where there was evidence for lithic production, with finds of stone cores, artefacts and débitage. There were also animal bones from the crannogs. In order to build the narrative about these sites we had to take in evidence from elsewhere as well as to analyse the artefact material. Other watery places have

Table 7 — *The changing role of crannogs over time (with emphasis on the area around Lough Gara).*

Period	Landscape focus and monumental attention	Deposits in watery places (votive?)	What crannogs do
Mesolithic	Places by water and by natural islands in focus, possibly pre-monumental experience of these islands as places. Uplands less marked by archaeology.	Flakes, cores, stone axes, human bones (fragmented ancestors).	Possible evidence for platform crannogs. Focus human attention on spatially bound places and mark out temporal changes in the lake levels. Limited temporal availability.
Neolithic	A stronger monumental attention to uplands, transfer of meaning from islands, the beginning of formation of nodes in the landscape. Almost no megalithic tombs placed on inland natural islands. Waters still active, for example as places for deposits.	Continued deposits of cutting objects such as stone axes and possibly some lithics.	Less evidence for the use of natural islands or platform crannogs.
Early Bronze Age	Continued concentrations of monuments away from the lakes and further alterations and concentrations of sites at the nodes in uplands. Some cist burials to be found outside the nodes.	Continued deposits of cutting objects, but change in material to flat bronze axes and daggers.	Less evidence for the use of natural islands or platform crannogs.
Late Bronze Age	Continued use and concentration of sites around the nodes, but towards the end of the period a stronger emphasis on the lakes.	Continuity and change in content of deposit with swords, shields, sunflower pins, ear-rings, cauldrons. Slightly more personal ornaments and then communal items.	Clear man-made islands in lakes and bogs with evidence of bronze-casting, personal ornaments and skulls. Similar finds in deposits. May have played part in rituals around votive deposits. Creating places in the water may have meant new power bases away from the nodes.
Iron Age	Less evidence for human activity apart from larger monuments such as linear earthworks and trackways, suggesting larger communal efforts binding together places in the landscape.	Continuity and change in content of deposit with swords, bog bodies, animal bones, headstalls, horns, horse gear (bits, U- and Y-shaped pendants). From communal to animal-related deposits.	Use of crannogs in the beginning of the period, but a slight difference in connotation as items deposited more connected with the animal world. Less evidence for use of crannogs towards end of period, signify a reconnection to earlier tribal loyalties, new symbolic content?
Early medieval	Secular settlement takes on a monumental role and refocuses people's attention to lands between nodes. Lakes increasingly drawn into people's everyday life.	Swords, religious paraphernalia, skulls?	Strong evidence for more permanent presence in lakes, suggest a renewed removal from the nodes. Expression of 'private space' for people with both high and lower status.
Later medieval	Medieval rural settlement still to be identified. Lordly moated sites found even closer to lakes than ringforts, suggesting a strengthening connection to waters.	?	Crannogs in use and built more monumentally than before. Possibly lordly power centres only.
Modern	Monumental roads.	?	Crannogs used as duck-shoots or made harmless as antiquities?

given evidence of human remains (in fact these are the only places where human remains from this period have been found). There is also a slight connection between lithics and red ochre in Mount Sandel. In my interpretation I made use of these connections between dead people, lithics and red ochre (which can also be found at Mesolithic sites elsewhere in Europe) and suggested that the lithics could have represented people as well as tools for fishing and maybe also woodwork. I also added that the relationship between core, artefact and débitage is an ancestral one, with the core metaphorically to be seen as the ancestor of the others. Our analysis of the artefacts from Lough Gara showed that the cores did not match perfectly with artefacts or débitage, and that this must imply some type of rearrangement of the different components in the production chain. I suggested that this rearrangement might also have meant a social negotiation and a rearrangement of ancestry. While the activities on the site can be read from this angle, they may at the same time have carried other meanings.

The crannogs were most likely places for fishing, but they would be different from other places from which fishing could take place, such as boats or the shoreline. The fishing that may have taken place from these platform crannogs as well as the deposition of flakes that may belong to them form two contexts. These contexts have to be understood together, so that each may throw light on the other. These platforms would, owing to their limited height and size, only be temporarily available and could only accommodate a smaller group of people. I think, as argued, that the platform crannogs could stand as a metaphor for small groups and their seasonal involvement with the land and waters. While the evidence for these platforms is not totally clear, we know that people had a definite focus on the natural islands of the lake at this time. People's choice of these natural islands and/or the platform crannogs may have facilitated the creation of group identities for the smaller, more transient groups. These identities might be renegotiated after a yearly cycle when the platforms or the shores of the islands became available again. Perhaps the larger islands served as places of origin for larger descent groups. This may have represented the re-enactment of an origin myth about islands, and the ancestors present under the waters. If the islands acted as places for yearly returns and meetings it is also likely that the use of islands, man-made or natural, may have changed people's perception of time and groups in a 'pre-monumental' way, making people think of time and place in a 'settled' way. The use of the islands may have created memories and attachments to particular places and pieces of land. If these platforms really existed they would have been working to mark out the temporality of the waters. The building of these platforms would then articulate the seasonal passage of time as well as people's belonging to lakes and social responsibility to each other.

Neolithic

However, over time people, while making use of earlier social knowledge and belongings, also acted to change their world, and it is possible that the island symbolism was drawn upon but in partly new surroundings. In the Neolithic, people took a greater interest in other natural topographically distinct features such as mountains and uplands rather than islands. In the vicinity of the lake we have, for example, Kesh, Carrowkeel and Fairymount. We rarely find any megalithic tombs on natural islands in inland lakes. However, the use of the islands in the Mesolithic may have affected people's ways of seeing themselves in the Neolithic, and the islands may have been used for other reasons in this period. The transition to the more settled lifestyle was accomplished more swiftly here in Ireland than elsewhere, for example in Britain. One of the reasons could be that larger groups with regular habits had already been formed in the Mesolithic, along with a perception of time suited to farming and settled life, during people's yearly returns to the confined spaces of the islands, whether platform crannogs or natural islands. This spatial and

temporal experience meant that people more readily accepted and desired a settled lifestyle at an early stage. In some ways people's experiences of what was 'good' in the Mesolithic may have been used and drawn upon in a new setting in which the lake islands were given less emphasis. During the Neolithic the landscape was reassessed and people paid more attention to uplands than to lakes, with the building and use of monumental tombs and the focus on farming or cattle-herding. However, even if the 'monumental' attention was centred on higher ground, the lakes and especially the rivers still had a meaning and possibly continued to be places for deposits. Stone axes were still placed in the waters from time to time, together with some lithics.

Bronze Age and Iron Age

At the beginning of the Bronze Age we have no direct evidence for any island-building activity in Lough Gara, but the waters continued as places where, for example, flat axes of bronze were deposited (sometimes these can be found in almost the same locations as the stone axes). During the Bronze Age monumental burial-places seem to gather in certain concentrations. These concentrations were augmented throughout this period and into the Iron Age. I have called these places 'tribal nodes', and one way of understanding them is that they were manifestations of larger units of people, built on traditions of use. It is only during the late Bronze Age that we have clear evidence that people built crannogs in the lake. The evidence for these crannogs is more distinct than for the Mesolithic platforms. Some of the late Bronze Age sites have been described as workshops and Rathtinaun has been seen as a domestic settlement, but I believe that there is more to explain about these sites. On or beside these crannogs can be found artefacts such as bronze swords and moulds. In some cases there were also bronze rings on or just off the site, and Rathtinaun had a distinct hoard deposited at its edge. Near the crannogs and on them human skulls and pottery have been found. The similarity to the finds from other watery deposits is striking. If we see people's crannog-building as connected with the deposition of items in watery places, the crannogs would have helped to change the tradition of deposition that had been going on for thousands of years. In this context, the late Bronze Age crannogs provided places, low-cairn islands, from where depositions could take place. I think that this is one of the reasons why they were built. Some of them show traces of pottery or of burnt grain, and there might be the remains of huts on some of them. Perhaps these represent the dwelling-places of those people who lived outside the communities and carried out the deposition of items in the watery places. If the periodic deposition of items in the waters can be seen as an institutional practice with its roots going back to the Stone Age, the construction of these islands changed this institution. The practice of deposition now had a place. The crannogs may have meant that some people had a more pronounced responsibility for the activity of deposition.

There are very few differences between the items found around the crannogs and in other watery deposits. One of the few differences is the presence of moulds on the crannogs, suggesting that the crannogs were workshops for metal production. It is known that moulds for bronze-casting were given special treatment through time. Already in the early Bronze Age some moulds were placed in wedge tombs and possibly treated as items that deserved burial. That the moulds were given this treatment implies that they meant more to people than simply waste from the production of bronzes. Instead we have to see that this production was embedded in the ways people perceived themselves and their surroundings at the time. The traces of bronze-casting on the crannogs would therefore signify more than a 'production' site, as the production in these places would draw on other meanings of water.

The rites of deposition both in water and at the crannogs changed over time and became more personally orientated, and then animal-oriented, judging from the deposited material, and

probably this was true of people's associations with the material as well. The crannogs then worked to merge together these categories of thinking — production, life, death, animals and humans. While the late Bronze Age crannogs may have been constructed in opposition to the nodes (as may also have been the case with hillforts), their role also changed over time as people involved other, animal-related items in the deposition rites. Maybe this manipulation gave rise to a new 'tribalism' centred on, for example, animal identities. We could go back to Talbot's (1849) comments on the crannogs being tombs — with these finds it is difficult to decide whether they were tombs or settlements, or a mixture of many such categories. To a certain extent these finds from the crannogs look similar to those from the presumed Stone Age platforms, with artefacts denoting transformation, animal bones and connections to dead people, and on that basis it could be argued that there is not much difference between the Stone Age and the Bronze Age depositions. What looks different is that the late prehistoric sites are more substantial and show some structures suggesting that they were used for longer periods of time, but perhaps not all year round. Another difference would be that their social context in general would have changed. In the Mesolithic we have no traces of any monument complexes such as the tribal nodes on dry land. That we do have in the later prehistoric period with the tribal nodes would imply that the crannogs in the Bronze Age carried a different meaning. There are only very few traces of what people did in the centuries just before and after Christ. It is possible that the crannogs went out of use for some few hundred years, in the later part of the Iron Age. The only dating evidence concerning crannogs during this period comes from Moynagh Lough (Woodman *et al.* 1997). This site was built on at least in the Mesolithic, Bronze Age and early medieval period (J. Bradley 1985–6; 1991; etc.). The only evidence we have is that the nodes may have continued in use and that people were involved in large-scale projects which may have been intended to serve a larger common good.

To sum up the evidence from later prehistory, the crannogs would have been built as places where deposits were prepared. By 'placing' the deposits it was also possible to have someone to take care of this process. There is no direct evidence for reuse of an earlier platform crannog as a base for a late Bronze Age site, but this happened elsewhere, e.g. at Moynagh Lough. In these cases this new rite may have claimed the sanction of antiquity, despite the fact that it changed the way deposits were supposed to be handled. It is also likely that the construction and use of these sites changed people's ways of thinking about their community. The crannogs would have been important places located away from the nodes. Even though the deposits may have been carried out on behalf of the community, a distinct emphasis on the border zones in the landscape would have constituted a threat to authority. The use of the crannogs would also have created a duality of structure, dividing people's attention between the nodes for the ancestors and other alliances and the gods or animals by the lakes. However, while there is evidence for continued use of the nodes into the following period, there is no clear evidence for a continuous use of the crannogs. This suggests that the nodes and the tribal identities, even if they were reworked, continued to be of great importance in people's lives around the lake.

Early medieval

It is not until the early medieval period that we have clear archaeological evidence for crannogs to work with again in Lough Gara. It seems as if renewed attention was paid to the lakes and waters at this stage. The evidence from the excavated crannog in Rathinaun shows that crannogs from the late Bronze Age were reused in this period, and it is likely that this reuse was meaningful. Based on evidence from our crannog in Sroove, but also from other excavated sites, the activities on the islands took on a more mundane meaning, in terms of both the artefacts and the features

on the island itself. The excavation in Sroove showed that crannog use was not confined to people from the richer parts of society but that people of lesser standing also built and lived on crannogs at this stage. Many of the items found on the site in its first phases were connected with personal appearance — a comb fragment, bone pins, iron pins and lignite bracelets. Subsequent phases produced evidence for more and different activities, and someone may have worked with textiles on the site, as indicated by the sewing needle. In one of the later phases when the site was covered over with stones there was evidence for iron production. In terms of structures and features the site also seems to have been quite mundane, in terms of the existence of a small house rebuilt on at least one occasion; the crannog was then transformed into an iron-production site. This is what I have described as the interpretative drift of the site, i.e. how the meaning of the site changed slowly over time. As discussed, this site shows a very special type of change, and these changes may have contributed to the site's genealogy. The site may have gained its own historicity, which in turn would have brought on new reasons for change. Through continuous use the crannogs would have been built up as places that had their own history and genealogy.

In this way the crannogs could have obtained a significance similar to that of the tribal nodes. The tribal nodes had been places where burials and ceremonies had taken place for a considerable time, and the people who used the early medieval crannogs also seem to have drawn on and manipulated the use of places linked to the past. While the use of the crannogs was a way of living according to tradition, this lifestyle was merged with an increasing interest in architecture defining private space. This in turn may have led to a withdrawal from tribal affairs, and this withdrawal might have involved not only the people who had access to many resources but also other people. Together with the use of ringforts, the crannogs represent a manifest movement out into the landscape, away from the nodes, for a lot of people. While the crannogs were drawing on the notion of the historical dignity of a place, their repeated use may well have created a similar discourse of their own, but with a change of location and a severing of many connections with the tribal nodes. Burials, for example, were moved into the ecclesiastical sites from the eighth century onwards. This gave room for other alliances to form.

Later medieval

If the crannogs during the early medieval period were connected with more people than just the upper classes and represented a movement out into the landscape by all people, their role in the later medieval period was different. It is likely that only a few of the low-cairn crannogs were extended in height and used in the later medieval period. At this stage they seem to have been used more exclusively by the Gaelic lords in the area. There are no published plans of any later medieval layers on the crannogs, and from the archaeological material it is hard to judge whether they were used as settlements. Their settlement connection can mainly be judged from the documentary sources, while the archaeological interpretation has to be built on what we can infer from the material. The change in building style, with more stones in the material, would have made these sites more monumental in the landscape. Their meaning would have changed accordingly, and the sites may have signified continuity, as natural rocks in the landscape, thereby reinforcing the Gaelic lords' 'natural' position in society. There is a clear connection between waters, crannogs, moated sites and tower-houses. There is also increased evidence for the use of log-boats during this period. This suggests that the water once again gained significance, this time as a means of communication, but perhaps this communication was mainly of interest to the lords.

Modern

It is not clear when the crannogs went out of use. We know from the earliest Ordnance Survey maps of Lough Gara that at least some of the crannogs were already above water before the two drainages. Material evidence shows that the crannogs in recent times have been used for duck-shooting and illegal activities such as poteen-making. The crannogs have also figured in other ways in people's minds. Some people remember them as hen-houses or as gardens with cherry trees. In Una Staunton's poetry they represent a past that can react, and that can react against modernisation in an unwanted way. Such a past would be different from a past categorised and made silent by the antiquarian's labels. What is dangerous about these islands is their temporal presence in the landscape: they can emerge from the waters when you least expect them.

We can conclude that the crannogs have been drawn upon during many different periods. Although at a surface level they might have similarities, they have also to a large extent conveyed changing meanings. What is clear is that they were not equally actively used during all periods.

Sand in the riverbed

In Chapter 5 I said that I had problems in trying to tell people what a crannog is, and this book shows that they have meant a wide range of things to people and would have carried a multitude of meanings. One constant factor in the use of crannogs over time, which could be argued already from the Mesolithic, is that all involve an element of transformation. In the Mesolithic at least the origin and the end-product of the stone flakes could be traced to the shores, while in the absence of diagnostic waste flakes the transformation may or may not have taken place on these islands. Production traces can also be found in the late Bronze Age layers, e.g. at Rathtinaun in the form of moulds, while the early medieval crannog at Sroove produced evidence for sewing and iron production. This all shows that producing things over time was not only about resource exploitation, but that the production was interlinked and viewed in a social context. It is interesting to note that the islands seem to be occupied more in the transitions between periods, something that could be taken to represent warlike activities but could also mean that the sites were islands of tradition in times of change. As I have also discussed, however, their social context was in transition too. They served as people's homes in a withering tribal society, as places where temporary groups formed or where religious rites were performed.

The crannogs, from platform to high-cairns, from the Mesolithic to the present, may have been connected with the production and transformation of material, but it is not the same production and not the same crannogs. The crannogs may at different times also have been connected with the Otherworld, for example through shamanistic practices, but it may not necessarily have been the same shamanism. People may from time to time have been aware that they were reusing earlier sites, but their reasons for doing so may have varied, as would the effects. The point I am trying to make is that as the context (social and other) changed, so would the understanding of the crannogs.

These explanations are partial, and they do not do justice to the material. Apart from describing a crannog as a man-made island, it is hard to give them any other definition. They are shape-shifters; they have been used as tombs, as production places and for settlement, and sometimes these categories merged on the same island. Even with this merge of categories, the social setting and contexts for these activities may have differed a great deal between periods, whether in a tribal setting or for nomadic small communities. Wittgenstein worked with a similar problem when it came to the definition of words: the only truth about certain concepts is that when they are investigated they escape definition; they move like the sand in a riverbed (Wittgenstein 1997, 16). I think that this is as close as one can come to an understanding of the

crannogs: what they are depends on which social fictionality they are viewed against, and their meaning drifts like sand on a riverbed.

Speaking with a different rhythm

As I have tried to show, both in the occurrence maps and in my discussion, the landscape around the lake holds many different temporalities. In compiling the maps I worked on the basis that sites belonging to one period might have retained their importance and have been incorporated in later narratives. Both then and now, the past was active and was a part of the cultural imagination of other ‘presents’. In working with the crannogs I have learnt that reuse does not necessarily mean stagnation. Even in continuous use with quite tight material reinterpretations, i.e. where the next phase of the crannog resembles the earlier, the act of continuous use creates its own discourse. What may appear to be repetition may through ‘cumulative instability’ and a perhaps unarticulated ‘interpretative drift’ change people’s ways of experiencing the world around them. This notion is particularly useful for understanding the excavated crannog in Sroove, which grew in its own historicity during its time of use. But other sites in the vicinity of the crannogs may have worked in similar ways. I am thinking here of the concentrations of sites that we have called tribal nodes.

It is possible that these material discourses can be seen as institutional practices. Institutions are the conventions that enable people to act and to work together — they are like frozen ideologies, not open to direct and persistent questioning over time. What we have discussed in this book is how the use of crannogs may have contributed to the formation of loyalties between groups, such as the small temporary communities in the Mesolithic or the kindreds in the early medieval period. Mary Douglas (1986) says that institutions do the classifying — and these conventions serve to help us to distinguish relevant information from irrelevant, etc. While on the one hand they enable our actions, they also restrict our thinking. The institutions are frameworks that promote certain ways of thinking, while making other ways of living unthinkable. Buildings and material culture also shape our ways of thinking and therefore these ideas are of importance to archaeological studies. One of the main questions in this thesis concerns the way in which crannogs would have affected people’s ways of thinking about themselves and their surroundings over time. As we have seen, they may have played a part in creating what Knorr Cetina (1994) calls ‘social fictionalities’ or ideas that give meaning to people’s actions.

The excavation of the crannog in Sroove showed that the material reinterpretation of the site, while varying slightly, involved a repetition of certain elements. For example, the house seems to have retained its position over time, and the finds vary only slightly from one period to another.

To the extent that crannogs show a narrowness in the material reinterpretation of events, with each new layer copying the last, the sites would become like ‘black holes’ in time, with no material change and to an extent with no memories attached to them. In a perfect copy nothing is left behind as a memory: the past does not disappear, but it is not remembered either. To remember is also about forgetting and about detaching the present, even if only slightly, from the past.

What has been observed throughout this study is that many other monuments besides crannogs were important not only in the period in which they were built but also in later periods. We have seen how the barrows in Killaraght on the western side of the lake were augmented by the ring-barrows, and how wedge tombs such as those on the western side of the lake could have been used for much longer periods. With an awareness of the multiple temporality in the archaeological material, and of the fact that people tend to construct new sites and to activate or forget other places, we can see that this would be a landscape of multiple and changeable temporality. This material is ‘speaking’ with a different rhythm. In a landscape like

this, monuments from the past can very easily be made present and active. This means that monuments from one period can easily be incorporated into stories in later periods. As we have seen, changes in the area might have occurred through additions to earlier structures and sites rather than by abandoning one site type and building totally new sites in new locations. The past acts back.

Past-modern or post-modern

I think that we have been able to understand more about people and the crannog material by dropping some of the modernistic notions that have influenced archaeological interpretations over time, such as the concepts of progress and resource exploitation which, as shown, are not directly compatible with this material. Perhaps we should not drop these but simply reflect on the tensions between present concepts and past contexts.

It has also been important to try to understand the activities that were taking place on these islands without translating them through an economic terminology. As I have pointed out, it is possible to obtain a contextual understanding of fishing, fowling, flint-knapping, bronze-casting, textile-working, farming and iron production without making use of economic terminology. This would be extremely important in cases where the economic explanations hinder the development of any alternative interpretation. There is no reason to discuss these activities in terms of resource exploitation when we know from the archaeological material that people were not thinking in this way. We can understand that they had a totally different way of relating to their landscapes and themselves. The crannogs and the activities on them were a part of the construction of these patterns of thought and played a part in the establishment of loyalties and solidarity between people, as well as in the strategic manipulation of these structures, which may have changed people's beliefs about which group they belonged to and what values they shared (whether in a smaller community, a tribe, a family, or perhaps a religious sect).

To work out a 'past-modern' archaeology would involve trying to unlearn our western categories of thinking, which is a precondition for understanding people in the past. I have asked for a questioning of a too-economic archaeology, but this does not mean that we have to start using totally new terms to describe the archaeology. Perhaps we need to see the definitions and concepts we are working with as constant questions. By using these when encountering the material we can reach an understanding. This would make use of our own late modernity (and situation in the present) as a method and a tool. A 'past-modern' archaeology would also involve taking an interest in other small-scale stories about how people in different times managed to make their lives meaningful and to make sense of their actions. It may also involve awareness of the multiple temporalities in people's everyday lives. The purpose of a past-modern archaeology is to be sensitive enough to pick up on and write about these stories.

Conclusions and summary

This book has followed the idea of island-building over time with the aim of contextualising crannogs in the area around Lough Gara and of learning more about what these sites meant to people at different periods. An important issue has been how these crannogs may have affected people's perceptions of their loyalties over time. The result has been a deeper understanding of the core of meaning surrounding these islands, and also of how an almost static material expression was used to bring about change.

The Crannog Research Programme

Many of the arguments in this book are built on the substantial fieldwork carried out by my project, the Crannog Research Programme. Our survey and a radiocarbon-dating programme together with the artefacts have shown that Lough Gara was used with special intensity during the Mesolithic period. The heaviest emphasis, however, is to be found in the early medieval period, leading into the high medieval period. We can now say that people were already building distinct islands in the late Bronze Age. It was also possible to identify some building activity in the early Iron Age, a period which is extremely elusive in the Irish archaeological record.

The survey and dating programme resulted in a morphological model that was used to discuss the relative monumentality and temporality of crannogs from different periods. This model has also been used to deal with issues such as the similarity and difference in meaning of these islands at different times.

Further fieldwork took place and a low-cairn crannog was excavated. This site belongs to the early medieval period and the results were used to discuss issues relating to the site's genealogy as well as social space. The crannog in Sroove also proved to be of crucial importance for understanding that not only high-status people but also the less well-off were involved in the creation of new loyalties in the wake of the tribes. Issues of responsibility and belonging have been important all the way through the book, as has the idea of questioning primarily economic interpretations of archaeological material.

A history of crannog research

The study of crannogs has changed quite drastically over the years. Recent researchers have preferred to see crannogs as a site type belonging primarily to the early medieval period (Lynn 1983). Lynn tried to argue that the 'ancestry' of these sites, whether in the form of overlayering on a particular site or in morphological similarity between sites from different periods, was irrelevant for the understanding of crannogs. In contrast, I have taken a great interest in this ancestry and have shown that it was of great importance to people in the past as well. I have tried to emphasise that sites from earlier times may have been meaningful in later periods.

Compared to other monument types, crannogs became recognised as an 'archaeological' site quite late, not until the middle of the nineteenth century. Some of the crannogs were in use in the seventeenth century, and perhaps others were still in use at the same time that they became subjects for antiquarian study. Archaeology in this case can be seen as a way of leaving a lifestyle behind, of putting it in the past. Early in the study of crannogs it was not totally clear whether the sites should be seen as tombs or settlements. However, with the help of documentary sources it was established that they were settlements. The crannogs were drawn into a narrative about progress and race that suited the concerns of an industrialising society. The researchers, depending on their own position in society, had different opinions as to whether the crannogs represented the habitations and activities of a well-developed race or of a backward people, but they all agreed that there was a measuring stick of development against which all human races could be compared. This perception was normalised by its use in archaeology, thereby supporting the change into a modern market economy. It was perfectly normal to describe the activities on the crannogs in economic terms like artistic or mechanical industry.

The dating of the crannogs posed a problem for many of the researchers (and has continued to be problematic throughout the years). Wakeman, with the evidence from Lisnacrogher, Co. Antrim, had begun to discuss the existence of crannogs belonging to the Iron Age, which he associated with the coming of the Celts. The Celts, the Iron Age and the crannogs continued to be an issue for Coffey and many of the later researchers, such as Mahr and Raftery. To Mahr the crannogs

represented the change brought about by the invasion of a new, more vibrant and warlike race, the Celts. Joseph Raftery also wanted to see the crannogs as connected with the Celts.

However, with the work of Hencken at Lagore and at Ballinderry 1 and 2 a new economic interpretative language was introduced into crannog studies. These interpretations were followed by Raftery in his work at Lough Gara. More recently the period of interest for crannog studies has shifted to the early medieval period. The evidence for Iron Age crannogs was admittedly vague, as pointed out by Warner (1983). Many of the subsequent interpretations were built on a severe source criticism followed by interpretations of high status and rank. Interestingly enough, both the late Bronze Age sites that were ‘ruled out’ as crannogs and the early medieval ones were interpreted in a more or less similar way — as high-status settlements.

What can be seen is that ‘economic’ explanations have increasingly been applied to the material, along with much present-day industrial jargon. I found that there was reason to attempt an anti-capitalist narrative of the crannog material and to start to ask other questions.

Fieldwork

This book has focused on the crannogs of Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland, and I have seen it as important to contextualise the lake material over time. As part of the survey work we also interviewed people living around the lake to find out what the crannogs and the past mean to people in these communities today. Obviously the crannogs are not the centre of people’s lives today, but there are stories going back some years that tell of the quite recent use of the sites. On the one hand, some people worry about the lake and its future, mainly from an environmental point of view; on the other hand, the lake is becoming commercialised and packaged as a product. We have seen, for example, that the islands in the lake have been given new names as a result of tourism and especially fishing.

In order to be able to discuss the crannogs over time I had to compare and contrast the morphology of these sites in different periods. We found that there might be some evidence that small platform crannogs existed in Lough Gara at least from the late Mesolithic period. There is also evidence that people paid attention to the natural island in the lake already during the early Mesolithic period. The fieldwork in Lough Gara shows that distinct man-made islands with palisades date back to at least the late Bronze Age and not only to the early medieval period as suggested by Chris Lynn. There is also evidence for the use of these sites in the high medieval period.

Instead of the traditional sequence running from lakeside settlements in the late Bronze Age to a new tradition of crannog-building with palisaded islands in the early medieval period, I have proposed a different solution. With evidence from Lough Gara and Sligo in general, I believe that the sequence runs from possible platform crannogs in the late Mesolithic to low-cairn crannogs in use from the late Bronze Age, but also built and used during the early medieval period. Possibly towards the end of the early medieval period the crannogs began to increase in height, partly through repeated use but also through the piling up of material such as stones for substantial stone packing. It is worth noting that there is only vague evidence for the use of man-made islands in the period from the middle Neolithic to the middle Bronze Age and in the Later Iron Age, although some evidence for crannog use during these periods has been noted elsewhere in Ireland.

The sequence composed from the survey and dating programme was used as a basis for the varying interpretations of the crannogs. For example, an island that can be seen above water all year round is bound to have a different effect on people than an island that only shows itself in the summertime.

Lough Gara through time

There is evidence that man-made islands may have been in use in Lough Gara possibly from the late Mesolithic, with an intensive phase of usage in the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, and in the early medieval period into the later medieval period. In order to get a better understanding of the crannogs' social roles and meanings I have tried to contextualise them with other sites and artefacts both near the lake and further away. One objective was to see both change and stability in what took place on and from these islands over time. Another objective was to compare what happened by the lake to the sites, monuments and finds off these islands and on the dryland. This study takes a special interest in the perceived rationale for production linked to the crannogs. These issues are linked to questions about what people felt loyal to, and with whom they had something in common, and how these buildings by influencing people's patterns of thought also affected the long-term institutional structure.

Mesolithic

It was suggested that the lake could have been a gathering-place for small groups during the late Mesolithic. These meetings may have taken place on small artificial islands, on the shore or on the many natural islands in the lake.

The material remains from this period consist of lithics such as blades and flakes, but also cores. An inspection of these remains showed that the characteristic débitage flakes that would indicate that the working process took place on the islands were missing. There is not enough evidence to say that the flakes were struck *in situ* on the islands or the shores. At times the cores are also of a different type of stone than the blades and débitage recorded for a particular location, suggesting that a coupling of mismatched flakes and cores took place on the shores. Because the cores and blades are of different types of stone a refitting of the material cannot be carried out. Refitting studies of similar assemblages from other places have shown a poor degree of connection between the flakes in question. This has been interpreted as indicating that people visited a site on different occasions.

My interpretation took these studies into account and suggested that the platform crannogs may have been visited on numerous occasions. Furthermore, I suggested that the physical relationship between the core and the flakes deriving from it could be read as a form of ancestry. In such a reading the core would be the origin and ancestor of the flakes. The other connection between ancestors and the waters is that the only human bones found to date from the Mesolithic were recovered from a stone floor similar to those in Lough Gara. This suggests that the core/flake relationship may also have symbolised some form of human relationship, perhaps a one-generation ancestry.

With this in mind it was suggested that the islands in the Mesolithic were used perhaps for fishing and fowling, but it was also pointed out that this explanation has no connection with why the islands were built. Fishing and fowling could with less effort have been undertaken from the shores or from a boat. Instead the islands were a response to a need to create meeting-places in the waters and along the shores. As the material evidence is ambiguous I outlined two different narratives. If we accept the material evidence for the smaller platform crannogs, it means that small low islands were constructed as meeting-places and fishing/fowling places for small groups. It is possible, following Woodman's (1978) narrative about the seasonal movement of people, that these islands were in use during the late summer. Since the platform crannogs are very low they could only have been in use during certain limited periods before being flooded. It is important to bear in mind that they were intentionally built this way, as there would have been no problem in building them higher to withstand the seasonal water-level changes. Instead they were built to

be seasonally inundated by the waters.

That the platforms were used for fishing/fowling cannot be proven with the material at hand, but apparently such an ‘economistic’ explanation is so ‘normal’ that the evidence for it does not need to be so strong. What is more obvious in the material is that the platforms were used for the placing of artefacts. Adding this fact to our interpretation of the nature of this material, suggesting a meaning of ancestry/origin, it is possible that the islands at this stage were used to negotiate temporary group alliances. These alliances would be symbolised by the new combinations of core/flakes put down on the islands every year and then sealed by the rising waters.

It has been realised in theoretically informed archaeology that material culture does not only reflect people’s actions but may also have a causative power, effecting and, by stage-setting, making people’s actions possible. This is achieved, for example, by changing people’s experience of space or by forming a context within which people carry out their classification of and reach an understanding of the world. It is through realising this potential for understanding the archaeological material that we move on to ask questions about what these islands do and how their use affected people’s ways of acting and thinking.

I argued that the use of islands, both the natural ones and possibly also the smaller man-made ones, served to accustom people to confined spaces in the landscape. Secondly it was argued that the small platform crannogs in particular introduced a temporal element into people’s lives. This element could have been there without the islands and with the constant returning to a place, but the seasonal rise of the islands above the surface of the waters made the re-occurring time manifest.

Neolithic

In Ireland there is comparatively early evidence for the appearance of a settled lifestyle, with early megalithic tombs, houses and field systems such as those at Céide Fields in Mayo. Evidence for equally early ‘Neolithic markers’, such as houses or traces of farming, has not yet been forthcoming in the British material to the same extent. It has been argued that the British post-processual orthodoxy has been trying to fit the Irish material into a far too static framework, without acknowledging the material’s own potential.

However, the earlier and more distinct traces of a settled lifestyle in the Irish material still need explanation. I proposed that the experience of space provided by the use of islands in the preceding period might have affected people’s ways of thinking about time and solidarity in this part of the world, before the monumentalisation of the landscape with megalithic tombs. The use of islands worked in a similar but slightly different way than the later tombs in forming people’s alliances in groups and with the land. They made sense of the more settled farming lifestyle and allowed it to be seen as rational and desirable. It also built on a long-term solidarity with the ancestors and the land.

During the Neolithic there seems to have been a different emphasis on the use of the lake. If the natural islands like Inch Island had been centres of attention and of importance for the creation of identities during the Mesolithic, this does not seem to have been the case during the Neolithic. There is still evidence that stone axes and some lithics were left on the island. It is possible that the natural islands in inland lakes fell out of favour. The material evidence used to support this proposition is that no megalithic tombs can be found on any natural island in inland lakes but are instead found on dryland.

It is possible that the direction of the paths through the landscape changed with people following their cattle. Instead of being river-bound, fording-places and overland routes were becoming more important than before.

The practice of burying the dead and remembering them through the building of monuments was introduced in this period. Around the lake there are two distinct megalithic tombs, each located in its own landscape. The court tomb at Moygara faces the Ballymote/Tobercurry basin, while the portal tomb at Drumanone is on the other side of the Curlews, suggesting that different ancestral rites took place at these two locations. The area nearest to the lake, however, has no concentrations of megalithic sites such as can be found at Fenagh, Co. Leitrim, or at the mountaintop of Carrowkeel.

While the location of the megalithic tombs seems to mark a break in the tradition of island use, the waters seem to have continued in use for the deposition of axes throughout the period.

Towards the end of the Neolithic period and at the start of the Bronze Age we see evidence for larger gathering-places in the area. Three henges are located to the east of the lake. These larger ceremonial sites often include earlier sites, as can be seen at Knockadoo–Brusna, where a henge seems to include an earlier barrow. Another of the henges includes a wet area, suggesting that water at this stage may have had a ceremonial role here.

Bronze Age and Iron Age

At another level the early Bronze Age also saw the building of wedge tombs. These megalithic tombs may have started out as burial-places, and they have been interpreted as ancestral ‘spirit houses’ by O’Brien (1999). What we can see around Lough Gara is that these tombs may have been the starting-point for the establishment of both larger and smaller tribal nodes away from earlier ancestral places. This may represent a break with earlier established communities. Places like Monasteraden and Kilfree on the western side of the lake may have been such nodes. If we look at the broader region there seem to be a number of places that become established in this way throughout the Bronze Age. These are places with concentrations of sites such as earlier megalithic tombs or barrows, or wedge-tombs and standing stones. These sites seem to fill out certain areas on all sides of the lake. There are also a number of hillforts in the area, for example at Knocknashee or Fairymount.

I suggested that these places could be seen as tribal nodes that grew in importance during the Bronze Age and possibly also into the early Iron Age. What is important to note is that wedge tombs and standing stones are rarely ever found on any of the islands in inland lakes. Therefore none of these nodes were focused on the waters.

The main physical connection between the sites in the nodes and water seems to be the location of the burnt mounds beside small streams in their vicinity. The burnt mounds generally date from the middle Bronze Age, and the fact that many of them have been found near monumental sites suggests that people saw it as appropriate to dwell near their ancestors.

There is no clear evidence for any intensive use of or building by the shores of Lough Gara during the early and middle Bronze Age, but what can be seen to continue through these periods is the deposition of items by the waters. Flat axes and bronze javelins, for example, can be seen to derive from watery places around the lake.

It is only towards the late Bronze Age that there is definite evidence for the construction and use of distinct artificial islands. Most often these crannogs have been seen as defended domestic habitations, and Grogan *et al.* (1996) have also included them in a model of settlement hierarchy, where they represent the layer under the hillforts. I proposed that, alongside these interpretations, there is room for another reading that deals more directly with the crannog material. Just as the explanation of fishing and fowling for the platform crannogs does not deal directly with the understanding of crannogs as built islands, the explanation of the Bronze Age crannogs as domestic habitations does not answer the question of why this particular settlement form should

have been chosen.

I reflected on the connection between the crannogs and the long-standing tradition of deposition of items in the waters of Lough Gara and in other places. I then suggested that the intensification in the use of the islands might have been an allusion to the practice of depositing items in the water. The reason for this was a similarity between the items found on or beside the crannogs and the items found in other late Bronze Age deposits. Given this similarity in finds, it might be an oversimplification of the evidence to see the crannogs as defended homesteads for people of some rank in society. It is likewise hard to prove with the archaeological material that the remains of metalwork such as moulds and bronze items represent work carried out by smiths under patronage in a hierarchical society.

I have instead argued that the crannogs were built in order to provide a place from which depositional rites could take place. Instead of these activities being carried out at fluid points along rivers or in bogs, the building of the islands firmly anchored these performances. The rites also involved metal-handling. That metal-handling was understood as a transformation which had associations with death could also be seen in the fact that moulds were buried in wedge tombs in the early Bronze Age. Perhaps the presence of 'domestic' items such as pottery implies that someone held the office of carrying out the deposition, and that the practice was becoming more institutionalised as a result of the building of the islands.

In the wider social scene around the lake it was noted that none of the tribal nodes focused on lakes, and it is possible that the waters were seen as the outer peripheries of tribal influence. The existence of at least seven Bronze Age crannogs in the lake, both on the east and west sides, suggests that it was not under the influence of one group but of many. At the present stage of research I can see no reason to suggest that the communities at this time were hierarchical. Hillforts and larger enclosures, usually regarded as high-status dwellings, could just as well be seen as large structures that included many people. Moreover, many of the tribal nodes were not spatially delimited but merely defined as a concentration of old monuments. Neither is there any burial evidence that shows a social stratification in the society, and some of the depositions can even be seen as communal. Deposits like the Dowris hoard contain hundreds of separate items, and we have no evidence that these were in private possession at the time. It is possible that they were joint depositions. The remains of larger-scale projects can also be seen during the Iron Age, with the appearance of large linear earthworks and long trackways being built through the bog at this time.

Early medieval

There is only very sparse material to tide us over from the early Iron Age into the early medieval period. However, there is evidence in the area that the tribal nodes continued in use into the latter period. Both burials and ogham stones show that these places were still of importance to people probably up until the eighth century AD.

This was, however, a period of great change, and there were many factors that were crucial in bringing about this change and new ways of understanding society. What can be seen in the documentary sources is an ongoing downscaling of society whereby the tribes eventually had to give way to the rising dynasties and the kin-group declined in size. One factor in this change may have been the new way of remembering particular ancestors brought about by the introduction of written language and the ogham stones. Before this people had to be commemorated with monuments only, and the possibility of a fixation on only one person would have been less. But the written language made it possible to mark out and remember someone in particular.

If we look at the distribution of early medieval churches in the wider area we can see that in many instances they were located on the edges of the nodes or away from them. Some of the ecclesiastical sites were, however, situated in the middle of a node. It was proposed that the location of the church in relation to a node could tell us about the relationship between the earlier tribes and the new religion. In this case an ecclesiastical site located on the periphery of the node would represent a conscious division between people in the two places. Charles-Edwards has suggested on documentary evidence that the conversion of the first Christians took place by drawing on an exclusion mechanism by which the Christians were supposed to distance themselves from the pagans. Possibly we might have spotted something similar in the landscape.

The main ringfort concentrations tend to avoid the nodes and may also represent a move out into the landscape. We could observe that the areas in between the nodes were filling up with sites at this time. The ringforts occur in large concentrations around, for example, present-day Carrick-on-Shannon or Swinford. The area around Lough Gara has less and may therefore have been less populated. As the ringforts represent a type of everyday monumentality their appearance also changes the outline of what was supposed to be important in society. As compared to, for example, the earlier hillforts they represent a spatial dispersal and a smaller concentration of space, as well as a monumental focus on everyday life instead of on ritual.

The reactivation of the crannogs at this stage represents a similar move in the landscape, away from the nodes. Both crannogs and ringforts have been seen as representing the dwellings of the upper classes in early medieval society. Our excavation in Sroove of a low-cairn crannog showed that people with less access to material wealth also inhabited these sites, indicating that more people in society than just the richest supported the movement out from the nodes. The excavation provided evidence of how this movement could have taken place and how the crannog was changed during its phases of use, how it was materially reinterpreted. It was built on a pre-existing causeway as a house surrounded by a palisade in the waters. The move to somewhere new was negotiated by the inclusion of antique materials on the site. It was given a personality by a foundation sacrifice. In the following phase the house retained its position but its floor was now of stone. From this period there are finds connected with personal appearance and also with activities such as sewing, showing that there was both continuity and change in the use of the crannog. The next phase made a clear break with what had gone on before. All traces of a house were erased by the placing of a floor of shattered and fire-cracked stones together with animal bones. At this stage the crannog was used for iron production, as indicated by the finds of an iron-furnace and slag. Then the site was covered over with stone. It was never developed into a high-cairn crannog in the later medieval period. We can see how the material interpretation of the site drifted away over time, with the crannog beginning as a settlement and ending up as a place for iron production. In this interpretative drift the crannog gained its own history and genealogy, changing slightly over time. It is possible that the site also represented the sequential genealogy of its occupants. In this way the use of crannogs away from the nodes may have further supported the development of kindreds without any primary connection with the nodes. It is also in this context that we have to see the evidence for metal production on the crannogs. What may at surface level look like a stable site type did change a lot during the early medieval period. I think that many ringforts can also be read in a similar way.

Both crannogs and ringforts architecturally have distinct boundaries, and they can be regarded as a reaction to ideas of dependence and independence. They can be seen as negotiating and withdrawing from tribal affairs and solidarity at both a conscious and a subconscious level.

During this period the tribal loyalties withered away to be taken over by dynasties and, in the later part of the period, by centralised high kings. I think that the use of crannogs, ringforts and

ecclesiastical sites, while being a result of these changes, also supported and structured them in people's minds.

Later medieval

Archaeological evidence from the high medieval period in rural areas is sparse. From the documentary sources we can see the development of lordships around the lake. In this period there is no evidence that the low-cairn crannogs were in use. At this stage the crannogs became even more monumental and were built up into the high-cairn crannogs. This might imply that the lake became less accessible to ordinary men. It may also have changed into a means of transport, as suggested by the increasing number of boats dating from this period. The settlements of this period, for example the moated sites, can be found much closer to the lake than before. There is even a twinning of moated sites on the shore and crannogs in the water. This represents a further encroachment into the formerly isolated parts of the landscape.

It is possible that the crannogs, many of them now built in stone, as well as the use of natural islands came to represent the 'monumentality' of a particular lord, whose rule and power was naturalised and supported by stone through the use of these old sites. What may be a pattern for further analysis is the disappearance of crannogs for other than the highest classes.

Interpretative drift

We can see from the analysis of the archaeological material from in and around Lough Gara that the landscape was constantly reworked. This means that later sites were positioned in relation to earlier monuments. Certain places were emphasised differently with sites and monuments, and people kept rethinking their alliances and loyalties.

In these narratives the crannogs had to some extent a similar but also a changing role. What has remained the same over time is that the islands may have been used to create a unity among a smaller number of people. On the other hand, we have seen in the morphological sequence of the sites that they fell in and out of use, and that their monumentality and presence in the landscape also changed over time. What the islands were used for and the use itself slowly changed their meanings.

I have shown that this recurring material expression, the man-made island, may not have meant the same thing over time. We can see that what a crannog is has not remained stable and that crannogs have meant different things to people in different periods.

Crannogs have been connected with what could be termed 'economic' activities, such as fishing, the moulding of bronze objects or iron production. However, as all these activities were mediated through the social thought-structures in play on the islands they can never be considered without their social context on the crannogs. To build an artificial island in a lake is not the most efficient way to undertake production, from an economist's viewpoint. They are not optimal choices for exploiting the surroundings. The metalwork and the fishing could have been carried out in many other ways with less effort. However, in our case people chose to make their own islands for these purposes. In this book I have tried to explain why.

Concluding remarks

In post-modern discussions the loss of enchantment in the mechanical modern world has been explored. We live in a constant replacement and deterritorialisation of meanings. One way to stop this never-ending chain of changing signifiers is to re-enchant the world, and to make places meaningful instead of commodified and exchangeable. I hope that in this book I have shown how people throughout time have inscribed their landscape with different meanings, and that the

islands we call crannogs were a part of their meaningful constructed reality. I think that the knowledge I have amassed in interpreting the archaeology around Lough Gara could contribute to making the area's meaningful past a part of the landscape experience here today. This is where I think archaeology today can make a difference. The purpose of my archaeology would then be to de-commodify our surroundings and ourselves. Please remember that re-enchantment is resistance in a world ruled by economists.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *ALC* 1220, note 8: ‘The site of the one here referred to has not been previously pointed out, but it appears to have been situated in Lough Oughter, county of Cavan, where the old castle of Cloch-Uachtair (or Cloch-Oughter) now stands. In a letter from Guy de Chatillon to Henry III, dated July 1224, Grennoch Oraely, as the name is written, is stated to have been captured from William de Lascy by Oraely, Walter de Riddleford and Richard Tuit, on the same day on which the castle of Kilmore [Co. Cavan] was taken, from which it appears to have been in the neighbourhood. See *Rd other Historical Letters, illustrative of the reign of Henry III.* ed. Shirley, London 1862 vol. i p. 499.’
- 2 This obviously does not mean that people did not hunt, farm or produce iron and were engaged only in a constant rethinking of their landscapes.
- 3 This term is pejorative.
- 4 The results of J. Rafferty’s work in Lough Gara have only been briefly published in two articles (1957 and forthcoming). The unpublished material has only been available to a limited extent.
- 5 This implies a distance between the people living out there and the people involved in academic study.
- 6 At this stage also Petrie called these structures crannogs in the publications of the Royal Irish Academy (Petrie 1850–3).
- 7 In the same edition there is a paper by J. Locke on the ‘Antiquity of Man’ that discusses the degeneration of the human species.
- 8 Mahr (1937, 266ff) discusses institutional as well as practical gains, with systematic excavation on a large scale; the introduction of the National Monuments Act (1930); and the institutional responsibility of the OPW.
- 9 This book was not well received in the archaeological community and was criticised for being too opinionated and full of factual mistakes (Ó Floinn 1993).
- 10 In this cryptic sentence I mean to say that every time people think about these sites they participate in the creation of their past.
- 11 Catalogue nos BOYL 015, 038, 060; KILA 009, 018, 034, 052; KILN 008, 013, 017, 026; KILC 027.
- 12 Catalogue nos BOYL 026, 056, 078, 079, 080; KILA 001, 002, 007, 011, 016, 017, 020, 021, 022, 023, 039, 040, 041, 042, 046, 048; KILN 007, 011, 012, 019, 021, 022, 023, 027, 028, 029; KILC 001, 003, 011, 012, 013, 014, 016–18, 019, 020, 021, 022, 023, 025; KILF 005, 006.
- 13 See e.g. sites KILC 021–023 in the bay in Sroove td.
- 14 BOYL 001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007, 008, 009, 010, 011, 012, 013, 014, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020, 021, 022, 023, 024, 025, 027, 028, 029, 030, 031, 032, 033, 034, 035, 036, 037, 039, 040, 041, 042, 043, 044, 045, 046, 047, 048, 049, 050, 051, 052, 053, 054, 055, 057, 058, 059, 061, 062, 063, 064, 065, 066, 067, 068, 069, 070, 071, 072, 073, 074, 075, 076, 077; KILA 003, 004, 005, 006, 008, 010, 012, 013, 014, 015, 019, 024, 025, 026, 027, 028, 029, 030, 031, 032, 036, 037, 038, 043, 044, 045, 047, 049, 050, 051; KILC 002, 004, 005, 006, 007, 008, 009, 024; KILF 001, 002, 003, 004; KILN 001, 002, 004, 006, 009, 018, 020, 024, 025.
- 15 In Ireland iron slag is often found in connection with megalithic tombs.
- 16 Göransson (1984, 154–5) has speculated on whether people during the Mesolithic were involved in coppicing.
- 17 In Lough Allen artefacts have been noted at Drummans Lower td and Cormongan td (NMI files, 1978, 48–57; 1984, 110, E114:3–34). A small collection has also been found at Tully near Drumsna on the River Shannon (NMI files, 1974, 19–25; see also E. L. Byrne 1996, 17–18). This appears to be a place in the river dominated by a large drumlin that could possibly have been an island at some stage.

- 18 E21 belongs to Raftery's excavation and is therefore left out of the analysis.
- 19 One has to bear in mind that this area might have been more intensively searched than the areas in the southern parts of the lake. There is not much evidence that the Callow Lake was intensively searched.
- 20 All of them had the bulbar face or the proximal end lying downwards, and in the second of the hoards all the pointed ends were 'facing the same direction'.
- 21 This collection number was officially allocated to Inch Island, but I found items tagged 'Tawnymucklagh' in these boxes.
- 22 Only in two places have Mesolithic artefacts been found in locations other than in the zone between land and water (see Dillon 1990; Woodman and Johnson 1996; Cooney 2000b, 6).
- 23 It has not been possible to confirm the number of waste flakes from the site as the search category contains no corresponding finds in the Museum.
- 24 There is actually no proof that fishing took place, but it is the normal assumption.
- 25 That wood is still preserved on some of these sites suggest that they already alternated between being inundated and being surrounded by water, rather than being on dry land in summer and surrounded by water in winter.
- 26 On Inch Island there are some stone blocks located in a favourable position, but at the present stage of research they cannot be interpreted as a megalithic tomb.
- 27 Megalithic tombs can be found on offshore islands such as Achill Island, Co. Mayo. There is also some use of islands for monumental Neolithic sites in the south of Ireland, e.g. Ringarogy Island, Clear Island, Co. Cork (see Shee Twohig 1995). Offshore islands such as Lambay and Rathlin seem to have continued in use as quarrying sites (see Cooney 1997b; 1998; 2000a, 192–9), but no megalithic tombs have been noted in these places as far as I know. Cooney (2000a, 193–4), like Edmonds (1993), has argued that the location of quarrying on islands may be connected with the separation of these activities from everyday life.
- 28 Most of the dated bog bodies in Ó Floinn's compilation belong to the medieval to modern period. There are five prehistoric dates published in Ó Floinn's gazetteer. One bog body dates from the late Mesolithic, as discussed above. The other four date from the late Bronze Age and into the Iron Age.
- 29 This hill has the same name, 'hill of the faeries', as the large mountain near Tobercurry.
- 30 With one exception, in Tivannagh, where a standing stone was found but was regarded by the surveyors as a scratching-post for cattle.
- 31 Perhaps the protective ring of stones was placed around the dead because the living were in such close proximity.
- 32 Their social typologies are critiqued in Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 37, 148–51, as being a reductionistic way of looking at people and cultures.
- 33 However, the search for houses may only reflect a very 'settled' perspective (see Thomas 1996).
- 34 The collection categories of E20, E21 and E22 deriving from Raftery's field seasons in Lough Gara have not been available to me. Instead I have been building on information from published catalogues to reconstruct what these sections contain.
- 35 Together with the large space enclosed by the hillforts this would suggest an increasingly important focus on a larger community.
- 36 The two latter have in common a single radiocarbon date in the middle Bronze Age, while material culture and other dates mainly suggest a late Bronze Age use. Perhaps this is an example of an old wood effect?
- 37 Cross (1953) mentioned the ruins of a tomb in Kingsland, but the presumed site was not convincing to de Valera and Ó Nualláin (1972, xviii).
- 38 This site is briefly published in J. Raftery 1957 and also appears in unpublished conference proceedings from 1988.
- 39 For a discussion of moulds on Rathtinaun see Coghlan and Raftery 1961.
- 40 At Knocknalappa, Co. Clare, some finds came from the middle of the site, while a bronze

- sword was found off the site (J. Raftery 1942).
- 41 The three late Bronze Age swords from Ballycroghan, Co. Down, were found in a bog that used to be a lake and what seems to have been a crannog (Jope 1953, 37).
 - 42 To date a number of skulls from wetland locations could be an interesting project for the future.
 - 43 No monumental sites earlier than the late Bronze Age have been found in these locations.
 - 44 Moulds for swords have also been found at places such as Dun Aengus, Co. Galway, and Rathgall, Co. Wicklow (see Eogan 1965, 176ff; see also O’Faolain and Northover 1998, 70).
 - 45 Two polished stone cones from Knowth may have symbolised horns; similar ones may have come from Freestone Hill, Co. Kilkenny, and the Rath of the Synods, Tara, Co. Meath (see B. Raftery 1969, 79–82). These are presumed to date from the early centuries AD (B. Raftery 1994, 196–7).
 - 46 For the distinction between the two see Ingold 2000, 111–31, but to take this discussion further here would lead us too far from the subject.
 - 47 This name was used in documentary sources up until a few hundred years ago. ‘From Aengus Fionn (the son of Fergus) are descended the inhabitants of Gregagia (at this day Culavinn, a half barony of the Co. of Sligo) near Lough-Techet in Conaught’ (OS Letters no. 394, with reference to vol. 2, p. 154, C 46 of *Ogygia*).
 - 48 As discussed in Chapter 9, along with the boulder burials in south Sligo there are also other ‘southern’ monuments in this part of the world. If it means anything, the name of the lake, Deccet, also turns up on a few ogham stones, some of them located in Wales.
 - 49 The issue of how to relate to documentary material as an archaeologist has been debated in recent years. Dustin Alcock and Julian Thomas have rightly pointed out the importance of archaeological self-sufficiency and that the subject needs to watch its integrity as regards the documentary material. I have often wondered whether I should make use of the documentary sources that directly concern the area around the lake. Some people have argued that there is an archaeological way of reading the documentary material. This could involve re-reading it with other questions in mind than those of the normal historian, questions involving a focus on space, material culture, etc.
 - 50 Unlike Roman law, all people were not equal under the law in Irish society. The *nemed* (‘sacred, holy’) could not only cross a boundary into other territories but also had a higher honour-price. Among the *nemed* were the so-called learned classes like the lords, clerics and poets; some texts also mention craftsmen like physicians, smiths and carpenters as enjoying some of the *nemed* privileges, but not all of them (F Kelly 1988, 9–10). Interestingly enough, the same term, *nemed*, implying some type of immunity when crossing a border, can also be applied to animals. Cattle could trespass onto someone else’s land without the owner being obliged to pay compensation under certain conditions. Then the cattle were called *nemed*, as they were sacred or immune to the dangers of crossing a boundary (F Kelly 1988). From a landscape perspective this is interesting. One possible interpretation could be that although certain areas were perceived as closed units, they were penetrable by some people.
 - 51 These sites would have been important in the king’s royal circuit.
 - 52 The first choice for excavation fell on the crannogs situated off Inch Island, the natural island in the middle of Lough Gara, but owing to the practical problems of excavating on an island this option was not feasible.
 - 53 The main parts of the excavation dealt with the southern crannog (site 2). It was decided to carry out almost a full excavation of the site, firstly because I wanted to find out more about social space on the crannog, and secondly because test-trenching is not looked upon favourably by the licensing authorities.
 - 54 Dr Jan Risberg, Dept of Quaternary Research, Stockholm University, pers. comm. White lake marl was also noted over the Bronze Age layers of Ballinderry 2 (see Hencken 1942, pl.3).
 - 55 In Irish folklife the hearth has taken on such a strong significance that it has become the core

- of the house, and almost more important than the house. It is possible that this could have been the case on the crannogs as well. Glassie (1982, 327) describes how the hearth gives the direction, orientation and movement in the house: for example, to go up in the house is when you are facing the opening of the fireplace, and to go down in the house is to have the opening of the fireplace behind your back. It has also been of importance to keep the fire burning day and night, and it is said that if the soul of the fire goes out the same happens with the soul of the people in the house (Evans 1957, 59, 62, 71). Evans comments: 'Above all, it is a shrine to which ancestral spirits return, a link to the living past' (1957, 71).
- 56 Brück (1999) has asked 'Where does a settlement start and landscape begin?' I can consequently ask 'Where does the artefact start and the site end?'
- 57 There is a furnace-bottom recorded as deriving from a low-cairn crannog across the lake, KILA 011, which would support this link as well.
- 58 Charles-Edwards 1984, 170–1: 'For them the dispersing effect of the division of inherited land did not operate, and hence it seems likely that their function as labourers for their lords drew them together in nucleated settlements. It will also, therefore, be approximately true to say that settlement in dispersed clusters was the expression of kinship whereas nucleated settlement was the expression of lordship'.
- 59 The OS Letters of 1837 for Roscommon, nos 186, 187, state that the old church of Kilnamanagh is still visible, and not far from it a well named after St Patrick. 'St Dabonna, bishop, the fourth son of Restitus by Darerca, bishop of Cluain-na-manach in the country of Connaught called Airteach' (*Triad. Thau.*, p. 230, col. 2).
- 61 *AFM* 930 mentions how 'The crozier of Ciaran, i.e. the Oraineach, was lost in Loch Techet, now Loch-*ui-Ghadra*, and twelve men along with it; but it was found immediately'.
- 60 Borsje identified this place as Loch Rudraige in Dundrum Bay.
- 62 In all fairness, to keep cattle still during milking it is more convenient to drive them into a corner, rather than around in circles.
- 63 This is the normal, preferred route travelling by boat through Lough Gara, as the passage on the western side of the lake is blocked by shallows.
- 64 In the Irish part of the text the lake is called *Loch Dechet* (cf. *AFM* ii, 626 (AD 931)).

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