CHAPTER 1

The Territorial Identity of Kildare's Landscapes

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'The first time I cross the Bog of Moods
I misread the map.
The Bog of Moons I thought it was
and watched as your white cap

lifted by a sudden squall
was cast before me into the canal
a full moon itself on the jet black water
shattering the perfect mirror

of the starry heavens. Seeds
of light prolific as common duckweed,
fen sedge, pollution-intolerant arrowhead.
Bistort. Bulrush. Bog bean. Bur-reed…"
(Paula Meehan, The Bog of Moods)

Introduction

Looking down from the hills of the Wicklow-Kildare borderlands, all of the Kildare landscape can be seen stretching interminably it seems westwards into the bog-fractured central plain. And from down on the plains, the most characteristic image of Kildare is of large fields and pastures in long vistas enclosed by great beeches which fade fairly abruptly to the west into empty landscapes of gravel ridges, conifers and drained and machined peatlands.

The fundamental geographies of Kildare can best be understood in terms of the county's location and environmental endowment. The contrasts between Kildare and the counties of Mayo or Kerry, for example, are largely the products of location, distance and accessibility, as well as inherent environmental characteristics – all of which had primary influences on the historical experiences of these regions, experiences which in turn produced the distinctive identities of the places we know today. The rich ruralities of Kildare

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are more than a consequence of the fortuitous occurrence of podzolic soils, but also continuously progressive husbandry and carefully nurtured local economies over several centuries. These circumstances are in turn responses to basic market forces resulting from proximity to the capital city of the valuable land resources which made Kildare an object of colonial interest for centuries.

On the eastern edge of the bogland zone, which defined its earlier political and territorial character as the lands of the Uí Faeláin and Uí Muiredaig (to the east and south) and Uí Failge (to the west), Kildare became one of the first feudal territories of the Anglo-Norman settlement, important in its juxtaposition with Dublin and the passage linking the capital to the colony in south Leinster and east Munster. The idea of spaces, nodes and networks might be used as an explanatory device to assist in understanding the character of Kildare county and landscape[1]. This is another way to highlight the importance of the geography, spatial configuration and historical evolution of the county in understanding all the disparate elements in the narrative of the county's past. Its past has taken *place*, in the sense that the space that is Kildare, flat and wet and bordered by mountains and bogs, has over the centuries been gradually turned into significant and meaningful places inscribed with the histories, memories, signs and symbols of the communities which occupied and transformed them. John MacKenna in recalling the significance of Castledermot to his youth highlights these qualities of space and place and time: 'There was something about the antiquity of the place…with ruins dating back to the ninth century': the headstones in the graveyard help to chronicle lives lived in these places.[2] In a broader sense, most of the territorial and artifactual legacies, the *materiality* of our inherited landscapes are important cues for history, memory and recollection. The aim of this essay is to examine this vocabulary of landscape as the context for its history.

The most noteworthy spatial characteristics of Kildare county might be summarised as follows:

> the grasslands of Kildare plains, focused especially on the valleys of the Liffey and Barrow rivers;
>
> landscapes of bogs and interspersed 'islands' of glacial gravels collectively referred to as The Bog of Allen extending westwards into the midlands;
>
> eastern hills flanking the Wicklow mountains;
>
> several upstanding hills in the western part of the county – Carbury, and the 'Chair Hills' between Rathangan and Kildare town;

the sand and gravel grassy plain of the Curragh, hedgeless and treeless from time immemorial.

Kildare was largely formed by glacial drifts and gravels washed out and moulded under ice sheets during the pleistocene period which ended about 10,000 years ago. In western hollows, tangled and impeded drainage encouraged the development of fen peat in shallow basins which ultimately developed into typical midland raised sphagnum peat. Elsewhere better drainage resulted in mainly rich loamy soils. Onto this environmental base has been grafted a settlement landscape matrix which has shown remarkable continuity from early Christian (and pre-Christian) periods to the twentieth century. Indeed the greatest landscape modification has come in the last quarter of the twentieth century when much of the north and east of the county has been engulfed by Dublin-generated settlement expansion.

The roughly triangular shape of modern Kildare points southwards with its baseline along the historic borders of the early medieval kingdoms of Meath and Brega, the bogs and mountains defining its eastern and western borders and its core lands of settlement for at least two thousand years focussed on the wide valleys of the rivers Liffey and Barrow. This northern portion of Laigin (or Leinster) had its principal settlement characteristics well developed by the Gaelic peoples who occupied it during the first millennium at least. The area which the Anglo Normans established as the modern shireland of Kildare had occupied a highly productive and strategic location in the kingdom of Leinster, controlling the lowlands and river valleys running southwards to the coastlands of Wexford and the trackways and passes into the labyrinthine bogland and forests of the midlands. Knockaulin (Dún Ailinne) was probably the hillfort which controlled this strategic corridor. Smyth's map of Kildare for this period (Figure 1.1) illustrates how the modern spatial order of Kildare was prefigured in a string of settlements faintly familiar to us today and a network of early routways or *slíthe* extending south along the river valleys, westwards into the boglands and eastwards through mountain passes. His assertion that 'the strong seized and held the rich central lowlands, and the weak were consigned to the mountain and waste on the periphery'[3] is an apposite summary of the story of settlement for Kildare and all of Ireland for the past two thousand years during the Gaelic hegemony and the later English colonial settlement. The Gaelic septs of O Byrne, O Toole, O More and O Connor were the original occupiers of the Kildare plains displaced to the peripheral Wicklow uplands and midland bogs by the Anglo Norman settlers.

In many ways this familiar geographical narrative tallies with our modern scientific understanding of the environmental characteristics of the county. The 1968 soil survey of Kildare provides a useful context to understand the evolution and development of agricultural settlement within the county over the last millennium. Obviously land improvement and farm husbandry over the generations has changed the soil conditions somewhat: for example, the

Figure 1.1 – *Early medieval Kildare and east Leinster*
(reproduced from A. P. Smyth, Celtic Leinster, Dublin, 1982).

Duke of Leinster, who owned over one sixth of the county's land, was responsible for significant drainage schemes on his estate in the nineteenth century which transformed extensive blocks of gley soils around Maynooth into valuable farmland. Some of the peat deposits have also been drained and reclaimed for limited agriculture from the eighteenth century. Other districts

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in Kildare however were so flat and lowlying that finding outfalls to assist artificial drainage programmes was virtually impossible.

The most common soil types in the county are the grey-brown podzolics which have the widest landuse range, being suitable for "all manner of Corne and Cattle" in the frequently repeated assessment of the Civil Survey for the county completed in 1655. Together with regosols of the Liffey valley which also have wide use range, and improved gleys concentrated in the northern portion, three quarters of the soils of Kildare are in the best category indicating its attractiveness for agricultural settlement for centuries. The soil suitability map (Figure 1.2) is a generalised summary of the land-use potential of the county's soil, extending from the multi-purpose podzols through the more limited gleys to the wet peatlands. As shown in the map the land with the best potential is found in the Liffey and Barrow valleys, in mid-county districts around Kildare, Kilcullen and Naas, with moderately wide-ranging soils in the north around Kilcock and Maynooth. In the western bogland zone, islands of top-grade land are shown at Kilmeague (in the historic 'island of Allen'), Timahoe and in the barony of Carbury in the north west.

Shired in 1296/7, Kildare was a strategic part of the Anglo-Norman colony extending from Dublin through Leixlip, funnelling down the Barrow in the south through a gap guarded by Carlow. There were significant clusters of manors in the south and in the north east in favoured districts which had earlier been cherry-picked by Gaelic inhabitants – a more conservative than innovative colonisation project which, as in Meath, largely adopted pre-existing Gaelic settled landscapes, adapting them to the needs of manor and market and avoiding the wet deserts in the west.[4] These boggy marginal lands, however, were notionally part of the early county as defined in the late thirteenth century. Early Kildare, therefore, embraced a much more extensive territory than the modern county - resembling more the area of the diocese and incorporating parts of the modern midland counties of Laois and Offaly and west Wicklow. The establishment of the King's and Queen's counties (1556) and Wicklow (1606) served to eventually delimit the county of Kildare.[5] Because the colony's settlement objectives were limited to the desirable lowlands, defending the borders became a more important consideration with the Anglo-Normans than their Gaelic predecessors, with fortified houses emerging in the later middle ages along the flanks of hill regions bounding Wicklow to the east, overlooking the bogs, woodlands and passes to the west and protecting the passage southwards through Athy and Carlow.

The Pale around Dublin became the region of most enduring English colonial power. By the fifteenth century much of Kildare was on the edge but largely within the ambit of the Pale. In 1515 the Pale had contracted to the north east of the county, defined by the Irish parliament as extending from the south of Trim in county Meath to Kilcock, Clane, Naas, Kilcullen, Rathcoole and into county Dublin at Tallaght. Beyond this north eastern segment of the county was what historians have since referred to as 'the outer pale'.[6] The
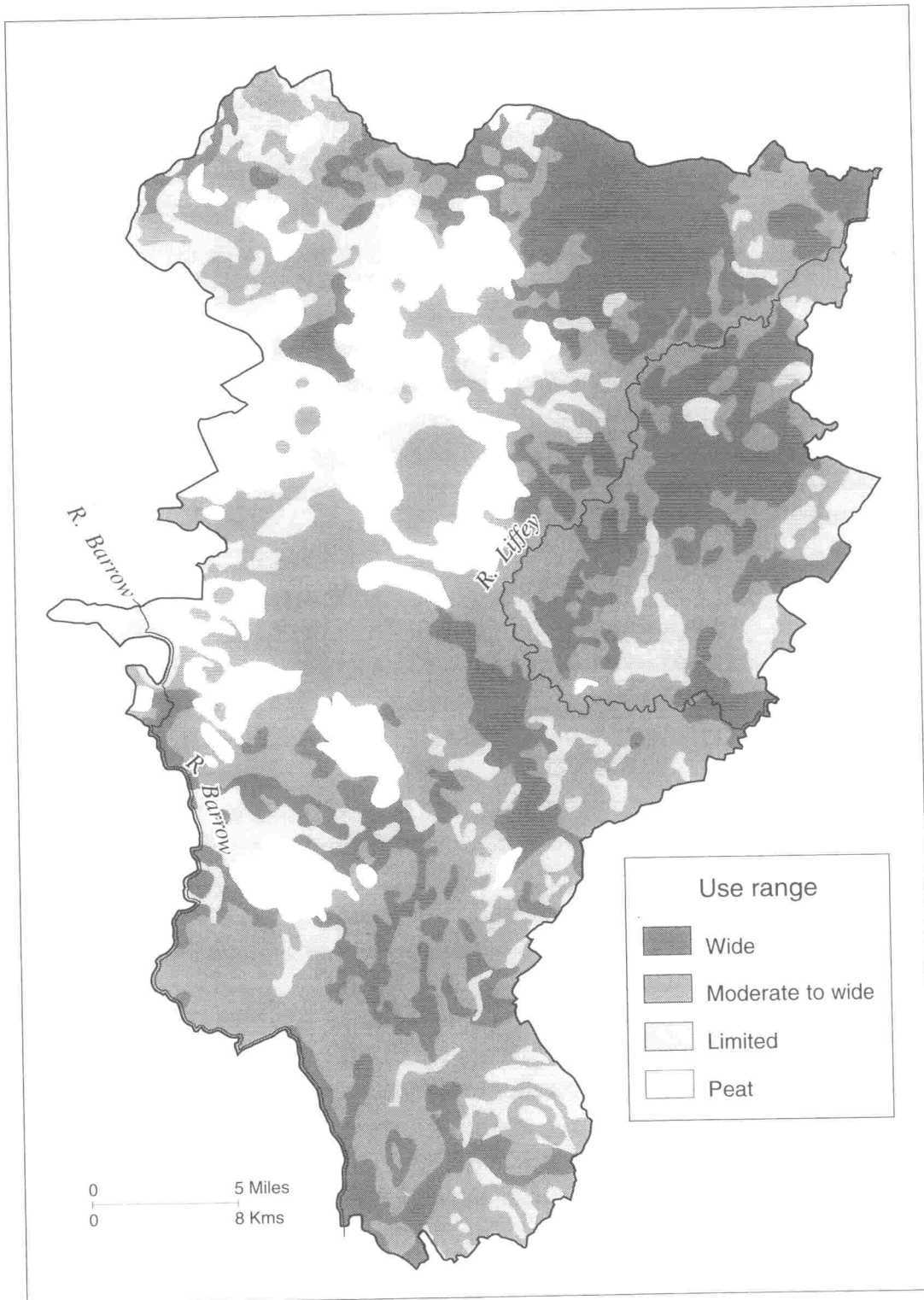
Figure 1.2 – *Soil suitability (An Foras Talúntais)*.

famous (1563) map of Leix and Offaly profiles the crucial location of Kildare, facing westwards into the forested bog-ridden landscapes of the midlands, with tracks and passes symbolising historic linkages (as well as plantation intentions for the future) and the settlements of Carlow, Athy, Monasterevin, Rathangan and the fortified hill of Carbury marking the borders of colonial order.

The ecological relationship between boglands, mountain, forest and plain was important for the historical evolution of Kildare and its borders. The idealisation of this age of border turmoil, with Gaelic pastoralists hidden in the bog and mountain refuges, raiding the Anglo-Norman agricultural villages on the plains, is captured in Sean O'Faolain's recollection of it from his schooldays:

> In the great heat the sheep lie panting on the bare, bald expanse of sunburnt grass, broken otherwise only by withered clumps of furze. Farther away still, the roll of the Wicklow hills may, or may not, remind you of the times when the O'Moores used to burst like thunderstorms down on the valley, roaring through Naas like a flock of six-shooter cowboys, burning and slaughtering… cantered back to the hills and the impassable bogs and the now-vanished woods, and lived there as they lived in the golden world.[7]

The nature of the western borderlands especially persists in Taylor's 1783 map of Kildare where the 'islands' of settled land are depicted in the bogs[8]: Lullymore (whose name *Laoilgheach* refers to a good grassy place for milch cows[9]), the Island of Allen containing Allen Hill surrounded on all sides by bog linked to the 'mainland' by toghers. Timahoe and The Fews (Kilpatrick) were located on islands in the bog. Examples of smaller islands were Lullybeg, Derrybrennan, Derrymillar, Drimaghon, Derrylea, Dowhery and so on.

The reality of the borders was represented by local power struggles across the ethnic and physical divide, marked by outrages like the 1305 massacre of twenty nine O Connors by the Berminghams while at dinner in Carbury, or the government-facilitated massacre of nearly fifty O Mores at Mullaghmast in 1577 — as well as the sixteenth century rebellions of Eustaces in 1580 on the Wicklow borders. Reality was also represented by cultural and social links between many of leading Pale families and Gaelic neighbours 'through marriage and trade, and participation in their cultural milieu of bardic literature and Irish-speaking.'[10]

By the high middle ages much of the woodland on the plains of Kildare had been removed to make way for grassland and agriculture: by the sixteenth century, for example, the colonial spaces of the Pale were largely bare of woodlands. The most significant forest remains persisted on the western borders, where Fynes Moryson referred to 'the great woods of Ophalia' in 1617.[11] Seventeenth-century surveys mention mostly minor underwoods in Kildare, often confined to residual pieces of commons. In the parish of Taghadoe, for instance, the Civil Survey records 'one acre of timber wood'; or 'among the ten acres of shrubbywood upon the lands of Brianstowne and Conestowne..there is small saplins..'; 'there is one acre of ashwood upon the lands of Bebush..'[12] The 500-acre mostly 'shrubby' woods on the island of Allen are noted in the Civil Survey and commemorated in the modern townland of Allenwood. The Down Survey barony map shows it fully grown, with small woods also in the Blackwoods – Downings area and at Clongoweswood and

Laragh. During the later middle ages as the colony contracted behind its Pale frontier, the borderlands which were variously characterised as the maghery, *fásach*, and marches, comprised thinly populated often abandoned land where nature in the form of woodland re-established itself. Nicholls suggests that most of the borderlands of lordships throughout Ireland were marked by forests and woodlands.[13]

The role of the western Kildare borderlands remained unchanged down the centuries, as marginal landscapes for marginalised peoples and communities. Smyth's characterisation of the midland bogs as the 'wellspring' of Celtic civilisation is a sophisticated construction of the survival strategy of Gaelic culture in the inaccessible and hidden bogland refuges. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they continued to play the role of refuges for displaced and even more marginalised social groups who colonised the actual bogs themselves, setting up squatter settlements in what were perceived as useless lands. Many of the residues of these cabin landscapes persist today in rudimentary settlement forms, often with surviving vernacular features, lining remote bog roads. As in other such marginal regions in Ireland, there were surges of population in some of these remote townlands, often facilitated by new road schemes. Bishop Doyle describes a visitation in 1823 to such an area west of Prosperous:

> I came yesterday through a large part of the Bog of Allen, where a colony chiefly of Connaught people, have dug out habitations from the immense cliffs of turf, where fire and water seem to be the only elements given them for subsistence; yet they are healthful, and seem to be blessed with a numerous progeny. Supported by some invisible food, and clothed by the hand of nature, they are like the sparrow and the bird of prey, fed by that Providence which neglects nothing it has made…[14]

His report on these squatting strangers from the west of Ireland was juxtaposed with an approving commentary on the nearby 'ingenious population' of Prosperous cotton weavers.

Some of the residual common lands which persisted into the prefamine period had similar experiences to the boglands. These were marginal landscapes also in terms of ownership and control and experienced similar demographic pressures to the bogs. Tirmoghan Common (Figure 1.3) to the south of Kilcock had a highly fragmented landscape of fields supporting a dense collection of houses by the time of the Ordnance Survey in the late 1830s. Similarly, other commons usually close to small towns or villages, such as Moat, Crockaun, Capdoo and Loughanure commons near Clane, all reflected a process of squatter settlement on uncontrolled land. The small townland of Commons, near the Wicklow border in Tipperkevin, contained a long linear cluster of houses and small fields. In all these cases, their landscapes contrasted strikingly with the surrounding well-ordered field and farmscapes.

Figure 1.3 – *Tirmoghan Common, 1838.*

The overwhelmingly rural character of Kildare, based largely on a livestock and bloodstock economy in the north and cereals in the south, continued well into the twentieth century. Kildare has the most favourable landholding structure in the country, a continuing legacy of the Anglo-Norman colonisation and the agricultural improvements encouraged by major landlords in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 1960s, holdings of over 100 acres occupied two thirds of the agricultural land of the county. Its small market towns functioned in the shadow of Dublin. Maynooth (including south Meath in its hinterland) was a rural village whose major industry was its cattle mart. Indeed, the rural character of the hinterlands of Kilcock and Maynooth was deepened if anything in the 1940s and 50s by the re-settlement of groups of farming migrants from the west of Ireland as part of a Land Commission programme of land reform in the west. Untenanted or underused large farms such as Laragh, between Maynooth and Kilcock, were broken up: Laragh was divided into 30-acre holdings among eleven migrants from county Mayo.

In 1970 Kildare County Council commissioned a planning survey from Trinity College whose authors projected a modicum of Dublin-generated development for the county but hardly on the scale which subsequently occurred. An industrial survey in 1968 referred to 'over 70 persons' travelling daily between Dublin and Leixlip and 'over 200 Kildare residents' travelling into Co. Dublin for work each day.[15] The survey estimated that the towns in the northeast of the county would double in population by 1981. The 1970s marked the beginnings of a significant new chapter in Kildare's settlement history. Along with south county Meath, the northern portions of the county were rapidly incorporated into the Dublin commuter belt. The towns of Maynooth, Celbridge, Leixlip, Clane, Kilcock, Naas and Newbridge have been transformed into suburbs of Dublin. Intervening countrysides have been inundated with housing, mostly in the form of bungalowed ribbon development. The 2002 census shows an accelerating suburbanisation of towns and countryside. Many of the rural lanes and byroads have been invaded by 'non-rural' communities, with shallow linkages to the local historic landscape, so that among Irish counties today, Kildare would have one of the largest non-indigenous populations. On a more positive note, however, some of these recently arrived middle-class commuters have developed a strong interest in the local history and heritage of their districts.

Placenaming

The settlement history of this colonised land of plains and borders is well represented in the legacy of placenames in Figure 1.4. The intensity of English placenames containing the element –*town*, and the frequency with which –*town* and *bally*- were transposed in the records,[16] especially on this southern extremity of the Pale, reflects the intermixing of local cultural traditions in the area.
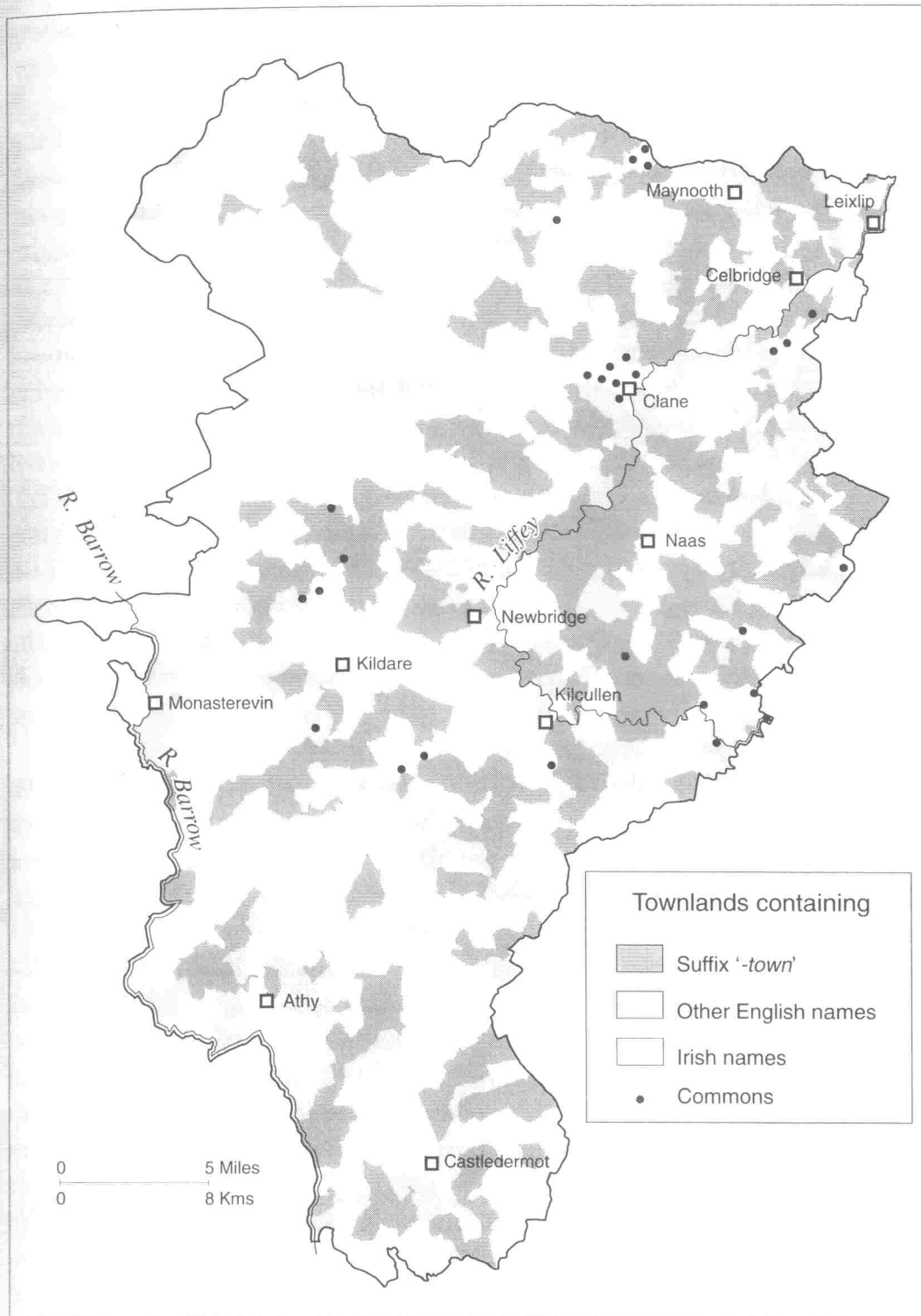
Figure 1.4 – *Townland names.*

The townland is one of the most useful elements in the landscape's vocabulary helping to tell the story of settlement. And the names which have been recorded for these units from at least the seventeenth century are an important part of the narrative. The study of Irish *logainmneacha* is a specialised science - but some

broad generalisations on the significance of townland names is possible to help provide a context for understanding the history of the county.

The suffix –*town* is usually accepted as an expression of the Anglo-Norman colonisation. This particular English placename also reflects an evolving process of naming throughout the middle ages, with some of the names originating as late as the sixteenth century. However it may be that, locally, the spatial extent of the names continued to approximate to districts of Anglo-Norman settlement as far back as the thirteenth century. The great majority of the names which were recorded (and standardised) by the Ordnance Survey in the early nineteenth century and which are mapped in Figure 1.4, can be found in the Civil Survey for Kildare. Numbers of them occur in medieval sources detailed in *The Red Book of Kildare*.[17] For instance, Robertstown (Villa Roberti) is listed in 1318; Milltown in parish of Feighcullen occurs in an inquisition of 1329; Pollardstown in 1331; Guidenstown (Rathangan parish) in 1360. Nicholastown, in parish of Tankardstown, is mentioned in 1360; Ladytown 1329; Gormanstown in Kilcullen in 1331. However, there are pitfalls in interpretation too, as in Carton, which occurs as Cartown in the seventeenth century but which is attributed to the Irish 'Baile an Cairthe', later 'the Carthyn'. Undoubtedly there are many more apparently English names which may be phonetic anglicisations of earlier Gaelic Irish names – Carnalway is one such (for Cornalowey in the 1659 'census').

In general it is probable that the rich array of pre-Norman Gaelic placenames was replaced in a gradual fashion, over a number of generations, as settler communities filtered in, as populations expanded and established a resilient social and linguistic presence. In terms of understanding the origin and lineage of these placenames, the striking similarity between many of the Kildare names and names in Pembrokeshire where many of the early Anglo-Norman settlers originated should be noted: represented in places like Sherlockstown, Puncherstown or Haynestown, or place references to Wales, such as Kerdiffstown (Cardifftown). Presumably contacts with the home communities in the Welsh borders were maintained in memory and migration into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. St.David's Day (1st March), for instance, was celebrated in Naas down to the eighteenth century.[18] Mapping church dedications in Leinster would make a useful representation of the spread of Anglo-Norman influence.

There are some hybrid names which are difficult to classify as 'English' or 'Irish', for example, Baronrath, Little rath, Blackrath, Castlekeely or Castleroe. In Figure 1.4 where alternative Irish names are given they are mapped as such on the basis that the English name is modern – for example, Castlebrown or Clongowes; Mayfield or Ballynagalliagh, Brewell or Merville. Kilwarden, near Castlewarden on the Wicklow frontier has been mapped as English. Newtownmacabe near Maynooth possibly reflects a later medieval holding allocated to galloglasses from south Ulster employed by the Earl of Kildare. There are important groups of names which in general appear to be modern – probably originating mainly in

the eighteenth century, or perhaps in the late seventeenth century, in most cases typically referring to demesne lands and usually replacing earlier Gaelic Irish names: such as Mount Armstrong (replacing seventeenth century Birchballagh and local commons[19]), Hortland (eclipsing the earlier Skullogstown), Mount Prospect, Burton Hall. Firmount and Millicent are modern replacements for Keapoge and Crustany, Newtowne and Horestowne.[20] The relative 'modernity' of some English names is questionable, however. Some were well established by the time of the Civil Survey and the 1659 'census'. Windgates and Rail Park in Maynooth, for instance, were there in the seventeenth century. So too were Greenhills and Ironhills near the Curragh. The townlands of Woodstock (Churchtown parish), Hartwell, New Hall, Blackhall, Roseberry are also listed. Indeed Blackhall is listed in an inquisition for 1307.[21] In a county where English was spoken in many places to a greater or lesser extent for almost a thousand years, common placenaming practices go back a long way.[22] Many of these English names reflect processes of early landscape development in the county which followed the Anglo-Norman settlement. Blackditch (recorded in the Civil Survey, in the island of Allen as well as the parish of Timahoe) and Blacktrench clearly reference early reclamation, as do Burntfurze, Thornberry, Thornhill, Furryhill (in the Barony of Naas). The numbers of Moortowns represent in most cases reclaimed marsh or bogland, as in the Moortown (in the parish of Mainham), which was mapped as bog in the Down Survey. Blackwood, Shortwood, Allenwood, Broadleas, Whiteleas, Wheatfields, Newland, Loughtown, Kingsfurze, Kingsbog, Ironhills are all part of a landscape narrative of transformation and settlement. Grange (and its gaelicised Graigue) suggests early land improvement and clearance. Glebe as a townland name indicates the organisation of landscape in support of the parish clergy. The townland called 'Concealment' in the boglands north of Monasterevin presumably records an attempted evasion of land survey.

Chapel farm, Hill farm, Mill farm, Bullhill, Castle farm, Cherrywood, Cherryville, Sunnyhill may be seen as reflective of more recent landscape modernisation. Gaelic Irish names are wide-ranging in content, referring to the natural landscape (as with Cor-, Clon-, Mulla-) as well as to human settlement forms (Kil-, Rath- and Bally). The most important contrast with English names is that the Gaelic names generally refer less to the process of modification of landscape and are more descriptive of landscape and its characteristics.

In Figure 1.4. there is a striking correspondence between the *–town* placenames and other English names with the prime lands of the county, best reflected in the location of soils with the widest range of potential land uses. Apart from the extremes of the boglands which are largely bereft of any English placenames, many of the gley soils south of Maynooth-Kilcock and east of Clane appear to have been avoided. Until drainage and improvements in the later eighteenth century, which enormously expanded their use range, these soils had limited agricultural potential. Caution in the interpretation of the

distribution of English and Irish names and the linking of this to 'ethnic' regions, however, is suggested by Horner's reference to the fact that most of the tenants in Maynooth in 1328 were English while many of the placenames were Irish.[23]

It may be suggested that while the –*town* zone is indicative of areas of more intensive Anglo-Norman settlement, Irish names may not necessarily indicate zones of exclusively Gaelic settlement – but areas of more deeply-rooted Gaelic settlement in which English settlement may also have occurred. Deep-rooted Gaelic medieval settlement is suggested by the correspondence of parish centres (as represented by church sites and graveyards) with Irish names. Like planted areas in east Ulster in the seventeenth century, the Gaelic names endured. Altogether the territorial impact of all English names, excluding those such as demesne names which are clearly modern impositions, is considerable, accounting for up to half the names in the county and more than three quarters of the names in the northeastern districts from Kilcullen to Kilcock. As in other areas, such as county Meath,[24] the occurrence of English placenames in blocs across the countryside, interspersed with equally consolidated districts where Gaelic names are dominant, especially in the southern half of the county, may also be significant for studies of rural colonisation in the middle ages.

Finally, as in many parts of Ireland, placenaming is an ongoing dynamic process. Official ideology in the twentieth century resulted in many deliberate constructions of Gaelic placenames. Towns like Naas and Newbridge were changed to Nás na Ríogh and Droichead Nua in the 1920s. Coill Dubh, the 1950s Bord na Móna settlement down the road from Blackwood which dates from at least the seventeenth century, plays the same cultural role as the late eighteenth century settlement called Prosperous to its east. The most characteristic placenaming opportunism of the past thirty years in Kildare is manifested in the expanding commuter towns in the north east of the county. Housing developments in Maynooth, for instance, exhibit the social priorities of this latest colonisation of Kildare: there is only one Irish name from the 1970s, Cluain Aoibheann which is mirrored in a neighbouring estate called Beaufield. Elsewhere, through the older substratum of townland names, have arisen Rockfield, Pebble Hill, Parklands, Silken Vale, The Arches, Parklands and Kingsbry.

Networks

A critical part of the process of settlement in all humanised landscapes is the way in which communities have developed networks of places, marked with visible and invisible lines and boundaries, dividing up its space into useful, meaningful and manageable places, which are socially and economically interrelated. Kildare's landscape is composed of a mesh of fields and farms, townlands, parishes and other significant places which have emerged out of many centuries of social interaction with the landscape. It is likely that the townland network was comparatively intact when the Anglo-Norman colonists

arrived in the twelfth century - a great many of their names can be found in medieval records. There are no maps to match the written records of the middle ages and it would be folly to assume that the boundaries of the places referred to were coterminous with the townland matrix today.

Examination of written and map evidence for the seventeenth century suggests that in parts of the county many boundaries were either unclear, unknown or in dispute. It is likely that many territorial boundaries, especially in the wet and poorly drained western portions of the county, were tenuous and unstable. Indeed today's well-managed eastern plains had patchy drainage into the eighteenth century, with many areas of wet and flooded land where boundaries with neighbouring townlands were 'fluid'. In addition the intermixture of common lands shared by adjoining townlands which probably reflected a more extensive open field landscape of the middle ages, also meant instability in boundaries. There was, for instance, a considerable amount of common land lying on many of the townland margins. The Civil Survey, the Down Survey, Emerson's survey of the Earl of Kildare's lands in the late seventeenth century, all refer to the frequency of common lands.

Much of western peatlands (the 'red bog' of seventeenth-century surveys) contained 'wet' boundaries in the seventeenth century whose territorial allocation was unclear and of no great economic import. Indeed Taylor's 1783 map of Kildare explicitly records some of the divisions in the boglands of Carbury as being unknown or 'not known exactly'. Some later townlands were subdivisions of others at earlier times - in some cases these combinations are commemorated on the Ordnance Survey maps, as in 'Blackrath and Athgarvan'. The townland of Greenegarden was described in the Civil Survey (1655) as being 'intermixt with the lands of Narraghmore so that distinct meare cannot be returned'[25]; by the nineteenth century it was subsumed into Narraghmore. Blackmillershill combines Black hill and Millers hill in Emerson's survey of 1674. In addition, developments like road and canal construction in the eighteenth century frequently realigned nearby townland boundaries. Rocque's 1756 map (Figure 1.5) of the townland of Feighcullen in Rathangan manor shows it adjoining a commons and a unit called Drumsillagh, both of which were incorporated, following canal and bog drainage, in Feighcullen by the Ordnance Survey map of 1839 – the angular field boundaries constituting the townland boundary. Watergrange was also substantially reclaimed by 1839.

Landed estates and, in some cases, the Ordnance Survey were also responsible for dividing some townlands in the east of the county – into north and south, east and west or little and big/great subdivisions: Stephenstown North and South represent a larger medieval unit bisected; similarly Craddockstown East, West and Demesne, Swordlestown North and South, Punchestown Great and Little, Flemingstown North and Flemingstown South (or Tonaphuca, possibly an earlier name), Dowdstown Great and Little, Eleverstown Great and Little - all divisions in the barony of Naas (appropriately
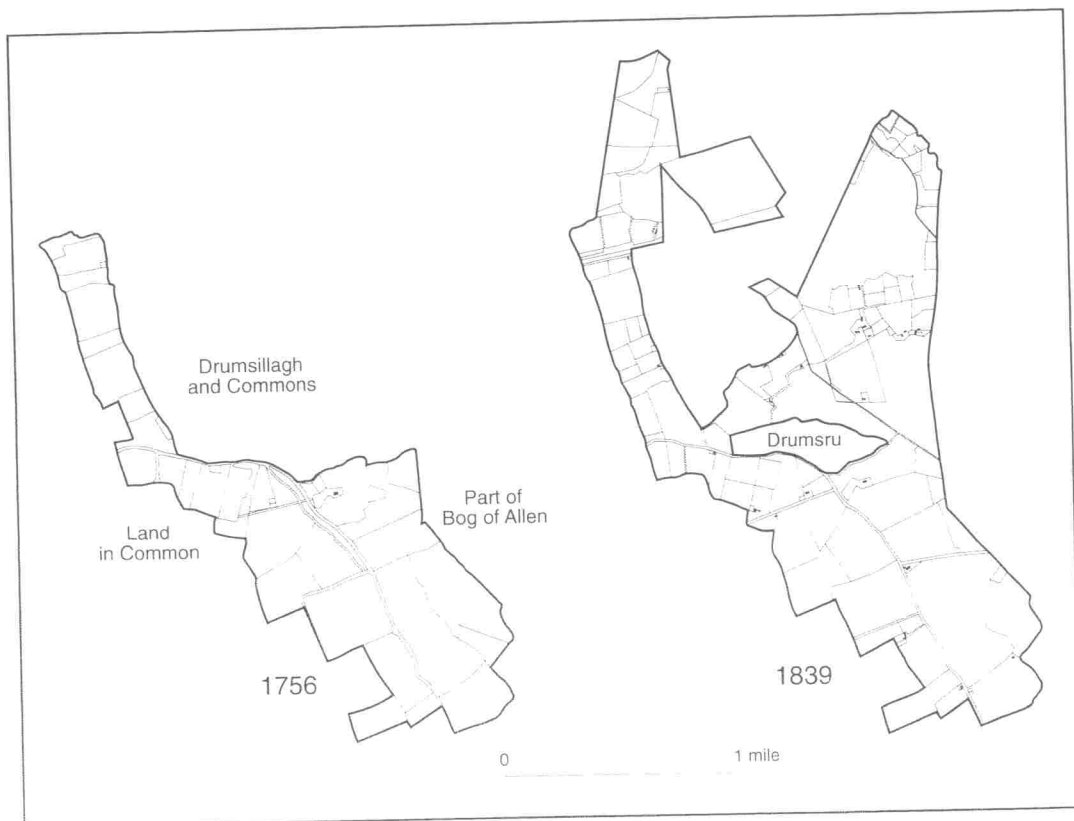
Figure 1.5 – *Feighcullen, 1756 (Rocque survey) and 1839 (OS).*

itself later divided into North and South). South of the Curragh, the 1659 townlands of Ballysax, Brownstown and Maddenstown were recorded in twelve subdivisions in the Ordnance Survey. Modern subdivisions of larger townland areas by landed proprietors, or other agencies especially in the marginal boglands to the west, are usually characterised by long straight boundaries often marked by ditches or banks. The eighteenth century turnpike road from Old Kilcullen to Athy provided a new base line for a range of re-aligned townland boundaries: Fontstown, Rathsillagh, Tippeenan were divided in upper and lower portions by the new road.[26] Monavullagh Bog to the north of Athy exhibits a series of straight boundaries radiating out from Derryvullagh island. Indeed close and intensive examination of the map of townlands shows many anomalies — such as Rathcoffey demesne, where narrow slivers of the original townland were left outside the new demesne boundaries and even narrower portions were laid out to enclose the long avenue leading up to the castle. Arnold Horner's detailed examination of the complex transactions embarked on by the 20th Earl of Kildare in constructing his demesne at Carton is a classic case study: several townlands or portions of townlands were obliterated by the Earl in his ambitious redesigned landscape.[27]

The overall geography of the townland network in Figure 1.6 illustrates the intricacy of this local spatial frame and its potential to assist in understanding the historical evolution of the landscape especially at the local scale. Ultimately
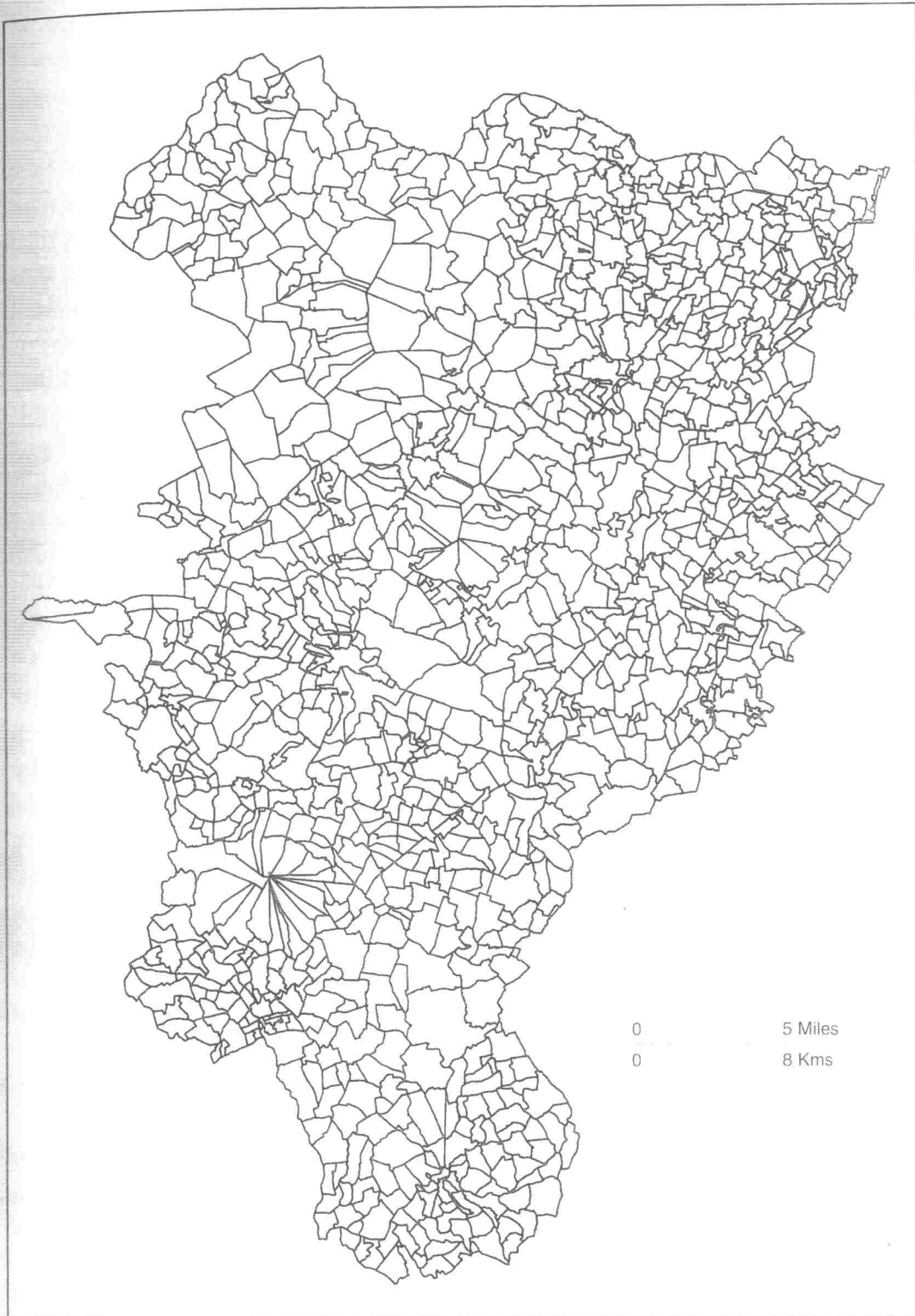
Figure 1.6 – *The townland network.*

these tiny units are the containers within which the material and cultural artifacts of society and settlement were arranged. The townland net is first of all a matrix of landownership and landholding, which were the driving forces behind the spatial order of boundaries, fences, byroads and lanes, fields, farms

and settlements. But it is also a matrix of social order and cultural heritage. It reflects local geographies of identity, belonging and sense of place. Local communities, are spatially arranged in hierarchies of townlands, parishes and urban/village hinterlands, which for families native to the area, in their shape, size and layout are as significant as the personal arrangements of their houses and gardens. Indeed the townland and its families and fields are often an extension of private family space. In these cases also, the townlands are physical spaces, which were occupied and marked in earlier generations by those who went before them. To the local communities, the townlands are known, named and familiar. In many parts of Kildare today, of course, for the new recent arrivals in the rural populations, the townland geometry is much less familiar and a much more transitory part of their identity.

As in many other parts of Ireland, there are notable variations in townland size between the richer and more marginal lands of the county. The peatlands are clearly identifiable with some of the largest townlands. Apart from this, the better agricultural lands which were most intensively settled following the Anglo-Norman colonisation would also appear to have concentrations of the smallest units. While this small parcellation may be characteristic of manorial organisation of landscape, it may also be simply a reflection of feudal preference for the more desirable lands. This is especially notable in the baronies of Salt and Naas which embrace the rich plains of the east and north east, the southern part of the barony of Kilkea and Moone, and around Athy and Kildare settlements. In these regions also, large numbers of townlands were subdivided in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reflecting the increasing value of commercial agriculture in these districts. Zooming in on the network, with the aid of GIS software, it is also possible to examine the minutiae of local anomalies in boundaries which accompanied the modernisation of the landscape prior to the Ordnance Survey's 1830s maps, as well as the rectilinear boundary lines representing aggregations of field boundaries, and portions of townlands isolated in neighbouring units reflecting eccentricities of ownership in the middle ages, and so on.

Although continuity and stability of boundaries is strikingly consistent, there are also notable examples of minor adjustments to boundaries between the time of Rocque's survey of the Kildare estates in the 1750s and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey's six inch maps in the 1830s, resulting mainly from continuing land reclamation of marshland, woodland and heath. Therefore the townland net was ultimately consolidated and boundaries fixed by a range of modernisations, especially eighteenth-century estate improvements, where drainage ditches (and accompanying hedges in many cases) helped to fix boundaries. The angularity of many townland boundaries in the north east of the county is a reflection of the way in which intricate micro-geographies of ditches and hedgerows were elevated to townland boundary status, in contrast to the more ancient boundaries, which coincided with natural features like rivers and local streams. The extinction of common

lands either by incorporation in contiguous townlands or by the enclosure of the outbounds and creation of the commons as a separate townland (as in Monread which was part of the commons of Naas in the mid-seventeenth century), was another phase in the development of the townland net

The most pervasive network of features thoughout the rural landscape in Ireland is represented by the lattice of hedge and ditch boundaries. Evidence on fieldscapes is tantalisingly vague before the appearance of estate maps for some areas in the later eighteenth century and the Ordnance Survey of the 1830s. The abiding impression from reading the Civil Survey is of a largely open-field, unenclosed landscape. In its comprehensive verbal descriptions of boundaries, hedges, banks or other man-made elements rarely feature. Very occasionally 'lanes' are used in some eastern districts to define boundaries, implying perhaps some kind of fence. In the eastern baronies, however, boundary descriptions simply talk of lands which 'meare' other named townlands. There is no indication of the nature of the mearing or boundary or whether outbounds were marked in some way by a bank or other feature.

> The Parrish of Ladytown meareth on the East from a ffoard in the River Liffie commonly called ye Thorowne ffoard att the Earle of Straffords Brickes all along the meare dividing betweene the Barrony of Naass and the Barrony of Connell untill you come to a place on the Roade goeing from Kilcullin Bridge comonly called Steephenstowne ffoard the said Parrish of Ladytowne meareth Southward wth. the lands of Greenehill and the lands of Waterstowne betweene them and the lands of Duddingstowne and Herbertstowne. The aforesaid Parrish meareth westward with a line leading in the bogg betweene Herbertstowne and Ouldetowne in the Parrish of Great Connell from thence along a line untill you come to a ffoard wch divides betweene the lands of Clowneings and the lands of Lowstowne from thence along a streame or line that divideth betweene the lands of Oulde Connell Lowstowne Ladytowne and Morristowne–meanagh to the River Liffie: and on the the North ye aforesaid Parrish of Ladytowne meareth all along the River Liffie untill you come to the Thorowne ffoard ffirst above menconed.[28]

The limits of the parish of Dunfierth are described as running along a 'Brooke and Bogg', through a 'maine Red Bogg', to a 'tocher', a brook, a ditch, a 'tocher', a ditch, a 'newe ditch', a 'streame of the Mill of Gurtin, to the Blackwater.[29]

The presence of commons, often shared by neighbouring townlands, in the Civil Survey and in the maps of the Down Survey (which excludes 'Protestant' land, however) supports the idea of openness. In the Civil Survey, common lands are clearly a feature of the landscapes of the northern districts of the county where this older feature of medieval landscape organisation seems to

have been more enduring than in the middle or southern baronies, where there are no incidences of commons mentioned – though the barony of Offaly was not included in the Kildare survey. Thus, the barony of Salt in the northeast had 21 commons listed; Naas barony had 26; Ikeathy and Oughterany had 10; Clane, 7 and Carbury, 8. The remaining baronies had none listed. Many of these commons were mapped in the Down Survey and some were subsequently recorded as separate townlands in the Ordnance Survey (see Figure 1.4).

Emerson's surveys of the Earl of Kildare's estates in the later seventeenth century cast some light on the nature of this largely unenclosed medieval landscape's organisation.[30] In Hodgestown, 'it is indifferent good arable wherein there is about 6 acres within those surrounds of meadow & pasture & shrubs. All the other meadow and pasture in the townland lies in common to the two proprietors....'. Painstown 'hath many common pastures adjoining which is not surveyed by reason other proprietors hath as great a privilege to graze thereon...' There was 'a common betwixt Possickstown and Griffinrath undivided'.[31]

Emerson's survey, even in the absence of its maps, shows the residue of a much older landscape patchworked by commons, an open-field landscape where grazing rights were complexly interspersed and where boundaries were often vague - as with the parcel of pasture claimed by one owner as 'belonging to Conlinstowne though the ancient knowing men which shewed the bounds saith it is part of Carrickanearle... the said parcel in difference is bounded on the south and east with Carrickanearle, and on the north with a common mountain to several towns...'[32] For the barony of Offaly, which was not included in the Civil Survey of Kildare, Emerson lists commons, usually on the boundaries of the following townlands: Walterstowne, Ballevarne, Duneny, Ballegranie, Fenner, Mooretowne and Tankerdstowne, Carrickanearle, Canonstowne, Milltown, Baranstowne: in all cases, 'lieth in common to each moiety' or ' a common to several towns'.[33] In the Manor of Maynooth, similarly, Hodgestowne, Painstowne, Barreen, Gragelin, Gragesallagh, Bryanstown and Rouske, Taghadoe, Windgates and Gragefinoge, all had the privilege of a 'small', 'convenient' or 'wet' common.

There were occasional rare references to changes which signalled the future shape of the landscape in terms of enclosures and subdivisions. In Windgates, for instance, there was 'a parcel of coarse wet pasture lately taken out and fenced from the common wherein Newtownemacabbe claimes commonage thereon now enjoyed by Windgates.'[34] Piecemeal divisions were gradually extinguishing the commons as new leases were granted in the later seventeenth century. Horner's overall impression of Emerson's landscape is that it was 'wetter and bleaker than today, with drainage much less comprehensive and large trees (which to judge from the 1650s leases for Maynooth village had still been commonplace a generation earlier) scarce enough to be given special mention.'[35]

It was a much less well-furnished and divided countryside than that exhibited by Rocque's maps of the Kildare estates in the 1750s.[36] An overview of Rocque's surveys for Maynooth, Rathangan and Athy manors (1756-60) suggests, on the one hand, a gradual process of field enclosure over the previous century (reflected in a more organic, irregular fieldscape like Killmoney in Rathangan) and, on the other hand, a more planned enclosure and improvement, where large fields have rectilinear boundaries, frequently with drainage ditches suggesting recent colonisation of wetlands. His survey of Athy in 1756 records part of the townland of Ballycullane as 'The heathy common' a 70-acre remnant of the much older landscape order which had been enclosed by the time of the Ordnance Survey (Figure 1.7). The Rathangan survey also shows commons on the borders of Conlanstown and Puncherstown (which were subsequently enclosed as the separate townland of Grange Common).
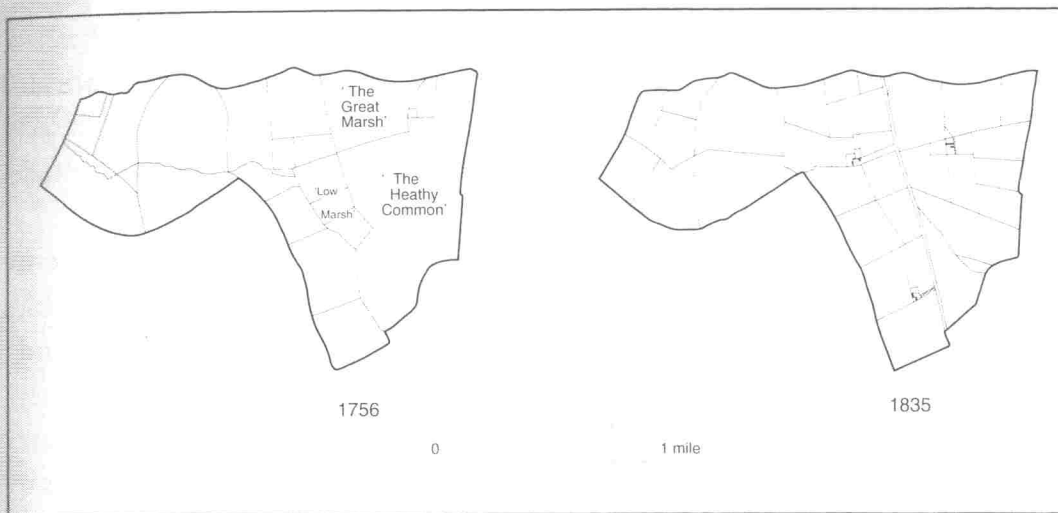

Figure 1.7 – *Ballycullane, 1756 and 1835.*

Another manifestation of networks in the landscape is to be found in the naming of sub-areas in townlands, most frequently field names. Emerson's survey of the Earl of Kildare's lands in the area of Kildare town for 1674 contains 'a feast of field and other place-names',[37] which may have been small enclosed parks near the town. However, it is unclear if all of them were fenced-off fields. For the most part they are descriptive of an intensively-used landscape, and possibly hint at some of the processes involved in reclaiming or managing the fields. Such minor names were quite common in Rocque's maps when fields especially were clearly and visibly an important component in the local landscape.

Micro-names, referring to small portions of land, landholdings, or landmarks, are part of a long rural tradition which usually mostly went unrecorded and continued down to the twentieth century in much of the Irish countryside. It is an aspect of local identity suggestive of a very local geography of distinctive features of field or place, or location in relation to farms and

houses. Unlike townland names, which have survived virtually intact because of their legal standing as landholding units within estates, minor names like field names seem always to have had a more transitory existence for contemporary local communities (though without intensive fieldwork it is not possible to be certain that some have not continued in use to the present).[38]

A survey of the manor of Maynooth as far back as 1328 recorded such micro-names, referring presumably to mostly unenclosed parcels of meadow or other landholdings separated by commons and undrained wetlands which were profiled in Emerson's survey more than three centuries later. Only 16 out of 53 tenants were Irish (betaghs), but most of the lands listed may have belonged to them[39] as the names seem mostly in Irish, or a mixture of Irish and English: Tyrhade (44 acres) [a holding name which continues in 1696[40]], Athecosteran' (5 acres), Atheryn' (7 acres), Lympitisfelde (20 acres), Ballybrody (20 acres); Moneyscaddan (50 acres); Athenek alias Aghpeike (14 acres); Mellaghesfeld (14 acres); Crenegele alias Cravile (36 acres); Scotingis (42 acres); Atheclare (16 acres); Johannisfelde (17 acres); Moriceisfeld (13 acres); Hoxclonyn (2 acres); Holwemede (8 acres); Inchepolyn (4 acres); Rothmede (7 acres); Coliesmede (1 acre).[41]

Many of the minor names in Emerson's seventeenth century survey are in Irish. Thus for instance, near Kildare town in 1674, apart from Sheepfold Parks, Bullogs Park and Windmill hill, there were 'fields' called Farrincarraland, Farrincapoge, Magdelonsland, Tougheriske, Aughaweeney, Loanaweaney, Trensheled, Croscronoge, Farrincladie, Kilcorcran, Logaginea, Breckane, Farringore, and so on.[42] Rocque's maps of Maynooth and Rathangan manors in 1757 comprehensively record the intricately detailed fields, including many of the field's names. Rocque's field names attest to an apparently well-farmed and well-managed landscape. The survival of names in Irish must have important cultural implications for Kildare at this stage in the mid eighteenth century. By the time of the Maynooth survey, the vast majority of names were in English. In Borrogstown on the Maynooth manor, for instance, the 223-acre farm of John Browne had 26 fields all individually detailed - Barnfield, Commonhall, Three Corner Field, Barn Close, Low Park, High Park, Quarry Field, Lodge Field, Clump Field, Hare Cover Field, Obelisk Field, Obelisk Park, Obelisk Croft, Obelisk Lawn, Broad Croft, Coltsfoot Field, Old Pasture, Narrow Croft, Well Park, Quarry Meadows, Moulding Field, Anne's Acre, Spring Field, Paddock Field, Crodaune - which is the only Irish name. In Taghadoe, however, 311 acres have their fields named and about half are named in Irish (such as Rushcollagh, Tiergrena, Feallough). A minority of townlands in Rathangan manor have fields with Irish names: for example, in Sawyerswood, out of more than twenty fields there were only the following Irish names: Crulleen Bane, Farren Buoy, Farren Thoo and Farren Bore.

Close examination of the field names can help in understanding the processes which went into the making of local landscapes at this scale. In Athy manor, Ballycullane (Figure 1.7) has the Water Field, the Water Close, the Long Marsh, the Square Marsh, and the Great Marsh, suggesting a process of recent reclamation. Some fields used the medieval measuring term 'stang': in Prusselstown (Figure 1.8), fields were called The Five Stangs, The Long Stang, as well as Small Croft, Long Marsh. Typical of field names in the Manor of Athy in 1756 are the following in Inch townland: Caves Croft, Home Pasture (attaching to the Inch castle and dwelling house, stables and yard), Gravel Pit Field, Fishpond Field, Corner Meadow, Upper Croft, Bridge Croft, The Three

Figure 1.8 – *Prusselstown (a) Newtown (b) 1756 and 1835.*

and Forty Acres, Long Piece, Horse Park, Inch Field, The Nine Acres, The Long Field, Munster Field, The Bushey Close, The Hill Field, Small Croft, Dry Ditch Field, West Marsh. As with repetitive names like Pigeon Park, Ram Park, Horse Park and so on, all were clearly English names. Individual names with close, craft [croft], park, piece, slip, meadow, pasture were most common.

Subdivision of field layouts may be seen as being a parallel process to the subdivision of townlands into smaller sections by estates (and identified as 'north', 'south' and so on). Undoubtedly these changes were all part of a process of ongoing remodelling of landscape as clearance, drainage, reclamation and settlement expansion accompanied demographic growth in many districts in the later eighteenth century. Comparison of Rocque's maps of the mid eighteenth century with the Ordnance Survey's depiction of the same places

eighty years later illustrates these changes (Figure 1.8). In the manor of Rathangan, for example, the townlands of Kiltaghan, Thomastown (east and west in the Ordnance Survey), Watergrange and Feighcullen (see Figure 1.5) show substantial subdivisions of fields. On the other hand, Boherkill, Kilmoney and Conlanstown remained virtually unchanged in the intervening decades. In the Manor of Athy, Ardscull, Inch, Shanraheen and Prusselstown show significant subdivision. In general, the broad layout of fences in Rocque's survey acted as an outline framework for a more minute sectioning into smaller fields. In Glassely, some pencilled lines on the map indicate the approximate outline of the boundaries which later emerge in the Ordnance Survey. In Sawyerswood and Ballycullane townlands, respectively, large expanses of woodland and heath commons in Rocque's survey have been reclaimed and divided into fields by the 1830s. In the manor of Maynooth, on the other hand, there was much greater continuity, with most of the field network well established by the time of Rocque's survey.

Some of the social pressures which led to these patterns of change in the landscape are indicated especially in locally marginal landscapes. In these cases, as in the remoter bogland recesses visted by Bishop Doyle, tenant communities banded together in partnership holdings to reclaim the poor land with little intervention by landlord or estate. The examples of the adjoining townlands of Barretstown, Clongorey and Blacktrench in the barony of Connell illustrate the consequence of this process and indeed represent much of the process of local landscape evolution in Kildare (Figure 1.9). Barretstown on the Liffey was a

Figure 1.9 – *Blacktrench, Clongorey and Barretstown.*

highly favoured and long-settled location whose broad well-enclosed acres demonstrated its value. To its west the townlands of Clongorey, Blacktrench and Lattensbog demonstrate, even in their names, the presence of wet acidic bogland where kingroups of Foxes, Kellys and Dunnes in the Griffith Valuation reclaimed the bog and marsh. And their fieldscapes as illustrated in the Ordnance Survey maps, with small clusters of houses, contrast sharply with the emptiness of Barretstown.

The principal road network in Kildare traces its antecedents to the early medieval period with trackways following the gravel ridges and dry points from one monastic settlement to another. Bog toghers are still being uncovered particularly in the poorly drained western and northern areas. The confining effect of the Pale resulted in the development of a disarticulated road system focussed especially on Dublin with local byroad nets reflecting internal mobility within parishes or organic growth of settlements on estates from the seventeenth century. It is clear from the Civil Survey that the road net was also shaped by the location of fords particularly across the Liffey and bridge points and fording points took on local significance.

The principal road net was effectively in place on Taylor's map, though in the case of the Barony of Salt and the eastern districts of the Liffey valley, an older road system which shadowed the mansion houses and parklands is evident. The road from Leixlip, for instance, meandered its way along the old fording points of the Liffey from Celbridge through Barberstown and Straffan to Clane. The houses and parklands which were developed in the eighteenth century were connected to the main road by avenues. Eighteenth-century turnpikes linking market towns were in place in the southern half of the county and were characteristically straight, paying little attention to local anomalies in topography and in many cases resulting in the realignment of local geometries of field and townland. From Kildare to Monasterevin, from Kilcullen to Athy, from Kilcullen and Timolin-Castledermot and from the latter to Carlow, these new straight lines struck out optimistically, accessing the southern important grain growing districts of the county. The most dramatic example of one of these new roads was only part built when Taylor was surveying. It epitomised the spirit of the age of improvement, reaching into the poorer margins of the west county. From Rathcoffey, Taylor shows the intended line of the road to Clane and from Clane the so-called Ballinagare road through the Bog of Moods aimed like a gunshot through Allenwood to the Offaly border. Striking through the boglands, it subsequently turned south at Lullymore to link up with the Rathangan road. As part of a development plan for the midland bogs, this and other roads facilitated the opening up of these marginal landscapes. Today there are still the marks of late settlement in ribbons along these roads and lanes, raised high over the cutover bog on either side. In some of John Rocque's maps of the mid-eighteenth century, roads can be seen clearly cutting across the grain of older field boundaries on the one hand, while in other instances the road net obviously forms the framework of later enclosures. Both

circumstances are illustrated in Ardscull in the manor of Athy and help to demonstrate the variable origins of the field patterns.

Nodes

Part of the process of spatial organisation is the emergence of nodes of settlement, locational centres, meeting places, markets, which have functioned as military, political, economic or social command and control points in the landscape. In terms of landscape history, examples would be hillforts, ringforts, mottes, castles or tower houses, churches and chapels, villages and towns, even cross roads.

Parishes and parish centres comprise some of the earliest social focal points in most landscapes. The older civil parishes are small and appear especially fragmented in the manorial zones, particularly in the north-east and central parts of the county. Figure 1.10 should not be interpreted literally as a reflection of the actual geography of medieval parishes, a temptation which results from taking an essentially modern (Ordnance Survey) rendition of boundaries and imposing it retrospectively on the landscape. One assumes that geographies of boundaries were much more elusive and fluid in the middle ages. Figure 1.10 should be read more as a broad approximation of the spatiality and rural centrality of parishes and church sites. Additionally, the map is not a snapshot of a particular time, but a summary of centres which developed over an indeterminate sequence of time. In this context then it gives a generalised idea of the spatial structuring of society around one thousand years ago. Many of the small units relate to early Christian rural churches such as Donaghmore, Donaghcumper or Stacumney in the north east, which were adapted through the Anglo-Norman settlement. By the late middle ages, 84 out of the 111 parishes in county Kildare were ministered by monasteries.[43] Clearly the evidence of deserted parish centres (often characteristically marked today by abandoned burial grounds) attests to the way in which these historic focal points were bypassed by economic (and ecclesiastical) developments in the early modern period. These were local centres of worship and burial for generations for local communities, in a pedestrian world where walking distance was a measure of accessibility. However, these local central places experienced a wrench during the seventeenth century. In the Civil Survey, for instance, a picture of general desertion and ruin emerges, a consequence of dispossessions of property following the Reformation and the presumed universal destruction which accompanied the war of the 1640s. The initiation of programmes of parish unions (for the Established Church) from the 1660s is a measure of the obsolete nature of the older pattern of parishes.

Evidence on settlement patterns is elusive, but the general impression of the Anglo-Norman colony was of a largely openfield landscape, containing 'open fields, greens, parish churches, manorial castles and other symbols of a strong village solidarity and identity.'[44] In 1569-71, Robert Lythe's survey provides reasonable evidence for settlement patterns according to John Andrews: 'the

Figure 1.10 – *Parishes and parish centres.*

very choice of single-point symbols [dots]…can be taken as proof of clustering, at any rate where no churches or castles are present.'[45] Lythe's settlement data shows notable concentrations of such clusters in the corridor from south Dublin, through east and south Kildare into Carlow.[46] The Civil Survey and

the Down Survey are generally uninformative on this matter, confining themselves to describing castles (characteristically in ruins). In the barony of Narragh and Reban, however, there are some instances of clusters of smaller houses and cabins shown around castles in the Down Survey maps - for instance, at Timolin, Kilberry and Reban. In the barony of Connell, Roseberry, Morristownbiller and Punchersgrange appear to have clusters. There are strong hints of such clusters in Emerson's surveys: his survey of the Kildare manor (1674) refers to clusters of '7 or 8 cabins near the middle' of Ballygreany, others of indeterminate structure at Baronstown, Duneany, Milltown, Pollardstown and Walterstown.[47] In the manor of Maynooth while the actual disposition of houses is unclear in surveys of 1674 and 1677, townlands such as Cormickstown had nine cabins, Donaghstown had eight, Taghadoe had twelve, Maws fourteen, Windgates twelve and Barrogstown six or seven. Given the additional information on common lands in the townlands, it is probable that these were clustered.

When Rocque's survey was undertaken in the 1750s, settlement appeared to be mainly road-oriented. Taylor's settlement pattern is also clearly influenced by the road network, though Taylor probably omits up to 70 per cent of the houses.[48] The evidence of Emerson and Rocque, and other evidence such as leases, suggests that considerable adjustments were made in settlement patterns and landscape on the Kildare estates. The distribution of houses by townland had changed considerably, with many having a lot less, suggesting proactive alterations to the pattern of settlement. Agricultural reform and dispersal of settlement clusters accompanied the elimination of much of the commons and the reorganisation and successive subdivision of fields in many areas up to the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s.

Estates and their mansion houses were important centres of innovation and land improvement as well as representing investment in the landscape by a socially important class here in the shadow of the capital city. Owning some of the most valuable properties in the country, there was an onus on proprietors to carefully manage the landscapes and economies (and societies) of their estates. The endurance and primacy of the plains of Kildare as privileged settlement landscapes are evident in the emerging geography of estates in the eighteenth century. Built on the manorial substructure which had evolved through the middle ages, north east and south Kildare supported a range of elements that characterised the estate system in Ireland at its most advanced. Investment in demesnes and mansion houses, for instance, reflected the commercial success of landed property and agriculture in this region. It might be suggested that the success of Taylor's map of Kildare in 1783 was a measure of the interest and income of the landowning rural community in Kildare.[49] In other ways, however, the estate system which emerged in seventeenth and eighteenth century Kildare was grounded in a strong and enduring tenant farming community, exhibiting some of the 'greatest continuities in Irish social history' extending back to the Anglo-Norman settlement.[50] The prosperity of the tenantry of Kildare (as well as

other parts of east Leinster) was reflected in eighteenth century food surpluses and the early emergence of two-storeyed thatched houses on well-managed extensive farm units, some of which survive to the present day.

The Earl of Kildare was the largest and longest established landowning family. The Kildare (later Duke of Leinster) estates amounted to 16 per cent of the land of the county. As in many of the older manorial regions in Ireland, however, estates in Kildare were not generally as extensive as in more recently planted parts of Ulster, for instance. Omitting estates under 500 acres, the following was the distribution of landed estates in the county in 1871:

500-1000 acres: 80 owners, 47 non-resident in the county[51]
— 2000 acres: 44 owners, 19 non-resident[52]
— 5000 acres: 28 resident, 15 non-resident[53]
— 10,000 acres: Six resident, two non-resident
   (in Antrim and London))
— 10000 + acres: Four, all resident

In terms of land valuation, there were twenty two estates valued at more than £2000, ranging from the £47,000 of the Duke of Leinster's 67,000 acres to the approximately £2000 of the Earl of Clonmel's Bishopscourt near Straffan. The Earl, however, also held 15,000 acres at £9500 in Tipperary, Kilkenny and Carlow. Most of the landowners lived in Kildare, or in neighbouring counties. The most valuable estates were located in the Liffey valley area, and in the southern districts of the county. The total of 162 landowners of estates over 500 acres corresponds broadly with Taylor's map of 1783 showing approximately 220 'seats' of country gentry. Some of Taylor's houses are not landowners, but may be Dublin bourgeoisie or large tenant farmers socially on a par with the rural gentry class.

In the rich eastern counties such as Meath and Kildare, the trappings of landlordism as exhibited in houses, demesnes, plantations and landscape improvement are evident. This is not to say that the landowning class was in complete control: even the powerful Duke of Leinster had to wait for leases to fall in while building his new town and demesne in Maynooth in the mid-eighteenth century.[54] Acknowledging these limitations, however, both socially and economically the landlord in his castle in a county like Kildare was a dominant figure in the landscape.

The mapping of trees on Taylor's map, while impressionistic is a useful exercise in demonstrating the significance of plantations in the landscape in the late eighteenth century, largely linked to estates as centres of improvement and innovation. Figure 1.11 summarises the distribution of his tree symbols. Though Andrews is circumspect about the accuracy of Taylor's mapping of trees, he suggests that he provided a 'realistic portrayal of private parklands, plantations, avenues, drives, walks, gardens...' and that outside demesnes, 'a long or conspicuous fence was occasionally represented on the map by a line of
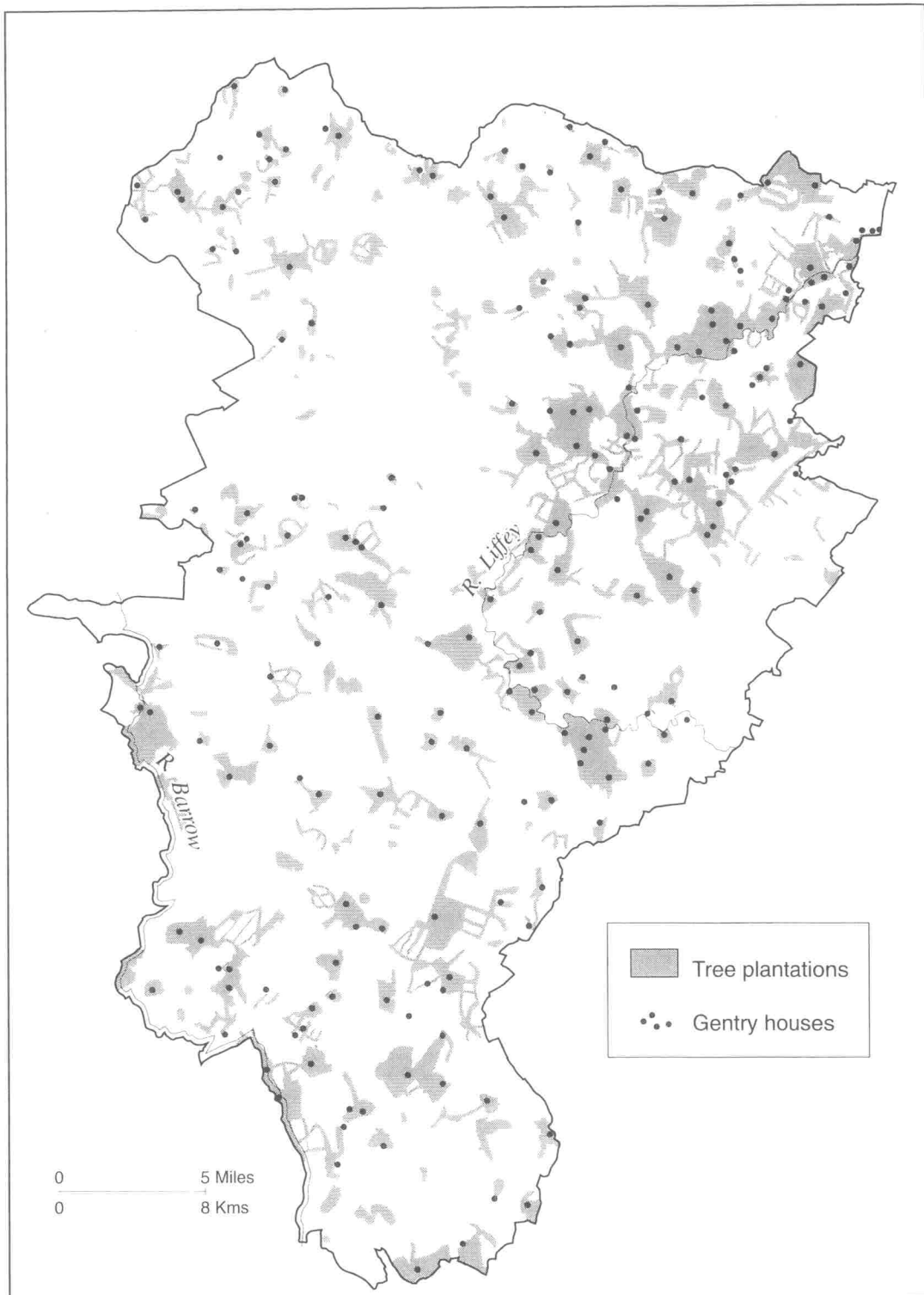
Figure 1.11 – *Trees and Houses from Taylor's map, 1783*

trees.'[55] Obviously it is unlikely that Taylor set out to map every tree, but merely to represent the occurrence of significant plantations at a time when tree planting was a fashionable and notably visible part of rural landscape improvement. 'Trees stood for order, improvement and superior culture.'[56] His map gives a clear indication of the relative distribution of tree plantations

county-wide for the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, and it may also be useful in throwing some light on the local significance of plantations which in many cases are still today a pre-eminent feature of the Kildare landscape.

Apart from the importance of demesne plantations where fairly extensive local planting had taken place, such as at Newbury, Hortland or Knockanally in Carbury, Taylor's map also hints at rows of trees being planted on the outbounds of townlands or farms, along some field boundaries, or on selected roadsides usually adjacent to a local mansion house, or on avenues leading to big houses. The association with the houses of the gentry, and in some cases with slated farmhouses, is clear from the map. And the concentration of such houses and their accompanying well-planted environs in the more favoured eastern parts of the county is particularly well demonstrated along the valley of the Liffey, described in the late seventeenth century as 'drenchinge severall noble gentlemens seates'.[57] Here there is a continuous belt of lavishly planted landscapes and big houses extending downstream from Ballymore Eustace to Leixlip – Harristown, Brannockstown, Castle Martin, Rosetown, Moorfield, Morristown, Yeomanstown, Landenstown, Firemount, Millicent, Blackhall, Castle Browne, Rathcoffey, Straffan, Lyons, Ardrass, Killadown, Castletown, Westown and others. The period of Taylor's map coincides with what Smyth calls the 'climax phase' in the relationship between landlord culture and trees, when landowners and strong tenants became seriously involved in planting as a result of incentives offered by the RDS and the Irish parliament. These developments in Ireland echoed the oak panic in eighteenth-century England with depletion of forest trees and national security repercussions for the Royal Navy.[58] Irish tenants came to play a more significant role especially after legislation in 1789 and 1791 which gave them extensive rights to fell trees during the lifetime of their leases, provided their trees were registered on planting.[59] The Register of Trees provides a useful indicator of the rate of tenant tree planting in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Kildare county ranks highly with its substantial tenants being actively engaged in this enterprise. It is more likely, however, given the date of Taylor's survey and the clear association between mansion houses and planting, that his trees largely represent the work of the landowning class.

Many of the houses and plantations in north Kildare, especially in the desirable landscapes of the Liffey, were also the product of geographical proximity to Dublin, many of whose merchants and bourgeoisie chose the salubrious rurality of Kildare for country houses. Castle Martin was built in 1720 by Francis Harrison, a banker, who was also a member of parliament. Castletown was built in the 1720s by another enterprising politician and public servant, William Conolly, who needed to be close to the capital.[60] Straffan House was built by a Dublin banker in the 1720s, whose son built Lodge Park nearby in the 1770s. Lyons in the same neighbourhood was built in 1797 for Lord Cloncurry who was the son of a blanket manufacturer who had bought the land from the Aylmer family whose ownership had extended back to the Anglo-Norman settlement.[61]

Conclusion

Significant elements of the story of Kildare are written in the forms and furniture of its landscape. Understanding some of the grammar and syntax of its landscape text, especially as these are expressed as spaces, nodes and networks of material and cultural artifacts can help in interpreting the historical experience of Kildare over the past millennium and in appreciating the morphology of places which make up the county today. As one of the most rapidly urbanising counties on the perimeter of the metropolitan Dublin region, it is important to be aware of the significance of its historical and geographical legacies in landscape and environment, community and culture.

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19. See Down Survey; also *Civil Survey,* viii, p. xxiv.
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