What kind of Irish was spoken in Westmeath?

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By the time of the Gaelic Revival at the end of the 19th century, the Irish language as a vernacular had largely disappeared across Leinster. The small extent of the language which remained was probably confined to the most remote and out-of-the-way townlands, and scattered among a generation who had been largely forgotten by the outside world – with the possible exception of a small part of Co. Louth. It is no wonder, then, that it is primarily to the north, west and southwest areas of Ireland that scholars of the language in all its varying forms have since directed their attention. It is in these regions that the language continued to be spoken into the 20th century, and indeed continues to be spoken, though much less extensively than heretofore. This focus, however understandable, has left a large gap in our understanding of the historical distribution of the dialects of Irish across the eastern half of the country. The only means of filling this gap is to carry out a detailed study of the scant remains of the language, as found in word lists, folklore collections, the later manuscript tradition (if available), everyday speech, and, last but by no means least, in placenames, including both townland and minor names. The great advantage of evidence from placenames to the historial dialectologist is the universal distribution of the placenames themselves. This means that aspects of the language which come to light in the placenames of one area can safely and easily be compared with developments in another.

No serious and detailed study of the dialect (or dialects?) of Irish formerly spoken in Co. Westmeath has been undertaken up to now. Nor does this article aspire to be such a study. Notwithstanding this, some evidence of the dialect was brought to light in the course of doctoral research by the author on the townland names of two baronies in the west of the county, Kilkenny West and Clonlonan,[1] and it is worth discussing some of this evidence here.

Donn Piatt and Séamus Ó Saothraí are the only two writers to have approached this question directly to date. Piatt (1905-70), a Dubliner, was married to Eibhlín Nic Cholgán from Raharney in the east of Co. Westmeath, and it is from her that he gathered a list of Irish words

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[1] Finnegan, A. (2012) *Logainmneacha Chill Chainnigh Thiar agus Chluain Lonáin – Ainmneacha na mBailte Fearainn.* Unpublished thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway.

which he published in the magazine *An tUltach* under the title 'Iarsmaí Gaedhilge ó'n Iar-Mhidhe' in 1935. He had this to say about the dialect itself:

> BÉIM GHOTHA[:] Béim Chúige Uladh i gcomhnaidhe ach amháin 'sa bhfocal "muchóirighe" bhfuil an bhéim ar an dara siolla.
> FUAIMEANNA- Bíonn "án" agus "óg" fada go maith. "Gabhar" – fuaim Chonnachta [*sic*] 's na Mumhan a bhí ag máthair mo mhná; i gCill Dealga, Conndae na Midhe, a tógadh í, ach chuala mo bhean "gór" .i. an tuaim [fhuaim?] Ultach ó shean-bhean as "Cluain Ámh" (?)[2] ar theorainn Chonndae Chill Dara. (Piatt 1935: 7). *STRESS [–] Emphasis as in Ulster always, except in the word "muchóirighe"*[3] *where the emphasis is on the second syllable. PRONUNCIATIONS – "án" and "óg" are quite long. My wife's mother, who was reared in Kildalkey Co. Meath, pronounced "gabhar" – as in Connacht and Munster, but my wife heard "gór" i.e.   the Ulster pronunciation, from an old woman from "Cluain Ámh" (?) on the Kildare border.*

Séamus Ó Saothraí (1927-2008), who was born in the townland of Cloonagh near Ballynagore, also favoured Ulster Irish as being the dialect most akin to that once spoken in Westmeath: 'Dhealródh sé gur foghraíocht Chúige Uladh a bhí sa taobh sin tíre. Is cosúil gur mhar a chéile mórán Gaeilge na Mí, na hIarmhí, Lú agus Dheisceart Ard Mhacha' (Ó Saothraí 1969: 18). *It would appear that the pronunciation was as in Ulster in that part of the country [Westmeath]. It is apparent that the Irish of Meath, Westmeath, Louth and South Armagh were more or less the same.* Indeed, a placename in his own district shows evidence of an Ulster influence: Baile na nGabhar/Ballyna**gore**. He goes on to mention three sentences of Irish which he collected from a woman in his own townland:

> 'Á, 'Mhuir 's trú!', 'Maith a brath, a ghrá!' agus 'Chugat a' taibhse dubh!' … An bhean a fuair mé uaithi iad, tá

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[2] There is townland called Clonava/Cluain Ámha in Co. Westmeath but it is in the north of the county, near Lough Derravaragh (BLÉ 51930). Westmeath does not share a border with Co. Kildare. It is possible that Cloncrave, a townland near Kinnegad in the barony of Farbill is what is meant here. Another possibility is that it is the Meath-Kildare border that is meant here and that 'Cluain Ámha' is a minor placename from that area.
[3] = *mochóirí* '(1) early rising; (2) early riser' (Ó Dónaill).

foghraíocht Ultach go soiléir aici ar an tríú ceann: 'Chugad a' teibhsi duth!' a deir sí. Óna seanathair, a fuair bás thart ar an mbliain 1915, a fuair sise an abairt. D'inis seisean di gur Gaeilge a labhraíodh sé leis na hUltaigh in Albain, nuair a bhí sé ag obair sa tír sin i dtús a shaoil … Ní miste a rá gur c-séimhithe Chúige Uladh atá san Iarmhí chomh maith – ag Cineál Éanna agus Cineál Fhiachach, go háirithe. (Ó Saothraí 1969: 19). 'Á, 'Mhuir 's trú!',[4] 'Maith a brath, a ghrá!'[5] *and* 'Chugat a' taibhse dubh!'[6] …*The woman I got these [sentences] from, she has a clear Ulster pronunciation in the third one:* 'Chugad a' teibhsi duth!' *she says. It was from her grandfather, who died around about 1915, she got the sentence. He told her that he used to speak Irish with people from Ulster in Scotland, when he was working in that country in the early part of his life … It is worth noting, what's more, that it is the Ulster lenited-c that is in Westmeath – in Cinéal Éanna*[7] *and Cinéal Fhiachach,*[8] *especially.*

As accurate as Ó Saothraí[9] was about his own area, he supplies little evidence (apart from Piatt's material, which mostly related to the barony of Farbill) regarding other parts of the county, and he can hardly have been justified in his claim that the Irish of Westmeath belonged to the southeast Ulster dialect area. To illustrate this point it is worth looking at the townland name <u>Culleenagower</u>/*Coillín na nGabhar* in the parish of Kilmanaghan, barony of Clonlonan: 'Made <u>gore</u> in Ulster but it['s] pronounced <u>gour</u> here' (OSNB).[10] It is pronounced ˈkulʼinʼə ˌg<u>au</u>r locally at present (J. Hackett 2011). *Gabhar* is usually pronounced g<u>au</u>r in the Irish of Munster and Connaught. There is further evidence of the pronunciation of *abh* as <u>au</u> in the townland name <u>Bunown</u>/*Bun Abhann*, in the parish of Bunown, barony of Kilkenny West: 'owen is here and all through the King[']s Co.

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[4] 'Alas!' (lit. Oh, Mary it's a pity).
[5] 'well seen [perceived], my love'
[6] 'Look out! the black ghost!'
[7] = The parish of Casltetownkindalen, barony of Moycashel. cf. Walsh 1957: 59n. & 89n.
[8] = The barony of Moycashel.
[9] According to his obituary Ó Saothraí 'had a lifelong interest in the idiom of his native Westmeath and his book on the subject awaits publication' *The Irish Times* 22-11-08.
[10] Comments like this in the OSNB are usually by John O'Donovan.

pronounced <u>oun</u> the <u>ou</u> like the <u>ou</u> in the English word <u>ounce</u>' (OSNB). ˈbunˌaun is the present local pronunciation.

It is right, in the light of John O'Donovan's comments, to discuss Nicholas Williams's work on the Irish of Co. Offaly at this juncture (Williams 1998). The Irish of Co. Offaly seems to have had a close affinity with that of eastern Connacht (excepting two baronies in Éile in the south of the county – a district which historically belonged to Munster); though there is also evidence of east Ulster features in the dialect (Williams 1998):

> Offaly Irish resembles east Galway in its retention of the historic short vowel before long sonants: *cam*, *poll*, *dall* etc. In the treatment of the final unstressed syllables in -*(e)amh, -(a)igh), -(e)adh,* etc. the Irish of Offaly agrees largely with east Galway … Among other features reminiscent of Connaught one can mention nasalisation after *san* 'in the', *toidheacht* as verbal noun of *tigim* 'come', the futures in -*e(ó)-* and the word *crúóg*.
> Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Irish of Offaly is the large number of apparently Oriel and Ulster features to be found in it. Among such one can cite –*ach* > -*a,* lowering of long *ó* to *á* … (Williams 1998: 571).

Williams contends that a single general dialect was once spoken throughout Connacht and Leinster, with distinct subsidiary dialects spread within that broad tract. He calls this general dialect *Galeonic Irish*, though this term is probably best avoided.[11] Suffice it to say that the dialects spoken in Connacht had a lot in common with those in Leinster (excluding Louth, Meath and Ossory (Kilkenny and parts of Co. Laois). Within the dialect formerly spoken in Leinster Williams distinguishes counties Kildare, Dublin, Wicklow and Carlow, where some traits of Munster Irish are evident, from an area comprised of south Longford, Westmeath, and most of Co. Offaly. It seems the Irish spoken in this latter area was most akin to that of eastern Connacht (Williams 1994 & 1998).

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[11] Named after the *Gáileoin* (another name of the *Laighin*), an early population group who occupied the area of what is now called Connacht and Leinster. Williams admits this much: 'Is ceart a léiriú anseo, áfach, nach ionann an t-ainm sin a thabhairt ar an gcanúint agus a rá gurb iad na Gáileoin/Laighin ab údar léi' (Williams 1994: 471). *It is right to make clear here, however, that to apply that name [Galeonic Irish] to the dialect is not to say that the* Gáileoin/Laighin *were its originators.*

There is some evidence to support Williams among the local and historical forms of the 276 townland names in the baronies of Kilkenny West and Clonlonan examined by the author. Minor placenames, gathered during fieldwork in those two baronies, also merit consideration.

According to Williams (1998) *ao* was usually pronounced i: in Westmeath, Offaly and Laois, as it would have been across the province of Connacht. Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh [= E.V. Nally] recorded *ao* as i: in the words *caorán* and *caorthann* in Emper, barony of Moygoish (Mhac an Fhailigh 1948: 258). *Caorthann* also occurs in the townland name Ballykeeran/*Bealach Caorthainn* in Kilkenny West parish, where *ao* is also realised as i:. Further examples of *ao* > i: include Cartronkeel/*An Cartrún Caol*, (Kilkenny West parish) and Cartronkeel/*An Cartún Caol* (Kilcleagh parish). Interestingly, there is some evidence that *ao* was pronounced as in southeast Ulster (y:)[12] in the east of the county:

> Tá "múilleach" i mBéarla na hIar-Mhidhe ar chlábar, cé gur maoithleach a scríobhas an tAthair Ó Duinnín. Sin an tuaim atá 'sa cheanntar thart ar Chill Lúcainne i [*sic*], ach is cosamhail ó litreacha na Suirbhéarachta Órdanáis (1836) gur tuaim "aí" a bhí an taobh thall de'n Mhuileann Chearr (Piatt 1936: 7). *"múilleach", meaning mud, is found in the English of Westmeath, though Dinneen writes this word maoithleach* [Dinneen also spells the word maothlach]. *This is the pronunciation in the Killucan area, though it is apparent from the Ordnance Survey Letters (1836) that the pronunciation "aí"* [= i:] *was found on the far side* [west] *of Mullingar.*

There is evidence of the change *gn- > gr* in the townland name Creevenamanagh/*Gníomh na Manach*, in the parish of Kilkenny West. See the historical forms: *?Gryeve na managh* (IDPP 22 n. 2 1551); *Creenamanach* (TAB 1823); *Crievenamonagh* (OSNB: BS 1837); *crí na manach* (OSNB: pl. 1837), in particular. There is also some evidence of the change *cn- > cr-* in minor placenames: *Crocan Ruad*, *Crockan* in the townland of Muckinagh on the shores of Lough Ree (BNS Ballynacliffy NS 144), though the same source gives another placename from the same area as *Cnoc Faire* (BNS Ballynacliffy NS 147). I myself have heard

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[12] See Wagner 1958: I, 26 (*caora* > ky:ra in Omeath).

ˈkruk > *cnoc* (J. Hackett) in <u>Ballynakill</u>, a townland which lies directly on the border with Co. Offaly in the parish of Kilcleagh, and ˈkrukˌɑn > *cnocán* (A. Walsh) in <u>Doonis</u>, a townland in Noughaval parish, close to the border with Co. Longford.

The development *-ch > f* is to be found in the word *cluiche* > klifʼə all over Connacht (Ó hUiginn 1994: 557).[13] This development is also to be seen in the genitive form of the word *cloch* as it occurs in the townland name <u>Ballynacliffy</u>/*Baile na Cloiche*, in Kilkenny West parish, first attested in the form *Ballinecloffy* (Piers 81-83, 91 1682). cf. <u>Aghnacliff/Achadh na Cloiche</u> in Co. Longford. There is a chance, however, that this development occurred after the name had been anglicised (Pádraig Ó Cearbhaill 2011: pers. comm.), presumably by analogy with the English words *rough*, *trough* (*Ballencloghy* (BSD 15b 1670c) > *Ballincloffy* (Piers 81-83, 91 1682)).[14]

Medial *-bh-/-mh-* is usually lost in Munster Irish (Baile an tSléibhe > balʼə an tle:). This development is also in evidence in eastern Leinster: '*Baile an tSléibhe* in County Dublin for example appears in English as *Ballinclea*' (Williams 1998: 561). Intervocalic *-mh-* is pronounced as a *v* in <u>Cluain Íomhair/Clonever</u>, in the barony of Garrycastle in Co. Offaly: 'Cluain Eibhír [*sic*]: 'bh' pronounced.' (Piatt 1933a: 28). This feature is also in evidence in the following forms of the obsolete placename **Cloch Eibhir*[15] (which was near, or in, the townland of <u>Walderstown</u> in the parish of Drumraney): *cartron' cloghvirr* (Inq. Jac. 1 (5) 1611); *Cloghevir*; (ASE 184 1669); *Cloghevir* (BSD 11b 1670c).

Velar *-bh-/-mh-* is usually pronounced as w at the start of a word in Connaught Irish, though v can be heard on the Aran Islands and

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[13] 'forás é seo ar an ngrúpa *-thch-* (i.e. SG *cluithche*). Tá a leithéid chéanna d'fhorás le sonrú san fhocal *lúchair* (< *lúthghair*) /Lu:fa:rʼ/' (Ó hUiginn 1994: 557). *This is a development of the group -thch- (i.e. Old Irish* cluithche). *A similar development can be observed in the word* lúchair (< lúthghair) /Lu:fa:rʼ/'. The earliest form of <u>Ballynacliffy</u>/*Baile na Cloiche* is spelt *Baile na Cloithi* MIA 1401.

[14] It is worth noting that *trough* is pronounced trɑx by some conservative speakers [of English] in this area (F. Finnegan, 2011: pers. comm.). Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh recorded *trough* > trɑx and *tough* > tux in Emper, barony of Moygoish, Co. Westmeath (Nally [= Mhac an Fhailigh] 1971: 38).

[15] Another possibility here is **Cloch Íomhair* (Íomhar = personal name).

in Co. Clare before vowels '/varə/, /vaːs/' (Ó hUiginn 1994: 553).[16]

Initial *-bh-/-mh* is pronounced w in a number of placenames from the barony of Garrycastle in Co. Offaly: '*Cruca Wakea* < *Cnoc an Bhacaigh, Poll an Mhada* and *Gortawilla* < *Gort an Bhaile* all with *mh* as *w*' (Williams 1998: 561). However *-bh-/-mh* is found as v in *Cúil Bhoc* > Coolvuck and *Achadh an Mhóinín* > Aghanvoneen in Ballyloughloe parish; *Achadh an Mhóinín* > Aghavoneen in Kilcleagh parish and *Cloch Bhruíne* > *Cloghvireny* (Inq. Jac. I, 5 1611) (= Cloghbreen) in Drumraney parish. Medial *-mh-* is lost in Ballynalone/Baile na Leamhán in Noughaval parish.[17] Cf. Baile an Leamhain/Ballylevin in eastern Co. Offaly (BLÉ 41964).

 Gníomh is pronounced grʼiːw in Cois Fharraige (De Bhaldraithe 1975: 46). It appears from some of the historical forms of Creevenamanagh/*Gníomh na Manach*, in Kilkenny West parish; *Gnywenemanagh alias Gnywternemanagh* (Fiants Eliz. 1355 1569); *Gnewnamanagh* (DS 1655); *Gnewnamanagh* (BSD 14b 1670c); *Gnownamanagh* (ASE 230 1673), that final *-mh* was pronounced w in the word *gníomh*. See also *Leighgneynlogh al' Leighgnewnewlogh* (Inq. Car. I (3) 1625) > *Leathghníomh an Locha*? (a placename associated with the same area in the 17th century), and *Gniwkill* (DS 1655), which was in Ballyloughloe parish.

 I have found one example of final *-mh* following a short unstressed vowel in the name of a small area in Rath Upper in Noughaval parish; ˈʃɑntˌlə (K. Maher 2008) > *Seantalamh*; and *Seantallo* Inq. Car. I, 85 1633); *o* almost certainly represents ə (schwa) in the second form (Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig 2011: pers comm.). Based on manuscript evidence Williams (1994: 472) reckons *-amh* was pronounced *-a* in Westmeath; it should be noted, however, that his source manuscript originated in Delvin, in the northeast of the county.

 The word *lonnradh* is pronounced lundrə in Cois Fharraige (De Bhaldraithe 1975: 38-39), while *cónra* is similarly pronounced coːndrə by some speakers of Connemara Irish (Nollaig Ó Muraíle 2011: pers. comm.). Some forms of the townland name Ardnaponra/*Ard na Pónra*, in Kilmanaghan parish show a similar development: *Arnapond* (DS 1655); *Ardaghpond* (Reg.D. 6-445-2549 1711); *Ardnapondra* (TAB

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[16] See also Cinn Mhara/Kinvarra in Co. Galway: 'prɑːʃtʼə xʼiːn ˈvarə' (Wagner 1958: I, xiv).
[17] This townland lies partly in Drumraney and partly in Noughaval parish.

1827) and ˈardnəˌpondrə (J. Hackett 2011). See also ˈpuːlnəˌpondrə (< *Poll na Pónra*?) (D. Claffey 2011) the name of a small area in, or near, Gurteen in Kilcleagh parish, about three kilometres southeast of Ardnaponra. It is possible, however, that this development occurred after the element *pónra* was anglicised (Pádraig Ó Cearbhaill 2011: pers. comm.).

There is evidence in a number of placenames, especially in Ballyloughloe parish, that the adjective *mór* may have been pronounced muər or muːr in the study area. This development is found in the dialect of Iarthar Duibhneach, Co. Kerry, and in the other Munster dialects (Dinn. 765). See Magheramore < *An Machaire Mór*; ˈmɑhərəˌmuər (B. Muldoon 2011 & J. Casey 2009). The genitive of *seanmóir* is similarly pronounced in Aghanashanamore < *Achadh na Seanmóra*; ˈɑhənəˌʃanəˌmuər (J. Casey 2011); *Aghneshanmoor* (HES 9 1786). It is possible that this development has its origin in the anglicised form of these names. Orthographic *-or-* is pronounced uː in words such as *sword* > suːrd and *ford* > fuːrd by conservative [English] speakers in this area.[18] However, the motte from which the village of Mount Temple takes its name was known to local Irish speakers in the 19th Century as *Mota muar bal locha luatha* (< *Móta Mór Bhaile Locha Luatha*) (OSNB: pl. 1837). Moyvore/Maigh Mhórdha is a townland and village in the barony of Rathconrath and lies about sixteen kilometres northeast of Mount Temple: ''The local traditional pronunciation is məˈvuːr or mʼĭ ˈwuːr or even mʼĭ vʼjuːr with some' Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh[,] litir: Márta 1962.' (BLÉ 1413829, card 7). A second local pronunciation, independent of Mhac an Fhailigh's letter, is given on the same card: məiˈvuər. It is known as ˌmaiˈvuər by conservative speakers in Glassan, in Kilkenny West parish (J. Parker).

There is evidence in some townland names and minor placenames that the adj. *fionn* was pronounced fan in the study area. The local Irish form of Aghafin < *Achadh Fionn* in Noughaval parish is

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[18] The Ford of Ross, a manmade ford connecting the townland of Ross (Noughaval parish) with Killeenmore (Bunown Parish) is known locally as də fuːrd ə ros (P. Slevin 2007). Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh also notes this pronunciation in the English of Emper, barony of Moygoish, Co. Westmeath (unpublished typescript on the English of Emper - RIA 23 O 84/13).

recorded as: *acha feann* (OSNB: pl. 1837). John O'Donovan had this to say about a small island on Lough Ree (in Bunown parish) called *Illanfan* < *Oiléan Fionn*: 'In this neighbourhood, and in the King's County FIONN, fair or white[,] is prond. fan' (OSNB). The current local pronunciation is ˈlanˈfan (P. Slevin 2007). <u>Cluain Fionnlocha/Clonfinlough</u> a townland and village in the barony of Garrycastle, Co. Offaly, is known locally as klonʹfanlə (BLÉ 41213 – text record 1988). In <u>Ballynahown</u>, which lies just across the border from <u>Cluain Fionnlocha/Clonfinlough</u> in Kilcleagh parish, Co. Westmeath 'fionn, is pronounced 'fan'' (Ó Háinle 2011: 262). Cf. <u>Achadh Fionn/Aghafin</u> > ahiˈfan (BLÉ 41248 – text record 1985) in the same district. Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh records *cúl fionn* 'gristly outer portion of tough steak' as ku:l fʹan, and *fionn* 'these boots would fit *Fionn* mac Cool' as fʹan in <u>Emper</u>, barony of Moygoish, Co. Westmeath (1948: 259).

There is evidence of the development *-cht > -rt*, a feature characteristic of the Irish of Gaoth Dobhair, and also found in a few other areas,[19] in two surnames in the study area: Ó Connachtáin > *Connaughton* > ˈkonərˌtən (local), *Connorton* (Census 1901);[20] Ó Neachtain > *Naughton/Naughten* > ˈnorˌtən (local), *Norton* (Census 1901).[21] Similarly, the province of Connacht is known to some conservative [English] speakers in the study area as ˌkonˈərt < Connacht (J. Parker). A handful of other surnames show the change *-ch > -r/rt*: Mac Lochlainn > *McLoughlin* > məˈglorkˌlən (L. Finnegan); Mac Cochláin > *Coughlan* > ˈkorkˌlən and ˈkortˌlʹən. These forms of Mac Cochláin > *Coughlan* are in common use throughout west Offaly, an area with which this surname has a long association.

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[19] Carrownamannarth < *Ceathrú na mBeannacht*, a local form of the townland of <u>Ceathrú na Mallacht/Carrownamallaght</u> in east Mayo - BLÉ 36342).

[20] There were one hundred people with the surname *Connaughton* in Westmeath in 1901 (out of 637 in the whole country). There were a further forty who used the spelling *Connorton*, thirty nine of whom were living in the barony of Kilkenny West, with the other individual living in the neighbouring barony of Clonlonan (Census 1901). In the country as a whole the combined figures for the spellings *Connorton* (70) *Connerton* (15) *Conerton* (10) and *Conorton* (6) give a total of 101. Outside of the study area these forms were most often recorded in counties Galway (22), Dublin (15) and Roscommon (14).

[21] Households using the spellings *Naughten* and *Norton*, are found side by side in the same townland (<u>Ardnagragh (Digby)</u> in Drumraney parish (Census 1901).

The position of stress in the Irish formerly spoken across Connacht and Leinster is one of its the most distinguishing characteristics:

> ... although like the Irish of Munster it shifted the accent from the root syllable to an originally unstressed long vowel, the accent did not remain on the long syllable, but was thrown back again onto the previously accented syllable. The first shift of accent had weakened the newly unstressed vowel and it remained weakened when the accent again fell upon it. Thus ˈ*scadán* was first stressed on the first syllable. Because the second syllable was long the accent shifted giving ˈ*sca*ˈ*dán* with the stress on second syllable but with a weakening of the first now unaccented syllable to the neutral vowel *schwa : sc*əˈ*dán*.
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> Later the accent moved back to the first syllable, and the schwa became an unclear but fully stressed vowel: ˈ*scudán*. (Williams 1998: 556).

Donn Piatt, in commenting on a list of Irish words[22] from the Shannonbridge and Clonmacnoise areas (barony of Garrycastle) in Co. Offaly, states that there was no need to mark stress as it was 'as in Northern Irish' (Piatt 1933a: 28). It can be assumed that it is the Irish of the Northern half of the country that is meant here, where the emphasis is almost always on the initial syllable (Williams 1998: 557). Williams notes that the word *patachán* is spelt *putachán* on this list, and cites the presence of this weakened but fully stressed *u* vowel as evidence that stress had shifted from the initial syllable towards the final syllable, and subsequently back on the initial syllable in the dialect of Irish formerly spoken in this part of Offaly (as in the word *scadán* mentioned above).

This phenomenon is well attested throughout the province of Connacht; particularly in multisyllabic words with a long vowel in the second syllable (Ó hUiginn 1994: 545). A handful of such examples occur in minor placenames in the study area, and in one townland name.

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[22] 'List supplied by C. Mac Aonghusa, whose grandfather was one of the last four natives of the locality to know an amount of Irish natively' (Piatt 1933a: 28). According to Tim Robinson (2011: 26) Criostóir Mac Aonghusa (1905-91), father of the late broadcaster Proinsias Mac Aonghusa, was a native of Co. Offaly (born near Banagher, and reared outside Shannonbridge, (Ní Mhurchú & Breatnach 2003: 65)), and is most likely the person referred to by Piatt here. Elsewhere Piatt mentions 'Hubert McGinnis (died 1923)' of Shannonbridge as one of the last Irish speakers in Co. Offaly (Piatt 1933b: 111).

da ˈkuʃˌlɑːn (P. Moran 2009) (< the *caisleán*), is the name of a small laneway in the townland of <u>Bryanmore Upper</u> in Drumraney parish.[23] A small area in <u>Killeenmore</u> townland, in Bunown parish, is known locally as ˈkulʼˌiːnʼ (P. Slevin 2007) (< *coillín*). This pattern of stress shift has led to the re-analysis of the townland name <u>Bleanphuttoge</u> (in Kilkenny West parish) as follows: *Bléin Phatóige* 'inlet of the small vessel' > *Bléin Phutóige* 'inlet of the intestine'(!). The initial vowel of the second element, *patóg* 'small vessel' weakened from a to ə when stress was shifted to the final syllable. The subsequent shifting of stress back onto the initial syllable caused this vowel to be realised as u, with *patóg* being mistakenly understood as *putóg*. The key historical forms are: *Plein Pattogi* (CGG 108 1110c), *Blen[ſ]tok*[24] (Crown Lands 124 1540-1), *Bleanpotogg* (CPR Jas. I 2a 1604), and *blaidheain phutoig* (OSNB: pl. 1837). [25]

A small number of words in Connacht Irish have retained final stress. In almost all such cases weakening or loss of the initial syllable is evident. This occurred when stress was shifted towards the final syllable: *arán* > ˈrɑːn; *coláiste* > ˈklɑʃtʼə (Ó hUiginn 1994: 545);

> Is cosúil go gcleachtaí an nós seo chomh fada ó thuaidh le Co. Shligigh (O'Rahilly, 1932, 99)[=IDPP], agus tá fianaise le fáil, más beagán féin é, gur láidre in oirthear ná in iarthar an chúige é. Thug Ó Máille (1927, 109) faoi deara gur ghnách le cainteoirí as oirthear na Gaillimhe, Ros Comáin, agus Liatroim, an bhéim a chur ar an dara siolla i bhfocail ar nós *an t-oileán, iarann, tearmann ...* (Ó hUiginn 1994: 546). *It is apparent that this practice* [vowel weakening] *used to be found as far north as Co. Sligo* (O'Rahilly, 1932, 99)[=IDPP]. *There is some evidence, scant though it may be, that this tendency was stronger in the east than in the west of the province.* Ó Máille (1927, 109) *noticed that it was usual for* [Irish-] *speakers from east Galway, Roscommon and Leitrim to*

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[23] The site of a ruined castle lies adjacent to this laneway.

[24] Mac Niocaill (*Crown Lands* 124) gives *Blenstok*, though the *s* here is most likely a scribal error (ſ for s).

[25] For a more detailed discussion of the placename <u>Bleanphuttoge</u>, see Finnegan, A. 'Logainmneacha Chill Chainnigh Thiar agus Chluain Lonáin - Ainmneacha na mBailte Fearainn', unpublished doctoral thesis, NUI Galway (2012), 62-66.

> *emphasise the second syllable of words like an t-oileán*[26]*,*
> *iarann, tearmann ...* (Ó hUiginn 1994: 546).

Ó Sé (1989: 157) is of the view that Co. Roscommon was the core area for stress shifting as outlined above. He also mentions the intriguing possibility that this pattern of stress shifting was a feature of the Shannon basin, linking north Tipperary with the northeast Connacht area and possibly extending into part of Co. Longford (cf. IDPP 101). Williams (1998), as we have seen above, has shown that such stress shifting was also a feature of the Irish of west Offaly.

In the case of five minor island names on Lough Ree, the first syllable of the element *oileán* appears to have been lost through apheresis: Oileán Fionn > *Illanfan* > ˈlʼanˈfan; Oileán Rua > *Red Island* > ˈlʼanˈruː; *?*Oileán an Bháid > *Illandavagh* > ˈlʼanəˈvaː; *?*Oileán an Steallaidh > lʼanəhiʃtilʼə; *?*Oileán na Giúise > *Lannausta*[27] > ˈlʼanəˈgʼuːʃ (P. Slevin 2007). The development of *oileán* > *ʼleán* > ˈlʼan in these names represents good evidence of the presence of final stress, at least in some words, in the dialect formerly spoken in the study area on the Westmeath shore of Lough Ree. This very proximity to the Shannon – since the river may be seen either as a linguistic barrier or a linguistic conduit – gives the study area a particular significance in the study of the historical distribution of Irish dialects. Some features peculiar to the study area may not have been common to the rest of Westmeath, or even the western portion of the county, but may relate to the Shannon basin itself as an area of linguistic continuity. The overall picture therefore remains unclear, though it can be said with a degree of certainty that the Irish spoken in at least the western half of Westmeath had many features in common with that which was spoken across a wider area encompassing west Offaly, southwest Longford, and eastern Connacht. On the other hand, in the eastern half of the county, and in areas adjoining Co. Meath, it seems likely that the dialect spoken

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[26] Ó Máille (1927) does not give *oileán* as an example on p. 109 or elsewhere in his discussion of stress.

[27] See *Lannausta Bay* in <u>Collum</u> (barony of Rathchline, Co. Longford N 021 561). Originally an island name. The other small islands listed above lie between the islands of <u>Inchmore</u> and <u>Inchturk</u> and Portlick Bay in Co. Westmeath. Further examples of apheresis in island names can be found in a group of three small islands just north of <u>Inchenagh</u>, a large island on Lough Ree in the barony of Rathchline, Co. Longford (local forms, after Cahill et al 2006: 160, in italics): Bushy Island > *Lanasky* [= Oileán na Sceiche], Goats Island > *Lanagower* [= Oileán an Ghabhair], Little Island > *Lanageish* [= Oileán na Géise]ʼ, final stress is also in evidence in the townland name <u>Tullvran/Tulaigh Bhioráin</u>, also in the barony of Rathchline (BLÉ 33429).

had features in common with the Irish of southeast Ulster. The boundary between these two centres of influence on Westmeath Irish, east Connacht and southeast Ulster, remains unclear and only a comprehensive analysis of placenames and other evidence across Co. Westmeath and adjacent counties will further illuminate it.[28]

Abbreviated References

OSNB	Ordnance Survey name books, arranged by civil parish. MSS in the National Archive; also available in a typescript copy by Fr O'Flanagan.
OSNB: BS	Boundary Survey (anglicised forms of placenames mentioned in the OSNB).
OSNB: pl.	Local Irish form of placenames mentioned in the OSNB – usually written in pencil in the name books.
ASE	'Abstracts of grants of lands…the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, A.D. 1666-1684', app. to *Fifteenth Annual Report from Commissioners of Public Records of Ireland* (1825).
BLÉ	Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann = The Placenames' Database of Ireland. The Placenames Branch (a branch of the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht) in cooperation with FIONTAR (Dublin City University). Accessed: www.logainm.ie. The database entry number (+ record card number) is given in references to this source
BNS	Bailiúchán na Scoileanna = The Schools' Collection. Material gathered as part of 'Scéim Bhéaloideas na Scol (1937-38)'. Irish Folklore Commission. MSS in the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin.
BSD	Books of Survey & Distribution, Co. Westmeath (Microfilm of MS in the National Archive, accessed in James Hardiman Libary, NUI Galway.
CGG	*Cogadh Gaedhel ré Gallaibh; The war of the Gaedhil with the Gaill,* ed. J. H. Todd (1867). London.
Reg.D.	Registy of Deeds, Dublin. References are by volume, page number and deed (memorial transcription).

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[28] An important contribution on Westmeath Irish was published as this article was going to press: Williams, N. (2012) 'Gaeilge na hIarmhí', in Mac Cárthaigh, E. & Uhlich, J. (eds.) *Féilscríbhinn do Chathal ó Háinle.* An Clochomhar, Indreabhán.

CPR	*Irish patent rolls of James I: facsimile of the Irish record commission's calendar prepared prior to 1830* (1966). Dublin.
Census 1901	Electronic version of Census 1901. National Archive, Dublin. Accessed: http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie.
Crown Lands	*Crown Surveys of Lands 1540-1, with the Kildare Rental begun in* 1518, ed. G. Mac Niocaill (1992). Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission.
Dinn.	*Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla: Irish-English Dictionary*, ed. P. S. Dinneen (1927). Dublin: Irish Texts Society.
DS	[Down Survey] *Hibernia Regnum* (barony maps, Sir William Petty 1655-59). The orginals are held in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. A facsimile edition was used here (1908). Southampton: Ordnance Survey.
Fiants	*The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns (1543-1603)*, 4 vol. (reprint, 1994), Dublin: De Búrca. *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records of Ireland* (1879-90). Dublin: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
IDPP	*Irish Dialects Past and Present*, T. F. O'Rahilly (1932). Dublin: Brown & Nolan.
Inq.	*Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellariae Hiberniae asservatarum repertorium I (Lagenia),* ed. J. Hardiman (1826). Dublin.
MIA	*Miscellaneous Irish Annals (A.D. 1114-1437)*, ed. S. Ó hInnse (1947). Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
Piers	*A Chorographical Description of the County of West-Meath. Written A.D. 1682. By Sir Henry Piers of Tristernaght, Baronet.* Published in *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis. Number 1*, ed. C. Vallancey (1774). Dublin. Reprint: Meath Archaeological and Historical Society (1981).
HES	Handcock Estate Survey: 'A Survey of the Estate of Gustavus Handcock Temple Esqr. in the Counties of West-Meath and Kings-Couty [*sic*]'. James O'Donnell (1786). MSS (29 pp.) in the National Library, Dublin; 14 A, 29. A series of estate maps.
TAB	Tithe Applotment Books – MSS in the National Archive, Dublin.

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Local Sources

James Casey c. 40. Forestry contractor, a native of <u>Aghanashanamore</u> in Ballyloughloe parish.

Declan Claffey c. 59. Butcher and building worker, a native of <u>Baltrasna</u> in Kilcleagh parish.

James Hackett c. 74. Farmer, born and reared in <u>Ballynakill</u> in Kilcleagh parish.

Keith Maher 28. Garda from <u>Clonbrusk</u> in St. Mary's parish, Bawny barony. Relatives have land in <u>Rath Upper</u> (Noughaval parish).

Patrick (Paddy) Moran, c. 65. Farmer, a native of <u>Cloghbreen</u> in Drumraney parish.

Brian Muldoon, 27. Accountant, a native of <u>Carn Park</u>.

Jim Parker 74 1999†. Farmer and builder, born and reared in <u>Glassan</u> in Kilkenny West parish.

Patrick (Pateen) Slevin, c. 80. Fisherman and farmer, born and reared on the island of <u>Inchturk</u> on Lough Ree (Noughaval parish).

Liam Finnegan, 69. <u>Cartrontroy</u>, St. Mary's parish, Brawny barony.

Ann Walsh, c. 60 <u>Toberclare</u> (Kilkenny West parish). Nurse, a native of <u>Cartroncroy</u> (Noughaval parish).
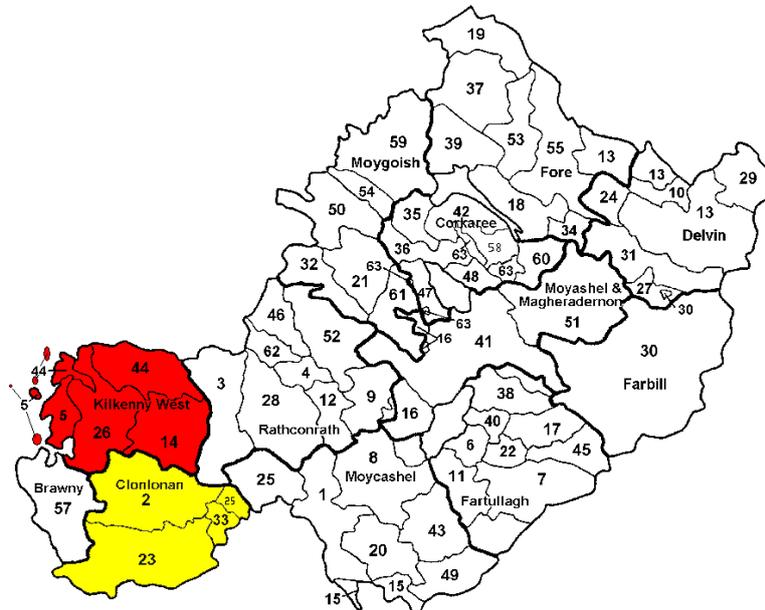
Fig. 1. The baronies and parishes of Westmeath (based on Sheehan 1978).

1)	Ardnurcher or Horseleap		27)	Killagh
2)	Ballyloughloe		28)	Killare
3)	Ballymore		29)	Killua
4)	Ballymorin		30)	Killucan
5)	Bunown		31)	Killulagh
6)	Carrick		32)	Kilmacnevan
7)	Castlelost		33)	Kilmanaghan
8)	Castletownkindalen		34)	Kilpatrick
9)	Churchtown		35)	Lackan
10)	Clonarney		36)	Leny
11)	Clonfad		37)	Lickbla
12)	Conry		38)	Lynn
13)	Delvin		39)	Mayne
14)	Drumraney		40)	Moylisker
15)	Durrow		41)	Mullingar
16)	Dysart		42)	Multyfarnham
17)	Enniscoffey		43)	Newtown
18)	Faughalstown		44)	Noughaval
19)	Foyran		45)	Pass of Kilbride
20)	Kilbeggan		46)	Piercetown
21)	Kilbixy		47)	Portloman
22)	Kilbride		48)	Portnashangan
23)	Kilcleagh		49)	Rahugh
24)	Kilcumny		50)	Rathaspick
25)	Kilcumreragh		51)	Rathconnell
26)	Kilkenny West		52)	Rathconrath