THE TOPOGRAPHY OF BRUIDHEAN DA CHOGA OR BRYANMORE HILL, CO. WESTMEATH

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The placename Bruidhean Da Choga (earlier Bruiden Da Choca) is well attested before 1000 A.D. It is mentioned in Sdele Muice Meic Dathá, The Annals of the Four Masters for the year 919 A.D and in Chronicon Scotorum for the year 604 A.D. The focus of this paper will however be on placenames mentioned in the mid twelfth-century text Bruiden Da Choca, ‘Da Choga’s Hostel’, and their possible connection with modern townland names found in the vicinity of Bruidhean Da Choga or Bryanmore Hill, which is situated about eight miles to the east of Athlone, in the parish of Drumraney, barony of Kilkenny West, Co. Westmeath.

I would like to acknowledge at this point that Gregory Toner’s edition of Bruiden Da Choca, hereafter referred to as ‘the text’, has substantially informed this paper (Toner 2007). Indeed it was somewhat to my chagrin that I discovered on close reading of Dr Toner’s notes that many of the questions I had set out to answer on this place had already been answered both by him and by the great Westmeath placenames’ scholar Fr Paul Walsh. Nevertheless, many of the placenames mentioned in the text remain unidentified and I feel this paper, which has mainly focused on townland names, may have something to add.

I will not give a summary of the text itself except to say it concerns the armies of Ulster and Connacht meeting at the hostel of Da Choga, following an earlier encounter near the ford of Athlone, resulting in a terrible battle and the destruction of that hostel. It is in the context of battle and death that most of the placenames in the text

1 I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Nollaig Ó Muireáil for his assistance in preparing this paper, which was first presented at the Second International Conference on the Early Medieval Toponymy of Ireland and Scotland – ‘The Earliest Strata’, at Queen’s University, Belfast on the 13th of November 2009.
are mentioned. Individual deaths recorded in the narrative are almost always associated with a placename (Toner 2007).

John O’Donovan first identified the precise location of Bruidhean Da Choga in 1837. It seems he already had an inkling as to where the place Bruidhean Da Choga was located as in one of his earlier letters from Westmeath he made a request for; “All the references in Mac Firbis, the Annals, Keating etc., to Bruihe-an-Da Choga, a celebrated fortress in the Territory of Cuircne – if this place be not now identified, it will be very difficult to bring the evidences together in 20 years hence,” (OSL WH: 23). 2 The Territory of Cuircne or Machaire Chuircne is roughly co-extensive with the barony of Kilkenny West, located in south Co. Westmeath. It is bounded by Lough Ree to the west, the Breensford River to the south and the river Inny to the north.

Bruidhean, or in current orthography bruion, is usually translated as a hostel or fairy palace – there were six celebrated hostels of Ireland. O’Donovan identified the remains of Bruidhean Da Choga as a large ringfort on the south-western slope of what is now known as Bryanmore Hill, anciently Bruidhean Da Choga or Sliaabh Màlann. This hill is in the townland of Bryanmore Upper, which along with Bryanmore Lower originally formed part of a ballybetagh around Da Choga’s hostel. O’Donovan also included the nearby townlands of Carrickaneha and Kiltuber lie between them and Bruidhean Da Choga.

Kiltuber

Coill [an] Tobair ‘wood of the well’

Toner has suggested Kiltuber can be connected to topar Cille Lasra ‘the well of Cill Lasra’ mentioned in the text; its location over the brow of the hill to the north-east of Bruidhean Da Choga agrees quite

well with the account in the text of the warrior Dubhthach throwing a stone a great distance over the hostel. This rock was subsequently to be found in the well of Ceall Lasra, which the text implies, later occupied the site of Bruidhean Da Choga (Toner 2007). The Irish forms of Kiltuber in the Ordnance Survey name-book (forms 8 & 9 below) seem to indicate an initial element of coill rather than cill; however the presence of the second element tobar in such proximity leads me to agree with Toner in connecting topar Cille Lasra with this townland.

5. Killentubber Larkin 1808
6. Kiltobber OSNB Drum. 1:3 HCSVR 1824
7. Kiltubber OSNB Drum. 1: BS 1837
8. coill¹ a tobar OSNB Drum. 1 Pl. 1837
9. Coill a’ Tobair² OSNB Drum. 1 1837

The picture is somewhat complicated, by D.H. Kelly who visited the area with W.M. Hennessy in 1871, and found it to “Correspond in all aspects with the narrative” (Kelly 1879: 254). He identifies Ceall Lasra with a holy well (marked ‘Lady Well’ on the first edition Ordnance Survey map) near a ringfort in the northern comer of Bryanmore Upper townland; he claims a huge rock as mentioned in the text is still to be found in this well, and that it was the nearby

² Ordnance Survey Letters – the original letter numbers are referred to here.

³ = Parish of Drumraney, Name-book 1.

¹ ‘c’ill a tobar’. It is interesting to note that the ‘o’ was inserted here, and it is clear that a gap was deliberately left between the ‘C’ and the ‘ill’. It is difficult to distinguish between coill and cill as both are usually anglicised ‘kil/kill’. It is possible that O’Donovan inserted the ‘o’ on consulting the local inhabitants.

² ‘wood of the well.’ Translation written in ink in the OSNB; these were usually written by John O’Donovan.
ringfort which contained Bruidhean Da Choga, and not the uppermost and much larger ringfort to the south which O'Donovan identified as Bruidhean Da Choga. A third ringfort located in the north-eastern corner of Bryanmore Upper is known locally as the ‘rahin’. There seems to have been some awareness of the significance of Bruidhean Da Choga locally. Patrick Moran, a farmer in his mid-sixties from the neighbouring townland of Cloghbreen, recounts his father telling him “there were five Breen in Ireland”, ‘The Breen’ in Bryanmore Upper townland being one of them.

Carrickaneha  
*Carraga an Fhéith ‘rock of the raven’*

O'Donovan recounts a tradition that a large rock found in Carrickaneha townland had been thrown there by a giant from Cnoc Aiste hill three miles distant (OSL WH: 46). The same story explaining the supposed trajectory of the house-sized rock found on the highest point in Carrickaneha townland has been repeated to me in the locality. The alignment between the two hills is quite striking, with an open low plain stretching out between, eliciting a somewhat obvious folk explanation of the initial *Carrag* (Carrick) element. It is interesting that Carrickaneha is not mentioned in any of the major seventeenth-century sources, unlike the townlands around it which are mentioned frequently. The name of this townland may not be very old, and intriguing as O'Donovan’s Carragh an Éitigh, or ‘Rock of the Lie’ (see below – form 5) may be in the context of Bruidhean Da Choga, I have as yet come across no clear evidence connecting this townland name to the text. *Carragh an Fhathaigh ‘Giant’s Rock*’ seems a possibility, but none of the quite late forms I have found so far support this. The present local pronunciation is /karika,ne:/ as can be seen in form 7 below. *Carragh an Fheth ‘rock of the raven’* has been suggested to me (Ó Muraíle pers. comm. 2009) and fits well with the current pronunciation, and the other evidence.

6 This form follows Walsh (1935: 393–97). Locally (Patrick Moran) /'noxon'asta/ or /'kno'asta/.

Attempts have been made in the past to link a hill called Cnoc in Choscair or Sliabh Beag, which is mentioned in the text,9 with Cnoc Aiste. Given the strikingly unobstructed alignment between Bruidhean Da Choga and Cnoc Aiste the temptation to do so is obvious. Paul Walsh has, however, comprehensively dismissed such claims, instead identifying Cnoc in Choscair with Knockycosker (Walsh 1935: 393–97). This is a townland some fourteen miles to the east, which seems quite far away relative to many of the other identifiable places mentioned in the text – even if, as has been suggested, the context implies a considerable distance from Bruidhean Da Choga (Toner 2007: 187). In any case, Walsh’s argument is shaky here in that he suggests, in dismissing a link between Cnoc in Choscair and Cnoc Aiste, that the manner in which the alternative name Sliabh Beag is deployed in the text implies the name Cnoc in Choscair had gone out of use in favour of Sliabh Beag by the time the story was being written (Walsh 1935: 393–7). If Cnoc in Choscair was obsolete in the mid twelfth Century, how then can one safely connect it to the current townland of Knockycosker? Cnoc in Choscair, as Toner has also concluded (2007: 187), remains therefore unidentified.

7 ‘the lying rock’, JO’D.
8 Local informant.
9 ‘Sliabh Bicc’ and ‘Sliabh Beag’ (Toner 2007: 134 & 266).
Cloghbreen  
*Cloch Bhruine* ‘stone of the hostel’

Further to the earlier discussion of the heroic hurling of stones during the battle we have another adjacent townland called Cloghbreen. This is surely Cloch Bhruine, and may have been the ultimate destination of Dubhthach’s stone. O’Donovan and O’Kelly (1879) tell us that the ringfort at Bryanmore once had a stone circle but that few of these stones then remained. One of these stones may have been moved at some point to the townland — or local tradition may have identified a stone in the townland as that cast by Dubhthach, giving the townland its name. Such speculation aside, Cloghbreen was a rocky townland prior to reclamation in the 1960s and the name may simply be descriptive of this rocky area beside the site of the hostel in Bryanmore townland.

The first two forms seem to support Cloch Bhruine, or ‘stone of the hostel’; the anglicised second element ‘vireny’ seems to be an attempt to represent the genitive singular of *bruion*, including lenition following the feminine *cloch*. This townland is situated outside the ancestral land of the O’Breens, which was to the west in the barony of  

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10 ‘Breen’s stone (house)’, JO’D.  

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**BRUIDHEAN DA CHOGA**

Brawny so it seems unlikely that, as suggested in the Ordnance Survey name-book (see n. 10 above), they would have a house here.

I now wish to return to discussing the four townlands containing initial *bruion* anglicised as ‘bryan’. The pre-1800 references to Bruidhean Da Choga run to almost a full page in *Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames* (Ó Riain, Ó Murchadhá & Murray 2005: 209–10). I have found quite a number of historical forms in the English language sources, which indicate that at least in the case of Bryanbeg, subdivision had occurred by the early seventeenth-century.

**Bryanbeg Lower**  
*Bruion Bheag Íochtar* ‘hostel, (little), lower’

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<tr>
<td>13. Bruighean beg</td>
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<td>14. Bruighean Beag11</td>
<td>OSNB Drum. 1 1837</td>
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11 ‘little fairy palace – Old Cormac Martin’, JO’D.
It is interesting to note that lenition is not marked, as would be expected following the feminine noun *bruíon*, in the second element *beg* of form 10 above which was recorded in pencil in the OSNB and likely represents a local Irish form. Lenition is also not marked in the Irish form given by O’Donovan for Bryanmore Lower (see form 13 below). We know that the Irish Language was probably in rapid decline in south Co. Westmeath by the 1830s. Pádraig Ó Fágáin (1985: 141–7) estimates that there were only 2000 native speakers in the whole county in 1851, with most of these concentrated in areas in the east of the county near the Meath border. There were only eighteen native speakers recorded in the Barony of Kilkenny West in 1881. This small number could easily be accounted for by immigrants to the area from other parts of the country. Garret Fitzgerald (1984: 131) gives an estimated minimum level of Irish speaking of zero per cent for those born in the Barony of Kilkenny West in 1881. This small number could easily be accounted for by immigrants to the area from other parts of the country. Garret Fitzgerald (1984: 131) gives an estimated minimum level of Irish speaking of zero per cent for those born in the Barony of Kilkenny West in 1881. It is worth noting that the language seems to have been in a relatively stronger position in the adjacent barony of Brawny, which includes the town of Athlone – here the figure for 1831–41 is six per cent, and for the decade 1771–1781 is thirty two per cent. It is important to note that these are estimates of the minimum level of Irish-speaking based on the levels of ability recorded among decennial age groups in the post-Famine censuses (1881, 1861 & 1851). It is likely that Irish speakers were disproportionally affected by the Famine (Fitzgerald 1984: 123). As well as this excess mortality, Fitzgerald (1984: 121) also notes that in areas where the ability to speak Irish was mainly confined to the older generation, extrapolations back in time based on this cohort likely underestimate former levels of Irish-speaking. Many Irish speakers could be expected to lose their command of the language as they grew older and less in number, and found themselves mainly interacting with people younger than themselves who did not speak the language. This leads me to conclude that Irish was likely spoken in most cases by those who were middle-aged or older by the time of O’Donovan’s visit to the area in 1837. O’Donovan, writing from the Parish of Killare eight miles to the north-east of Bruidhean Da Choga, mentions “the very old people who can speak Irish, of whom there now remains but a small number” (OSL WH: 137).

I have no forms indicating that the division of Bryanmore into Upper and Lower townlands is of any antiquity, though further investigations in the Registry of Deeds may push the date of this division back into the 18th Century. It may have been divided by analogy with Bryanbeg, but what is most notable is that Bryanmore Lower lies at the base of the hill, while Bryanmore Upper occupies its upper slopes.

12 Some of the historical forms indicate a final element of *uachtarach* (3–5), rather than *uachtair* (g.).
Brynmore

5. Brynemore
6. Brynemore
7. Brinemore
8. Brinemore
9. Bremore
10. Brynmore
11. Brinemore
12. Brinemore
13. Breinmore
14. Lower Bryanmore
15. Bruighean Mór

Bryanmore Upper

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<tr>
<td>Dacho</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruighean Da Choga</td>
<td>OSNB Drum. 1</td>
<td>1837</td>
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O'Donovan's translation of Bruidhean Da Choga as 'Fairy Palace of the two wars' is interesting, the element 'Da' was of course not understood at this time, and this translation may have come from O'Donovan's local informant Cormac Martin, then eighty-seven years old — who O'Donovan tells us resided at the foot of Bruidhean Da Choga in the townland of Curraghroodle. A stream now known as the Breensford flows through this townland, having its source at the lower slopes of the hill itself. Cormac Martin told O'Donovan 'with great confidence that this stream divides the ancient patrimonies of three very ancient families of Westmeath, viz. the Countries of Dillon of Cuircneach from Magawley of Cal-ree, and of O'Bryan (recte O'Breen) of Brawney' (OSL WH: 47). O'Donovan also tells us that this stream, as is common, takes various names according to the lands it flows through, but records only Æth Bhraoin or 'Breen's Ford' which he writes 'seems the most current name of it' (OSL WH: 48). According to Cormac Martin it was 'the constant tradition' (OSL WH: 48) that the lands of the O'Breens extended from the Queen's Arms on the bridge of Athlone to Æth Bhraoin. It seems likely, as Toner has mentioned, that this stream is the Bether stream mentioned in the text. Intriguingly Liam Cox describes 'Breensford River' as 'the anglicised form of the ancient name Sruth Gleanna Bruidhean, the river of the Glen of the Bruidhen or hostel' (1994: 42). In another chapter he gives; 'Áth Bruidhne, the ford of the Bruidhean' (1994: 82) as the original name of this stream, and elsewhere Sruth na Bruidhne as another 'original name' (Cox: 51). Unfortunately Cox gives no indication as to where he obtained these forms, and I have not found them attested anywhere. The first form above seems to be based on the following reference in the text; 'im sruthglenn Bruighne bran bracht' (Toner 2007: 120). It seems likely that the sruthghleann 'stream-glen' here refers to the rushy valley immediately below Bruidhean Da Choga with its many springs, or the wider low-lying area which extends for about a mile to the west of Bruidhean Da Choga and is drained by various meandering branches of the Breensford.

A ruined stone structure within the circular enclosure which O'Donovan identified as 'The Breen,' is marked 'Stern's Folly' on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. Local tradition holds that a 'planter' named Stearne attempted to build a castle here but went bankrupt, or alternatively that the fairies kept knocking it down on him as it was being built! A deed from 1802, however reveals that a

\[13\] 'fairy palace (Big)', JO'D.
\[14\] Erased.
\[15\] 'fairy palace of the two wars. 4 masters, Dimshheaneus &c.' JO'D.
\[16\] Da appears to be an attenuated form of dia 'god'. See Toner (2007: 18-19) and O'Rahilly (1946: 127-9).
\[17\] Seven Irish language forms of townland and other names are attributed to Cormac Martin in the Ordnance Survey name-books. All of these are names of places in the immediate vicinity of Bruidhean Da Choga.

\[18\] 'Bether, a river near Da Ceca's hostel, perh. the Breensford River' (Toner 2007: 290).
\[19\] Recension A, 259.
Stearne still held land in the area at that time. In 1837 O’Donovan stated that local tradition considered this to have been a Dillon Castle; he also mentions that a castle is shown on Petty’s Map (Hiberniae Delineatio) of Westmeath at ‘Brinemore’; he goes on to state that this castle “is always called by the Irish [Irish Speakers] Caslán na Brúighne” (OSL WH: 42). A small track immediately adjacent to Stearne’s Folly is at the present time known locally as /da ’kus’lán/.

Three other places mentioned in the text have been identified with modern townlands. Two are in the immediate vicinity of Bruidhean Da Choga, namely Ard mBocain or Ardbuckan, and Ard na Crech or Ardnagragh (Digby) and Ardnagragh (Gray) (Walsh 1957: 112-3). The third, Muine Cainnlige, has been identified as the townland of Bunnahinly in the barony of Brawny, some six miles west towards Athlone (Walsh 2003: 249).

**Lough Slania**  
*Loch Sláine* ‘lake of Sláine’

There is a small lake (c. half an acre in area) named Lough Slania about three-quarters of a mile to the north-west of Bruidhean Da Choga. Cox identifies this lake with a Loch Lén mentioned in the text, simply stating: “Loch Lén – Marked Lough Slania on Ordnance Survey maps in Bryanmore townland.” (1994: 86). The lake is in fact in the adjoining townland of Killinineen. Presumably, it was the lake’s very proximity to Bruidhean Da Choga which influenced his identification. Notwithstanding his initial statement Cox goes on to conjecture that; “Lough Slania appears to have had some curative property in its water whence derived Loch Sláine, anglicised Lough Slania, the lake of health or well-being.” (1994: 86). The DIL gives soundness, completeness, wholesomeness; health; salvation, as meanings for *sláine*.

The Book of Ballymote and Mac Fhirbhisigh’s Book of Genealogies tell us that half of Caill Chaerche which was at Bruidhean Da Choga, was in the possession of Sfil Aodha Sláine i. u. Garban.

20 CGn. 563-185-375183.

In relation to form 2 above, Lishlawn, it has been suggested to me that Lance-Corporal Hogan could have seen ‘Lishlawn’ written down somewhere (Ó Muraile pers. comm. 2009), with the L. standing for Lough. This would give us an Anglicised form very close to the form /lox /sla:n’a/. A development from *Loch Aodha Sláine* to *lox /sla:n’a/* would be possible under the influence of the genitive *Locha (Aodha) Sláine*. It has been suggested that such a genitive form could have been reanalysed as *Loch Sláine* in the nominative (Toner pers. comm. 2011). O’Donovan acknowledges Cormac Martin, his eighty-seven year old local informant, as the source of the form Loch Sláine (form 4 above). There is no trace in this form of Aodha (g.). The current local pronunciation (form 5 above) does not, however, correspond to the form recorded in 1837. A small lake (twenty-three acres) called Lough Slawn is to be found in the parish of Cashel, Co. Longford, about twelve miles to the north-west of Lough Slania. O’Donovan gives the Irish for this lake as Loch Slaine 22.

There is another small lake (c. one acre) called Lough Slawn 23 in the townland of Bruidhean Da Choga (OSL WH: 39 & 41 & Hogan 1910: 138). According to *Chronicon Scotorum*, Aedh Sláine was killed in 604 A.D. at Lough Sewdy near Ballymore about five miles to the north-east of Bruidhean Da Choga (Hennessy 1866: 69). Might Lough Slania be an anglicisation of a form of *Loch Aodha Sláine*?

1. Lough Slania  
2. Lishlawn (Lough)  
3. Loch Sláine  
4. Loch Sláine  
5. /lox /slá:n’/  

1. Lough Slania  
2. Lishlawn (Lough)  
3. Loch Sláine  
4. Loch Sláine  
5. /lox /slá:n’/  

21 ‘Sláine’s lake. (Sláine nomen mulieris). Cormac Martin’, JO’D.

22 See OSNB for Co. Longford, par. of Cashel, book no. 2.

23 See DARDNI. Online map of Lough Navar forest park which shows Lough Slawn.
of Aghameelan, parish of Inishmacsaint, Co. Fermanagh. The lake is not named on the Ordnance Survey first edition map, nor is it mentioned in the OSNB. Further evidence may come to light to sustain a connection between Lough Siania and Aodh Siaine, in the meantime O'Donovan's Loch Slaine 'lake of Slaine' cannot safely be replaced.

One of the other lakes mentioned in the text, Loch Luatha, was situated about one and a half miles to the south of Bruidhean Da Choga, it was identified by O'Donovan and forms part of the name of the parish in which it was situated: Ballyloughloe or Baile Locha Luatha. According to the text Luath, the wife of Da Choga, died there. The lake, which is now drained, formerly occupied about two acres.

Creevenamanagh "Gniomh na Manach" 'gneeve' of the monks'

Another death recorded in the text is that of Cliabach Cetroeach who was killed by Dubhthach at a place subsequently known as Druim Cliabaig. The Annals of Tigernach record that in 1177 a hail shower fell in Cuircne at 'Druim cliabaigh', destroying 'Gnim na tri sesreach'. The implication here is clearly that the hail destroyed the crops sown or growing in this gniomh or twelfth part of a ploughland.

1. ?.Gnim na tri sesreach ATig. 443 1177
2. Gnywenemanagh alias Gnywteremnanagh Fiants Eliz. 1355 1569
3. ?.Guivenemanagh CPR Jas. I 90a 1606
5. Gyuvenemanagh CPR Jas. I 228a 1612

24 Feminine personal name. See Ó Corráin & Maguire (1990: 166).
25 Gneeve often appears as the anglicised form of gniomh in the State Papers. Ó Dónaill (1977: 653) gives 'twelfth part of ploughland; grass of one cow' as meanings for gniomh.

6. Gnewnamanagh DS 1655c
7. Gnewnamanagh BSD 14b 1670c
8. Gnewnamanagh ASE 230 1673
9. Creenanmanach TAB 1823
10. Creenanmanach TAB 1823
11. Crievenamanagh OSNB Kilk. 1: John Hogan 1837
13. Criachnamanach OSNB Kilk. 1 Pl. 1837
14. cri na manach OSNB Kilk. 1 1837
15. Crích na Manach OSNB Kilk. 1 1837

I have tentatively identified Gniomh na dTri Seisreach with the townland of Creevenamanagh, which is situated about three miles to the north-west of Bruidhean Da Choga. The Annals of Tigernach are closely associated with Clonmacnoise. This gniomh may have belonged to the monastery, which would explain the inclusion of the reference to the hail shower of 1177 in the Annals. Kehnel (1997: 295) lists three office holders in the monastery who were of the Cuircne, all of whom were active in the eleventh century. Creevenamanagh is the only townland in Cuircne (now the Barony of Kilkenny West) which appears to include the initial element gniomh. Excluding townland names, I have found only one other placename in the barony; Leighgneynlogh al' Leighgnewnewlogh (Inq. Car. I (3) 1625), which appears to include the element gniomh. In the adjoining Barony of Clonlonan I have also only found one such name; Gniwkill (BSD 95b 1670c & DS 1655c). Both of these names are now probably obsolete. Leighgneynlogh al' Leighgnewnewlogh could represent Leathghnionm an Locha. A part of Lough Makeegan lies within the townland of Creevenamanagh.
A long narrow field showing aratral curve lies in the centre of the townland (See Fig. 1). Aratral curve is a dog leg curve found in the outline of medieval tillage fields which is believed to have its origin in the turning of ox-teams as they approached the headland. Medieval tillage fields were usually long and narrow due to the difficulty of turning the plough-team (Atkin 1995: 19). Gniomh na dTri Seisreach can be translated as ‘plough land of the three plough-teams’. Ploughlands typically comprised about 120 acres (McErlean 1983: 322). This field, with an area of almost nine Irish acres, is very close to one twelfth part of 120 acres, or the area of a gniomh. Given the quality of the land in the area it would be to be expected that ploughlands would be smaller rather bigger than the generally regarded 120 acres. This field may be Gniomh na dTri Seisreach.

From the reference in the Annals of Tigernach we know that Gniomh na dTrí Seisreach was at or on Druim Cliabach. The high point (92m) of a conspicuous and steep sided ridge lies in the townland of Creevenamanagh. The north-eastern slope of the ridge lies within the adjacent townlands of Tullyhogan, Tullylanesborough, Tullyhumnos and, interestingly Magheracuirknagh or Machaire Chuirce, a townland of a mere five acres which carries the former name of the entire territory. There is a cluster of four ringforts to the south of the high point of the ridge, with a further three in the immediate vicinity. If we presume the naming of this ridge after the slain Cliabach Cétreach to be a false etymology executed for literary purposes, then looking at the meaning of the word itself may be worthwhile. The DIL gives; (1) wild; animal; boar. (2) slender-bodied. From either of these some connection to the shape or appearance of the ridge itself could be inferred. The form given in Rescension B, Druim Cliathcha (from cliathach, rib? frame? wing?), could also refer to the shape of the ridge (although other meanings of the word in DIL include ‘enclosure made of hurdles’ and battle, attack, skirmish”).

I would like to conclude with an attempt to pinpoint the location of Mag nDerg. This plain is mentioned several times in the text and seems to have been somewhere between the ford of the Shannon at Athlone and Bruidhean Da Choga. It is stated in the text that ‘Derg son of Dolar of the Fomóraig fell there against the Tuatha Dé Danann in the mustering of the battle of Mag Tuired on account of which it was called Mag nDerg’.

Various writers have suggested possible locations. O’Donovan placed it at Moyvore which is some distance to the north, while Walsh described it as a plain running east from Athlone to Moate including Loch Luatha. Toner has tentatively identified the very large townland\(^{31}\) of Moydrum as a possible location for Mag nDerg and discusses his reasons for doing so in detail in the textual notes to his edition of the text (2007: 169–70). I merely wish to add that, from a topographical point of view, it seems quite possible that the large contiguous raised bogs found in the townlands of Moydrum, Annaghgortagh, Carn Park and Waterstown among others, which lie between Athlone and Bruidhean Da Choga, formed the Mag nDerg. Highly humified sphagnum peat is often referred to as ‘red bog’. These bogs are of this type and indeed ‘red-bog’ was a technical term employed by Petty during the Down Survey. The Down Survey barony maps identify two of the bogs in question as ‘A Great Red Bog’ (see Fig. 2).

A glacial ridge runs east from Athlone under its main street, and is clearly visible at the eastern edge of the town in the townland of Bunnavaally. It is the ridge indicated by the second element of Moydrom or Maigh Droma, ‘plain of the ridge’. It is the most logical route for anyone wishing to progress east from Athlone towards Bruidhean Da Choga. Great red raised bogs extend in each direction to the north and the south of this ridge. It is my contention that either the area covered by the bogs to the north of this esker at Moydrum, or the bogs to the south, or both, comprise the Mag nDerg.

\(^{31}\) Moydrum is comprised of two adjacent townlands, one in the barony of Clonlonan, and a second in the barony of Brawny. The combined acreage is 1074.
AENGUS FINNEGAN

ABBREVIATIONS

Drum. Drumaney (parish)
JO'D John O'Donovan
Kilk. Kilkenny West (parish)

ABBREVIATED REFERENCES


BNS Baileúchán na Scoileanna = Schools’ Manuscript Collection, MSS in National Folklore Collection, U.C.D. See the MSS for Drumaney National School.


Census A census of Ireland, circa 1659, with supplementary material from the poll ordinances (1660–1661), ed. Seamus Pender (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission 1939).

CGn. Cláríann na nGniomhús = Registry of Deeds, MSS in King’s Inns, Dublin.

CPR Irish patent rolls of James I: facsimile of the Irish record commission’s calendar prepared prior to 1830, introduction by M.C. Griffith (Dublin: Stationary Office 1966).

Crown Lands Crown Survey of Lands 1540–1, with the Kildare Rental begun in 1518, ed. G. Mac Niocaill (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission 1992)


Fiants The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns: During the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Philip & Mary and Elizabeth I, (Dublin: Edmund Burke 1994).


OSNB Ordnance Survey name-books (Westmeath) – MSS in the National Archive, Dublin. [Bound copies typed by Fr Michael O’Flanagan were accessed in James Hardiman Library, NUIG – The original MSS were also consulted]

OSNB Pl. Forms recorded in pencil in the Ordnance Survey name-books – usually local Irish forms.
OSNB: BS  Boundary Survey. Forms recorded by the townland boundary surveyor c. 1825, cited in the OSNB.

OSNB:HCSVR  House of Commons Survey and Valuation Report (1824) cited in the OSNB.


REFERENCES BY AUTHOR


