The Medieval County of Tipperary

Legend:
- Cantreds
- Modern Baronies

Fig. I.
The Cantreds of Medieval Tipperary

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The identification of the cantreds of the medieval county of Tipperary is important for several reasons. In the first place, it provides the key to the division of land among the first generation of Norman conquerors, for the cantred was the territorial unit employed in all royal grants in this region. Attempts to identify the existing baronies with the medieval cantreds have served solely to increase the prevailing confusion on the subject of the Norman settlement in Co. Tipperary. Secondly, the great Norman manors often occupied an entire cantred, and sometimes even a combination of cantreds. And, thirdly, the cantred was the basic administrative subdivision equivalent to the English hundred. Each cantred had its own serjeant and coroner and was separately presented before the justices in eyre when they visited the county.

There were altogether thirteen cantreds in Co. Tipperary during the thirteenth century: Ormond, Owney and Arra, Eliogarty, Elyocarroll, Eoghanacht Cashel, Slieardagh, Movan, Moccalyn, Comsey, Muscry, Okonagh, Ofa, and Ifowyn (Fig. 1). By the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, the cantreds of Comsey and of Owney and Arra disappear from the surviving lists. Comsey was merged with the neighbouring cantred of Moccalyn: the two cantreds were represented by a single jury in the eyre of 33-34 Edward I, and in 1322 Moccalyn had two serjeants instead of the usual one, which suggests that Comsey retained its serjeant. Precisely what happened to Owney and Arra is uncertain: two thirteenth century accounts associate Muscry with Arech (Arre), so they may have been combined in the same way as Moccalyn and Comsey. Thus, for legal and administrative purposes, the county was divided into eleven parts.

1 Though not entirely accurate, the term ‘Norman’ is used generically throughout this paper as being the best to describe the Normans, Welsh, Bretons, Flemings and others, who found their way to Ireland during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

2 This is too large a question to discuss here. However, I hope to publish a paper on the Norman settlement in Tipperary in the near future. The most comprehensive, though inadequate, attempt to sort out the settlement was made nearly sixty years ago by W. F. Butler (see ‘Clan and Settler in Ormond’, *JCHAS*, 20(1914), 1-16). More recent histories have done nothing to clear up the confusion.

3 See, for example, *P.R.O., Dublin, MSS* Cal. Roll of the Justices Itinerant in Co. Tipperary, 33-34 Edward I. A less detailed transcript of the same eyre may be found in *P.R.O., Dublin, Cal. Plea Rolls, xi*, 176 ff.

4 Occasionally some of the remaining cantreds were combined, as in the case of Slieardagh and Movan in 33-34 Edward I (above, fn. 3), but they appear separately in the court of the liberty of Tipperary in 1432 (*Cal. Ormond Deeds, iii*, no. 102).

5 *[P.R.O., Dublin, MSS] Cal. Roll of the Justices Itinerant [in Co. Tipperary, 33-34 Edward I]*, p. 5. At least one of the jurors of Moccalyn came from Comsey (see below, p. 26); Comsey is not mentioned by name in the return.

6 *P.R.O., Dublin, Memoraunda Rolls, xii*, pp. 788-9 (an order to the sheriff of Tipperary commanding him to appear before the exchequer with the chief serjeant and nine serjeants of cantreds).

The modern baronies of Co. Tipperary are of comparatively recent origin: they seem to have taken shape in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, though changes were still made after the Down Survey. Just why the baronies replaced the cantreds is not clear, but since they were introduced over a long period the reasons are doubtlessly complex. The changes involved were often radical. The cantreds of Okonagh, Muscry, Eoghanacht Cashel, Moyenen, Mocatlyn, Comsey, and Elyocarroll were eliminated. Some cantreds, like Eliogarty and Slievardagh, survived with significant modifications, while others—Ormond, Offa, and Ifiowyn (Iffa)—remained more or less unaltered. Extensive changes of this kind occurred in Co. Kilkenny about the same time, and elsewhere as well.

The sources relating to the medieval cantreds are fragmentary in the extreme, but they are sufficiently informative to establish beyond doubt that the cantreds corresponded to the rural deaneries, or to subdivisions within them. The most important single source is the Roll of the Justices Itinerant in Co. Tipperary in 33-34 Edward I, which contains not only the names of the jurors summoned from each cantred, but also numerous placenames in Offa, Ifiowyn, and the combined cantreds of Slievardagh and Moyenen. This eye roll can be supplemented to a limited extent by the returns of the sheriff of the Liberty of Tipperary in 1432 and again in 1447-49. Apart from these, one has to rely on fragmentary information gleaned from charters, manorial extents, and miscellaneous sources.

Neither the cantred nor the rural deanery existed in Ireland before the Norman conquest, but the conquerors used the ancient tribal divisions as a basis for both their administrative and ecclesiastical organisations. This does not mean that secular and ecclesiastical divisions were necessarily identical. On the contrary, the newcomers tended to multiply their administrative divisions: in Tipperary, for example, the deanery of Cashel was divided into two cantreds, Eoghanacht Cashel and Moyenen: in Kilkenny, the deanery of Kells contained no less than four cantreds. But, on the whole, the available evidence indicates that in Tipperary and Kilkenny the cantreds generally adhered to the framework of the deaneries. In this way the church has preserved the outline of the ancient tribal regions more faithfully than the civil organisation, which was subject to change. This is not, of course, an isolated phenomenon: in France, for example, the ecclesiastical provinces reflect the civil organisation of the late Roman Empire, and the parishes of Galicia were based upon the Celtic tribal regions of pre-Roman Spain.

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8 The changes in the north and west were probably due to the dislocation created by the Gaelic recovery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The findings of the Commission and Award in 1606 with respect to the territory of Dough Arra illustrate the extent of official confusion (see 5th Rep. D. K., p. 33). Yet it was in central and southern Tipperary that the most radical changes were introduced, in spite of the fact that these regions had an uninterrupted administrative history.
9 Most of Elyocarroll was absorbed into the barones of Clonlisk and Ballybritt, Co. Offaly; the remainder was incorporated into the barony of Ikerrin.
10 I hope to discuss Kilkenny in a forthcoming number of JRSAI.
11 Liam Ó Buaíthra has established that the medieval cantred of Imokilly, Co. Cork, was considerably larger than the modern barony (see 'An Early Fourteenth Century Placename List for Anglo-Norman Cork,' Dinneanchas, 2(1966), 45). Such alterations, therefore, were widespread, and not confined to a particular region.
12 Cal. Roll of Justices Itinerant; also see fn. 4 above.
13 Cal. Ormond Deeds, iii, no. 102.
14 F. Lot and R. Fawtier, Histoire des Institutions Francaises au Moyen Age, iii (Institutions Ecclesiastiques), Paris 1662, pp. 9 and 162.
The origin of the Celtic regions upon which the cantreds were based remains obscure. Several of them are mentioned in the *Topographical Poems*; most likely they correspond to the ancient Gaelic *tricha cet* rather than the *tuath*. This seems all the more probable because in Tipperary the Normans treated the *tuath* as a unit of land: in the cantred of Eliogarty it was said to contain ten fees or 100 ploughlands; in Ormond and Elyocarroll it was also regarded as a fixed unit of land, but no details are given.

1. **The Cantred of Ormond and of Owney and Arra**

The cantred of Ormond corresponded to the area now included in the baronies of Upper and Lower Ormond. Although Arra formed part of the manor of Nenagh in Ormond, it seems to have been merged with the cantred of Muscry by the end of the thirteenth century, if not earlier. In any event, Owney and Arra does not appear in official records as an independent cantred after 1206. Together, the above-mentioned cantreds corresponded to the deaneries of Ormond and Owney. In spite of the fact that Arra lies in the deanery of Ormond, it was nevertheless attached to Owney for administrative purposes.

2. **The Cantred of Elyocarroll**

This cantred occupied the south-western arm of Co. Offaly that lies in the medieval diocese of Killaloe, and also the northern portion of the barony of Ikerrin, Co. Tipperary, which lies in the same diocese (the parishes of Roscrea, Corbally, Bourney, Rathnavoge, and Borrisnafarney). Ikerrin had no independent existence in the Norman period; it was held by the Purcells partly of the manor of Dunkerkin, the *caput* of Elyocarroll, and partly of the manor of Thurles, the *caput* of the cantred of Eliogarty. Significantly, there is no deanery of Ikerrin.

3. **The Cantred of Eliogarty**

The cantred corresponded to the deanery of Eliogarty, which conforms closely to the modern barony. In the north, however, it included the portion of the barony

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17 For a full discussion of the *tricha cet*, see J. Hogan, 'The Tricha Cet and related Land Measures,' *PRIA*, 38, C(1929), 148-235.
18 In 1303 Hugh Purcell owed services 'pro uno theodo continente decem feoda que faciunt centum carucatas terre,' while John fitzRobert owed services 'pro dimidio theodo continente L carucatas terre... seu quinque feodis [recte: feoda] militum in Drummacharran'—*The Red Book of Ormond*, ed. N. White, Dublin 1932, p. 71.
19 Ibid., pp. 147-54; *Cal. Inq.[visitations] Post M[ortem]*, viii, no 184.
20 In 1385 Thomas Cantwell held 'a tuath and a half' in Arra of the manor of Nenagh (*Cal. Inq. P.M.*, viii, no. 184).
21 See above p. 23.
of Ikerrin which lies in the diocese of Cashel.\textsuperscript{25} It may be noted that most, if not all, of this northern fringe of the cantred was held of the manor of Thurles by the Purcells and Stapletons,\textsuperscript{26} which indicates that that manor corresponded to the deanery rather than to the present barony.

4. The Cantred of Slievardagh

The amercements imposed on the townlands of this cantred in the general eyre of 33-34 Edward I show beyond doubt that it corresponded to the deanery of Slievardagh,\textsuperscript{27} which consisted of the northern parishes of the modern barony.\textsuperscript{28}

5. The Cantreys of Comsey and Moctalyn

These two cantreys were co-extensive with the deanery of Fethard,\textsuperscript{29} which was composed of the southern parishes of the modern barony of Slievardagh and the eastern parishes of Middlethrd. Comsey was that part of the deanery which now lies in Slievardagh, and although it was merged with Moctalyn sometime before the end of the thirteenth century,\textsuperscript{30} the name did not disappear altogether until the nineteenth century.

The names of the jurors of the united cantreys that appear in the eyre of 33-34 Edward I, and later in the rolls of the court of the Liberty of Tipperary (1432 and 1447-49),\textsuperscript{31} indicate that the jurors were either tenants or subtenants of the manor of Kilmartin, which incorporated both cantreys. Two of the jurors in the eyre roll, John Barret and Richard Mauclerck, are named in an extent of the manor in 1308-09;\textsuperscript{32} a third, David de Sancto Albino (Tobin) was lord of the manor of Killernmen (now Kilveman) in Comsey in 1309.\textsuperscript{33} He was presumably a tenant of the manor of Comsey, which was held of Kilmartin.\textsuperscript{34} The connection between the manor and cantred is substantiated to a certain degree by the evidence of the court rolls of 1432 and 1447-49: Edmund fitz James Butler was lord of Kilmartin; Nicholas Braynoke, the chaplain, came from Rathcool; Edmund Power was lord of the same.\textsuperscript{35} Others

\textsuperscript{24} Cal. Roll of Justices Itinerant, pp. 140-174.
\textsuperscript{25} See the ecclesiastical taxations in Cal. Doc. Ire., 1302-07, nos. 718 and 729.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., nos. 718 and 729.
\textsuperscript{27} Cal. Ormond Deeds, iii, no. 102.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., i, no. 418.
\textsuperscript{29} Genealogical Office, Dublin, MS 190, p. 47 (Excerpta Genealogica et Historica e Rotulis Plantis Communis Banci Hiberniae in Tarre Berminghamense depositis).
\textsuperscript{30} Cal. Ormond Deeds, i, no. 118.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., i, no. 118.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., iii, nos. 90, 180 and 194.
may have come from the region of Fethard (Peter Everard), Mauklerstown in the parish of Colman (the Maveclerkes), and Comsey (Richard Tobin).

6. The Cantred of Moyen (Magh Faisin)

The cantred of Moyen occupied a relatively small area stretching from Knockagraffon in the south-west to the borders of Slievardagh in the north-east. It corresponded to the southern portion of the deanery of Cashel. Its outline can be determined with a fair degree of accuracy from the place names mentioned in the eyre roll of 33-34 Edward I: Knockagraffon; Maystereston (a townland adjoining Knockagraffon in the parish of Athassel and Reliekmurry); Tulaghmethan and Millleton (parish of Tullaman); Moygorban, Clonbrokan, and Moybernann (parish of Magorban); and Stevenstown (parish of Railstown). The returns of the sheriff of the Liberty of Tipperary in 1432 and 1447-49 confirm the evidence of the eyre roll, but they do not provide additional information. The cantred was still functioning as an administrative unit in 1514, when two juries were appointed to elect coroners for the Moctalyn and Moyen.

7. The Cantred of Eoghanacht Cashel

The cantred of Eoghanacht Cashel seems to have occupied the central and northern part of the deanery of Cashel. The jurors in the eyre roll of 33-34 Edward I included John Cod, a tenant of Ardmayle; Henry Haket of Geel (now Gailic), Ralph of Synn (in Ballsheenan, a tenement of Ardmayle) and Richard Blanchard, who held six ploughlands in Rathkenan. The returns of 1432 and 1447-49 are not so revealing: Thomas Butler was possibly lord of Ardmayle; Walter FitzHenry de Burgh was a burgess of Cashel, who must have had some lands in the Liberty of Tipperary. Eoghanacht Cashel was sometimes called the cantred of Ardmayle in the early thirteenth century. In 1207 Walter de Lacy was granted the cantred of Ardmayle; after several vicsititudes it passed to Richard de Burgh in right of his wife Egdia, Walter's daughter, sometime before 1225. Although the manor of Ardmayle was later passed to the Butlers, the de Burghs retained Leaugh (now Glankeen). William FitzGeoffrey de Burgh, who appears in the sheriff's return for Eoghanacht Cashel in 1447-49, may have belonged to this branch of the family.

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38 The Everards lived in Fethard in the County of the Cross of Tipperary, but to do suit at the court they must have held land in the Liberty of Tipperary. (The royal grant which created the Liberty of Tipperary in 1228 specifically exempted the lands of the church, or crosslands, from the jurisdiction of the Earl of Ormond. These church lands were organised as a separate royal county. I hope to publish a paper on this subject in a forthcoming number of this Journal).


40 Cal. Ormond Deeds, iv, no. 23.

41 The Red Book of Ormond, p. 92.

42 Ibid., p. 07.

43 Cal. Ormond Deeds, iii, no. 102 (p. 94); iii, no. 255. Cashel was situated in the Cross of Tipperary, not in the Liberty (see fn. 36).

8. *The Cantred of Muscry (Muscroige Chuire)*

The cantred of Muscry, or Muscry Quirk as it was sometimes called, corresponded to the eastern half of the barony of Clanwilliam, most of the barony of Kilnamanagh Lower, and probably also part of Kilnamanagh Upper. The evidence indicates that it corresponded to the deanery of Muscry. Apart from a couple of scattered references to places in Muscry in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—Athassel in 1206 and Grallagh (in Clonbullogue) in 1348—most references occur only in late sixteenth century documents, when the cantred probably no longer existed as an administrative sub-division.

It is very likely that the manor of Kilfea was co-extensive with the cantred in accordance with the usual pattern of settlement in Tipperary, but this cannot be proved as no medieval extent has survived. However, an inquisition held at Clonmel on the 17 July, 1607, revealed that John O'Dwyer held a number of townlands in the parishes of Ballintemple and Toem of the manor of Kilfea, so it would seem that the manor extended over much, if not all, of the cantred.

9. *The Cantred of Okonagh (Eoghanaich Aradh)*

The cantred of Okonagh corresponded to the deanery of Tipperary: all placenames mentioned in connection with the cantred can be located within the deanery. The town of Tipperary was granted by the king to the archbishop of Dublin, together with the cantred of Okonagh, in 1215. Furthermore, it appears from the Irish Plea Rolls that in 1300 the advowson of the church of the castle of Okonagh belonged to the church of Tipperary. In 1334, Richard FitzRichard Geitoum granted the manor of Kilshane in Okonagh to the Earl of Ulster. Kilshane was probably a tenement of the manor of Okonagh, the *caput* of the cantred.

There is some doubt regarding the origin of the name of the cantred. It is usually though to have been derived from *'Uí Cuanach',* now Coonagh, Co. Limerick. P. J. Flynn, on the other hand, has suggested that it was derived from *'Eoghanacht',* which was changed to *'Onaigh' in the sixteenth century as a result of a phonetic change whereby *'g'* became silent. His theory accords better with the facts. In the first place, the Normans appear to have distinguished between Uí Cuanach in Limerick, which they spelt *'Cuanach',* and Eoghanacht in Tipperary, which they spelt

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44 *Topographical Poems,* p. lxx.
45 *Rotuli Chartarum,* 1199-1216, p. 165; P.R.O., London, Minister's Accounts, 3 C 6/1280/21 (account of Alexander Chapman, receiver of Elizabeth de Burgh).
46 See, for example, *Cal. Ormond Deeds,* vi, nos. 65, 86, 89 and 131. Lismackheen and Cowgortie (parish of Templecreery), Cappagh, Drongan, Towryn, and Killadry (all in the parish of Killadry), are among some of the townlands said to be in Muscry.
47 P.R.O., Dublin, Chancery Cal. Inquisitions, x, pp. 6-9.
50 Bodleian Library, Laud MSS, 611, f. 79. I wish to thank Mr. K. W. Nicholls, who kindly gave me a transcript of this charter, which he discovered in the Bodleian.
51 E. S. J. Hogan, *Onomasticon Gaelicum,* Dublin/London 1910; St. J. D. Seymour, *The Diocese of Emyl,* Dublin 1913, p. 36.
52 *The Book of the Gailees and the Golden Veins,* Dublin 1926, pp. 43-44. Eoghanacht Aradh has also been identified with Eoghanacht Caille-na-manach, now Kilnamanagh [*Topographical Poems,* p. lxxvii].
‘Okonagh’.\(^{58}\) Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that such a phonetic change actually occurred. In the early thirteenth century the cantred of Eoghanacht Cashel was sometimes written with a hard ‘g’ (Loganach Cassel or Heyghancassel), and other times with a silent ‘g’ (Yonaichcassel).\(^{54}\) Subsequent references indicate that the hard ‘g’ disappeared altogether. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was usually spelt ‘Oun[agh]t Cassel’\(^{55}\). For some reason, however, the Normans retained the hard sound in Okonagh until the sixteenth century.\(^{66}\)

The site of the castle of Okonagh, or Onagh, about which there has been doubt, was the mote at Dunoghill. In 1630 it was found that Thomas, late Earl of Ormond, ‘was seised in his demesne as of fee of and in the town and lands of Onagh, alias Donoghhill, consisting one ruinous castle seated on the mount of Donoghhill’.\(^{57}\) Although nothing remains of the castle, the mote, which appears to have had three baileys, is a silent testimony of its former greatness.

II. The Cantred of Offa

It is clear from the numerous places amerced in Offa by the justices in eyre in 33-34 Edward I that the cantred corresponded to the modern barony of Iffa and Offa West.

III. The Cantred of Ifswyn (Ul-Eoghain Finn)\(^{58}\)

Ifswyn, now called Iffa, corresponded to the modern barony of Iffa and Offa East, as appears from the eyre roll; the only significant difference is that the parish of Tibberaghny formed part of the cantred.\(^{59}\) This is abundantly clear from a variety of sources: Tibberaghny is mentioned along with a number of other places in the cantreds of Offa and Ifswyn in a papal letter in 1260;\(^{60}\) the manor, which belonged to the de Burgs, is invariably among the accounts of their manors in Tipperary,\(^{61}\) and the court of the liberty of Tipperary was held there in the reign of Henry VIII.\(^{62}\) It was also included in the deanery of Kilsheelan, which corresponded to the cantred of Ifswyn.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{58}\) The farm of ‘Cuanach,’ Co. Limerick, appears in a rent-roll of the Irish exchequer about 1290 (P.R.O., London, E. 101/221/27).


\(^{56}\) See, for example, National Library of Ireland MS 3, pp. 200-3 (Harris, Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis, iii); Cal. Ormond Deeds, iii, no. 102.

\(^{57}\) As late as 1417 Raymond Askedekyn (alias McHode) appears in the rolls of the county court of the Liberty of Tipperary as Raymond Ooonagh or Dominus Oconagh [N.L.I. D 1547 (Ormond Deeds)].

\(^{59}\) N.L.I. MS 11,044 [unsorted Ormond Deeds]. Inquisition held at Clonmel on the 26 July 1630, after the death of Richard, late Earl of Desmond, and Dame Elizabeth, his wife, deceased.

\(^{55}\) Topographical Poems, p. 101.

\(^{60}\) Tibberaghny is now in the barony of Iverk, Co. Kilkenny.


\(^{61}\) P.R.O., London, Minister’s Accounts 3 C 6/1239/24, 26, 29 (mid-fourteenth century accounts of the receivers of Elizabeth de Burgh).

\(^{63}\) Visitatio Regalis, 1615. T.C.D. MS 1066, pp. 279-93