A Study of Medieval Settlements in Ainy Manor, County Limerick

MARY O'DONOGHUE

The article describes the surviving structural remains of the 13th and 14th Manor of Ainy in East Limerick. An introduction to the historical background is followed by the documentary, topographic and field evidence for the lord's demesne and his high status tenants and the field evidence for the low status tenants. The clustering and morphology of sites highlights the status of these tenants, their location within the manor and their role in the manorial system. These are the first tentative steps towards arguing for a more complex settlement layout in Anglo-Norman manors, consisting of clusters of moated sites and ditched tofts.

Historical Introduction

The Norman conquest of North Munster took place in two stages: an initial grant of lands in what is now Co. Tipperary in 1185 and a second advance in 1199 with further grants of territory in present-day Co. Limerick. Among the principal grantees were Philip of Worcester, William de Burgh, Philip de Broase and his nephew, William de Broase. King John, who had been given the title Lord of Ireland by his father in 1177 in expectation that it would be his sole inheritance, succeeded as monarch in England in 1199. He continued to extend Norman power in Ireland and these grants, and the consequent settlement of Tipperary and Limerick, played an important role in maintaining Norman control in North Munster throughout the medieval period.

The borders of the kingdom of Limerick were defined by the dioceses of Killaloe, Kilfenora, Emly and Cashel, with some initial uncertainty about the precise borders with the kingdom of Cork (Empey 1981). Limerick, as with all other Norman counties, was divided into cantreds, which in turn were organised as manorial baronies. Recruitment to military campaigns and the creation of manors, through land grants and resulting control over agricultural production, were both the motivation for and an essential part of that colonising process.

The manorial system was created in the context of feudalism. Nobility held lands in the name of the Crown in exchange for military service. Vassals and peasants, both free and un-free, were tenants of nobles. As tenants they paid homage, gave up a share of their produce and laboured for the lord in return for military protection. A tenant's function and class were synonymous and this is reflected in settlement organisation. The manor, as the smallest unit of landscape division, provides an opportunity to examine the settlement hierarchy of Anglo-Norman organisation by means of a detailed study of settlement sites.

The manor of Ainy, as its name suggests, was located in East Limerick, in the Lough Gur and Knockainy area (Fig.1). On the map published by Empey (1981) Ainy Manor extended approximately 9 kilometres east-west and 20 kilometres north-south (Fig. 2) ; most of it is mapped on six-inch ordnance survey maps LI032 and LI040. Topographically it is a gentle, undulating limestone landscape with relatively hilly ground to the north and south.

Ainy manor was a small cantred that functioned as a seigniorial borough, with the settlement at Ainy as its caput, or capital. As such it was held by tenants-in-chief who were answerable to the great lords, such as de Braose and Worcester. In 1201 King John granted most of Limerick to William de Braose, a renewal of an original grant to de Braose's uncle Philip. At his peak William de Braose III, the 4th Lord of Bramber, was lord of seven manors in England, three manors in Wales and the three castles of Skenfrith, Grosmont and Whitecastle. However, he fell out of the king's favour, was outlawed and lost all his lands. De Braose's lordship was

given to Philip of Worcester in 1215 (Empey 1981) along with manors in Tipperary. However, in 1218 the lordship was returned to the crown (Sweetman 1875, 838) and his son did not inherit his father's property (Hennessy 1996). In 1318 the royal agent Lord Robert Bagot, Chief of Justice of King's Bench and Sheriff of Limerick, acquired a large amount of property in the barony of Aney (afterwards called the Baggotstown estates). Eleven English tenants are named as living within the vill of Any (Hospital) in 1339 (Otway-Ruthven 1965). Thus from the fourteenth century the manor no longer functioned as a seigniorial manor as it had previously, but it did remain a recognisable manorial unit throughout the fourteenth century, with a high proportion of occupants holding tenure. Moreover, it is accepted that the land grants set out in the original extent, detailed in the inquisition post-mortem of 1226 (Sweetman 1875, 214), remained hereditary during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The boundaries of the manor are difficult to define. However, as the boundaries of the manor and the civil parish normally correspond (Otway-Ruthven 1965), it can be deduced that the following rectories (and therefore parishes) held by the Knights Hospitallers of Aney formed part of the manor of Ainy: Hospital, Aney, Moorestown alias Ballinamona, Ballinlough, Kilcullane, Cahercorney, Ballinard, Knocklong and Kilfrush. All of these rectories are recorded in papal taxation records dating from 1291 or 1302. The manor may also have included Rochestown, Templebraden, Owlys (Oaala), Knockgraffon, and Carrantobber (Rockwell).

The Study

This study focuses on the field evidence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, consisting of mottes, moated sites, ditched tofts (house and garden plots) and a pair of excavated, unenclosed, houses. Six specific areas have been selected each representing an element in the manor: the manorial centre and lord's demesne, one knight's fee, a motte, the unenclosed settlement (a small nucleation), the enclosed sites south of the manorial centre, (the demesne lands) and the enclosed sites around the town of Hospital (the Hospital locale).

A multidisciplinary methodology was employed, incorporating the use of historical, geographical and ecological sources, aerial photographs and field surveys. The aerial photographs used in this article were taken as part of the Bruff Aerial Photographic Survey undertaken in 1986 by the archaeology department of UCC (NUIC) and Duchas (the Heritage Service), at a scale of 1:10,000 feet. A number of these aerial photographs were stitched together to create the plates to illustrate the descriptions provided. After locating the relevant sites on the aerial photographs the author walked the area, measured the sites and noted their condition. Foot and Mouth disease restricted access and time in the field, therefore a sample of moated sites were surveyed, at least one in each photograph.

By examining one example of each settlement type correlations can be made between them and the hierarchy of tenements in the feudal system generally, with reference to the documentary sources. By exploring such interconnections it is possible to relate site hierarchy and feudal structure within the theoretical framework of Landscape and Place, which encompasses place and class among other concepts (Muir 1999). Class and status relate to hierarchy, and place relates to settlement organisation within the manor. The form and size of the settlement were based on social hierarchy, as one's class dictated one's place in the manorial system. Thus each settlement and tenement type had a specific function within the manorial system.

Part One: Evidence of the Manorial Centre, Demense Lands, Knight's Fees and Mottes

The manorial centre and lord's demesne

This area was geographically central in the manor, with much of the parish set aside for the lord's demesne. Ainy was the seigniorial borough of the manor (Sweetman 1875), having courts,

an administration centre, religious institutions, a mill (MacCaffrey 1907) and land set aside for 127 burgage plots (Empey 1986). The function of the burgesses was to provide a stable population nucleus in the centre and to provide services in the administrative centre, courts and market. However, there are no surviving remains of burgage plots, a manor house, motte, ring-work or moated sites close by. There are two later tower houses in what is now the village of Ainy, which may signify the location of the previous manor but could also represent the defence of a later settlement at Ainy.

However, the Down Survey Map (Fig. 3) illustrates a series of narrow strips of land dispersed around the village, which suggest open field cultivation. While the map is a seventeenth-century source, there is also a contemporary, and therefore a more convincing source of evidence. It is a thirteenth-century reference to burgesses' access to the lord's plough team to plough their four carucates of land (Sweetman 1875). This suggests co-operative cultivation and therefore an open field system of cultivation. There is little documentary evidence as to the control of this production. However, situating a mill, administrative centre and market in Ainy allowed the lord to retain control over production and profits.

The knight's fees
Below the lord, the knights were the highest class of tenant in the manor. Knight's fees were tracts of land, named in the extent and granted in return for military service or scutage (Fig. 4). Those holding knight's fees usually paid scutage, a cash payment. It is possible to locate these grants by correlating the place names in the inquisition post-mortem with town lands. Five of the six knight's fees were located to the north and northeast of the manor, providing protection around the manorial centre. Ballynamona is the knight's fee with the most convincing evidence of settlement. Ballynamona was referred to as a vill, 'vill de Mora' in fourteenth-century sources (Sweetman 1875). As Seaver (2005) has outlined, a vill in medieval times referred to a whole settlement consisting of open fields, commons, roads and mills. There is a reference to a church, contributing to papal taxation in 1291 and 1302. Though the present day ruins represent a later church, the existence of a church in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries suggests there was a population large and stable enough to maintain a church and its vicar. This parish is named Ballynamona and includes the town lands of Ballynamona, Ballincurra and Portboy.

There is little evidence of that population surviving on the landscape. Although there are few surviving moated sites close by (Plate 1), O'Riordan (1936) excavated an example of an enclosure that is difficult to see on the landscape, a toft. The site was one of eight or nine conjoined rectilinear sites that represent a nucleated form of settlement, medieval houses associated with houses and yards belonging to free tenants (O'Conor 1998). The small part of the site that was excavated indicates that it was used for domestic purposes. It contained pottery dating it to the thirteenth century, a disc quern and animal bones, suggesting domestic use. Seventy years have passed since this excavation and little research has been undertaken since. Suffice to say that there was a significant population in this area but little evidence is now visible on the landscape.

The three conjoined moated sites at Ballynamona are the largest and most obvious sites in the manor, with prominent banks and ditches (Plate 1). The condition of the southern bank and ditch of the middle moat has deteriorated; the southernmost moat is barely visible on the photographs and very difficult to locate in the field. The northernmost moat is the best preserved. However, even those prominent banks and ditches would not have provided suitable defences. Moreover, the site is not located in a defensive topographical setting; the surrounding area is a gentle undulating landscape. These banks and ditches therefore represent an expression of the high status nature of the site and its tenant rather than a defensive structure. This argument is supported by the fact that the townland was granted as a knight's fee and therefore belonged to

a tenant of high status. The significance of these elements is highlighted when considering the time and resources taken to construct these non-defensive elements.

Here the documentary and field evidence combine to form a picture of a settlement of high status. The functions of the fee would include the maintenance of a church, the accommodation of a vill and its associated elements, the purveyance of the produce of the surrounding land into the manorial centre and provision of an element of protection along the northern edge of the manor. Thus the function of the fee ties it into the feudal system, illustrating that the tenants' class, as expressed in extensive banks and ditches, was of high status and held a high place in the feudal hierarchy.

Mottes

Professor M. J. O'Kelly (1941) referred to six mottes but only four were clearly visible on the landscape at the time of the survey. These are to the south of the manor, with two to the east, one within the knight's fee of Ballinlough and one in the parish of Hospital. Given the fact that mottes represent the initial fortification of the colonised area, it appears that the knight's fees were granted, at a later date, around the less protected northern periphery. Therefore the mottes provided sufficient security in the south. In contrast to the mottes in western Limerick (Keegan 2005), those in Ainy do not appear to be associated with churches or settlements. However, the absence of evidence in the field and in the documentary sources does not necessarily imply evidence of absence.

The example in Rathanny East, south of Hospital, has a triple set of banks and ditches, of which the middle bank and ditch are the most defensive. This motte is located in an easily defended topographical setting with wide views on a sloping hillside that runs down to a wide river. However, it is low in comparison to some examples elsewhere in Ireland, being 4.18 metres high with a flat-topped mound 25.4 metres in diameter. These measurements indicate that the summit is wide enough to accommodate a number of domestic buildings. Moreover, it is located on rich soil. So this motte and the other examples in Ainy represent the dual role of military colonisation and the protection and facilitation of agricultural production in the surrounding area.

Part Two: Evidence of the Free Tenants and the Un-free Tenants

Details of the other forms of tenements are also contained in the inquisition post-mortem of 1226 (Sweetman 1875, 214). The lands granted to eight high-class free tenants were named, but cannot be correlated with modern place names, and the location of two pairs of burgage plots was not specified. Conversely, correlation between sites in the field and documentary evidence is equally difficult.

However, the discussion of different classes of free tenants and un-free tenants is important as manorialism was based on a social and economic hierarchy in which the low-grade tenants held an important role in a collective sense. It is possible to address this issue by studying the range of settlement types, the morphology of those sites, particularly the morphology of moated sites, and the clustering of sites. The range of settlement types that these tenants may have occupied includes enclosed and unenclosed sites occurring in nucleated and dispersed patterns. In this context nucleated refers to any number of domestic structures built in close proximity. As Empey (1986) stated, the variation in forms of nucleation defies classification.

The unenclosed settlement – a small nucleation

The excavations at Lough Gur (Cleary 1982, 1983) revealed two medieval houses close to Bourchier's Castle. This unenclosed site was 6 kilometres from the centre, a considerable distance. However, Lewis (1837) believed that an earlier fortification, Fitzgerald's Castle, lay

beneath the tower house of Bourchier's Castle (the remaining castles of the area are from the fifteenth century and later). The two medieval houses may represent progression from one generation to the next, rather than a small nucleation, as one house was earlier than the other.

The first house was a single-roomed, sub-rectangular construction, 14.5 by 7.6 metres, of post-and-wattle frame with a hearth and chimney by the south-western wall. There were indications of a byre at the south-western end of the house and oats, barley and wheat were found in an ash pit close to the hearth. It seems, therefore, that this house was used for private habitation with some elements of iron manufacturing.

The second house was a two-roomed, L-shaped building with mud walls and with a dry-stone annexe that leaned against the southern wall. The western room was divided internally while the eastern room was not. There was evidence of a yard associated with a corn-drying kiln and a stone-built hearth. As in house one, there was evidence of iron manufacturing as iron slag was found on the site. Evidence of iron manufacturing and the close proximity to Fitzgerald's Castle indicate that the houses belonged to a craftsperson. Such a person would be a free tenant of elevated status. Craftspeople were held in high esteem as evidenced by the mention of one such craftsperson in the 1226 extent. This unenclosed, apparently remote, intermediate status settlement correlates to that of a free tenant of elevated status in the feudal hierarchy.

Enclosed sites – an introduction to elements of morphology and nucleation

There are comparatively more examples of enclosed than unenclosed sites on the landscape. Enclosed sites have a higher visibility because the ditches defining enclosed sites make them more visible during both aerial and field survey. There are three main types in the photographs published with this article – moated sites, ditched tofts and platform sites.

The name platform sites is a generic term used to describe a site that is recognised as a monument but whose function and period have yet to be defined. Platform sites are usually more than three feet higher than the field within which they are situated and do not appear to be defined by a ditch. In contrast, ditched tofts are defined by a ditch or at least the trace of a ditch on one side and are slightly raised above ground level. Despite these definitions, some sites can be difficult to define as ditched tofts and platform sites. These tofts appear to correlate with a class of cottiers in the feudal system.

Moated sites are more distinctive, even those surviving only as crop marks. These are generally rectilinear but there are some examples of wedge-shaped, round and oval moats in the manor. The edges of a platform can be defined by a bank and surrounded by a ditch or moat. The moat was once water-filled and had an inlet/outlet called a leat. The majority of moated sites in Ainy Manor are smaller than those in West Limerick (Keegan 2005). There are examples of dispersed moated sites but there are also some clusters of moated sites and ditched tofts. Both ditched tofts and moated sites appear as unconnected sites and as conjoined sites. Many sites survive with just an inner bank, while others are associated with multiple banks. These morphological elements will be discussed with regard to defence and status.

In general, moated sites that occur in clusters of higher concentrations are smaller. Presumptions of broad contemporaneity are acceptable if certain factors are in place. Such factors include features that can be assigned to the same historical period and are located in close proximity. Moated sites date between 1225 and 1330 (Keegan 2005, 34), which is equivalent to three generations. Within any given cluster, therefore, three sites equal three generations or one hundred years of occupation in that area. Most clusters consist of four or more moated sites. Therefore at least two moated sites would have been occupied within any given generation. Given that excavations of houses in this period prove that two or more generations lived in the same allotment (the houses at Lough Gur and Caherguillamore, for example), it is tenable that these sites were occupied contemporaneously and therefore represent nucleated habitation sites.

Enclosed sites – the photographic evidence and the field evidence

Four specific areas were chosen, the locations of which are illustrated on Fig. 5 and these areas correspond to two locations within the manor, the demesne lands and the Hospital locale. Plate 2 (Bottomstown to the south) and Plate 3 (Baggotstown to the north) illustrate the landscape south of the manorial centre and are part of the demesne lands belonging to the lord, described under the heading of *demesne lands*. Plate 4 (Coolalough to the south) and Plate 5 (Lodge to the northeast) represent the landscape around the town of Hospital.

Lodge has the most compact cluster of small moated sites. In contrast, the moated sites in Bottomstown are twice as large and located at twice the distance. These sites may or may not have been part of the Hospitallers' granges. It is important to note that the Knights Hospitallers were a powerful ecclesiastic and military group and were granted the right to have their liberty recognised in 1215 by King John (O'Sullivan 1995); therefore they remained outside the tenancy system. As there is no definitive evidence that the sites in Lodge and Coolalough belonged to the Hospitallers, these have been included here as part of the lord's manor.

Demesne Lands – Plates 2 (south) and 3 (north).

The main cluster of sites occurs to the east and west of the westernmost roadway. Five of the largest moated sites within this cluster occur as crop marks to the east of the roadway. The northernmost is highlighted by a black square and the next example by a grey circle (Plate 3). The remaining examples are highlighted by a white circle to the north and two black circles, located to the southeast in a diagonal line (Plate 2). There is a small site, either a ditched toft or a moated site, to the west of the northernmost of these moated sites (Plate 2). Overall, the moats appear to be situated a considerable distance from each other suggesting a more dispersed settlement pattern.[1]

However, there are a number of encircled sites that have not yet been discussed which may influence that conclusion. Firstly, a church site immediately to the south, circled in grey, is not considered contemporary, as there is no record of it in papal taxation records of the time. Secondly, there are a number of possible sites running in a north-south line to the west of the road. The two platform sites, circled in black, may be from any period in history. Since these sites cannot be allocated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they cannot be included in the survey of settlement patterns. The conclusion from the above analysis is that this group of moated sites represent dispersed settlements and not nucleated sites.

The moated site situated to the northwest (Plate 3, and enlarged Plate 6) is oval in shape, with a regular outline and obvious ditch; some circular examples are known in Wexford (Moore 1996). The inner bank no longer survives and the site appears isolated. To the north of it, however, are a series of small squares that appear to be tofts. These conjoined enclosures are reminiscent of those excavated by O'Riordan in 1935 and may represent a form of nucleated settlement.

This row of enclosed sites is similar to rows visible on the aerial photographs and many are associated with moated sites. Do all such examples represent ditched tofts? This association may be due to the fact that moated sites are located in boggy ground and these rows represent drainage systems. In order to contrast these conjoined tofts and drainage systems, the polygon to vicinity the right of Plate 3 highlights an example of a drainage system. The conclusion, then, is that some moated sites are associated with ditched tofts.

However, there are some examples of more isolated moated sites in the area. The westernmost moated site on Plate 2, for example, appears isolated within its immediate vicinity. Within the constraints of survival and visibility issues, it is possible to extrapolate that some sites formed part of a nucleation while others remained single, dispersed farmsteads.

---

[1] The two white circles to the south highlight small former fields and the two sets of conjoined features (probably natural) in the Baggotstown area, highlighted by white circles towards the east of the photograph (Plate 3), have been included for comparative purposes.

This site clearly has a set of double banks and ditches. The internal dimension of this site is similar to that of the internal dimensions of the univallate moated site (Plate 2) yet the multivallate site appears larger. The difference in size is more apparent than real as it is due to the width of the banks and ditches of the conjoined examples. Unfortunately it is not possible to make further comparisons as the remaining sites appear as crop marks. From this single comparision, it seems that multiple banks and ditches do not necessarily correlate with larger sites.

Enclosing a site with multivallate banks and ditches may denote defensiveness or status. Topographically this is not a defensive setting as it is located on low-lying undulating ground. Enclosing the site would have been an effective way to distinguish it from the cluster of sites to the south of it. Despite the fact that the banks and ditches are denuded, this multivallate moated site is an impressive monument that would be considered high status in comparison to those in the cluster to the south.

In summary, the cluster of moated sites of this area form dispersed farmsteads. One nucleation is represented by a series of ditched tofts and an oval moated site (Plate 6). The topographical setting of the multivallate site is non-defensive and the site may therefore represent status.

The Hospital Locale – Plates 2 (south) and 4 (northeast).

There are five definite examples in the cluster of sites in Coolalough, indicated by small black circles (Plate 4). These examples are much smaller than those in Bottomstown (Plate 2) but are more densely concentrated within a small area. Here we see a correlation between size and frequency of sites within clusters, the more concentrated the cluster the smaller the sites.

That contrast increases if other sites are included in the analysis. The sites circled in white are low mounds and are not included as they appear to be platform sites. The two easternmost of these are more convincing. The other examples illustrate the difficulty in choosing whether an area contains the last vestiges of a moated site. This is also true of the sites highlighted by the two large black circles at the top of the photograph. The overlapping drains in these areas hide any underlying archaeology.[2] Of the definite examples, the five westernmost sites and two easternmost sites, though clustered, their distance suggests that these represent dispersed rather than nucleated settlement.

There are six sites in Lodge, of which two appear to be platform sites (the northernmost and southernmost), two appear to be ditched tofts (the easternmost and the site on the river) and the other two appear to be moated sites. None of these has survived intact. These have been incorporated into the hedges and dikes and their edges are difficult to distinguish because the field boundaries in this area have changed considerably. Therefore, it was difficult to trace their outline in the field and the moats of the two ditched tofts were not prominent. If the interpretation of their morphology is correct, the two moated sites and the two ditched tofts represent a small nucleated settlement.

Due to the short distance between this cluster and the conjoined moated sites to the west, the conjoined sites may be added to this nucleation. This cluster is much more compact, and as in the previous comparison there is a correlation between the size and frequency of sites within clusters: the more concentrated the cluster the smaller the sites.

The conjoined sites appear larger, yet, the sites to the east have similar internal dimensions to the internal dimensions of the conjoined moated sites. The difference in size is more apparent than real as it is due to the width of the banks and ditches of the conjoined examples. This size difference may denote defensiveness or status. Topographically this is not a defensive setting as it is located on low-lying undulating ground. Enclosing the site would have been an effective way to distinguish it from the cluster of sites to the east of it. Despite the fact that the banks

---

[2] The mounds to the southeast and southwest appear to be natural and have been highlighted for comparative purposes.

and ditches are denuded and incorporated into the present field boundary, these are impressive monuments that would be considered high status in comparison to those in the cluster to the east.

In summary, both dispersed and nucleated forms of settlement are represented. Dispersed settlement is represented in Coolalough and nucleated settlement is represented in Lodge. The conjoined sites represent a status-driven motivation rather than a defensive one.

Unenclosed and enclosed sites and their place in the manor

How do these sites equate with the tenements in the feudal system? The excavated evidence so far proves that the unenclosed houses at these sites were of relatively high status. Moated sites were used as protected farmsteads. Due to their density and distance from the manorial centres, moated sites are not considered to belong to gentry but to have been occupied by free tenants (Keegan 2005). There is a correlation between the prominence of the enclosing elements and their location some distance from less prominently embanked sites. This correlation appears to highlight their status rather than their defence. Furthermore, differences in status may reflect differences in grades of free tenant varying from high to low status within the free-holding tenement structure in the feudal system. And there is a connection between the size of moated site and the number of sites in a cluster; the higher the number of sites in the cluster the smaller the sites tend to be.

Likewise, ditched tofts occur in both dispersed and nucleated forms; indeed, both site types may be considered to be part of one cluster. The site excavated at Ballynamona was one of a cluster, being one of a number of conjoined rectangular tofts. The finds from this site indicate that tofts were used for domestic purposes. It contained pottery dating it to the thirteenth century, a disc quern and animal bones, remains of small-scale consumption. Such tofts are medieval homesteads associated with yards belonging to cottiers, labourers to whom a small portion of land was rented directly at a fixed rent. Certainly they represent the lower class of free tenant, but some affluence is suggested by the presence of green-glazed ware.

Although this correlation is speculative within the present state of research it does account for the vast numbers of these types of sites located on rich soil, clustered and dispersed, and their proximity to moated sites. In relation to feudal hierarchy, cottiers were one of a number of intermediate and low class tenants that formed the foundation on which the system was based, essential as a group but not as individuals.

Part Three: Summary of the Manor's Tenants and their settlements in the Manor

By locating the administrative and commercial centre within the heart of the manor the lord provided the burgesses and villagers with protection, thereby ensuring the smooth operation of the manor. It also accommodated the purveyance of produce from the tenements to the mill and to the market. This allowed the lord to retain control over production and profits. The burgesses were guaranteed protection, providing a stable population nucleus in the centre and services for the manor. As burgesses were central to the working of the manorial centre they were provided with legal privileges which ensured their place in the feudal hierarchy.

Another essential element in the manor's settlement structure was the location of the knight's fees. By providing military support or scutage the knights held a position of high status within the feudal system. Moreover, they managed their own fees. Ballynamona, for example, retained its own centre with a church, vill and high status settlement site. The manorial centre, however, retained all control and profits, but the knights were essential to the defence and economy of the feudal system.

The mottes held the status of being the initial fortifications without which colonisation would not have been possible. In Ainy they also played the role of defensive farmsteads and

provided continuing protection in a frontier area. Unfortunately there is no way of correlating mottes to the tenements in the documentary sources. Craftspeople had a lower status but were considered essential to the manor and therefore held in high esteem. The median status of these settlements is represented by the excavated finds and features within houses at Lough Gur and correlates with that of a free tenant of elevated status in the feudal hierarchy.

By correlating the morphology of enclosed sites with status, it is evident that the status of the free tenants occupying the sites varied considerably. Unfortunately there is no evidence to suggest how many grades of free tenants were accommodated in moated sites or their specific functions in the feudal system. Excavated examples suggest domestic use and agriculture as the main activities of those living in this site type. The clustering of some moated sites, as argued above, suggests that nucleation was an element in the location of habitations and there are correlations between the sizes of moated site and number of sites within a given cluster.

Nucleation is also a factor in location of ditched tofts. Perhaps it provided an element of security in an otherwise open and often hostile setting of the frontier zone. The excavated evidence at Ballynamona and the density of ditched tofts within small areas suggests that such sites represent the more numerous, lower classes in the feudal system, the cottiers.

This settlement structure is pyramidal. Clearly the method behind the feudal system is to place certain classes of tenants in strategic locations within the manor facilitates their function. Their function is based on the skills they provide for the lord; this dictates their status in the feudal system and vice versa.

Concluding Remarks

The location, size and morphology of settlements reflect the function of various sites which, in turn, reflects their status and placement in the feudal system. It is this expression of class within the feudal system that ties in with the concept of Landscape and Place. Within that wider structure, there is variation in the way individual lords organised their manors. This is a fact to which Graham (1993), Barry (1988), Keegan (2005) and Meenan (1985) have testified.

The study undertaken here concentrates on one manor. By changing the focus of study to encompass a smaller area it is possible to highlight the role of tenements in the feudal system and how these roles reflect variations in settlement type, morphology and location within the manor. In particular, this study has highlighted the morphological differences and spatial patterning of the settlements of low status tenants. As these tenants were not discussed in the documentary sources, the archaeological evidence was theorised to correlate morphology and clustering with the tenants' status in the feudal system.

This study has also highlighted that the term nucleated settlement should be extended to concentrations of moated sites and ditched tofts, and the fact that such concentrations take many forms. The ditched toft is one of those forms; the evidence for such settlements has not been researched since the 1930s. A question that this small scale photographic and field study raises is whether the high concentration of small moated sites and ditched tofts in Ainy is unique to this manor. In consequence, there may be many more moated sites and ditched tofts in the Irish countryside than previously thought.

Lowe, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, for her help with scanning and formatting the images and Dave Neale for helping with the presentation of the aerial photographs.

References

Barry, T.B. 1988. 'Medieval moated sites in Ireland: some new conclusions on their chronology and function' in G. MacNiocaill and P.F. Wallace (eds), *Keimelia: studies in medieval archaeology and history in memory of Tom Delaney*, 525-535. Galway.

Cleary, R.M. 1982. 'Excavations at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick: Part II', *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society* 87, 77-106.

Cleary, R.M. 1983. ,Excavations at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick: Part III', *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society* 88, 51-80.

Empey, C.A. 1981. 'The Settlement of the Kingdom of Limerick' in J. Lydon, (ed.), *England and Ireland in the later middle ages.* Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1-25.

Empey, C.A. 1986. 'Conquest and settlement: Patterns of Anglo-Norman settlement in North Munster and South Leinster', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 13, 5-31.

Graham, B.J. 1993. 'The High Middle Ages: c 1100 to c 1350' in B.J. Graham and L.J. Proudfoot (eds), *An historical geography of Ireland.* Academic Press, London, 58-98.

Hennessy, M. 1996. 'Manorial organisation in early thirteenth-century Tipperary', *Irish Geography*, volume 29 (2), 116-125.

Keegan, M. 2005. 'The archaeology of manorial settlement in west county Limerick in the 13th century' in J. Lyttleton and T. O'Keeffe (eds), *The Manor in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland.* Four Courts Press, Ireland.

Lewis, S. 1837. *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland.* S. Lewis & Co., London.

MacCaffrey, J. (ed.), 1907. *The Black Book of Limerick*, Gill, Dublin.

Meenan, R. 1985. 'The deserted villages of County Westmeath', unpublished M. Litt Thesis, Trinity College, Dublin.

Moore, M. 1996. *Archaeological inventory of County Wexford.* Stationery Office, Dublin.

Muir, R. 1999. *Approaches to Landscape.* Barnes & Noble, Oxford.

O'Conor, K.D. 1998. *The Archaeology of Medieval rural Settlement in Ireland.* Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

O'Kelly, M. J. 1941. 'A Survey of the Antiquities in the Barony of Small County, Co. Limerick', Unpublished M.A. Thesis, UCC.

Otway-Ruthven, J. 1965. 'The character of the Anglo-Norman settlement in Ireland' in *Historical Studies V,* 75-84.

O'Riordan, S.P. 1936. 'Excavations at Lissard, county Limerick, and other sites in the vicinity', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.* 37, 257-276.

O'Sullivan, M. 1995. *A history of Hospital and its environs.* (Private Publication).

Seaver, M. 2005. 'Practice, spaces and places: an archaeology of boroughs as manorial centres in the barony of Slane' in J. Lyttleton and T. O'Keeffe (eds), *The Manor in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland.* Four Courts Press, Ireland.

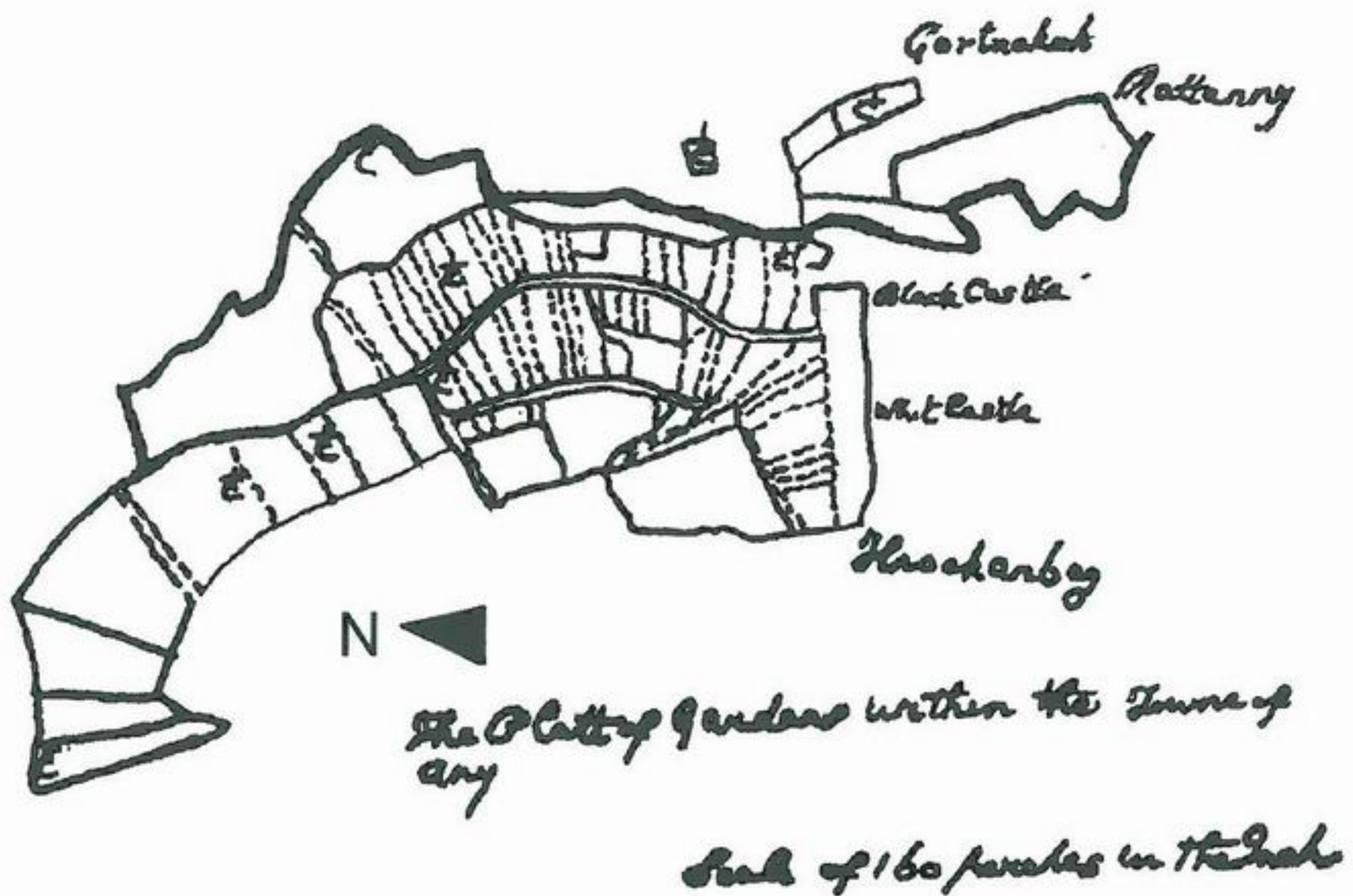Sweetman, H.S. (ed.), (1875) *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland,* 1, 1171-1251. London.

Fig. 1 Map locating the study area.

Fig. 2 Map showing the outline of the cantreds in Limerick
and the location of Ainy Manor

Fig. 3 A copy of the map of Ainy village in the seventeenth century, from the Down Survey Collection

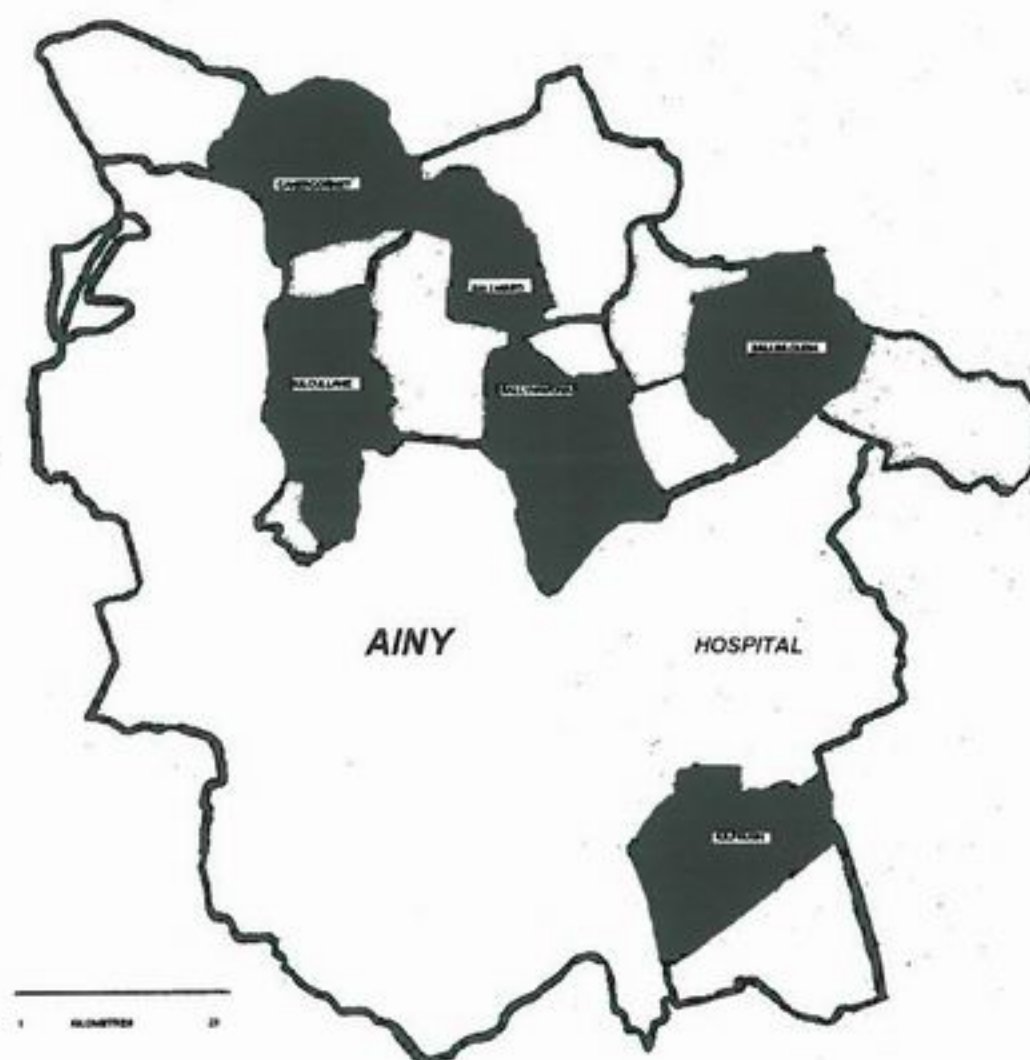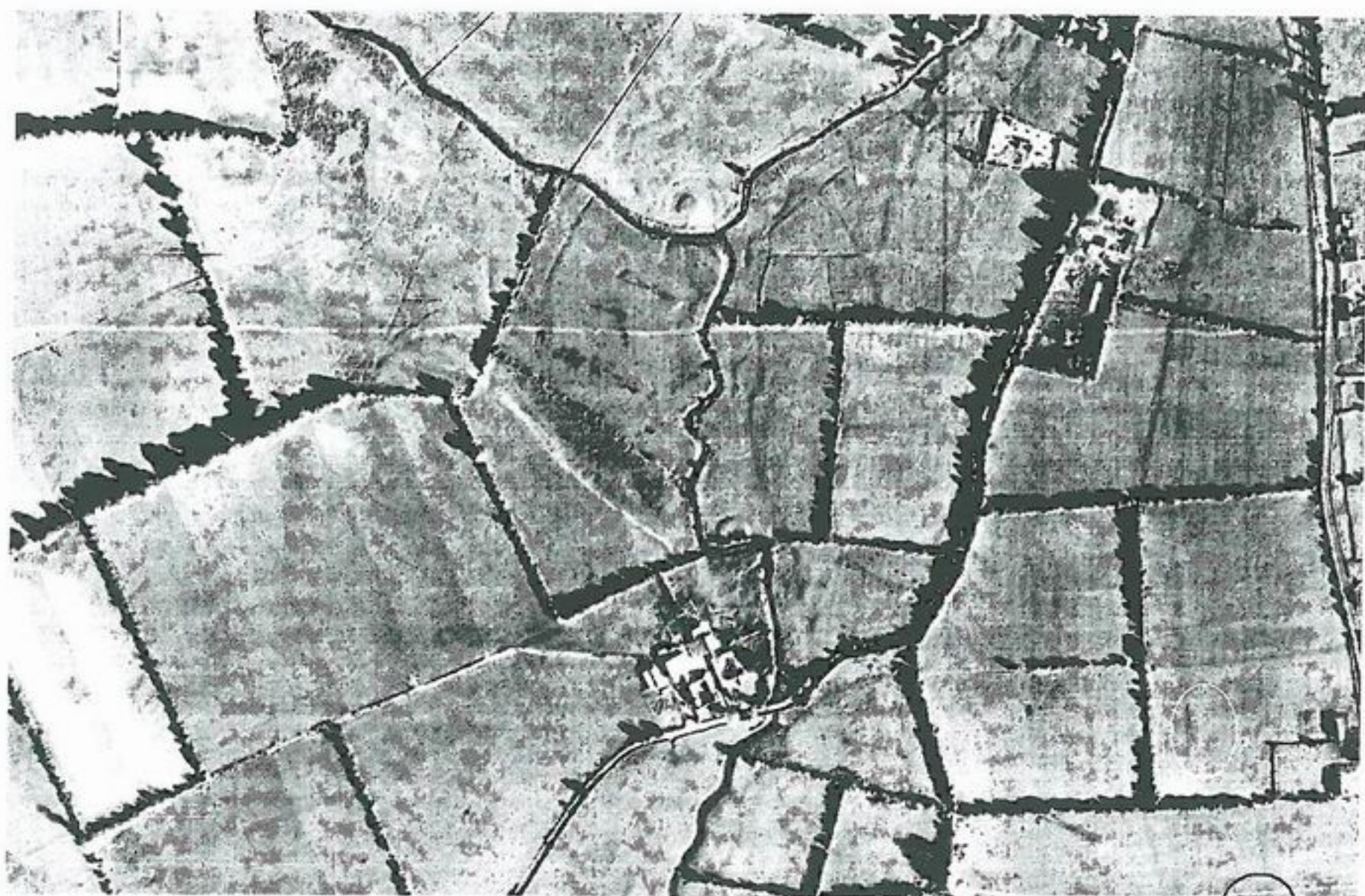**Fig. 4** Map illustrating the location of Knight's Fees in relation to the demesne farm.

Plate 1 Ballynamona, flight line 6, photograph 2020, top of the photo indicates north (with kind permission from Dept. of Archaeology, NUIC).

Plate 2 Gormanstown, flight line 9, photos 2107-2103, top of photo indicates north (with kind permission from Dept. of Archaeology, NUIC).

Plate 3 Baggotstown, flight line 8, photos 2072-2073, top of photo indicates north (with kind permission from Dept. of Archaeology, NUIC).

Plate 4 Coolalough, flight line 8, photographs 2077-2080, top of photo indicates north (with kind permission from the department of Archaeology, NUIC).
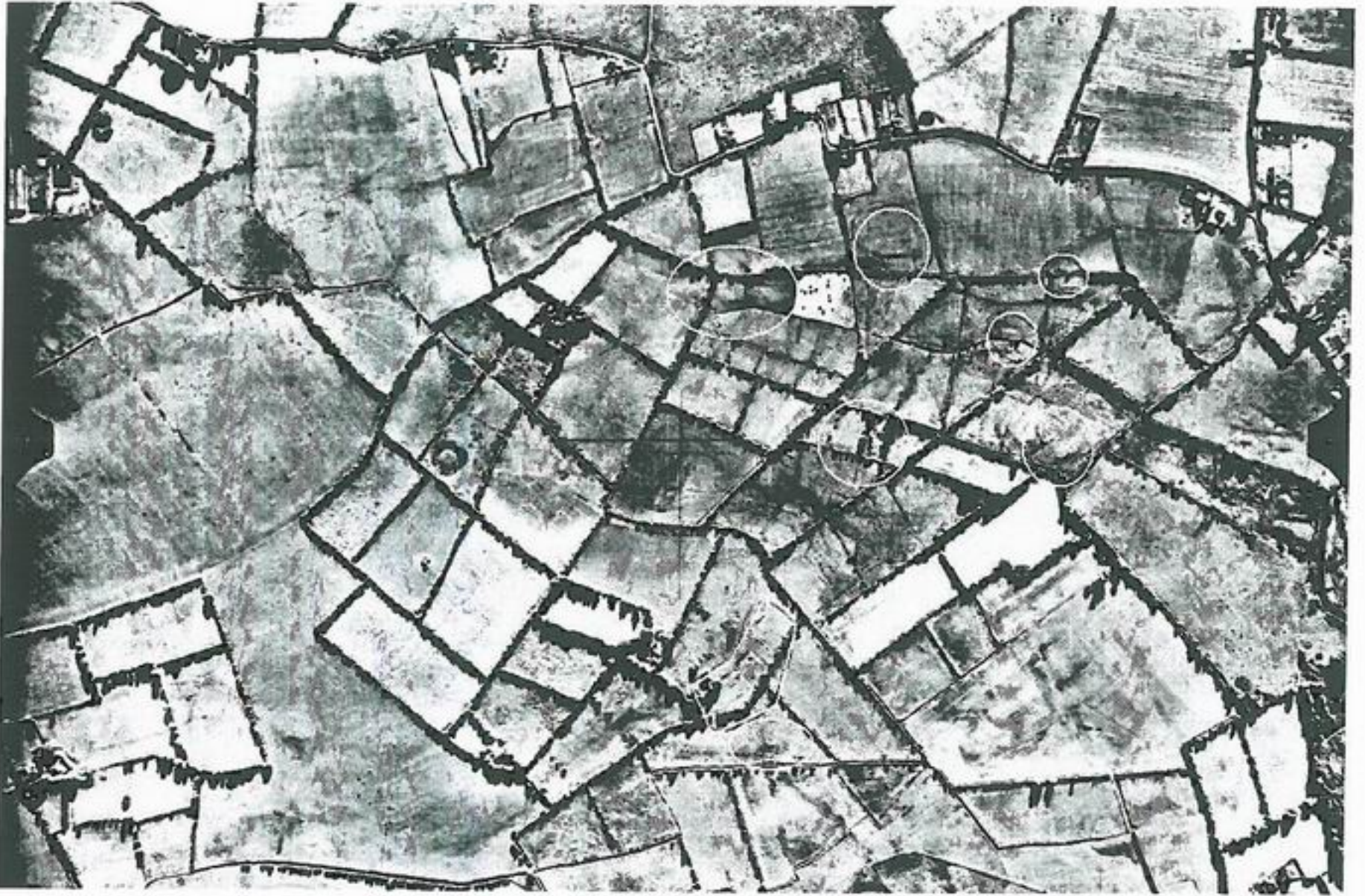
Plate 5 Lodge, flight line 7, photograph 2054, left side of photograph indicates north (with kind permission from Department of Archaeology, NUIC).
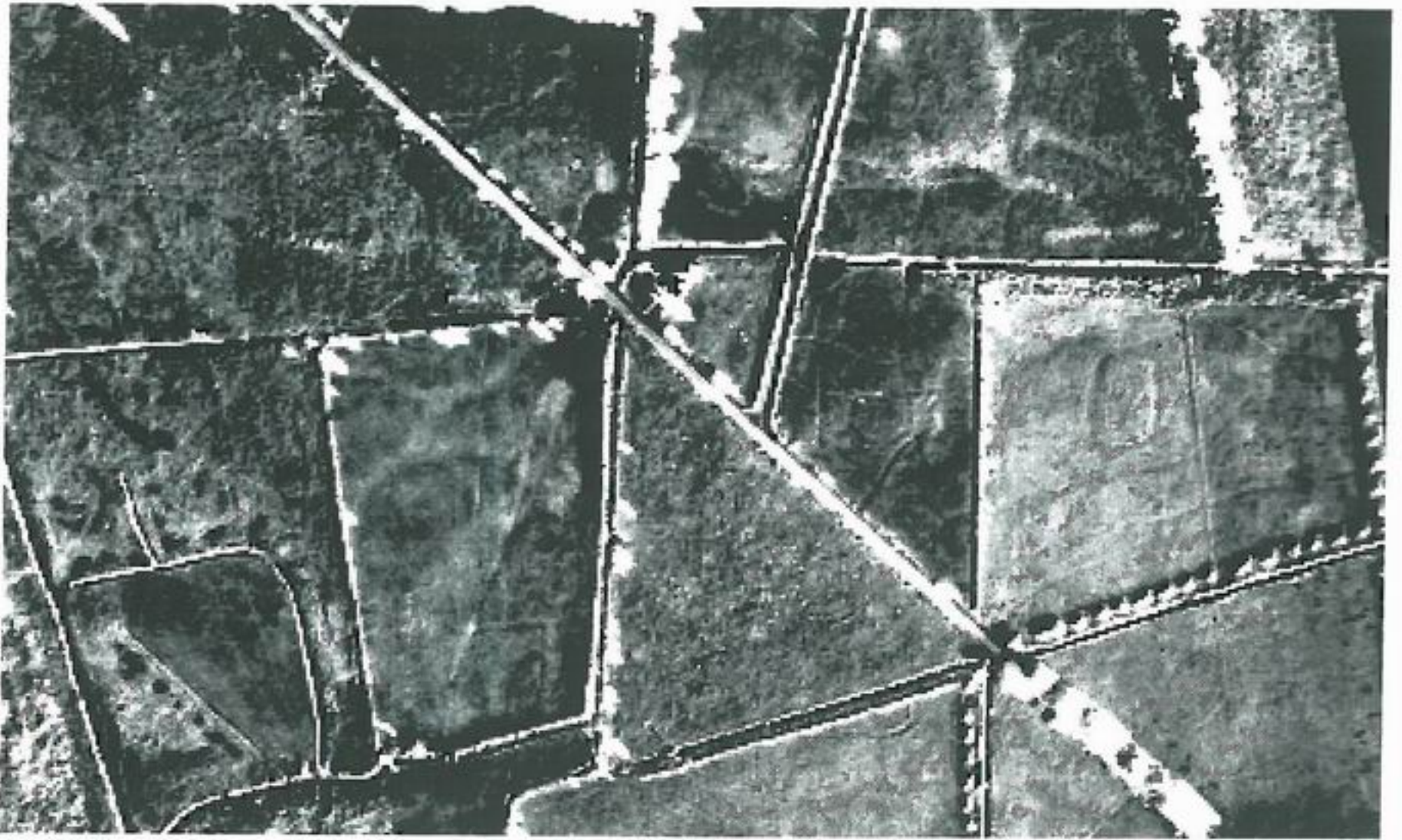

Plate 6 An enlarged photograph of site in Baggotstown, top of photo indicates north.