

Early Anglo-Norman Settlement Patterns in Co. Limerick

MARIE TAYLOR

This paper examines the impact of the initial Anglo-Norman arrival in county Limerick and the evidence for the colonisation of Limerick being a three stage process. The impact of feudalism on the micro-scale will be investigated and an analysis given of the subinfeudation process within the framework of the cantred and manor.

Territorial Organisation

Lordship represented the spatial basis of feudal power in Anglo-Norman Ireland. It defined a spatial area within which the feudal lord had feudal rights. In Limerick land was initially granted to the Anglo-Norman lords within the framework of the *cantred*.¹ In the Anglo-Norman period the county of Limerick was divided into fourteen cantreds (Fig. 1).

The cantreds were then subdivided by the lord or tenant-in-chief into smaller holdings, known as knight's fees in return for a specific amount of military service. The size

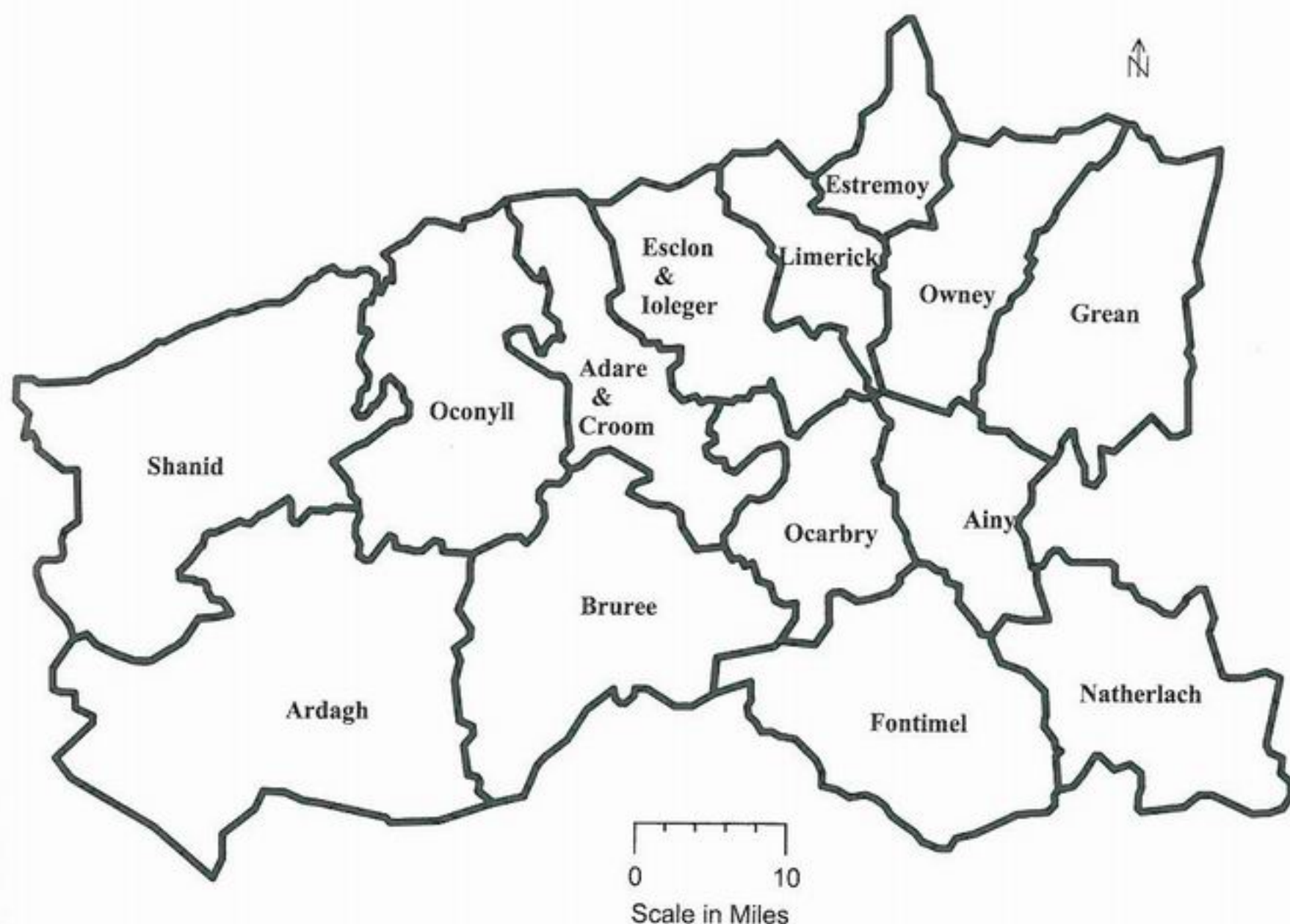


Fig. 1 Late 12th Century Anglo-Norman Cantreds of County Limerick

¹ C.A. Empey, 'The Settlement of the Kingdom of Limerick' in J. Lydon (ed.), *England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1981) p. 2.

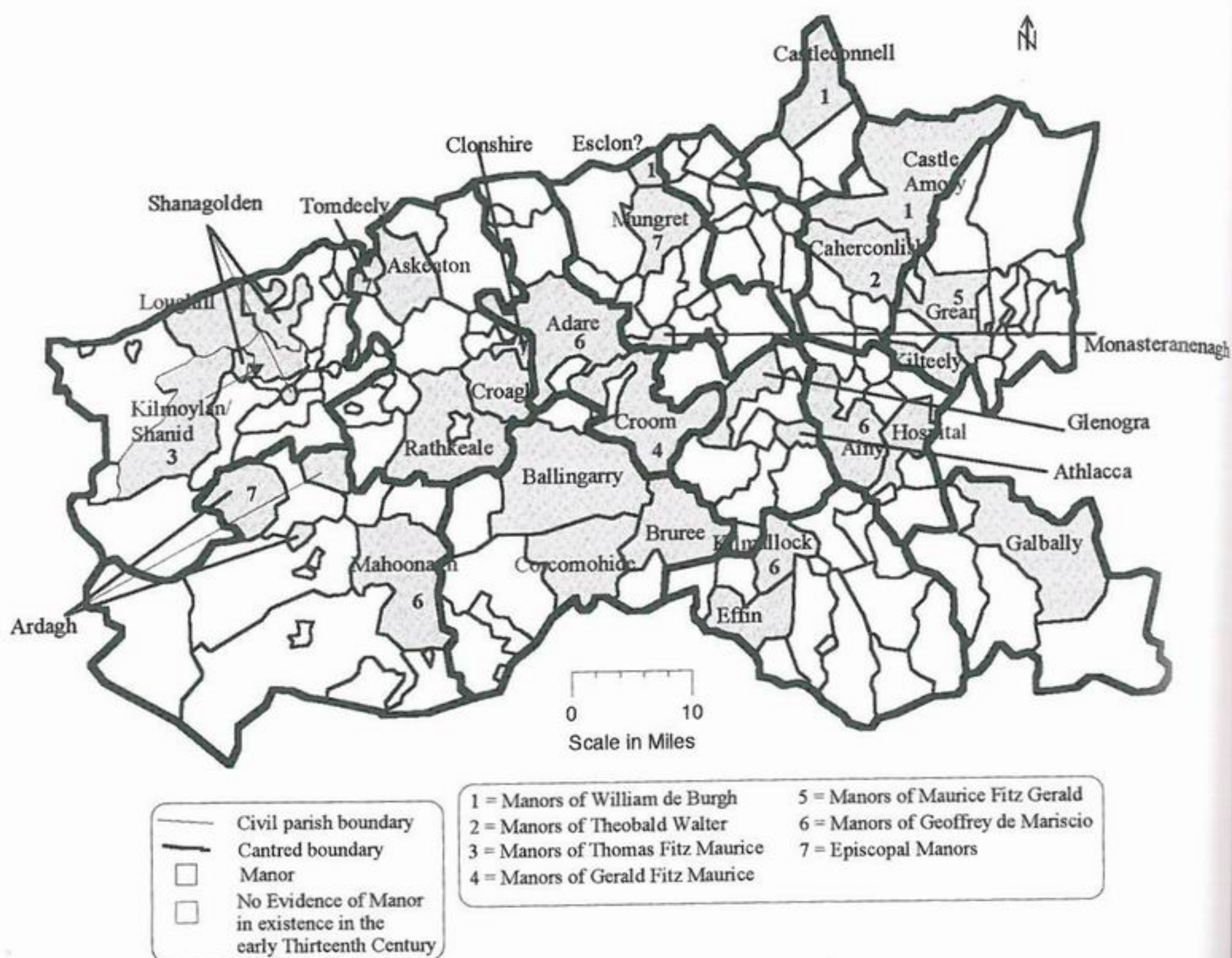


Fig. 2 Early 13th Century manors in County Limerick

of the knight's fee varied considerably. The knight's fee later provided the framework for the manor and parish.² The manor, in Ireland, was the institutional means by which feudalism reached down to the ordinary person in society. The major functions of a manor were as a defensive and administrative centre, which were centred on the focal point of the manorial centre.³ The manor also functioned as an economic and social institution over a wider spatial area.

The parochial system may have only been in its inception prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans but its development was simultaneous with the organisation of the manorial system. This led to civil parishes and manors frequently sharing boundaries.

² M. Hennessy, 'Parochial organisation in medieval Tipperary', in W. Nolan (ed.), *Tipperary History and Society* (Dublin, 1985) p. 63.

³ The manorial centre was where the tenants paid their rent, appeared at the manorial court and attended church. T. McNeill, *Anglo-Norman Ulster* (Edinburgh, 1980) pp 84-8. Here also were located the medieval parish church, the lord's residence and one or two free tenants were located as well as some lower classes of the tenantry who provided labour services on the lord's farm. A. Simms, 'Core and Periphery in Medieval Europe: The Irish Experience In A Wider Context,' in W. Smyth & K. Whelan (eds), *Common Ground. Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland* (Cork, 1988) p. 34. The manor was a means by which land previously held by the native Irish was colonised and secured and a means of imposing power on the landscape, which was achieved by the construction of a defensive stronghold at the manorial centre or *caput*, in the form of a ringwork, motte-and-bailey or a castle.

Many medieval parishes⁴ still exist as civil parishes today, though they no longer serve any function.⁵ These are distinct from the modern Catholic parishes. The civil parishes of county Limerick are illustrated in fig. 3. (See List of Names in Appendix, Table 1).⁶

With regard to Limerick we are fortunate that in 1201 Myler Fitz Henry ordered an inquisition to be held regarding the ecclesiastical property of the diocese,⁷ which is recorded in the 'Black Book of Limerick'.⁸ It covers the diocese of Limerick but not areas of Limerick in the diocese of Cashel and Emly. The inquisition helps aid in the identification of parishes and townland names at the outset of the colonisation of Limerick by the Anglo-Normans. Many of the names of the churches on the list also correspond to the name of the parish in which they are found.

The existence, however, of such an extensive list in 1201 of ecclesiastical property would seem to suggest that the parochial system was established or at least tentatively in place by the time of the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. This would seem to indicate that the Anglo-Normans perfected and adapted to their needs, a method of territorial organisation already in place by the time they settled the Limerick landscape in any great numbers at the turn of the thirteenth century.

As can be seen from fig. 4 the churches from the 1201 list can be identified to an approximate location. (See Appendix, Table 2). Many of these churches have not survived onto the present landscape and were not recorded on early ordnance survey maps. The majority of the names of the churches are very different to the present-day names of the sites. Begley⁹ and Westropp¹⁰ have helped in the identification of many of the sites but a number of the placenames could not be identified.

If the locations have been identified correctly then it can be suggested that in the majority of cases there is one church located in a civil parish. In a limited number of cases, two churches were recorded in what was later regarded as a parish. This may be due to an incorrect identification of a placename. In the parish of Robertstown, which has an Anglo-Norman name, two churches are recorded. Originally it may have been composed of two parishes, which were amalgamated, hence the presence of two churches.

Also in the inquisition list not all the civil parishes have a church. There are a number of possible explanations for this. The church may have been destroyed or not surveyed. They may have been in areas not under the control of the Anglo-Normans at the time the list was composed or they may have been part of larger medieval parishes at this time, which were later adapted by the Anglo-Normans when more manors were established.

⁴ One of the aims of the twelfth century church reforms was to introduce the territorial unit, the parish. The Synod of Kells in 1152 endeavoured to enforce the payment of tithes, the basis of the parochial system, John D. Seymour, *The Twelfth-Century Reformation in Ireland* (Dublin, 1932) p. 17. The Cashel Synod of 1170-1 decreed that tithes should be paid to the parish church, O'Keefe, 'The Built Environment of Local Community Worship' in E. FitzPatrick and R. Gillespie (eds), *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006) p. 126. This illustrates that the concept of an area tied to the church as a means of church revenue existed or was at least attempted to be put into place as early as the mid-twelfth century, before the Anglo-Normans could have established them. The organisation of the parochial system, however, was not perfected.

⁵ A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London, 1968) p. 118.

⁶ This map is based on O'Connor's map of the seventeenth-century parish network *circa* 1600. It is used throughout this research as a basis for many of the maps used to represent the medieval landscape in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, P.J. O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's Past* (Newcastle West, 1987) p. 134. It is not a representation of seminal pre-Norman parishes or Norman parishes or indeed of the parochial system as it existed after the Anglo-Norman colonisation. It is, however, the nearest depiction of how the parochial system may have existed in the medieval period.

⁷ J. Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick. Ancient and Medieval* (Dublin, 1906) p. 92.

⁸ J. McCaffrey, (ed.), *The Black Book of Limerick* (Dublin, 1907) p. 14.

⁹ Begley, *Diocese of Limerick. Ancient and Medieval*.

¹⁰ T.J. Westropp, 'A Survey of the Ancient Churches in the County of Limerick', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 25C (1904-5) pp 327-407.

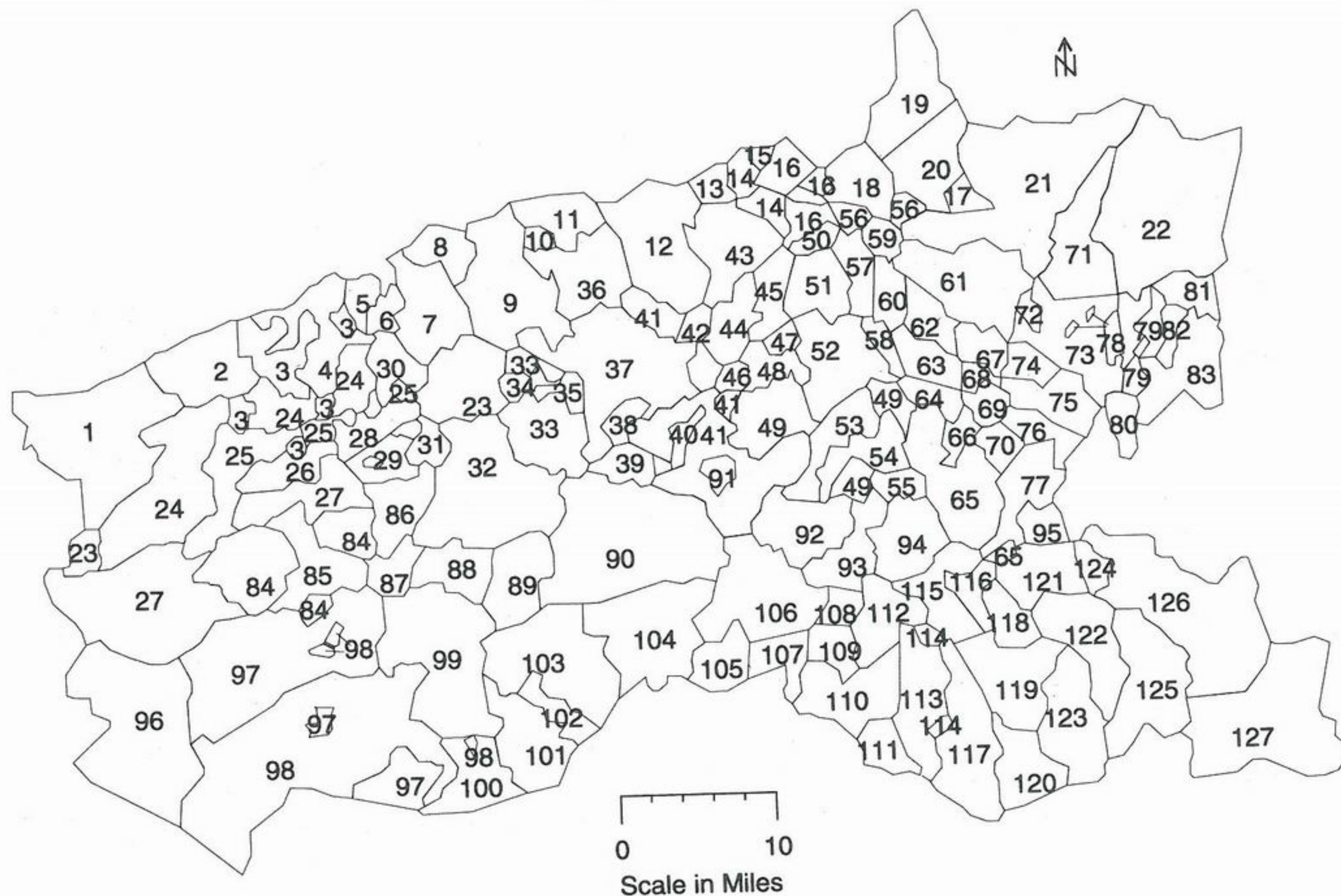


Fig. 3 Civil Parishes in County Limerick

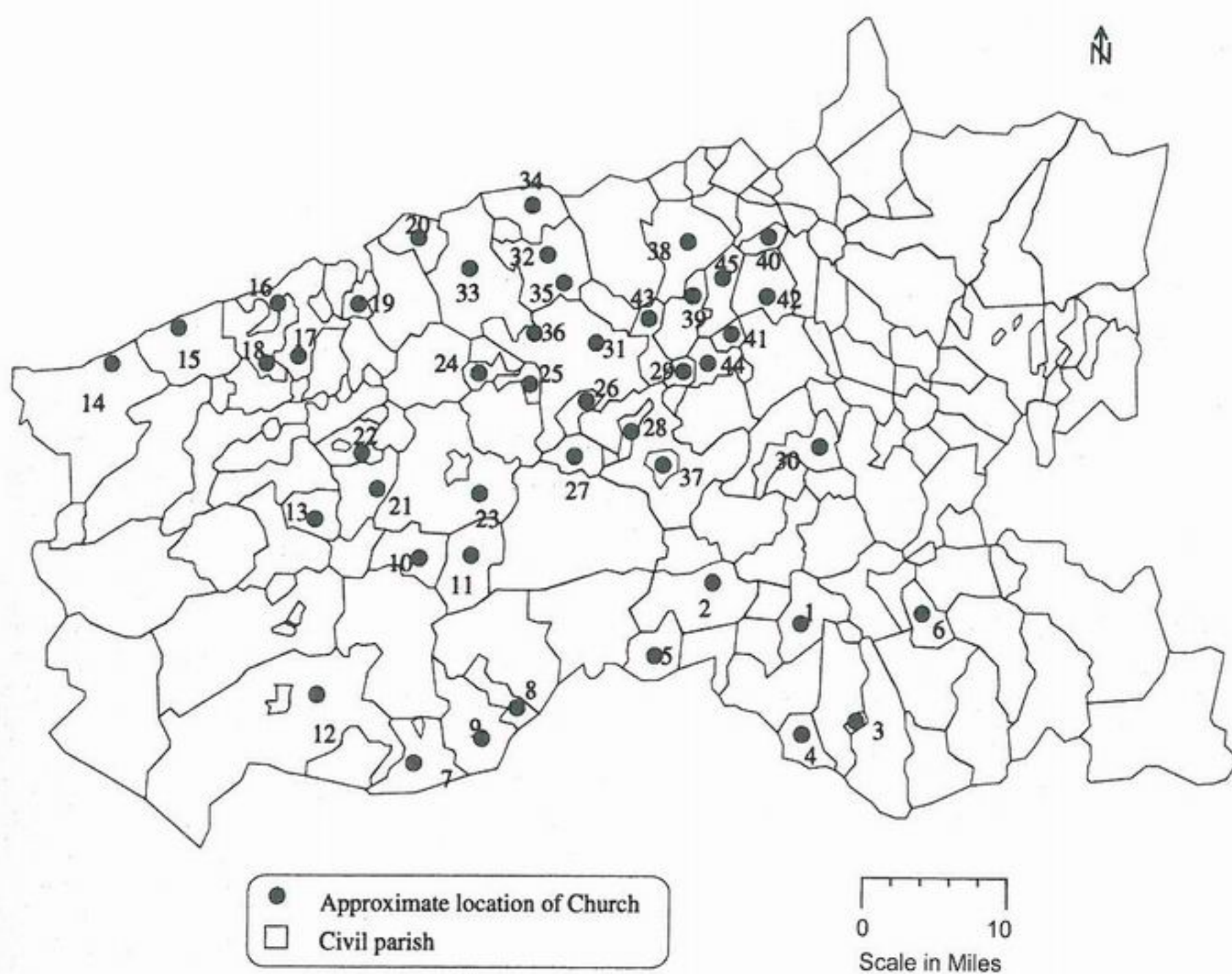


Fig. 4 Churches Listed in the 1201 Inquisition of Limerick Diocese

Subinfeudation of Limerick

It is difficult to trace and be precise about the subinfeudation of Limerick. This is because of the intricate nature of the land grants and because of the lack of contemporary documents. The subinfeudation of Limerick and the establishment of an Anglo-Norman colony was a three-staged process.

Stage one in county Limerick, *circa* 1175-1194, incorporated the distribution of land grants during the initial subinfeudation process and the military conquest of the land. This stage could be described as a stage of tentative exploration of the landscape. During this initial Anglo-Norman intervention a number of tenants-in-chief were granted land by the Crown. These, largely speculative, land grants were issued tentatively in the hope, rather than the belief that they would be settled and were given to help ensure loyalty to the Crown. The cantred appears to be the most common territorial unit used at this stage. Colonisation and settlement would not seem to have occurred in any great depth during this first stage.

At the Council of Oxford, in 1177, King Henry and Prince John granted the kingdom of Limerick, excluding the city and one cantred, for the service of sixty knights. The gift, however, was renounced on the plea that the territory was not as yet conquered.¹¹ The King then:

¹¹ A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin, (eds), *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis* (Dublin, 1978) p. 336, note 330.

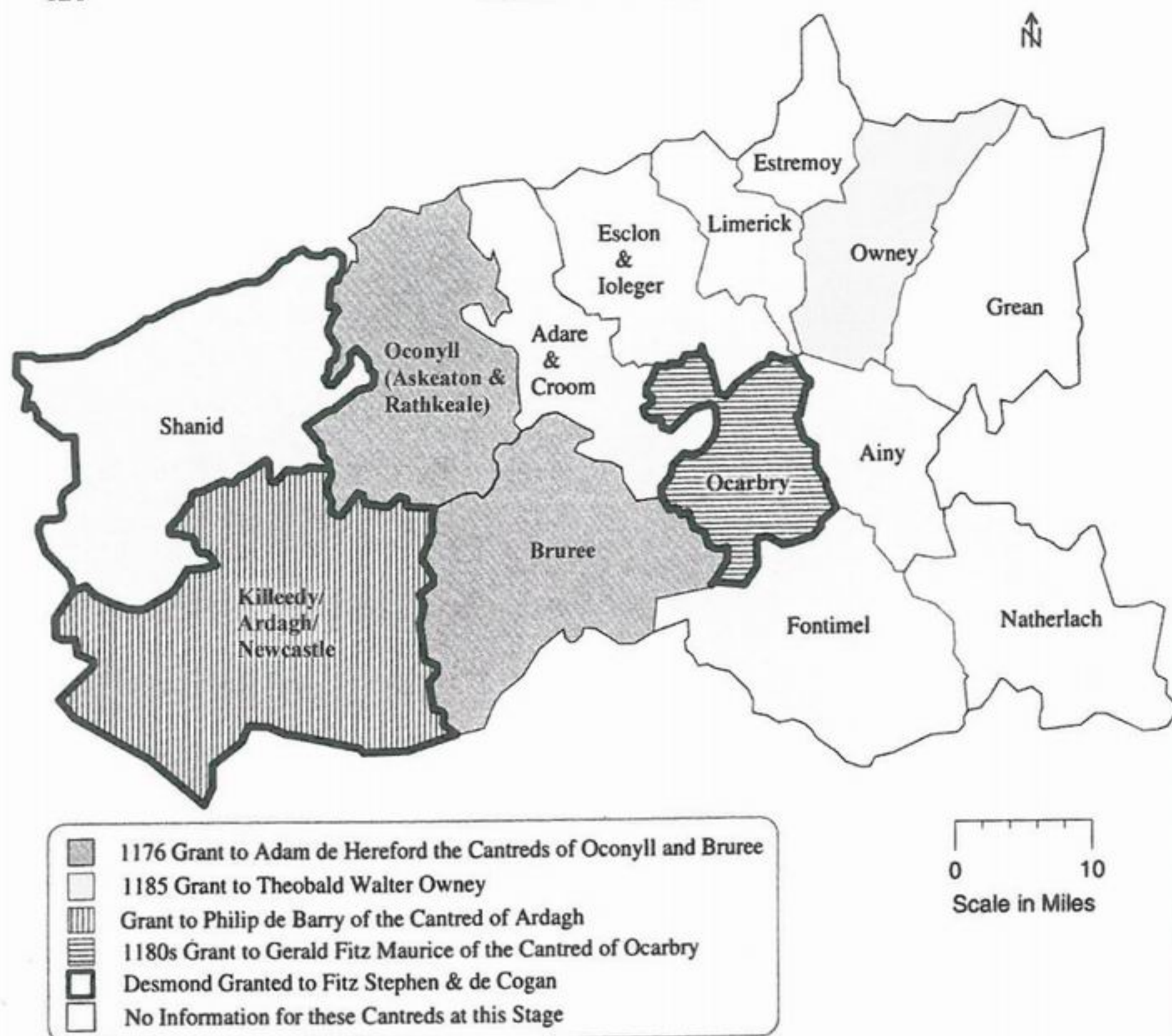


Fig. 5 Stage one: Land Grants of County Limerick

gave Fitz Stephen and Miles de Cogan south Munster to be held under grant ... The king also made a generous grant of north Munster to Philip de Breuse (Braose). This comprised the whole kingdom of Limerick with the city itself.¹²

These grants reflected the existing division of Munster between the MacCarthys of Desmond and the O'Briens of Thomond. Giraldus informs us that:

immediately Diarmait the prince of Desmond and other leading men of that area were reduced to obedience. FitzStephen and Miles then divided between them the seven cantreds nearest the city, which were already in their hands at that time, and were in a more settled condition ... After this they escorted Philip de Breuse (Braose) to Limerick. When they came to the city ... Fitz Stephen and Miles immediately offered to cross the river and attack the place. ... Philip, [however] preferred to return safely to his own lands rather than expose himself to the hazards of fortune in a country so hostile and so remote.¹³

¹² Ibid., p. 185.

¹³ Ibid., pp 185, 187.

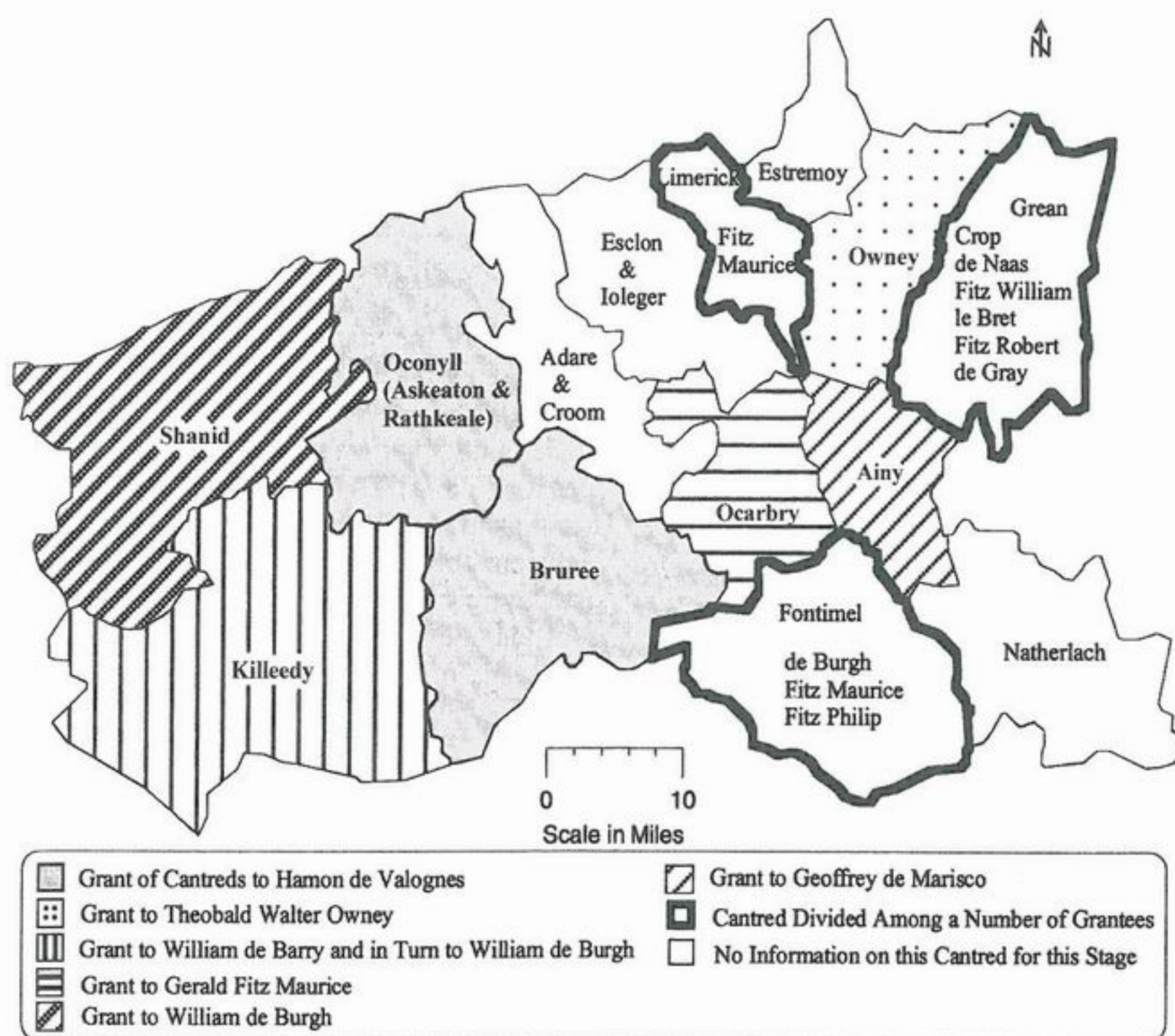


Fig. 6 Stage two: Land Grants of County Limerick: c.1199

De Braose's speculative grant of the kingdom of Limerick remained uncolonised until 1201. This account illustrates how desolate the Limerick landscape was for the Anglo-Normans and how difficult it was at this time to colonise and settle this area. De Braose, despite having over seventy knights and a hundred and fifty archers at his disposal and a large number of foot archers¹⁴ still thought it safer to turn back rather than face the inhabitants of Limerick city.

Stage two in county Limerick, *circa* 1195-1215, was a time when the foundation for an Anglo-Norman colony was laid. Real attempts were made to expand Anglo-Norman territory in county Limerick. During this second stage, some of the initial land grants of stage one were re-issued or reaffirmed as they were not taken up by the original grantees. These affirmations benefited the next generation of Anglo-Normans. Again the land was granted using the territorial unit of the cantred. Consolidation of this new territory was achieved through the establishment and organisation of the manor.

During stage two of the colonisation of Limerick, King John issued a number of small grants to about ten major tenants. These grants rarely extended beyond a single cantred.¹⁵ More control could be kept over smaller grants and no one grantee could become too

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁵ Empey, 'Settlement of the Kingdom of Limerick', p. 10.

powerful.¹⁶ In county Limerick, no single grantee emerged predominant with the possible exception of de Burgh.¹⁷ Limerick city was held as Crown property.¹⁸ By 1199 the county of Limerick had been divided into around fourteen cantreds, held by the major tenants, as seen in fig. 5.

During stage two, the main tenants-in-chief in county Limerick were Walter, de Burgh, de Valognes, Fitz Maurice and de Braose. The main objective of this second stage of the colonisation of county Limerick was to attract settlers to the manor and the organising of land and settlement within the spatial framework of the manor. Difficulties exist in constructing distribution maps of land ownership in early-thirteenth century Limerick. These include changes in landownership as a result of inheritance issues and dowry disputes over the rights of lands. There was uncertainty over ownership and entitlement to land. Also a number of the original grantees died *circa* 1204-6 and the crown either held on to the lands or regranted them. By 1215 many of their heirs then came of age. Also King John took back land from those lords who were out of favour with him and granted land to those who supported him. No consistency in crown policy perhaps led to the delayed settlement of the manors. Stage two of the colonisation is noted for the establishment and consolidation of the manorial landscape of county Limerick. Politically it too is noted for its instability as the Crown wielded its power by granting land but also by taking back land and regranted it to others.

Stage three, *circa* 1216-1321 saw the settlement of the Anglo-Norman landscape in county Limerick and the consolidation of the manorial system. Many of the manors held in minority during stage two returned to the original families when the heirs came of age. This occurred mainly in the second decade of the thirteenth century. This stability allowed for settlement to develop and was reflected in the granting of fairs and markets for the economic development of the manor and the distribution of the manorial produce. This allowed for the economic exploitation of the land to progress. This is evidenced in county Limerick as it was during stage three that the granting of fairs commenced. The development of a network of weekly markets and fairs was an important accompaniment to a developing network of boroughs as they were important for local trade and commerce.¹⁹ They were mainly granted to the second or third generation of Anglo-Normans when there is less direct interference from the Crown with regard to the regrating of lands.

Nucleated settlements emerge during this stage and a number of them were granted borough status. The granting of borough status essentially meant the conferral of charted privileges²⁰ on a group known as burgesses.²¹ This would provide an inducement for settlers and the means for a lord to develop the economic potential of his manor. Empey

¹⁶ Previously, in Ireland, King John divided the land between a small number of individuals, as exemplified in Tipperary in the mid-1180s, William de Burgo, Philip of Worcester and Theobald Walter, *ibid.*, p. 22, note 63. These large fiefs were spread out over a number of cantreds, so while Tipperary was divided among a small number of major tenants by the early thirteenth century, Limerick had at least ten major tenants, O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's Past*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Empey, 'Settlement of the Kingdom of Limerick', p. 10.

¹⁸ O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's Past*, p. 10.

¹⁹ A.F. O'Brien, *The Impact of the Anglo-Normans on Munster* (Kinsale, 1997) p. 56.

²⁰ This included the grant of burgage holdings in the borough at a rent of one shilling per annum, the right of burgesses to their own hundred court and a share in the common fields, O'Connor, *Exploring Limerick's Past*, p. 14. Burgage is a plot of land within a borough on which a house was built and usually included a small acreage outside the settlement, B.J. Graham, 'The High Middle Ages: c. 1100 to c. 1350', in B. J., Graham and L.J. Proudfoot (eds), *An Historical Geography of Ireland* (London, 1993) p. 81.

²¹ These privileges were generally modelled on the Breteuil charter of the Normandy town of Breteuil-sur-Illon. It was used as an exemplar in South-West England and the Welsh marches so the transmission of its custom to Anglo-Norman Ireland was natural and easy, Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 116.

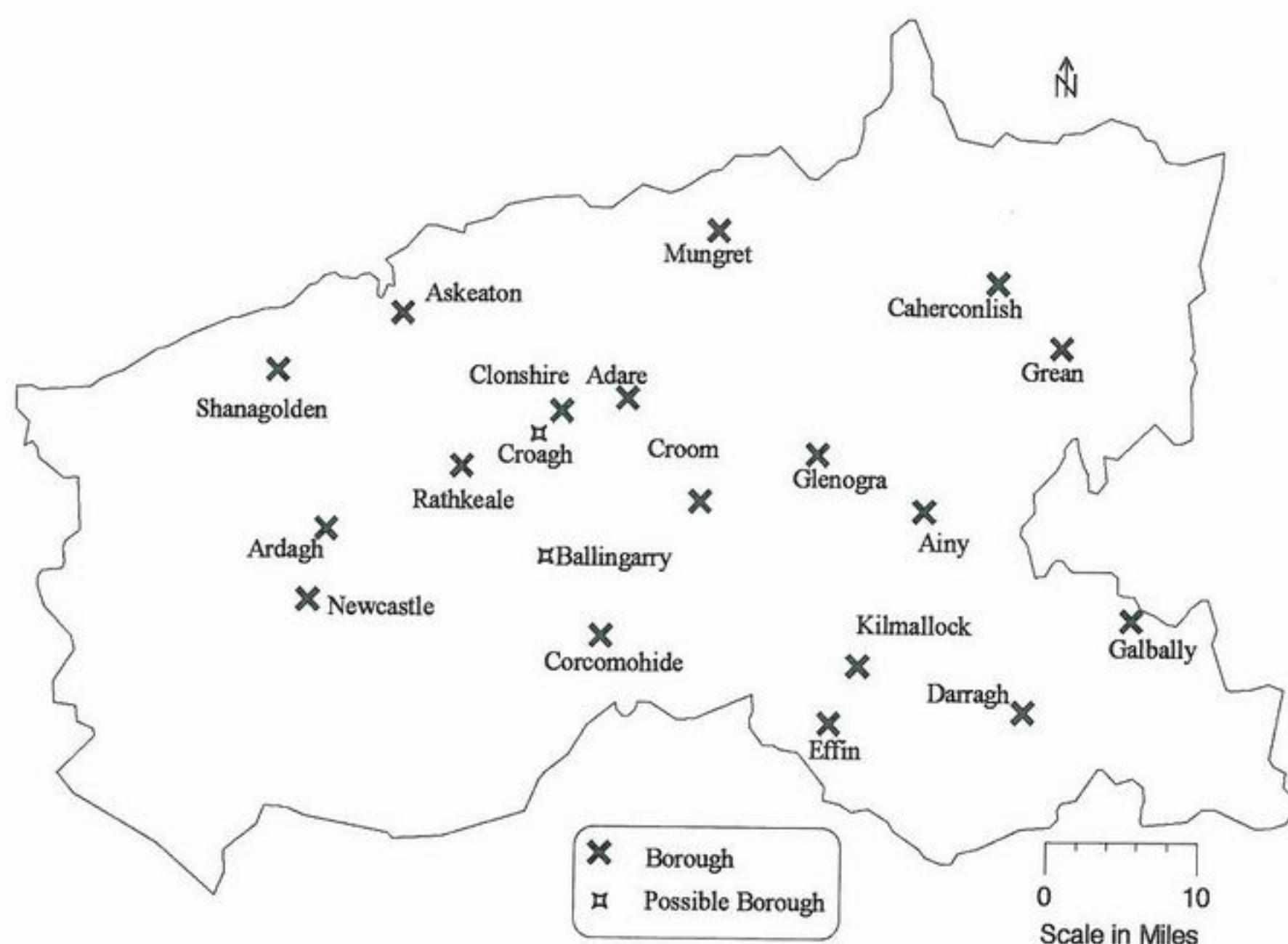


Fig. 7 Stage three: The Distribution of Boroughs in County Limerick

argues that the amount of land held by the burgesses probably represented the investment of the founding lord. He gives the example of Theobald Walter. The amount of land he invested in boroughs, especially those associated with his main manors, was generally between five and seven times the area of his arable demesne.²² With regard to Caherconlish the amount in arable demesne was 316 arable acres. The area held by burgage tenure was 2,400 acres.²³ Therefore the granting of borough status was used as bait for prospective settlers.²⁴

Summary

The primary objective of this paper was to examine the impact feudalism had on the territorial organisation of Anglo-Norman rural settlement landscape in county Limerick in the early stages of Anglo-Norman colonisation. At the core of the manor, a manorial centre emerged where manorial functions, including the administrative, judicial and economic functions, were concentrated. Many of these locations developed into nucleated settlements some of which were granted borough status indicating their importance on the Anglo-Norman landscape. While the granting of borough status did not guarantee the success of a settlement, many Anglo-Norman boroughs have survived onto the present landscape as important settlements.

²² C.A. Empey, 'Conquest and settlement: patterns of Anglo-Norman settlement in north Munster and south Leinster' *Irish Economic and Social History*, 13 (1986) p. 22.

²³ N.B. White, (ed.) *The Red Book of Ormond* (1932) pp 155, 74.

²⁴ C.A. Empey, 'Conquest and settlement: patterns of Anglo-Norman settlement in north Munster and south Leinster' *Irish Economic and Social History*, 13 (1986) p. 22.

Appendix

Table 1 Civil Parishes of County Limerick

1. Kilfergus	2. Loughill	3. Shanagolden
4. Robertstown	5. Morgans	6. Tomdeely
7. Askeaton	8. Iveruss	9. Kilcornan
10. Chapelrussel	11. Ardcanny	12. Kilkeedy
13. Killeely	14. Limerick parish	15. Limerick
16. Limerick parish	17. Clonkeen	18. Kilmurry
19. Stradbally	20. Killeengarriff	21. Abington
22. Doon	23. Nantinan	24. Kilmoylan
25. Dunmoylan	26. Kilcolman	27. Rathronan
28. Kilbraden	29. Clonagh	30. Lismakeery
31. Doondonnell	32. Rathkeale	33. Croagh
34. Cappagh	35. Clonshire	36. Kildimo
37. Adare	38. Drehidtarsna	39. Kilfinny
40. Dysert	41. Croom	42. Killonahan
43. Mungret	44. Crecora	45. Knocknagaul
46. Killeenoghty	47. Kilpeacon	48. Ballycahane
49. Monasteranenagh	50. Donaghmore	51. Caheravally
52. Fedamore	53. Glenogra	54. Tullabracky
55. Bruff	56. Derrygalvin	57. Cahernarry
58. Rochestown	59. Carrigparson	60. Ludden
61. Caherconlish	62. Inch St. Laurence	63. Caherelly
64. Caherconey	65. Ainy	66. Kilcullane
67. Ballybrood	68. Rathjordan	69. Ballinard
70. Ballinamona	71. Tuogh	72. Dromkeen
73. Grean	74. Aglishcormick	75. Kilteely
76. Ballinlough	77. Hospital	78. Ballynaclogh
79. Tuoghcluggin	80. Templebredon	81. Castletown
82. Doon	83. Oola	84. Ardagh
85. Newcastle	86. Kilscannell	87. Grange
88. Clonelty	89. Cloncagh	90. Ballingarry
91. Anhid	92. Athlacca	93. Dromin
94. Uregare	95. Kilfrush	96. Abbeyfeale
97. Monagay	98. Killeedy	99. Mahoonagh
100. Killagholehane	101. Dromcolliher	102. Cloncrew
103. Kilmeedy	104. Corcomohide	105. Colmanswell
106. Bruree	107. Hackmys	108. Tankardstown

109. Kilbreedy Minor	110. Effin	111. Kilquane
112. St. Peter's & St. Paul's	113. Ballingaddy	114. Ardpatrick
115. Kilbreedy Major	116. Athneasy	117. Particles
118. Emlygrennan	119. Kilfinnane	120. Kilflyn
121. Knocklong	122. Ballingarry	123. Darragh
124. Ballyscaddan	125. Ballylanders	126. Galbally
127. Kilbeheny		

Table 2 List of Churches in County Limerick in 1201

1. Kilmallock	2. Bruree	3. Ardpatrick
4. Kilcomgain (Kilquane)	5. Cluencomard (Colmanswell)	6. Imlechdroiniggi (Emlygrenan)
7. Killogholehan	8. Cloncrew	9. Druncollogher
10. Clonelty	11. Cloncagh	12. Killeedy
13. Ardagh	14. Kilfergus	15. Loughill
16. Ardineer (in parish of Robertstown)	17. Dysert (in parish of Robertstown)	18. Shanagolden
19. Toomdeely	20. Iverus	21. Killscannell
22. Clonagh	23. Rathmaseer	24. Cappagh/Kilmacluga
25. Clonshire	26. Drehidtarsna	27. Kilfinny/Cill Finche
28. Disertengusa/desert of Angus (Dysert)	29. Killanahan (in parish of Killeenoghty)	30. Tullachbraci (Tullabracky)
31. Kilcurly (not a parish)	32. Kildimo	33. Kilcornan
34. Ardcanney	35. Keldachaleum (in parish of Kildimo)	36. Kilgobbin (in parish of Adare)
37. Anhid	38. Mungret	39. Imeolchuir (probably Crecora)
40. Donaghmore	41. Ballichorchiam (Kilpeacon)	42. Cahirdubdulig (Caheravally)
43. Kellonachan (Killonahan)	44. Ballycahane	45. Cluonidublach (probably in parish of Knockagaul)

Table 3 Markets & Fairs in County Limerick in the Early-Thirteenth Century

Kilmallock	1221	Mungret	1224 ²⁵
Ainy	1226 ²⁶	Adare	1226 ²⁷
Grean	1234 ²⁸		

²⁵ H.S. Sweetman, (ed.), *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, 1 (London, 1875-86) no. 1262.

²⁶ Ibid., no. 1226.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., no. 2182.

