

Fig. 1.3. The urban hierarchy of medieval Limerick.

Andrew), Athlacca (St. John the Baptist), Bruff (St. Peter) and Ballingarry (St. Evanjanus). Other cementing ingredients in village life would have included corn mills, granaries and occasional holy wells. There was a striking propensity to select riverine sites. Upwards of 30 villages were located alongside rivers or streams, thus ensuring an immediate and reliable supply of water at all times.

Of the settlements which endured, the most significant contributors to the present-day pattern would include Kilfinnane, Bruff, Glin, Hospital and Ballingarry. Smaller places too managed to adapt to the changing social and economic demands which were made upon them over time. A selection would include Oola, Knocklong and the hill-top village of Herbertstown in east county, Athlacca and Bruree in mid county, and Croagh and Mahoonagh in the western lowlands. Many were destined to succumb, however, in the face of a transformation in landownership, landholding and landworking during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. About one-half of the total vanished from the scene, leaving behind only the trace elements of castle and church in ruins. As early as the mid seventeenth century, the venerable old village of Killeedy in west county would appear to have been irretrievably lost. The Civil Survey records the presence of 'an old castle and a church' but nothing else.<sup>(43)</sup> Nevertheless, a vibrant tradition in village life which is attested in the later middle ages has persisted into the modern era. Losses have been matched, if not outstripped by gains to the village network.

It is now appropriate to return to the opening theme of this section. County Limerick was deemed to fall within a more general type of area which in the high medieval era is perhaps best characterized as a hybrid zone. The Anglo-Normans who established an enduring presence within the county and conferred the great gift of towns and nucleated villages were from the start in contact and conflict with the indigenous population. Enduring contacts with native culture by way of intermarriage, fosterage and acquisition of the Irish language are discernible among the upper strata of Anglo-Norman society from a relatively early date.<sup>(44)</sup> Such

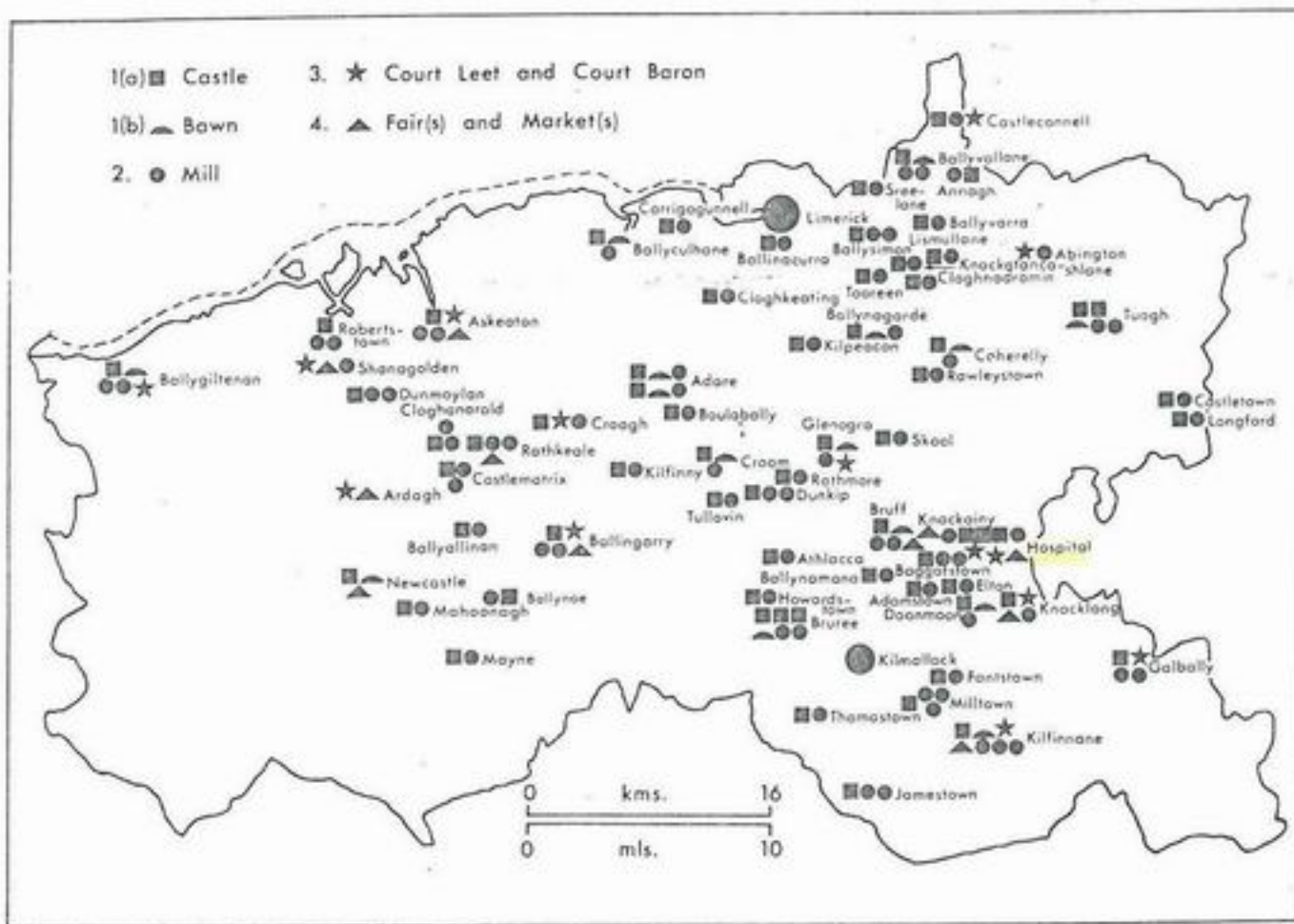


Fig. 2.1. The villages of county Limerick 1654-6.

meedy, even though both had already struck roots and had acquired central place functions. A third problem posed by the Civil Survey relates to the difficulty in discerning the phenomenon of nucleation. From an examination of the Tipperary survey it has been noted that 'there is hardly a single case of the word village being applied specifically to a group of buildings'.<sup>(2)</sup> This observation similarly relates to the Limerick scene. As in Tipperary, what the survey does is to record the number of buildings to be found in a certain townland or townlands without any mention of the space relations between one building and another.

Despite the problems adumbrated above, fig. 2.1. represents a tentative bid to plot the distribution of Limerick villages using the Civil Survey as source. The survey was studied with a view to selecting criteria which might be taken as pointers to the presence of settlement nucleations. Altogether, four such criteria could be identified with consistency from the Limerick volume. These emerged as follows: i) castle with or without an accompanying bawn, ii) mill, iii) fair/market and iv) privilege of court leet and court baron. No single criterion was deemed to suffice as an indicator of village presence. Instead the locations plotted on fig. 2.1. represent a combination of two or more criteria which together exhibited a reliable degree of spatial and/or functional inter-relationship.

Turning briefly to each criterion in turn it may be stated first of all that castles are the commonest of all the antiquities in stone to dot the Irish landscape. The vast majority are fortified private residences of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but predominantly of the sixteenth. Within county Limerick an overwhelming proportion of Civil Survey 'castles' belong to this category, and bearing in mind their function as private dwellings the term *tower house* is a more acceptable generic label in seeking to distinguish them from contemporary or earlier military castles.<sup>(3)</sup> Limerick is clearly the outstanding county in Ireland in terms of the profusion of tower houses. It stands away out in front with a density of .380 towers per square mile, followed by Kilkenny with .245 and Tipperary with .154,<sup>(4)</sup> and the high Limerick

incidence may be taken as a surrogate of wealth and well being in a part of Ireland that saw the most complete interdigitation of Norman and Gaelic life. In a recent study of mid seventeenth century Tipperary, Smyth assigns an independent nucleating role to the tower house.<sup>(5)</sup> However, the Limerick evidence suggests that treated strictly in isolation tower houses cannot be interpreted as nucleating forces *per se*. Many occupied purely rural locations and to-day in Limerick as elsewhere their relics are most conspicuous alongside substantial farmhouses. It is necessary, therefore, to seek out other settlement items and/or functional evidence when attempting to plot the distribution of mid seventeenth century villages. Among the former, mills vie with castles as the most consistently recorded items in the Limerick survey. The majority were devoted to the grinding of corn but the widespread presence of tuckmills also indicates that small scale production of cloth was carried on throughout the county. As with tower houses a substantial proportion occupied dispersed locations. Our concern, however, is with mill associations in relation to one or more criteria which as a composite point to the presence of villages. What emerges is that riverine locations are supremely important. All but two of the sites plotted on fig. 2.1. featured mills, while more than seven in every ten brought castle and mill together in riverine settings and thus furnished powerful magnets for nucleation. The remaining criteria relate to function. Survey evidence for the holding of fairs and markets is afforded in respect of ten locations on fig. 2.1. Combinations always occur with other criteria, and in any case all of the sites merit recognition as pre-existing villages. The privilege of court leet and court baron is plotted for 14 locations which also exhibit combinations with other criteria. Such courts took place at the cores of large estates where landowners exercised a wide-ranging judicial function. Although little studied by historians such courts may have played an influential role in the functional make-up of the early modern village. The need for study is perhaps all the more compelling since throughout Ireland abundant evidence exists of synchronisation between estate core and village.<sup>(6)</sup>

Exclusive of the city of Limerick and the town of Kilmallock, 65 settlements are plotted on fig. 2.1. The survey records evidence of further buildings in or near 27 of these but gives little hint as to the nature of space relations. Nevertheless, the presence of some large villages may be inferred. At Hospital (Smallcounty barony) where a *New English* landlord was proprietor, a castle, mill and 60 houses are specified along with the functional indices of fairs and courts. Ten miles further south, the *Old English* owned townland of Kilfinnane (Coshlea barony) featured a castle together with an accompanying bawn, 3 mills and 50 thatched houses or cabins as well as fairs, markets and courts. The nucleus of Any (Knockainy) in Smallcounty barony reveals a mix of Irish and English proprietors and the count appears impressive in terms of both settlement items and functional make-up. The Irish proprietor, Thady O'Grady (deceased), was former owner of a castle, 9 cabins and a mill, while the English proprietors, William Fitton and Anabel Browne laid claim to a court leet and court baron, a fair, a castle and an unspecified number of cabins. In terms of both ownership and layout Knockainy at this time was truly a hybrid settlement characterized by none of the spatial disjunction that followed on the Cromwellian land transfers.<sup>(7)</sup>

In more general terms the proprietorial geography of land units which show evidence of village settlement is revealing (fig. 2.2.). The names of Old English proprietors predominate thus offering striking testimony of the strength and durability of intrusive colonisation during the middle ages. By mid seventeenth century they had of course become thoroughly gaelicised and they all espoused Catholicism. But their retentive grip on lands with evidence of village settlement is arresting, particularly in mid and east county. The Bourke lineage of Clanwilliam bulked largest. In this barony alone individual members commanded the village settlements of Castleconnell in Stradbally parish, Knockatanecashlane in Caherconlish, Ballinagarde in Caheravally, Lismullane and Cloghnadromin in Abington, Ballyvarra in Killeenagariff, Ballysimon and Sreelane in Kilmurry, and outside of it the Bourkes held Kilpeacon in Small-

and Tuogh (Tuogh parish, Ownybeg barony). Other deep rooted associations wedded Hurley to Knocklong (Coshlea barony), Heyne to Cahirelly West (Clanwilliam barony), Ryan to Annagh (Ownybeg barony) and Creagh to Milltown (Ballingaddy parish, Coshlea barony). In every single instance Irish proprietorship like that of the Old English was undivided. The native had learned well the ways of the medieval incomer.

New English and/or Protestant proprietors registered 16 occurrences among land units evincing village settlement. In their case the distribution closely reflects the pattern of land transfers achieved as a result of the Munster plantation scheme, apart from the earl of Kildare's interests at Adare and Croom. West county stands out most prominently, with an elongated salient penetrating through to the eastern county boundary. In the west Colonel Francis Courtenay was easily the largest landowner to have emerged, and judging from the Civil Survey, village foci studded the lowland sector of his estate at Newcastle, Mahoonagh, Ballynoe (Clonely parish, Glenquin barony) and at Mayne (Mahoonagh parish, Glenquin barony). Other west county associations linked the Trenchard family to Shanagolden, Sir Edward Wingfield to Robertstown (Robertstown parish, Shanid barony), Lieutenant Col. William Piggott to Cloghanarold (Doononnell parish, Connello Lower barony) and Edmond Southwell to Castlematrix (Rathkeale parish, Connello Lower barony). In the narrowing belt through mid and east county the villages to fall within the sphere of English and/or Protestant interests included Croagh, Kilfinny, Glenogra, Rathmore (Monasteranenagh parish, Small-county barony), Bruff and Hospital.

The overall distribution pattern shows a clear ascendance on the part of east county Limerick. This accords with expectations but there is little doubt that the western baronies of Connello and Kenry fail to achieve a full representation. Indeed the pattern depicted corresponds closely with the distribution of detail shown on Petty's county map of Hiberniae delineatio (1685)<sup>(6)</sup> which was of course based upon the Civil and Down surveys. As such it is an amalgam of untidy cluttering and under-representation and it is marred by empty spaces. Lacunae in Civil Survey coverage along with insufficiency of detail in the case of some baronies may be held responsible. It should, however, be noted that the conspicuous void in west Connello may be explicable in terms of unattractive hill country which had hitherto been sparsely settled or simply left beyond the margins of the worked land. Similarly elsewhere, all hill country stretches are devoid of evidence of village settlement. On the other hand, village prevalence over the limestone-rich lowlands of county Limerick was a well-established phenomenon, with notable concentrations apparent in the baronies of Smallcounty, Coshma, Coshlea and Clanwilliam.

Sir William Petty's Down Survey reinforced the Civil Survey and fleshed it out in cartographic form. Detailed coverage of territorial boundaries is provided and while the settlement content tends to be patchy and niggardly, some useful insights emerge. This is especially the case when close-ups are furnished of individual villages. Two such close-ups are made available for the Limerick villages of Adare and Knockainy, and so for the first time in history the layout of small settlements is depicted in intimate association with their surroundings. An impression of the interpenetration of village and countryside forms straightaway. Starting at Adare (fig. 2.3.), leading settlement items stand in association with routeways, landholdings and field systems. The earl of Kildare's castle strategically guards a bridge over the Maigue, while to the south of the river a triangular market place – equidistant from the Spittle Gate, the White Abbey (Trinitarian Priory) and the Black Abbey (Augustinian Priory) – proclaims the village centre. The market place's centrality amid leading items in the village suggests that this triangular open space may have been coeval with them. It certainly owed nothing to planter influence since the landowning and landholding structure at mid seventeenth century reveals no trace whatever of New English colonists. Sequestered lands that formerly belonged to the priories and the friary had been acquired by local landowning interests, while

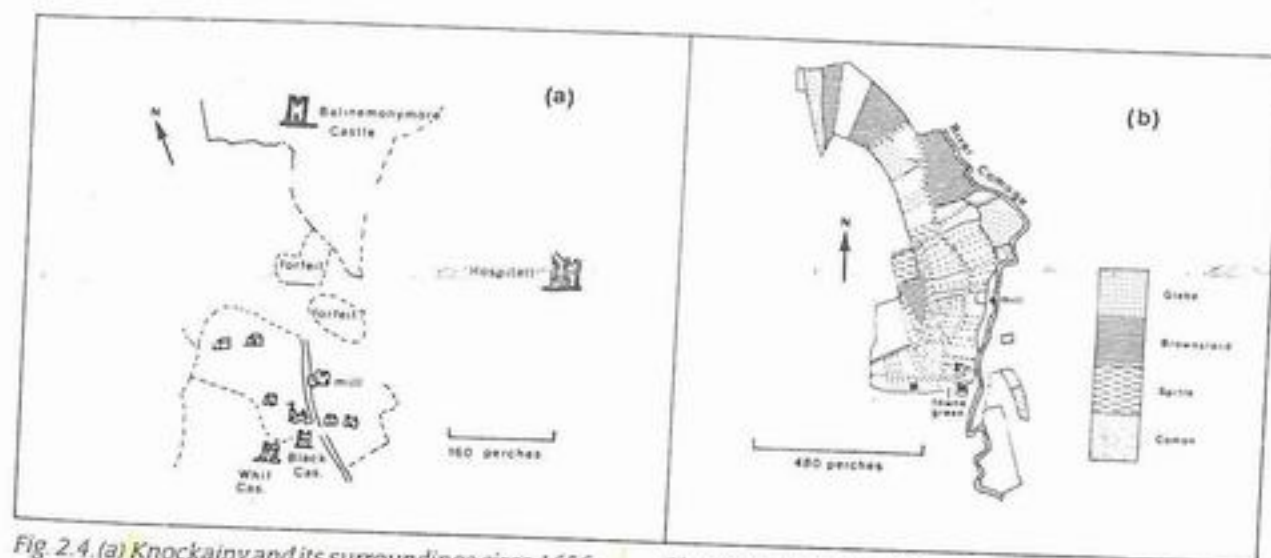


Fig. 2.4. (a) Knockainy and its surroundings circa 1656.

Fig. 2.4. (b) Close-up of Knockainy circa 1656.

offers a frontal close-up of the village. The parish church, now without a roof, stands centrally and around it two castles gather along with a mill on the Camoge River and five cabins. It seems certain that the draughtsman's treatment of settlement items erred on the side of parsimony since the Civil Survey credits the east Limerick village with a far more generous cabin endowment. At Knockainy as in other places the Down surveyors were obviously giving a symbolic rendering on paper to a large nucleated settlement, and in such renderings five or six houses at most sufficed to surround the major nuclei of castle and/or church.<sup>(10)</sup>

As far as village topography was concerned the cases of Adare and Knockainy show the Down Survey at its best. Outside of these, however, other surveyors showed little interest in detailing the settlement arrangements either in villages or in the open countryside. At this time on the eve of forfeiture, admeasurement of the land in all its facets counted for almost everything while the settlement content of land units merited or was accorded only the most cursory of glances. The latter is easily seen in relation to village settlements that were deemed not to come within the ambit of confiscation. Thus at Hospital, for example, a symbolic castle alone proclaims what according to Civil Survey evidence was a large, complex and well-endowed village on the lands of the English proprietor, Sir Thomas Browne. It was the same at Glenogra where despite the impressive juxtaposition of castle and parish church, a symbolic representation of the former is all that appears on paper. In effect therefore, nothing at all emerges of a settlement focus 'Haveing a Castle, a Bawne, 30 houses and cabbins and a Mill together with a Court leet and Court Barron and Cheife rentes'.<sup>(11)</sup> Things were scarcely any different elsewhere even in the case of village settlements which, to judge from their Catholic proprietorship, would soon become targets for transfer along naked sectarian lines. At Castleconnell, for instance, only a castle, a church and a house appear; at Galbally the castle stands on its own in splendid isolation; at Baggottstown and Kilpeacon the familiar nucleating forces of castle and mill show but nothing else; and at Boulabally in Adare parish nothing at all is sketched inside the denomination boundary. Judging from both the Civil and the Down surveys, therefore, coverage of the village settlements of county Limerick was marked by inconsistencies, lacunae and loose ends. Nevertheless, despite this, the paper landscape that emerges from these great undertakings is richly laden with testimony of life in villages across the broad sweep of the lowlands of mid Munster. Indeed sufficient evidence may be adduced to cause a revision of our notions of the settlement structure which served the prime lands of Ireland in the middle of the seventeenth century.

#### Mechanisms and markers of change

The Civil and Down surveys belong to a time segment in the seventeenth century which separates two expansionist phases in the fortunes of village settlement, from 1603 to 1641 and

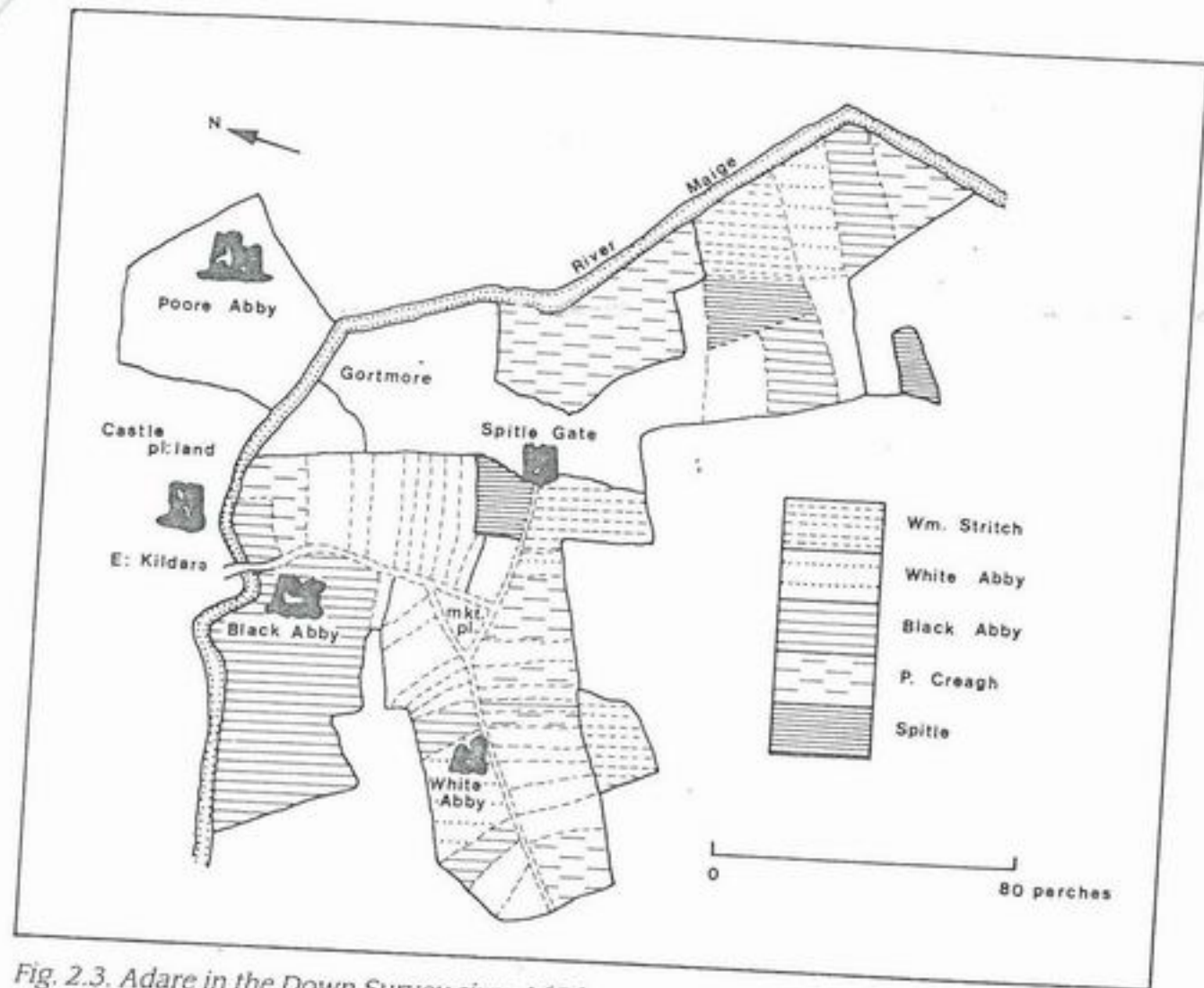


Fig. 2.3. Adare in the Down Survey circa 1656.

the ubiquitous Piers Creagh of Limerick and William Stritch, also of Limerick, held substantial if discontinuous blocks of land (fig. 2.3.). Fragmentation is the dominant theme in landowning. Piers Creagh's lands, for example, lie scattered among seven dispersed divisions. The Spittle Gate and the scattered spittle lands relate back ultimately to a local foundation of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem,<sup>10</sup> thus adding appreciably to the estates of medieval monastic orders in and around Adare. Clearly ecclesiastical as well as lay patronage had played a formative role in the development of Adare as a sizeable village. This much is apparent from the Down Survey map as is evidence that roadways exerted a dominant influence on strip field alignments. In the main landholdings form a pastiche of rectilinear strips and consolidated blocks, possibly reflecting a mix of medieval and modern tendencies in land working.

Moving on to the Knockainy maps, fig. 2.4. (a) portrays a patchwork of minutely striped farmland. The villagers' arable lands lie open, scattered and intermixed along a threaded network of laneways. Two separate extents of commonage fringe the open field strips. Beyond strip and common, blocks of land exhibit a fragmented pattern of ownership similar to Adare. Glebe and spittle land attest to the grip which medieval church interests held over landed property prior to the transfers that followed on the Reformation. Moreover, the four large blocks entitled 'Brownsland' and belonging to Sir Thomas Browne of Hospital probably represent part of the former lands of the Knights Hospitallers. Knockainy village is located towards the south with only its leading settlement components shown. Two castles and the parish church constitute the main poles of development, while the village's principal gathering places of green and graveyard accompany the duality of castle and church. Fig. 2.4. (b)

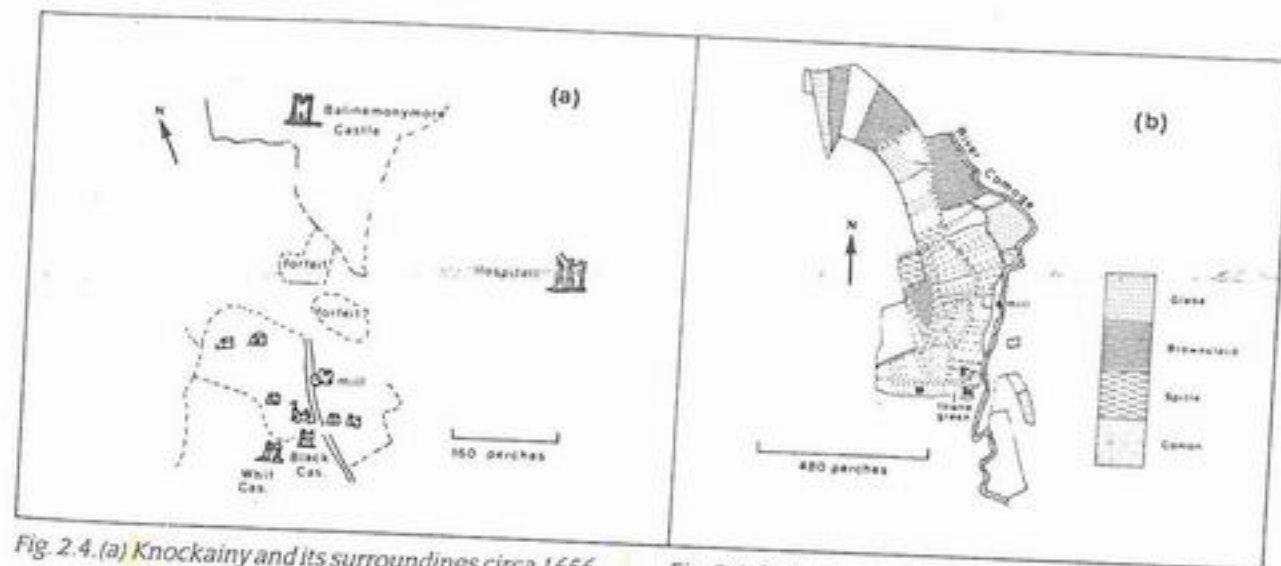


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from 1660 onwards until *circa* 1690. Dealing with the first of these it may be stated at the outset that between 1603 and 1641 the thrust of available documentation suggests a rapid expansion of internal trade as landowners sought the provision of fairs (usually on an annual or six monthly basis) and markets (usually on a weekly basis) at the settlement foci of their estates. Throughout the country as a whole almost 500 sites were granted patents during the period – the highest ever recorded – and more than treble the total for any comparable period subsequently.<sup>(12)</sup> Within county Limerick most of the patents were confirmed between 1607 and 1625 when a marked expansion in agricultural output underpinned buoyant economic growth. Individual landowners across the county spearheaded progress. Under their aegis the mechanisms of trade became activated on a scale unparalleled over any comparable period of time, either before or after. The relevant details are set out in Table 2.1.<sup>(13)</sup>

In launching markets and fairs much of the initiative came from the beneficiaries of recent land transfers. The estates of Dowdall, Barkley, Cullum, Trenchard, Courtenay and the earl of Thomond all derived initially from the Munster plantation scheme, while Browne owed his lands around Hospital to the spoliation of former monastic possessions. Adventitious proprietors such as Fullerton and Stephenson also made a contribution as did landowners of longstanding like Cantwell, Lacy, Bourke and Hurley. Occasionally village germination and growth may have coincided with the beginnings of a trading function. The most likely instances are Kilmeedy and Dromcolliher on Courtenay's far-flung estate, but there is no certainty on this point. Everywhere else it may be stated without equivocation that patents were bestowed on pre-existing villages.

Provision of the mechanisms of trade ushered in modernising influences. This much is clear from an analysis of some of the original licences and from an examination of the associated tolls. Taken together these demonstrate that the intended function of markets and fairs was to facilitate the sale of local agricultural produce for cash and thereby promote the commercialization of agriculture. Once a week the market served as an exchange centre for a surrounding rural area. Most of the produce on offer, including butter, oats, wheat, cattle and horses derived from local farms while the market also afforded to landowners and their tenants opportunities for purchasing goods ranging from salt to domestic utensils and agricultural implements. Patterns of circulation became established by virtue of the comings and goings of rural dwellers, pedlars and perhaps the out-shops of merchants as in the villages of contemporary Ulster.<sup>(14)</sup> Annual or six-monthly fairs attracted vendors from greater distances. The fairs of Rathkeale, for example, must have elicited interest from a well strung out area, to judge from a seventeenth century satire on Thomas Fitzgerald, knight of Glin.<sup>(15)</sup> According to the poet:

Clann an mhic sin Éamoinn,  
D'éis a marbhtha mairid siad;  
Do gheabhair a rian go Ráth Caola,  
Ná h-iarr acht i n-am aonaigh iad.

The marketing function of developing villages must also have bred a variety of crafts and other semi-specialist occupations such as weavers, smiths, tailors and wax chandlers, and with the surge in trading activity during the period, the bustle of farmers and traders produced a host of alehousekeepers. There was, for instance, a widespread licencing of taverns in the years 1614-16 – a sure indicator of the rapid expansion of trade. The places to be specified in this respect at the time were Kilmallock, Ballingarry, Adare, Knockainy, Cahirconlish, Askeaton, Ardagh, Robertstown (Shanid barony), Glin and Rathkeale.<sup>(16)</sup> It is likely too that the functional diversity which until recently was such a pervasive feature of licenced premises in villages and small towns went back in time to the early seventeenth century, if not a good deal earlier.

Landowner	Year of Patent	Location	Specification
Edward fitz Harris	1607	Kilfinnane	Monday market & 2 annual fairs
Sir James Fullerton	1607	Bruff	Wednesday market & 2 annual fairs
Sir Thomas Browne	1608	Hospital	Saturday market & 1 annual fair
Sir John Dowdall	1609	Rathkeale	Thursday market & 3 annual fairs
Sir Francis Barkley	1610	Askeaton	Wed. & Sat. market, and 1 annual fair
William Cullum	1611	Ardagh	Monday market & 1 annual fair
Thomas Cantwell	1611	Galbally	Tuesday market & 2 annual fairs
Francis Trenchard	1612	Shanagolden	Friday market & 1 annual fair
William Lacy	1613	Ballingarry	Tuesday market & 1 annual fair
Richard Stephenson	1619	Dunmoylan	Wednesday market & 1 annual fair at Kilcolman
Earl of Thomond	1620	Fedamore	Thursday market & 2 annual fairs
Richard fitz William Burke	1620	Lismullane	Thursday market & 1 annual fair
George Courtenay	1625	Newcastle	Saturday market & 1 annual fair
	1625	Kilmeedy	Wednesday market & 1 annual fair
	C. 1640	Dromcolliher	Weekly market & 1 annual fair
Maurice Hurley	–	Knocklong	Weekly market & 2 annual fairs
William Fitton & Anabel Browne	–	Knockainy	1 annual fair

Table 2.1. Patent provision in county Limerick, 1600-1641.

The growth phase from 1603 to 1641 is attributable to an amalgam of influences. First of all, intrusive landowners played a crucial formative role. With their restoration after suppression of the 1598 rebellion, a substantial start was made in the transfer of land to New English proprietors which continued on a piecemeal basis during the seventeenth century. In county Limerick, recipients of Munster plantation seignories collectively accounted for some

ample, New English settlers exceeded 20 per cent of the total enumerated population of Rathkeale, Newcastle, Dromcolliher and Shanagolden. All of these villages had witnessed colonisation stemming from the Munster plantation scheme and collectively they contained over a fifth of the enumerated New English population within Connello barony. However, proportions as high as these are encountered nowhere else. The nearest approaches come by way of settlements where the New English element ranged between 10 and 20 per cent. Ardagh and Loughill (Connello barony), Kildimo (Kenry barony), Castleconnell (Clanwilliam barony), Abington (Owneybeg barony) and Castletown (Coonagh barony) were the only villages to come within this category. Settlements which registered an alien element of more than 7 per cent and less than 10 per cent included Croagh (Connello barony), Athlacca (Coshma barony), Fedamore and Hospital (Smallcounty barony), Knocklong and Galbally (Coshlea barony). The mean for the county as a whole (exclusive of Limerick city and Kilmallock town) was 5.2 per cent. It is apparent, therefore, that in taking up residence, planter and colonist showed a predilection for locations in or near village settings.

Changes in landownership induced in time some far reaching effects on village and small town life. Such changes only became maturely worked out in the early eighteenth century when relative peace helped to launch a major growth phase in the settlement history of this country. Before that, however, the painful process of property transfers was for the most part packed into the preceding century. In county Limerick, as we have seen, substantial changes had already been achieved arising out of the Munster plantation scheme. After mid century, the process was advanced decisively through a combination of Cromwellian confiscation and post Restoration land settlement. Dispossession of old and insertion of new landowners altered the face of proprietorship in favour of the New English as adventurers and soldiers cast hungry eyes over rich Limerick land. Of those whose descendants made an impact on settlement and landholding structures, the following planters might be cited in association with villages at estate cores: Major John Odell (Ballingarry); Captain Thomas Southwell (Castlematrix, Rathkeale); Phineas Bury (Shannongrove/Newmarket or Pallaskenry); Thomas Westropp (Ballysteen, Kenry barony); Hugh Massy (Anglesborough, Coshlea barony); Sir Standish Hartstonge (Bruff); Randolph Wilson (Caherconlish); Captain Robert Oliver (Kilfinnane); George Evans (Bulgaden, Coshlea barony); and Charles Ormsby (Athlacca). During a period of instability many also came and went, leaving little other than a record of their fleeting presence. The entire period might be said to culminate with the Williamite confiscations of the 1690s and subsequent land sales. As a result existing landowners such as Bury, Southwell and Evans expanded their hold on land and new planters such as Captain Charles Conyers (Castletown, Connello barony) insinuated themselves at the settlement foci of old territorial entities. The cumulative effect of all of these changes meant that the ultimate hold over land and village had turned predominantly Protestant, as people of planter stock came to displace the old Catholic proprietors. In this way an effective launching pad for modernisation had been cobbled together whenever peace and stability should prove sustainable.

In the meantime such were the vicissitudes in landowning that the second of the expansionist phases relating to village settlement was muted by comparison with the first, and much of the economic growth that occurred took the form of short intermittent bursts. Patent confirmation in respect of markets and fairs tailed off appreciably. Altogether, details of six patents are on record, but half of these represent an extension to existing privileges. In the cases of Newcastle, Ballingarry and Galbally additional fair days were secured by their respective landlords – Sir William Courtenay, John Odell and Sir O. St. George. The only new confirmations applied in the cases of Glin, Caherconlish and Abington (Owneybeg barony). Fresh initiatives were, therefore, strongly localized and little new momentum could have been generated in the sensitive area of trade. Indeed, at a time of transition marked by insec-

Of the formative influences perhaps the most crucial in the eighteenth century was the general standing of settlements within the estate system. Two preliminary points may be made. First, a high degree of accord is evident among the growing towns in the sense that most of them formed the centrepieces of single, large estates. The only glaring exception was Kilmallock which, as we have seen, stagnated under its multiplicity of proprietors. Second, in the course of their evolution from 1700 onwards the towns of county Limerick remained overwhelmingly embedded within the same basic estate frameworks, and a good measure of continuity is encountered among proprietorial families. Estate cores such as Newcastle (Courtenay), Kilfinnane (Oliver), Adare (Quin), Glin (Fitzgerald) and Hospital (Browne) were retained by the same landlord family for the entire period, while the others experienced at most two sets of lineages. Examples of the latter would include Bruff (Hartstonge, Pery), Abbeyfeale (Southwell, Ellis) and Dromcolliher (Courtenay, Stevelly). Evidence of spatial and temporal continuity is therefore available of a kind conducive to the growth of towns.

After 1800 towns, by virtue of their growing complexity, increasingly transcended the estate system.<sup>(2)</sup> One indication of this was the forging of enduring links with the countryside on the part of a reconstituted Catholic Church, firstly through its chapels and later through an attendant suite of features. Another came by way of service provision on the part of the State. Towns gathered unto themselves the bulk of new structures and new institutions which were designed to furnish the mass of the population with rudimentary social services. Among Limerick towns as elsewhere *circa* 1840 these structures included constabulary barracks, court houses and national schools while dispensaries, fever hospitals and workhouses were the most frequent items to emanate from the provisions of the Poor Relief Act of 1838. At a time of peak population numbers therefore, old market nodes had begun to evolve into incipient service centres. Cruel and painful adjustments had often to be made in the post-famine era as table 6.1. illustrates, and coming into the present century many towns were in terms of their demographic content little more than shadows of their former selves. It is, however, a measure of the resilience of the county Limerick town that Ballingarry alone dropped below the fixed minimum of 500 in the census of population of 1981, and employing the same basic criterion now as a century ago, the only additional contenders to the Limerick urban scene are Foynes, an incipient port in 1840, and the two deeply rooted nodes of Castleconnell and Caherconlish which have been revived lately as dormitory settlements of the expanding city of Limerick.

In a county such as Limerick where the tradition of village life was, as we have seen, deep rooted in the mind and marked by locational conservatism on the ground, it is perfectly congruent that the expansive phase from 1700-1900 should prove to be one of the most productive in the development of existing villages and the initiation of new ones. In some senses the mid-Munster county formed a microcosm of the larger Western European setting which saw a general blossoming of village life, and during this phase of only gradually diminishing paternalism the development of villages still owed much to landowners who in addition sponsored planned growth points on their estates. In Ireland and Scotland alone upwards of 600 planned villages emerged up to 1850 which, generally under the aegis of landowners, were associated with the commercialisation of agriculture, the growth of domestic textile industries, spinning mills and bleachfields, the rationalisation of local markets and fairs, and developments in overland transport, road planning and harbour construction.<sup>(3)</sup> As well as the organic growth or the remodelling of existing settlements and the development *ab initio* of planned growth points, the Limerick countryside – in this instance as part of the larger Irish scene – also saw the emergence of haphazard and humble villages which came to stake a claim at the base of the urban hierarchy. A diversity of influences went into their making but initially at a time of accelerating population growth the majority might be viewed as points of infill. Such villages gathered over time around road interstices or simply along lengths

of routeway and they developed to serve the most elementary needs of a scattered rural population. In many instances a new chapel furnished an assured fixing point for a loose assemblage of services to gather around as the Catholic Church came through triumphant between a receding Gaelic world on the one hand and an antipathetic colonial one on the other. Recent research has tentatively identified over 400 examples of chapel villages as they have come to be termed,<sup>(4)</sup> and the majority took gradual shape in the Ireland of the nineteenth century. Given the richness of the tradition of village life and the strong Catholic impulses that surfaced in the nineteenth century, it was entirely consistent that Limerick should feature prominently in terms of its capacity to generate chapel villages, while more generally the mid-Munster county occupied centre stage in Ireland for the long standing vivacity of its villagers and the variety of its village forms.

### Town and estate: pattern

On viewing Irish towns in the making over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it may be acknowledged at the outset that the landed estate acted as a basic frame of reference. Such factors as size, layout, capacity to generate wealth and to exploit opportunity, along with continuity through time could critically influence the shaping of settlement in general and of towns in particular. Moreover, these landed entities held the entire island in their grip and among the leaders of society the fashioning of landscape was guided by a desire to uphold universally accepted norms. Conformity and uniformity were therefore the keynotes as the same diagnostic patterns came to be encountered, and of these the town at estate core was lovingly replicated across the green face of Ireland.

In county Limerick the motif of town set within estate is well seen by mid-nineteenth century when, for the first time, a full set of data becomes available<sup>(5)</sup> (fig. 6.1.). Most towns emerge as linchpins of large, relatively compact estates; indeed town centred estates

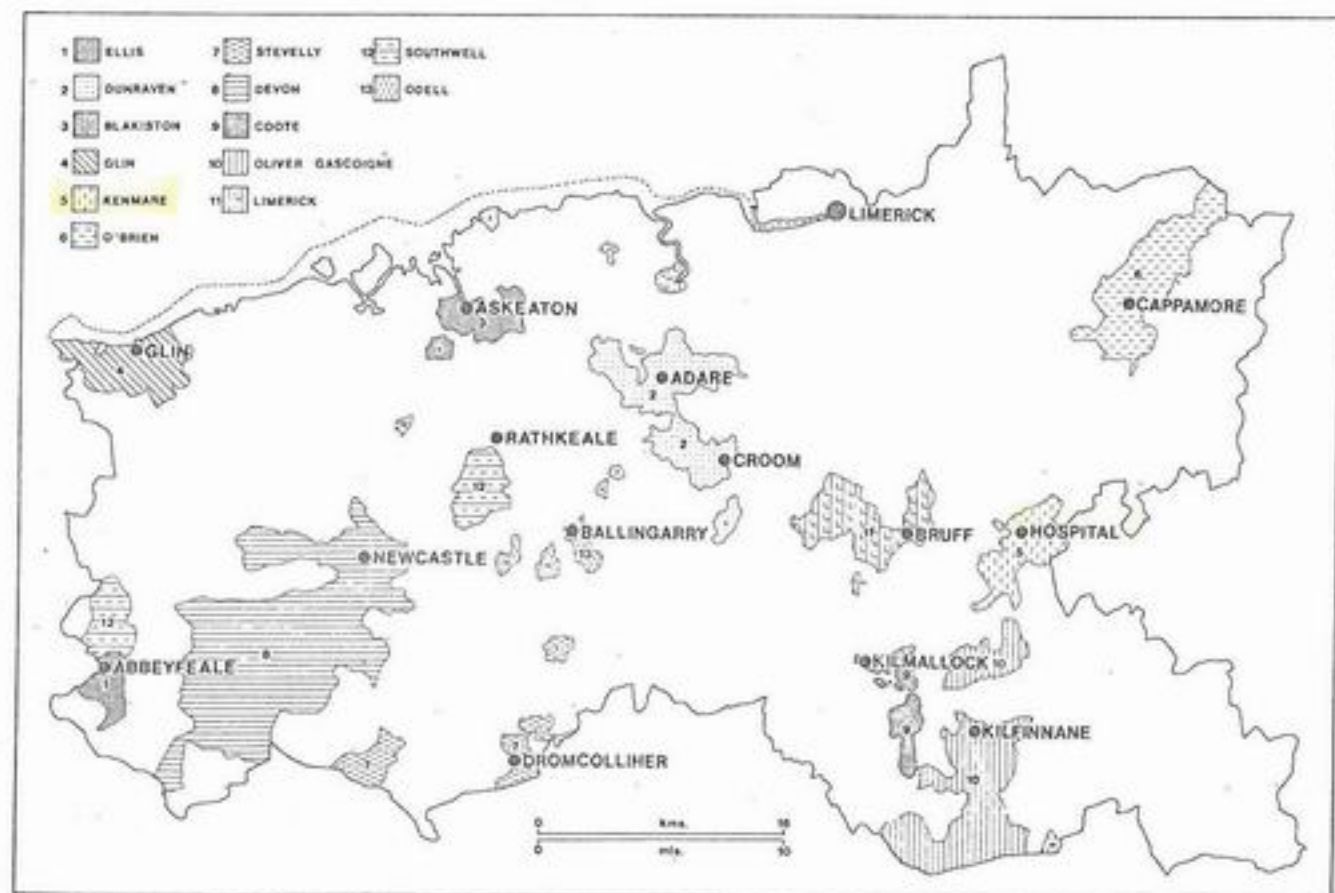


Fig. 6.1. Towns and estates circa 1840.

throughout the county tended to bulk among the largest and rank among the most cohesive. Of the great estates those that belonged to the earls of Devon (33,026 st. acres) and Dunraven (11,574 st. acres), R. Oliver Gascoigne (15,748 st. acres) and Stafford O'Brien (10,075 st. acres) contributed Newcastle, Adare and Croom – two Dunraven towns in mid county, Kilfinnane and Cappamore. The lesser and mostly compact estates of the earl of Limerick (7,831 st. acres), knight of Glin (5,685 st. acres), Lord Kenmare (5,257 st. acres), Sir Matthew Blakiston (3,635 st. acres) and Richard Ellis (2,068 st. acres) contributed Bruff, Glin, Hospital, Askeaton and Abbeyfeale respectively. Dromcolliher belonged to the locally fragmented Stevelly estate (4,972 st. acres) which had been hived off Devon's far-flung lands at an earlier date; Kilmallock, although much divided internally was rimmed in part by the unitary Coote estate (3,120 st. acres); and Ballingarry fell partly within the estate of Major Thomas Odell (1,708 st. acres). Lastly, Rathkeale, the leading county town at this time, suffered like Kilmallock from divided proprietorship and among an array of landed interests in its vicinity, those of Lord Southwell (2,813 st. acres in Rathkeale parish) were most significant.

The emergent urban pattern signifies an element of historical inertia in the sense that leading medieval settlements later formed the bulk of county Limerick towns and the estates in which they were set either had a basis in medieval antecedents or dated back at least as far as the land transfers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In these circumstances the layout of relevant estates, their integrity in time and space and the location of towns within them merits close examination. Looking firstly to the overall structure of town based estates, three roughly parallel axes emerge and run transversely across the county (fig. 6.1.). That nearest Limerick city is best developed and it features in close succession the Kenmare, Limerick, Dunraven and Blakiston estates, all tight and compact, like oases set amid the county's topography. Here, Adare and Croom, the twin poles of Dunraven's estate combine with the centrally situated towns of Hospital (Kenmare estate), Bruff (Limerick estate) and Askeaton (Blakiston estate) to form a well ordered network of central places across Limerick's lush lowlands. Further south a second axis is less well developed, but discernible, nonetheless. It extends from the Oliver Gascoigne and Coote estates and after an interval of some 13 miles – filled in part by Charleville's sphere of influence from a base in north county Cork – it passes through Odell's lands towards Rathkeale. In south-east county the major landed interests around both Kilfinnane and Kilmallock are so sharply defined from one another as to betoken a common origin in Cromwellian land transfers and spatio-temporal continuity thereafter. Around Rathkeale and Ballingarry on the other hand, fragmented proprietorship reflects a more complicated history of landownership persisting through to mid nineteenth century. The shortest axis cuts transversely across lowland and hill country in west Limerick and takes in the Stevelly, Devon and Glin estates. Centrally placed Newcastle forms the hub of Devon's extensive lands while at the edges Glin presides over a tidy, well-knit estate and Dromcolliher serves in part the scattered lands belonging to Robert J. Stevelly. Completing the network Cappamore and Abbeyfeale stand inside the O'Brien and Ellis estates in north-east county and south-west county respectively, with the former like Newcastle and Kilfinnane serving an estate as well as a wider setting that spans successfully hill country and lowland.

Turning secondly to a consideration of town based estates in time and space the findings indicate a substantial degree of continuity. Sometimes direct links following on from medieval landholding were exhibited as, for example, on the Fitzgerald estate at Glin and possibly also on the O'Brien lands around Cappamore. On the other hand indirect links harking back to the medieval era were preserved on Dunraven's estate about Croom and Adare since it accorded substantially with the former landed interests of the earls of Kildare in mid county Limerick and was acquired through land purchase in the early eighteenth century. All remaining estates in one way or another derived from land transfers of the sixteenth and

compact format that it exhibited in Moland's map of 1709 (fig. 6.2.). Adare and Glin on the other hand were both towns in the making in the nineteenth century and as such they merit some detailed coverage. Elsewhere, local landlords presided over and invested in the development of the towns of Hospital, Kilfinnane and Bruff, along with Croom and Ballingarry to a lesser extent; landlord, tenant and new wave immigrant influences all helped to make Rathkeale the county's leading town in the eighteenth century; middlemen made their own of Askeaton in the absence of a resident head landlord; and, as we have seen, multiple ownership was to the fore among the factors which induced Kilmallock's long phase of retrogression. The remaining towns of Abbeyfeale and Cappamore were relative late comers on the urban scene and of all the towns in the county their growth and development perhaps owed the least to the upper echelons within the estate system.

As much as any town in Ireland, Adare, in the course of its remodelling, exemplified the power and vision of the landlord. For fully two centuries the Maigueside village had languished in the shadow of its medieval ruins and in its broken, shrunken state the only houses to be enumerated at the beginning of the nineteenth century were those of James Connolly, cabinet maker; John Saxmyth, shoemaker; Phillip Mills, parish sexton; Matt Hannon, blacksmith; Charles Daly, tailor; Jack Hayes, butcher; Morgan Williams, linen weaver; George Dore, schoolmaster and publican; and Thomas Gleeson, publican.<sup>(6)</sup> Soon afterwards there was an emphatic change of direction as the idea of creating a new town began to find tangible expression at the hands of the landlord, Windham Quin, 2nd earl of Dunraven.<sup>(7)</sup> Marriage to a wealthy English heiress in 1810 together with frequent sojourns in England must have powerfully influenced Dunraven's vision. Indeed, the new Adare as it came to evolve bore a striking resemblance to the full Picturesque style that prevailed in contemporary England among landowners set upon a course of village rebuilding.<sup>(8)</sup> Growth and development subsequently proved to be a long drawn out process, and it related to the rate at which existing leases fell in. The process was still in a state of flux *circa* 1837 when it was observed that 'several houses have been taken down already, and others will be also removed as the leases fall in, under the improvements intended by the proprietor, Lord Dunraven'<sup>(9)</sup>. Ultimately, landlord inspired change dragged on into the present century under successive earls of Dunraven, but most of the architectural set pieces that bestow character to Adare in our own day had already been in place by the time of the 2nd Earl's death in 1850. These would include the two priories, the Trinitarian (c. 1260) and the Augustinian (1315), both of which were restored in the early nineteenth century as respective parish churches for the Catholic and Anglican communities, the cottages replete with heavy thatched eaves, rustic verandahs and trellising which date from around 1828, the hotel, courthouse and fever hospital (a Christian Brothers' school from 1853). Concomitant with these developments a new manor house and a more elaborate demesne added show to substance and set off the Dunraven estate core superbly. In the town the most notable of the later acquisitions were the parochial house (1852), the memorial drinking fountain (1855), the community hall (1911) and the fringing, rustic cottages of Detmar Blow (early twentieth century).

Representations of the Main Street before and after improvement testify to thoroughgoing transformation that was powered by the landlord, while also providing an insight into the nature of contemporary perception. The earlier portrays the unimproved village street as it was before 1810, with the roofless Trinitarian Priory overlooking women gathered in the middle of dirt and in the background the pig acts as a symbol of poverty (plate 6.1.). Around mid century on the other hand an entirely different perspective of the same street is delineated. The restored priory (now the Catholic church) presides over an animated scene of women on the move, and substantial two-storey houses are fronted by remarkably mature deciduous trees, while the bend of the street is accentuated for effect (plate 6.2.). By this time a progressive estate town had emerged, largely set in between the polarities of demesne entrance and