

The Early Place-Names of County Armagh

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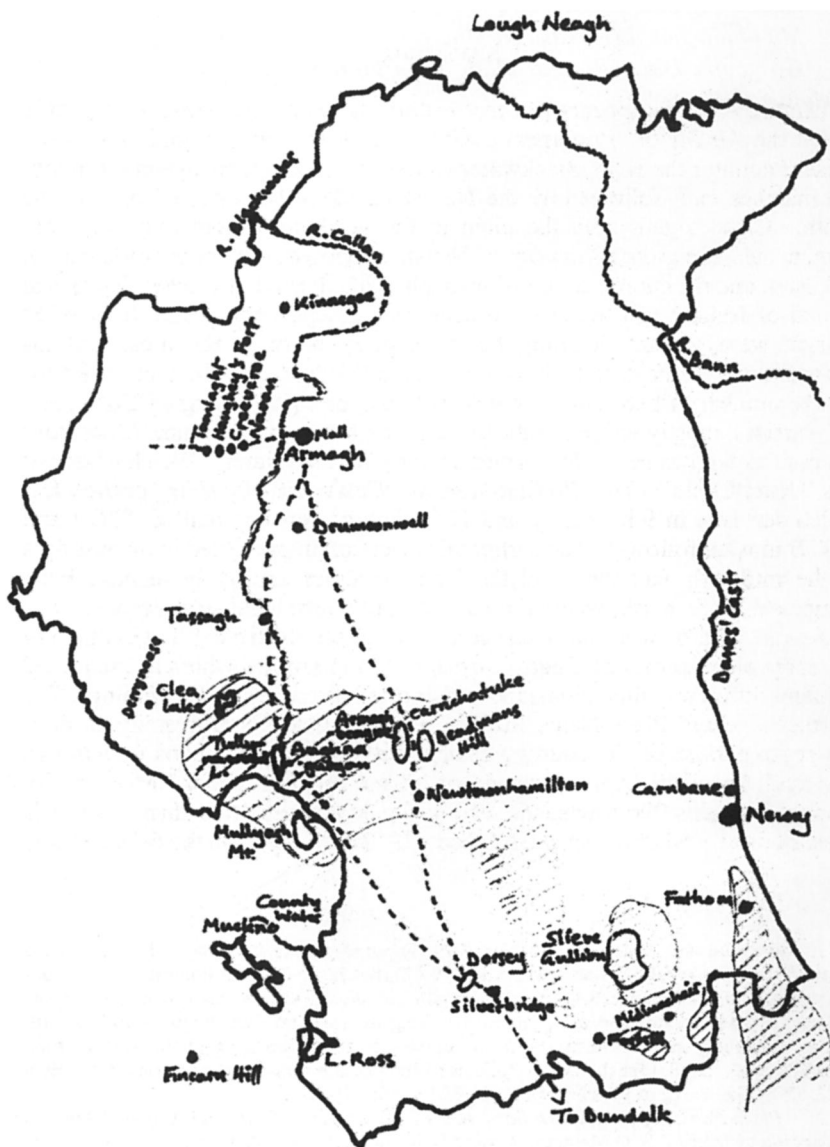
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Places mentioned in County Armagh

The Early Place-Names of County Armagh

By

KAY MUHR

County Armagh appears in early historic times as the territory of people called the *Airthir* or 'Easterners', with roughly the same boundaries as the present county: the river Blackwater to the west, Lough Neagh to the north, the marshes later followed by the Newry canal to the east, and hills to the south. Close together on the plain in the north-west were two important human sites, the great earthwork of Navan, supposedly the prehistoric capital of Ulster, and the church centre of Armagh, with claims to be the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. In the late 7th century, and again about 900, lives of St Patrick were written detailing his missionary work in the area, and his foundation of Armagh to be his chief church.¹ Navan was the focal point for a large number of hero-tales about Conchobar, prehistoric king of Ulster, and his warriors, mostly written in the 9th century, but including some 7th century material as well as new tales written in early modern times. The chief tale of this 'Ulster Cycle' is *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the 'Cattle raid of Cooley' or the *Táin*, which survives in 9th century and 12th century versions (called *TBC I* and *TBC II* in what follows). The earlier tales were often preserved in manuscripts in the midlands, but they and the later examples are likely to have been composed in the north, where the names would have local significance.

A great deal of work has been done already on identifying and explaining the early place-names of County Armagh, but in articles which are scattered in many different publications and which often disagree in their findings. The Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, based in Queen's University Belfast, has yet to publish on the county Armagh, but a forthcoming book on Armagh City and Area will begin coverage of all the modern names.² Modern Co. Armagh contains 996 townlands, and 494 place-names other than townlands appear on the 1:50,000 map (*OSNI* sheets 19, 20, 28, 29). On the 6-inch sheets

1 *Muirchú and Tírechán* ed. Bieler 1979; *Tripartite* ed. Stokes 1887. The early lives (Latin) have been reliably dated (Bieler 1979, 2,42), but historians and linguists give various dates for the Tripartite Life: c. 830 'replete with political messages all internally consistent' Byrne 1994, 7; c. 900 Mulchrone *Bethu Phátraic* p.v, long the standard date; linguists 10th or 11th century (including earlier sources) with the possibility of additions up to the 12th century, Dumville 1993, 255-8. Like the Ulster Cycle, the Life was 'a text in a state of growth' (Mac Eoin 1982, 128: 'The dating of middle Irish texts' *PBA* vol.68 109-37).

2 *Place-Names of Northern Ireland* vol. viii, Co. Armagh I, *Armagh City and Area*, in preparation by Mícheál B. Ó Maínnín. 4 vols on Co. Down, 2 on Co. Antrim, and 1 on Co. Derry have been published 1992-7, by the Institute of Irish Studies, QUB.

the number of non-townland names increases to 1125.³

Compared to the present, only a handful of place-names can be traced back to references in the Ulster Cycle or Lives of Patrick from the 7th to 12th century AD, because these are narrative texts, and not maps or survey lists. This article on the early period is an attempt to interpret not only the various place-names but how the geographical area was perceived in the oldest accounts we have of it, sacred and secular. As will be seen, some of the place-names appear in both secular and sacred sources, others in one genre only. We begin with native heroic literature and the most important early name, that of *Macha*.

PART I PLACE-NAMES IN SECULAR SOURCES AND ULSTER CYCLE TALES

A PLACE-NAMES IN THE ARMAGH PLAIN

MACHA

The name of the cathedral city of Armagh, *Ard Macha*, on which the 17th century county of Armagh was based, has long been interpreted as meaning the *Ard* 'height' belonging to *Macha*, a personal name. However, in an article in the first *Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society*, John Arthurs decided that in origin *Macha* did not refer to a person at all, but was simply the original place-name of the district around Armagh, a derivative of early Irish *mag* (now *má*) 'a plain', meaning something like 'open country suitable for agriculture'.⁴ Nevertheless, both interpretations of Macha have been important for the history of the place, and both the everyday and the supernatural meanings of the place-name could be drawn on.

Early Irish literature has much to say about a supernatural woman named Macha, who was associated with the war goddesses *Mórrígan* and *Badb* throughout Ireland but was also particularly connected with the area round Armagh.⁵ Macha was wife to Nemed 'sacred one', leader of Clanna Nemid and a legendary colonist of Ireland. She also was said to have had a vision which foretold *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Other stories about Macha and different husbands on her home territory indicate that she was thought of as the goddess of the land which bears her name. Many stories were built on the relationship between the earth goddess and the ruler of tribal territory in early Ireland, as a mirror of the state of the kingdom. However, even without the kingship-marriage theme, the goddesses seem to have the two aspects, of desolation and

3 Database of the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project; 'Index to minor place-names from the 6-inch Ordnance Survey, Co. Armagh', Laurence Flanagan, *BUPNS* ser.2 iv (1981-2) 76-84.

4 Arthurs 1952-3, reprinted 1955, 29; cf. Vendryes 1960, *Lexique Etymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien*. This article by Arthurs (alias Seán Mac Airt) has now been reprinted in *Ainm* vii (1996-7) 152-7.

5 O'Rahilly 1946, 210 n.7.

fertility.⁶

Secular literature has few examples of Macha by itself as a place-name. In the Ulster hero-tales and historical accounts it is most often used as an epithet, for example: 'Arise, Kings of Macha', in a poetic exhortation or *rosc*; Cúscraid *Mend Macha* 'the stammerer of Macha' one of the sons of Conchobar king of Ulster (*TBC* I ll.3905,484). Although, in the story of his death, the hero Cú Chulainn saw the whole plain called 'The Macha' burning,⁷ in most texts the longer term *Magh Macha*, meaning 'the plain of Macha' or 'Macha's plain', is used for the area around Armagh.⁸ This name may be tautologous in one sense, since *macha* still appears in Ó Dónaill's Modern Irish dictionary with the meaning 'cattle-field', but *Magh Macha* can also be seen as a reinforcement of the original meaning of the element *macha* which does not exclude reference to *Macha* as a goddess name.

Two tales connect a woman called Macha with the monument called Navan fort (H 8445) near Armagh. In one Macha is the daughter of a king of Ulster who became queen herself and ordered the building of Navan Fort, to be the capital of the province. In the other she is a woman of mysterious origin who married a king's vassal, and died giving birth to twins when the king forced her to race against his horses at a tribal assembly. The dying Macha cursed Conchobar king of Ulster so that he and all his warriors became 'as weak as a woman in childbirth', an image which has been linked with seasonal fertility rituals or the practice of couvade where the husband is expected to share his wife's labour pains. Although written later, these stories are set in pagan times, so that it seems appropriate to begin the place-names of Armagh with the place-names of the Ulster Cycle, the heroic tales centred on the capital of Ulster at Navan.

EMAIN MACHA 'THE TWINS OF MACHA'

In the Ulster Cycle tales, the dwelling of the kings of Ulster is called *Emain Macha* meaning 'Emain of the cultivated land' or 'Macha's Emain', or sometimes *Emain* (later *Eamhain*) alone. The name was in use in Ulster Cycle tales of all periods, even though by the time the tales were written the original Ulaid or Ulstermen had moved east of the river Bann. In the 11th century political schema in the Book of Rights, Emain was associated both with the kings of the Ulaid in east Ulster and the Airthir of current Co. Armagh,⁹ and the name was invoked to claim province-wide status for the heroes of many later bardic poems.¹⁰ In *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe*, the Book of the

6 Mac Cana 1958-9 'Aspects of the theme of king and goddess in Irish literature', *Études Celtiques* viii 59-65; Carey 1983, 264 'Notes on the Irish war goddess', *Éigse* xix 263-75.

7 In *Macha*, *LL* ii 1.13775.

8 O'Donovan identified *Mag Macha* with The Moy, Co. Tyrone, *Frag. Annals* 147n. This cannot be correct, but seems to have influenced Glancy's estimate of the Archbishop's holding of Coswoy *cois mhaighe* 'foot of the plain' which included Navan and extended from the Callan to the Ballymartrim Water (1959, 353-4).

9 Dillon, 1962: *Lebor na Cert* 8, 92.

10 ed. Williams 1980: Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe 36 §24, 90 §32.

O'Neills of Clandeboye, the poems reflect the Uí Néill claim, after the Ulaid had lost power, to be the heirs of the original overkings of Ulster.¹¹

There is no doubt which site is referred to. Records in the Irish annals show a battle being fought at *Emain Macha* in AD 759 (*AU*, *A. Innisf.*) and king Brian Ború camping there in AD 1005 (*A. Innisf.*). It was given as the terminal point of a raid c. AD 821 (*AU*, *AFM*). The site had become church land, held by the Archbishop of Armagh, and the annals record that the Archbishop built a large lime kiln there in AD 1145 (*AFM*). Its significance in the Ulster Cycle must underlie O'Neill's attempts to make his manor at *Hewynnae* in 1374,¹² and eventually to build a house there to entertain the poets of Ireland in 1387.¹³ In Archbishop Dowdall's register in 1541 the lands of another O'Neill family 'the Stirps of Malachy Yneill' included the 'lands' of Navan.¹⁴ 'Malachy O'Neill's descendants' must be the *Slut Melaughlin* who were said to have received the area from the Archbishop 'time out of mind' in 1609.¹⁵

The Englishman Richard Bartlett's maps c. 1600 show Navan west of Armagh as a little hill with a pennant on top labelled *Oweyn Maugh*, in some versions with the addition 'ancient seat of the kings of Ulster'.¹⁶ Bartlett was interested in Irish royal sites and recorded others on the same map from apparently contemporary tradition: '*Lise-ne Ree* where the McGenis is made' at Knock Iveagh Co. Down; '*Tullogh-oge* on this hill were 4 stones in the manner of a chaire, wherin th'Oneales this manie yeres have bin made' at Tullyhogue Co. Tyrone; '*Mullogh-test* so caled of a stone there on wch McMahan is made' in Co. Monaghan, a place which has been identified with the hill of Leck.¹⁷ His maps are evidence that the ancient monument of Navan Fort was still known at the beginning of the 17th century as the seat of the early kings of Ulster.

The site comprises three distinct earthworks. [1] A large circular ditch with external bank, approximately 940 feet or 286 metres in external diameter, encloses the summit and south-eastern slope of a drumlin ridge, typical of the landscape of the area. The position of the ditch inside the bank makes it unlikely this was intended as a fortification. [2:B] On the highest part of the ridge, but in the WNW segment of the enclosure, is a large mound 20 feet/ 6 metres high. From the top there is an extensive view, and the medieval cathedral of Armagh is visible on its hill, 1.7 miles to the east. [3:A]. South-

11 Simms 1983, 145, cf. Ó Donnchadha 1931.

12 Lawlor 1911, *Reg. Sweeteman* 221 §8: Deirdre Flanagan noted that a better spelling would be *Hewyn vae*, i.e. *Eamhain Mhacha*, Lynn 1997, 8.

13 *AU*, *AFM* iv 706:1387; Reeves 1860 v 223 dates both events 1387; Simms 1983, 143, 148.

14 *ex terris de Eawayn* Murray, L. 1925-32, vi 217.

15 Glancy 1954, 82. Malachy is the usual anglicisation of *Mael Seachlainn*.

16 *South-east Ulster*, Esch. Co. Maps 2; copied in Speed's Ulster, 1610.

17 Shirley 1845, 74. The townland of Leck in the parish of Kilmore, 4 miles SSW of Monaghan, contains an isolated hill c.170 metres high. Shirley said the stone had been destroyed, but the place is on record as 'The McMahon's Stone (site of)' H 651288 (Archaeological Survey of Co. Monaghan).

east of the mound on the level hilltop is the remains of a ring-work.

Excavation of site B by Dudley Waterman in 1965-72 revealed that it covered a cairn of stones, and that the stones had been placed in position inside a massive round building constructed, not long before, of five concentric rings of oak posts. A central post may well have been a free-standing 'sacred tree'. The outside walls had then been deliberately set on fire. While the finds suggest occupants of high status, this event, like the internal ditch of the main enclosure, indicates ultimately a ceremonial rather than a settlement site. Dating of surviving timber from the base of the posts revealed that the trees were cut c. 100BC, the same decade as the timbers in the Dorsey, a set of cross-ridge dykes some 17km to the south, traditionally associated with Navan Fort.¹⁸ Recent excavation by Jim Mallory has shown the ditch had also been cut in the same decade.¹⁹ After this ritual destruction it seems that the area was abandoned, although Navan Fort remains impressive even today. It is impossible to know if Irish literature of the 7th century and later inherited any definite traditions of its former use.

Currently Navan townland surrounds the grass-grown monument, bounded on the east by the lake of Loughnashade (beyond the quarry) and on the west by the townland of Creeveroe. However, the Ulster Cycle tales imply that there were several buildings, and some of the medieval and 17th century references mention 'the lands of Navan' in the plural.²⁰ The site of the lime kiln has not been found and it is not clear when the bounds of the present townland of Navan were created. The name may once have implied a wider district, as identified by the archaeologists working on the prehistoric landscape of Navan.²¹ Where archaeology reveals a ritual site, the Ulster Cycle sees it as the seat of an ancient king. However, later Irish sources show Navan as a place of occasional assembly or celebration, and one of the 13th century Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe's poems depicts it as an inauguration site, attended by the ancient Ulaid, the Airthir or Airgialla, and the O'Neills.²² According to this plan, it still had all-Ulster significance.

The modern anglicised spelling Navan derives from a form with the definite article: *An Eamhain* 'The Navan'. The alternation of *w* or *v* in English to spell the sound of Irish *mh* or *bh* occurs again in the name Creeveroe below. Another anglicised form may appear in a minor name in 1609, known till 1661: *Boharemyne*, possibly *Bóthar Eamhna* 'road of Navan'.²³ The current

18 Summarised from Lynn, C. 1986. 'Navan Fort', *Emania* i 11-19, and Waterman ed. Lynn 1997. *Doirsi Emna* 'entrances to Emain', *A.Tig.* 1176, *A. Conn.* 1224. Lynn 1989, 5; Dorsey below.

19 Mallory 2000, 27. Mallory, J.P. 'Excavations of the Navan Ditch', *Emania* xviii 21-35.

20 1541 *ex terris de Eawayn* Murray, L. 1925-42, vi 217; 1633 *the Nawan 2 sessiogh*s, *Inq. Ult. Arm.* §20 Car. I: Glancy 1959, 354. However *Dangen*, i.e. Irish *daingean* 'stronghold' is Lisadian townland, misplaced by the calendarers, Glancy 1959, 355.

21 Warner 1994a.

22 ed. Williams 1980, poem xv, 170-183.

23 *CPR Jas I* 274, Glancy 1954, 79; etymology Lynn & McDowell 1987, 27a. In this case *mh* has been delenited to *m*.

'Navan Fort Road' between Navan and Armagh is shown on Bartlett's maps.²⁴ *Boharemyne* is listed in the sources next to Ballyrea townland which includes part of the road (H 845443), and it is unclear why Glancy identified it as part of Tullymore townland further east (H 858444), to the south of Ballycrummy (H 856449) which is bounded by the road.

Each of the two Macha stories, both found in several versions, gives a different explanation of the term *Emain*, although the medieval compilations of *dindsenchas* 'lore of places' often give the two explanations one after the other.²⁵

In the story of the foundation of Emain (sometimes called *Echtra Macha*, 'Macha's adventure'), Macha *Mongruad* 'red-maned' was the daughter of a king of Ulster called *Aed Ruadh* 'Red Hugh', who was also associated with Assaroe, *Eas Ruaid* 'the red (one's) waterfall', near the traditional western boundary of the province of Ulster. After his death Macha made herself queen by marrying one rival, Cimbath, and seducing and overpowering the sons of the other, who were then forced to construct her fort.²⁶

In the version of this story in Cormac's Glossary the founder of the fort is not given a name at all. This glossary or list of unusual Irish words is traditionally attributed to Cormac mac Cuillenán, king and bishop of Cashel who died in AD 908. According to Cormac's first explanation of *Eamain*, 'the woman' who marked out the ramparts of Emain used the pin of her brooch, compass-like: 'she could reach farther before than behind her, and because of it the fort (*lios*) is awry'.²⁷ This description seems to refer to the non-central position of the mound (site B) in the Navan enclosure, and the suggested meaning is *eo-muin* 'neck-pin'. Cormac then continues with an explanation of the word as meaning 'one blood', but not connected to any story. It has been suggested that this second explanation may have been influenced by the word *emon* 'twins',²⁸ which follows in Cormac's list, and could itself be the starting point of the 'twins of Macha' story, the language of which has been dated to the late 10th century.²⁹

While the first legend (*Echtra Macha*) seems to be the earlier attempt to explain the name Emain, the second, called *Noenden Ulad* 'the sickness of the Ulstermen', seems to be the older story, with its links to the tribal assembly (*oenach*), burials and ritual games, to the wider landscape of the Macha plain, and to the whole drama of the Ulster Cycle. A supernatural woman takes an

24 Warner 1994a, NCS8.

25 cf. *Met. Dinds* iv 124ff: *Ard Macha*.

26 Stokes 1894-5, *Rennes Dindsenchas* xvi 279-282. *Met Dinds.*: as above.

27 Meyer, K. 1912. *Sanas Chormaic* YBL p.41-2: §502 *Eamain* .i. *eo-muin*... *Is aire is cloen ind less.* §503 *emon*.

28 Marstrander, C. 1911: 'Ir. *Emun*, *Emuin*', *Ériu* v 160: treats *emuin* as the feminine form of *emun*, but the texts he cites vary as to whether each word means 'twin' or 'twins'. The place-name is fem.

29 Toner 1988, 32-3. Although the story of the twins who found a city is an Indo-European myth traceable elsewhere, it need not have been always connected with this site. Toner's conclusions on the date of the story refer to its use in explanation of the place-name *Emain Macha*.

Ulster warrior as husband, but when he boasts of her speed at the *oenach* she is forced to race the king's chariot. She is given no mercy although she is pregnant. She wins the race but then gives birth and dies cursing the men of Ulster. Because of the events in this tale the boy Cú Chulainn became the chief hero of the Ulster Cycle. He had not been born within Ulster but at its southern boundary, in the otherworld mound of New Grange, *Brugh na Bóinne* 'the palace on the Boyne', and thus he alone was immune to Macha's curse on the Ulstermen and fit and able to defend the province and its bull from the Connaught attack in the *Táin*.

The naming of the Ulster capital *Emain Macha* is secondary in *Noenden Ulad*, which explains how the Ulster warriors acquired their mysterious sickness. In the earliest version, only one of the four manuscripts names the characters: Macha as the racing woman with the complimentary epithets *Fír* 'true' and *Fial* 'generous' for the twins she bears, and only one uses the term *emon*. The names of the twins are not linked to any other events and the explanation of the place-name is not related.³⁰ In the second version of the story,³¹ Macha, when asked her name, says that the Ulster assembly will bear it for ever (*i.e.* will be called *Oenach Macha*), and *Emain Macha* is so-called from her twins, *emon*. This version concludes 'From that (event) then come the sickness of the Ulstermen and *Emain Macha*'. The third version like the first has no explicit place-name explanation.³²

Emain alias Navan rarely appears as an Otherworld place in early Irish literature. However, the early Ulster Cycle has two instances. *Oenach Emna*, 'the assembly(-place) of *Emain*' is on the way to the Otherworld in the tale 'Cú Chulainn's Sickbed', *Serglige Con Culainn*, and *Emain* itself is called 'the otherworld palace of *Emain*', *Sídbrug na hEamna*, in the 'Colloquy of the two Sages' *Immacallam in dá Thuarad*.³³ However, as Toner says, the role of *Emain Macha* in the whole Ulster Cycle is likely to represent 'a mythical palace which has been euhemerised along with its divine occupants'.³⁴ The name *Emain* or *Emnae* was also used in the 8th century east Ulster tale *Immram Brain* to name an Otherworld located on an island in the sea.³⁵ *Emnae* is possibly the earlier version, only later influenced by the word *emon*, *emain* 'twins'.³⁶ Otherworld parallels to the institutions of this world are pervasive in Irish literature and the *Emain* across water may have become more significant after the *Ulad* of the Ulster Cycle had been expelled to east Ulster: not only had allegiance to pagan sites on Irish soil been displaced by Christianity but they needed a way of imagining their ancient capital

30 ed. V. Hull 1968, *Celtica* viii 28-9: MS Harleian 5280 names *Fír* and *Fial*; MS Fermoy has *emon*..

31 *LL* ii 467-8, tr. Toner 1988. *Is desin tra atá Noenden Ulad 7 Emuin Macha*.

32 *Tochmarc Cruinn 7 Macha*, ed. Thurneysen, R. *ZCP* xii (1918) 252-3; Toner 1988, 32.

33 Dillon 1953, §32; Stokes 1905b, §5.

34 Toner 1988, 34.

35 cf. *Immram Brain*, Toner 1988, 33.

36 *Emnae* Pokorny, J. *ZCP* xxi, 127, summarised by O'Rahilly 1946, 13 n.1. *Emon* o, m., *emain* i, f. are used in Irish texts meaning both 'twin' and 'pair of twins': Marstrander 1911; *DIL*.

somewhere other than in the land now occupied by the Airthir.³⁷

The oversea Emain may be viewed as a counterpart to Emain of the Ulaid, but the connection with the seagod Manannán in *Immram Brain* along with later references make it clear that it is also a real island, the isle of Man' which is also viewed as Manannán's dwelling.³⁸ The alternative name also appears in Muirchú's Life of St Patrick as the island reached by the penitent Mac Cuill when the saint told him to cast himself adrift in a small hide boat, chained and with the key to the fetter thrown into the sea. The north wind blew him away from the Lecale coast 'to an island called *Euonia*' (in *insolam Euoniam nomine*) where he was rescued by two missionary bishops and eventually became their successor 'St Maughold bishop of Man and prelate of Aird Uimnonn'.³⁹ *Aird Uimnonn* seems to include the Irish version of the name, in the genitive following *Aird* fem. 'promontory' and with a nasal ending.⁴⁰ The annals of Ulster for AD 577 and 578 (*primum periculum Uloth in Eufania; Reversio Uloth de Eumania* (*Uloth* archaic genitive plural of *Ulaid*, from **Uluti*)) have been taken as 'expedition' and 'return' of the Ulaid from Emain (?) or Man.⁴¹ Similarly 'the battle of Man' (*Bellum Manonn AU 582, Bellum Manand 583*) has been located in either the Isle of Man or near Stirling in Scotland, the district of *Manaw* preserved in the names Clackmannan or Slamannan.⁴²

Although unusual, the element *emain* is not confined to these two places. Some annals for 1105 mention a church called *Domnach Airt[h]er [n]Emna* '(?)the church of the Airthir of Emain' to which the coarb of St Patrick was taken when he fell ill on a peacekeeping mission to Dublin. He then died at Duleek, and was buried in Armagh, *AU*, while the *domnach* has been identified as Donaghmore or as Donnycarney in Meath.⁴³ The large townland of Cloonown in the south of Co. Roscommon was a church site called *Cluain Emain*,⁴⁴ and Drumone townland in the west of Co. Meath was originally *Droim Eamhna*.⁴⁵ In Uí Faeláin or the diocese of Glendalough there was a

37 Muhr 1996a, 55-6.

38 'A poem in praise of Ragnall king of Man', *Baile suthach Sídh nEamhna*, ed. B. Ó Cuív, *Éigse* viii (1957) 283-301, p.289 §8.

39 Bieler 1979, 106: Muirchú I 23 (22): *Maccuill di Mane episcopus et antestes Arddae hUimnonn*.

40 Broderick, G. 1980-1. Broderick believes *Uimnonn* is a misreading of *Manainn* 'Man'.

41 *AU* ed. Mac Airt p.89.

42 Watson 1926, 103. (Mac Airt *AU* p.90 simply translates the name as *Manu*).

43 *AU* ii 74; *AFM* ii 980; *ALCé* I 94; Hogan 1910, 349-50. If *Airt[h]er* is indeed genitive plural rather than genitive singular *airthir*, 'of the eastern part', *n-* should be restored before *Emna*. The apparent meaning of the name might indicate a church in Co. Armagh (so taken, *AFM*), or a church in Meath with an Airthir connection. Note the description *na hOirthir im Eamhain* 'the Airthir around Emain' among the Airgialla in the Book of Ballymote, O'Brien 1962, 142 b 29 (Diarmaid Ó Murchadha pers. comm.)

44 *Martyrology of Tallaght* c.830, pp. 48,53; *CSH* 722.8, *Chronicum Scottorum*, *AFM* AD 1089n. I thank Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig of the Place-Names Office, Dublin, for references. The spelling indicates 'meadow-Emain' or 'meadow of the twin(s)' (masc. *emon*). Parish of St Peter's, 15, N0435.

45 *Gasaitéar na hÉireann* pp. 93,217. Parishes of Loughcrew and Moylagh, ? in. sh.13, N5474.

place apparently called *Dún dá Eman*.⁴⁶ The eastern Scottish monastery of Inchcolm 'St Columba's island' in the Firth of Forth also had the alternative name *Insula Emonia* in 12th and 13th century charters copied in the early 15th century by Bower.⁴⁷ The use of this name seems to have been revived in the 15th century 'possibly by Abbot Bower' (p. xvi), as in the story in the *Scottichronicon* of the founding of the monastery on *Insula Aemonia* in AD 1114 (p. xiv). However *Emonia* seems to be proved as a genuine name by the landing place of Porthaven on the coast diagonally opposite Inchcolm. The earliest citation of this name, by Bower in the early 15th century, is as *Portevin*,⁴⁸ apparently Gaelic *Port Eamhna* or *Eamhain*.⁴⁹

Wagner suggested an etymology connected with water for both names. *Emain* is 'what is moving rapidly by itself, the stream'⁵⁰ and *Man* (with Manaw in Scotland, Mon *i.e.* Anglesey, Menai, the river Maine and the Menapii tribe on the Rhine) was derived from a pre-Indo-European 'word for "river" "sea" or "water" in general'.⁵¹ O'Rahilly suggested *Emain* was originally *isamonis*, which can be translated 'holy mound' and fits the idea of *Emain Macha* as an Otherworld hill.⁵² The element *mon*, *man* has also been connected with *mons*, 'mountain'⁵³ and although the supernatural character called Manannán, from the Isle of Man, is the god of water in Irish tradition, his own name and that of his island probably originally derive from the way the island rises like a mountain from the sea. The Scottish editors of the charters of Inchcolm consulted Dr A.B. Scott, who explained *Emonia* as 'island of the Mon people... or district', linked with settlements of the 'Brittonic Manapioi' like Clackmannan and Slamannan, Mona (Anglesey) Man (Isle of) and Menevia (St David's).⁵⁴ Watson also linked *emain* with *man* as in Man and Manannán,⁵⁵ but Wagner apparently did not associate the element but only the meaning.⁵⁶ Further research is needed.

46 Apparently 'fort of the (male) twins'. Hogan 1910, from *Crede Mihi* ed. J. Gilbert, Dublin 1897, p. 36: *Et in terra Uffelan, Balicutlan, Dundaewen*, p. 47: *Dundaeman*. Found thanks to Kevin Murray.

47 *Charters of the Abbey of Inchcolm* ed. D.E. Easson and A. MacDonald, Scottish History Society 1958, xiv-xvii.

48 Bower, *Scottichronicon* (ed. Watt) vol. 8, p.139.

49 Geoffrey Barrow pers. comm. (c.1992) to Simon Taylor, whom I thank for these Scottish references. *Port Eamhna* 'ferry to *Eamhain*'. Watson (1926, 131) doubted the age of *Emonia* as applied to Inchcolm.

50 *Ériu* 28 (1977) 13. 'The archaic Dind Ríg poem and related problems' pp1-16: '*isamnion*... derived from **eis*- 'to move rapidly' and *mn* a reflex of the I.Eur. particle of the middle voice.'

51 Wagner 1977, 14; 1979, 32 §28, ref. his article in *ZCP* 33, 4f. McKay (1999, 105) accepts the 'water' etymology for the river Maine in Co. Antrim.

52 O'Rahilly 1946, 13; Toner 1988, 34. The word *síd* often appears in Gaelic literature with this meaning, see Wagner 1979, 24-5= 1981, 1-4.

53 Rivet & Smith 1979, 419-20 (on *Mona*, Anglesey). Rivet, A.L.F., and Smith, C. 1979. *The place-names of Roman Britain*, London 1979.

54 *Charters of the Abbey of Inchcolm* p.xvi.

55 Watson 1926, 104-5.

56 Cf. 'In Irish tradition I cannot establish a direct connection between Macha and the God of the sea', Wagner 1979, 30; 1981, 19.

The archaeological and legendary importance of the place may be reflected in a very early reference. The Greek geographer Ptolemy who recorded the tribe *Voluntii* (generally agreed to represent the *Ouluti*, later *Ulaid* 'Ulstermen') also recorded a place near the north-east coast of Ireland called *Isamnion*.⁵⁷ Because the Ptolemy text suggested it might be a promontory, Reeves thought *Isamnion* might be identified with (*Rinn*) *Semhne* 'promontory of the Seimhne people', modern Island Magee.⁵⁸ It is true that the ending *-on* looks like the genitive plural ending of the tribal names qualifying other promontories.⁵⁹ Orpen thought it was more likely to be a city, but accepted the area of Dundalk.⁶⁰ Since intervocalic *-s-* would be lost in Old Irish, O'Rahilly decided *Isamnion* must be the misplaced name of the city or royal centre attested later as *Emain*.⁶¹ Wagner accepted more fully than O'Rahilly Pokorny's suggestion that the name was earlier *Emnae*, a form which appears only in *Immram Brain* as the name of Manannán's Otherworld realm, and then became Emain when influenced by the word meaning 'twins'.⁶² Mac an Bhaird proposed that the original form was *Isomnis*, giving trisyllabic *Eamain* (*Eamuin* LL 1.14179) in early Irish.⁶³ This would be equally true of O'Rahilly's reconstruction *isamonis* and one would have to understand that an earlier hiatus or long vowel had been lost under the influence of the word for 'twins'.

If any derivation from the name given in Ptolemy is accepted it supports the idea that the twin origin legend for Emain Macha must be a later accretion. However, apart from the alternative *eó-muín* 'neck-brooch' derivation and story given above, there is little in Irish literature to support a hiatus or a long initial vowel in Emain.⁶⁴ In the recent excavation report, Jim Mallory has also dealt with the etymology of Emain.⁶⁵ It is suggested here that discussion and use of the name has regularly been influenced by the beliefs and legends about it.

57 O'Rahilly 1946, 7, 12-13; Mac an Bhaird 1991-3, 10-11.

58 Reeves *EA* p.270.

59 As in O'Rahilly 1946, 2 2.5. Toner 2000, 78.

60 Orpen, GH, 1894. 'Ptolemy's map of Ireland', *JRSAI*, pp.115-28.

61 O'Rahilly 1946, 12-13 'Emain, capital of Ulaid... must be the place referred to'; Mac an Bhaird 1991-3, 11. It hardly matters that the royal centre was in fact a ritual site: *pace* Toner 2000, 78.

62 Wagner 1979, *BUPNS* ser.2 ii 38 n.55; *ZCP* 38 (1981) 19 n.55. 'If Ptolemy's *Isamnion* is to be identified with *Emain Macha*, the correct Irish form must be, as Pokorny has seen, *Emnae* and not *Emain*'. J. Pokorny, *ZCP* xxi,127, summarised by O'Rahilly 1946, 13 n.1. Mac an Bhaird quotes Pokorny 'Die Geographie Irlands des Ptolemaios' *ZCP* xxiv 94-120, 120.

63 Mac an Bhaird 1991-3, 11.

64 *Eomain* rhymes with *deolaig* in a line about the brooch, *Met. Dinds* iv 124.16; *Félire Oenguso* 25 l.193 6-syllable line: *Borg Emna ro tetha* 'Emain's burgh it hath vanished'; in Fiacc's Hymn *Emain* rhymes with *Temair*, Tara. *Trip* ii 408 v.22.

65 In Lynn 1997, 197-9. Compare Mallory 1989, 135. *In search of the Indo Europeans*.

OENACH MACHA 'THE ASSEMBLY OF MACHA'

The Ulster assembly called *Oenach Macha* was the occasion at which Macha is said to have died racing the king's chariot horses,⁶⁶ but *Oenach Macha* is mentioned elsewhere in the literature and in the Annals, and seems to have been a place as well as an occasion. Two prehistoric battles are said to have happened there.⁶⁷ The alternative name *Oenach Eamhna* 'the assembly of Emain' (parallel to *Mag Eamhna* 'plain of Emain') is listed as one of the chief assemblies of Ireland in the place-name legend (*dindsenchas*) of Carman in Leinster, and as the burial place of the Ulster heroes in the later manuscript of the text on famous pagan graveyards.⁶⁸ The 16th century tale called 'The Battle of *Aenach Macha*' describes a foreign attack on what is first called *Aenach Eamna* 'the assembly-place of Emain'; when three are killed they are buried in grave-mounds (*ferta*) on *Aenach Macha*, but when all the invaders are defeated their heads are piled up at *Aenach Eamna*.⁶⁹

The alternation of epithets implies that *Oenach Macha* must have been very close to *Emain/Navan*, and John O'Donovan, the first scholar to consider the problem, thought it might simply be an alternative name.⁷⁰ In Cinaed Ó hArtacáin's poem on the deaths of the Ulster 'heroes who were in Navan', *Fianna batar i nEmain*, Blai Briugaid is said to have died on the south of *Oenach Macha*, although in a fragmentary earlier poem and in a prose tale the place appears as 'the south of Emain'.⁷¹

If we follow the connection with Macha, one might expect her to be buried at the site of the assembly where she died and to which she gave her name, just as the place-name legends of the other Irish fairs say that *Oenach Carmain* began with an assembly at the grave of the woman Carman, and *Oenach Tailten* began with Tailtiu's request for funeral games around her grave.⁷² The *dindsenchas* poem now titled *Ard Macha*, Armagh, should perhaps be treated as the place-name legend of *Mag Macha*, from the frequency of *mag* 'plain' in its verses, particularly in the opening and closing lines. It deals with all three Machas: Macha wife of Nemed was buried on the plain, which had been cleared by her husband; Macha daughter of Aed who shaped Emain with her brooch was buried here, and thereafter the Ulaid held *Oenach Macha* on the plain to bewail her; while the third Macha, who died bearing twins after racing Conchobar's horses, was buried at Armagh.⁷³ The final verses or coda say that, since the coming of St Patrick, Armagh has been a good place to be buried (*rúaim ratha*, a 'Rome of grace'), even though

66 Noenden Ulad; Toner 1988, 32a.

67 *Cath Aenaigh Macha*, *AFM* i 38, AW 3579 = *Lebor Gabála* v 200-1; Dobbs 1926; 1922-3 xiii 318.

68 Gwynn, *Met. Dinds.* iii 20 l.246 ; Petrie 1845, 98n.

69 Dobbs 1926, 152-5 §§6,7,8.

70 *AFM* i 38 note a, AW 3579.

71 cf. Stokes 1902, 308 §15 ; Meyer 1906, 24 §2n, 44 notes to p.24: *LU* 134b, The Death of Celtchar, *LL* 118a.

72 *Met Dinds* iii 8, iv 150; MacNeill 1962 i 348-9.

73 *Met Dinds* iv 124-131 ll.3,11,96. The twins are a boy and a girl called *Fír* and *Fial*.

Navan has been deserted.

There are also historical references to *Oenach Macha*. It is claimed in the *Leabhar Eoghanach* that the 5th century Eoghan son of Niall, the eponym of Inishowen and Tyrone, made his camp in *Oenach Macha* after subduing the people of the area.⁷⁴ In AD 1021 the Airthir tribes gathered to intercept and fought with a raiding party led by a son of Aed ua Néill at *Oenach Macha*, which has been explained as *Ard Macha* in a gloss in the Annals of Ulster (AU, 456 §3 H1). In AD 1103 the Annals of Ulster record that king Muirchertach Ua Briain, having failed in battle in Ulster, visited all three Macha names, going from *Oenach Macha* to *Emain Macha* to *Ard Macha*, where he left a gift on the altar.⁷⁵ This could have been an approach from west to east. However, the circumstances imply that his approach could have been a deliberately auspicious circuit, going sunwise, by which Muirchertach could show that he intended to make peace with the church of Armagh. Thus *Oenach Macha* could have been south, or even south-east, of Navan.

It is difficult to locate *Oenach Macha* further as there is no help from modern sources. No surviving place-name seems to preserve the *oenach* element, the first syllable of which might be pronounced *ee* or *oo* today. Enagh townland (H 850423) 2 miles south of Navan has been suggested,⁷⁶ but earlier evidence is against it, as apart from the 1609 spelling as *Balleanenay*,⁷⁷ the prevalence of 17th century spellings as *Annagh* shows it was originally *Eanach* ‘a marsh’. Manooney townland (H 780445) five miles to the west of Navan,⁷⁸ or Enagh in the same area (H 774429), are too far away. In 1633 there was a subdivision anglicised *Enagh* in Ballynahonebeg (H 864433) townland south of Armagh,⁷⁹ but without further information this also may have been a marsh, *eanach*, rather than an assembly site.

DRUMCONWELL

One possible site of *Oenach Macha* is the townland of Drumconwell (H 880405) on the high road south from Armagh to Dundalk via Newtownhamilton. Drumconwell appears to derive from an Irish form *Droim Conmhaoil* ‘Conmael’s ridge’. It was church land and contained a cross-inscribed ogham stone which may have been intended to show an earlier form of the same personal name, in a field called the Graveyard Field. In the genealogies of the Armagh tribes called *Airthir* there are two men called *Conmael*, an early 7th century prince of the family of *Uí Echdach* and an *Uí Nialláin Conmael* who was king of Airthir at his death in AD 800 (AU). One of these may have been commemorated in the name Drumconwell.⁸⁰

74 *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe*, Ó Donnchadha 1931, 10.

75 AU = AFM ii 94, cf. Candon 1996, Warner 1994b.

76 Hughes 1955, 4; Mallory in Lynn 1997, 203.

77 Glancy 1954, 81.

78 As suggested by Bevan 1957, 2.

79 Glancy 1957, 342.

80 *Din[?]glo* for *Cunomagli*, Warner 1991, 45,47.

However, a prehistoric king Conmael, who met his death at the first (legendary) battle of *Oenach Macha*, is said by *Lebor Gabála* to have been buried at the south side of *Oenach Macha*, at a place then called *Ferta Conmaíl* 'Conmael's grave'.⁸¹ In the 17th century the historians Keating and O'Flaherty both said that *Fert Connhaoil* was known in their day. Since the 19th century Drumconwell townland, south-east of Navan and south of Armagh, has been accepted as preserving the name of 'Conmael's grave (-mound)',⁸² Warner suggests that it was thus the site of *Oenach Macha*, forming a triangle with Navan and Armagh, and that the early cross on the memorial stone is one of two crosses in *Oenach Macha* mentioned in the Tripartite Life of St Patrick.⁸³

Secular texts already mentioned make it clear there was a connection between *oenach* or assembly sites and the presence of ancestral graves.⁸⁴ According to the second Macha legend, although it was Navan, *Emain Macha*, which was named after Macha's twins, their mother's death in childbirth was the result of her taking part in a race with horses and chariots, one of the sports characteristic of the *oenach*.⁸⁵ Macha's own grave is only mentioned in the *Ard Macha dindsenchas* poem, which goes through the different stories and says she was buried at the plain, the *oenach* site or Armagh. From the other *oenach* legends we would expect it to be at the *oenach* site, marked by a *fert* or 'grave-mound'.⁸⁶

Although *Oenach Macha* is clearly a different place from Navan and Armagh, there is enough confusion in the sources to indicate that it must have been very close to them both, while Drumconwell, though 'to the south', is three miles from Armagh. Aware of this, Warner found, a little to the north of Navan and near the remains of two passage tombs in Ballybrolly townland (H 846460), a stone now called Conway's Grave, which he suggested as another possible site for *Fert Conmaíl* and thus the *oenach*.⁸⁷

AN CHRAOBH RUA: CREEVEROE

As well as the tribal assemblies, feasts for the warriors play an important part in the Ulster Cycle tales. Somewhere at Navan, Conchobar king of Ulster had three houses, called in *Chroebrud 7 in Téite Brecc 7 in Chroibderg*, 'the ruddy-branched, the speckled assembly(?) and the red-branched', '*Craebderg* for the spoils, *Téite Brecc* for the weapons, and *Craebrud* for the kings'.⁸⁸ Although *An Chraobhruadh*, 'the ruddy-branched', is given as the name of the

81 *AFM* i 38-9; *Met. Dinds* iii 266; *Lebor Gabála* vol. v 200-1.

82 Keating, ed. Dinneen, ii 120, index sv.; O'Flaherty *Ogygia* 1685, 195; Warner 1991, 47. *Droim Connhaoil*.

83 Warner *op.cit.*; *Trip.* i 238.

84 *Met. Dinds* iii 2, iv 152-4; Petrie 1845, 98-101.

85 *Met. Dinds* iii 2, iv 160.

86 *Met. Dinds* iv 166ff.

87 Warner 1994b, 69.

88 *Scéla Conchobhair*, Stokes 1908, 26 §15. The text is early Middle Irish, p.18.

royal banqueting house in the stories,⁸⁹ in ordinary use the word *craobh* 'branch' often signifies a large and bushy tree, and later Irish sources seem to be thinking of the name as *Craobh Rua* 'the ruddy tree'.⁹⁰

The *Craebruad* may well have been originally a sacred tree, such as we know existed in AD 1099 and 1111 at the forts or inauguration sites of Tullaghoge Co. Tyrone and Crew (from *craobh*) Hill, Co. Antrim, on opposite shores of Lough Neagh (AU). There was also in AD 825 a *Craebh Chaille* 'tree of the Callann' beside the river west of Armagh.⁹¹ Despite doubts whether it existed at all,⁹² *Craebruad* or *Craobh Rua* survives as a place-name, as the townland of Creeveroe next to (west) of Navan. For Haley, the drumlin-hill of Creeveroe, next to that of Navan, provided the explanation of the name *emain* 'twins' or 'pair'. As the Paps Mountains in Co. Kerry, in Irish sources *Dá Chích Anann*, were 'the two breasts of the goddess *Anu*', these two mounds represented the breasts of Macha.⁹³

SUBDIVISIONS OF CREEVEROE

A reference from the Annals tells us that by AD 1145 the land of Navan had passed into the possession of the Church, in particular the Archbishop of Armagh (AFM). Although the earliest list of the monastic lands dates to 1245, it is after the Reformation that references to Creeveroe as church land appear, in inquisitions of the former possessions of the abbey of Saints Peter and Paul in Armagh.⁹⁴ At the time of the Plantation, Creeveroe was one of over 30 granges or monastic farms, scattered widely in Cos Armagh, Tyrone and Derry. Some of the texts give the names of smaller land units forming part of the granges, and a 'great stone called *Crewroe*' was described as marking the boundary.⁹⁵ Possibly this stone called 'ruddy branch' marked the original place of the tree. In the 1830s John O'Donovan noted the site of the royal house (see below) but no reference to the marker stone survives.

The 16th and 17th century inquisitions which record the great stone called *Crewroe* as a boundary marker contain other names which show the extent of Ulster Cycle traditions in the area. The grange of Creeveroe had subdivisions called *Cavanecrewroe-eyghteragh* and *Cavancrewroe-owtragh*, 'lower and

89 Henderson 1899, *Fled Bricrend* §1; Van Hamel 1933, *T.Emire* §2.

90 See the list to be published by M.B. Ó Mainnín, *op. cit.*

91 AFM i 438, identified by O'Donovan (n.c) with the Derrynoose townland of Kilcreevy, *Cill Chraoibhe* 'church of the tree', on a smaller tributary of the Callan. A bridge and a (new) church were built there after 1458: Jeffries, H. 1998, 'Historical sites and traditions 2. Kilcreevy – a medieval church site' SAM 12 pt 2; Muhr 2001, 309 n.128.

92 Ó Broin, T. 1973. 'Craebruad: the spurious tradition', *Éigse* xv 102-13.

93 Haley 1970, 28-9. Another parallel in the dindsenchas poem on Brug na Bóinne, *Met. Dinds* ii 18.

94 Lists of P&P lands in date order: Arthurs 1956-7, iv 33, 32 (1245, 1322); Archdall 1786, 43-6; *CPR Jas I* 102b, 156, 374-5, 391-2, 534-5; *Inq. Ult. Arm.* §4 Jac. I, §20 Car. I, §40 Car. I, §10 Car. II.

95 Lynn & McDowell 1987, 24; *Inq. Ult. Arm.* §4 Jac. I. The extra units are within the granges, but the punctuation of the calendars is confusing, and the original 17th century records have been burnt.

upper hill/hollow of the ruddy branch'.⁹⁶ Other subdivisions were *Mullaghnecrewroederge* 'summit of the red Creeveroe', and also *Mullaghnefermore* 'summit of the big men' and *Aghteeconchor*, 'place of Conchobar's house', *áit tí Conchobhair*.

In the early 19th century the 'uniform tradition of the country' remembered Creeveroe townland as 'the place where the regal palace stood', and O'Donovan says he marked the site on a parish map which unfortunately can no longer be found with the Ordnance Survey material in Dublin.⁹⁷ In 1877 it was intended to include a mound in the townland in the schedule of the Ancient Monuments Bill, Co. of Armagh, as the site of the 'House of the Red Branch', a famous 'dependency of Navan Fort'. However, it was then found that 'the traces of construction on the mound of Creeveroe are not sufficiently clear to warrant its retention'.⁹⁸ Now local tradition of the house-site has passed out of memory.

In recent years people have wondered whether the name *Aghteeconchor* might indicate another monument, across the border in Tray townland, called the King's Stables, as representing king Conchobhar's *eachthaigh* 'horse-house'.⁹⁹ However, the compound *eachthaigh* has not been attested and would not have been anglicised with *t*. A similar spelling *AghteeBrianRoe* was used for the 'place of Brian Ruadh's house' in the Peter and Paul grange of Ballylane.¹⁰⁰ If there was still some trace in the 19th century of a building believed to be the 'red branch hall', it may survive now only as one of the circular or rectangular crop mark features on the hill in the south of the townland.¹⁰¹

An earlier suggestion is that *Mullaghnecrewroederg* of the Grange might be identical with *Mullaghcreevy* 'summit of the branchy tree', the 17th century name of the townland of Legarhill belonging to the Archbishop, on the western outskirts of Armagh (H 863451). Glancy's justification for this position, away from Creeveroe townland, was that the hill was 'an outer defence of *Eamhain Macha*, protecting it from the east'.¹⁰² Although the boundaries in the past may have been slightly different,¹⁰³ research begun by Arthurs and McGleenon suggests that the land units in each grange (except possibly Maghery) were located next to each other.¹⁰⁴ The grange of Creeveroe

96 In the north *cabhán* tends to mean hill, especially in later names: Toner 1996, 14.

97 O'Donovan 1842, 218n; Nollaig Ó Muraíle pers. comm.

98 Cahill 1989, 30.

99 Sheila Cosgrove, York Archaeological Trust, to the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, March 1993.

100 Archdall 1786, 45, dated 1557; McGleenon 1987, 31, dated 1609.

101 Warner 1994a, NC15-16.

102 Glancy 1957, 344n.

103 The earliest map to show townlands is the Escheated County map of the Barony of Armagh, 1609, which has reversed east and west. It shows Navan but not Creeveroe, and Tray bisected by the Ballymartrim Water, which now flows west of Tray.

104 Arthurs 1956-7 v 43, but (cf. his note 63) *Cranagill* is Cronkill in the grange of Maghery; detached unless *Derridorogho* is Derrylee/Derryane; McGleenon 1987, 23-33 and map 'Granges... in *Clanconnoghie*, *Clancarny* and *Toaghie*'.

is given in the lists next to another Peter and Paul grange, Tirearly, which is now the townland which is physically next to Creeveroe on the south (H 832444).¹⁰⁵

The abbey of Peter and Paul also held smaller scattered portions of mensal lands around the city of Armagh. Some of these became modern townlands, including Tirgarriiff north of Creeveroe (H 844457), and Drumcoote (H 855454) directly east of Navan.¹⁰⁶ Because these mensal lands were intermixed with lands belonging to the Archbishop, and because Glancy had linked the similar names *Mullaghnecrewroederg* and *Mullaghcreevy*, it has been further suggested that a slender pillar-stone, in a hollow close to the border of Legarhill with Ballycrummy townland south-west of it (H 860450), might be the 'great stone called *Crewroe*' on the border of the grange.¹⁰⁷ However, *craobhlcreeve* is a fairly common element in place-names, and it is not likely that the grange of Creeveroe included a detached portion several townlands distant in the Archbishop's lands on the outskirts of Armagh.

The original *Crewroe* stone may have been destroyed, like the 'inscribed' stone in Tray townland nearby, which was blown up by the farmer some time before 1910 because it was an obstruction when planting trees. Warner, searching for the site, found the 'only obviously artificial planting in the vicinity' was on a rocky outcrop 70m across the boundary into Creeveroe townland.¹⁰⁸ Within Creeveroe, cropmarks show two sections of linear double ditch,¹⁰⁹ which have been shown in recent televised excavations to date from the middle Bronze Age.¹¹⁰ The minor 'Navan Fort road' which runs along the south of Creeveroe and Navan townlands towards Armagh has been recognised as part of the ancient landscape, traceable all the way over Legarhill, but now represented by a footpath past a holy well and early cemetery as it approaches Callan Bridge from the west. If the border in the south-east of Creeveroe had followed not a stream but the old road, as it now does in the south, the boulder¹¹¹ now called the Bull's Track on the north side of the road could have marked the boundary of Creeveroe. A roadside boulder is once mentioned in the Ulster tales, as the place where Deirdre, whom Conchobar had married against her will, jumped from his chariot and killed herself as they travelled to *Oenach Macha*.¹¹²

105 Glancy 1954, 83.

106 Arthurs 1956-7, iv 36-37; CPR Jas I 391b,534a; *pace* Glancy 1959, 355.

107 Lynn and McDowell 1987, 25b.

108 Warner 1988a; 1994a NCS43 not on map.

109 Hartwell, B. 1991, 6-7. 'Recent air survey results from Navan', *Emania* viii 5-9.

110 M. Conway, *Emania* forthcoming.

111 Warner 1994, 8, NCS7. However the two small streams which form the apex of a small triangle of Ballyrea townland which projects north of the road at this point make an unexceptional boundary feature.

112 Hull 1949, 310-1.

II PLACE-NAMES IN OTHER SECULAR SOURCES

Emain Macha, *Oenach Macha* and the house of *Craobh Ruadh* appear in the early Ulster Cycle tales. The first and third became modern townland names. References to Navan are so frequent that they suggest continuous use. In the case of Creeveroe and its subdivisions the names could reflect later interpretation based on the story tradition. Other names in the area give indications of continuing interest in the legendary literature, in medieval and later times. In the 17th century there was also *Cloghannesceyliaght*, 'stone causeway/hut of the storytelling', which was a subdivision of Navan.¹¹³ Not all of the later place-names appear in Ulster Cycle texts.

LOUGHNASHADE

The 'pool at Emain' in which Cú Chulainn swam in the early version of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (*TBC I* 1.745) is replaced in the later version with the name of the Callan river (*TBC II* 1.1138). The Callan is mentioned in other sources at this date, but it crosses the old road a mile away to the east towards Armagh, and the name may have been included from a scribe's general knowledge. However the 'pool' (*linn*) intended in version I could have been the lake now called Loughnashade (H 851454) on the north-east bound of Navan. In one late Ulster Cycle tale, Cú Chulainn was healed of his wounds by water brought by magic trout from *Loch na Séad* 'lake of the treasures', the Irish spelling of Loughnashade.¹¹⁴ It seems that this was a name in local use as the Irish spelling is included with that of Armagh in a version of the traditional south-east Tyrone song *Seachrán Cairn tSiadhail* ('Rambles from Carnteel').¹¹⁵

Since Loughnashade was the place in which in 1794 four bronze 'trumpets' were found, the name may suggest earlier discoveries.¹¹⁶ Deposit of treasures in its water indicates that Loughnashade formed part of the prehistoric ritual complex at Navan. However, the form of the present name, which includes the article *na*, is late. If the lake retained some significance in early historic times, it must have been under a different name.

In the early 10th century the Irish annals report two executions by drowning in a lake, sometimes called *Loch Cirr* and once located 'west of Armagh'.¹¹⁷ *Loch Cirr*, possibly meaning 'lake of the angle', cannot contain the same element as *Cúil Chíre* 'nook/corner of the crest', which is mentioned in a poem on the battle of *Emain Macha* in AD 758 (*AU*). By the medieval

113 *Inq. Ult. Arm.* §20 Car. I: Glancy 1959, 354. Glancy treats *Dangen* p.355 as another sessiagh of Navan, but the association is a muddle in the calendars: it refers to Lisadian 'fort of the stronghold' further west. Neither was Tirgarriff part of Navan: it appears among the Peter and Paul lands in 1322.

114 O'Rahilly 1924, *TGG* p.60.

115 Laoide 1904, 67 §xi.

116 Warner 1986, 6; Raftery 1987.

117 *AFM* AD 907; cf. *AU* 911; *Chron. Scot.* 911; Warner 1988, 36; cf. *Emania* v 40. Hogan has *Loch Cuir*.

period the townland of Navan had become bishop's land, and in 1278 the Register of Archbishop Fleming records the renting of pasture near the archbishop's lake of *Lochchachsseth* to Rory *Makillamuru*.¹¹⁸ The editor Lawlor suggested this might be Loughnashade. However, the family of *Mac Giolla Muru* gave their name to the townland of Ballymackilmurry to the north of Armagh, which once included several townlands near it, and the bishop's lake is probably that, now drained, which was beside the medieval Bishop's residence in Mullynure (H 881471).¹¹⁹

THE KING'S STABLES

Another pool providing evidence for pagan ritual sacrifice in the Navan archaeological complex is that at the King's Stables (H 838454), between Tray and Creeveroe.¹²⁰ The King's Stables site is man-made. Since it has been found to have the same date as the hillfort now called Haughey's Fort on the summit of Tray, it was presumably connected with the original inhabitants there rather than the later ritual centre at Navan.

Although it was stated in 1877 that the King's Stables 'bore that name traditionally before Stuart compiled his History of Armagh in 1819',¹²¹ nothing similar is recorded in Irish-language sources nor in the 17th century bounds of Creeveroe. Glancy's suggestion that Tray townland itself was *Tír Each* 'land of the steeds' is unlikely on phonetic grounds, although there are other difficulties with Joyce's interpretation *An tSraith* 'the millrace' etc.¹²² However, the English name King's Stables first written down by Stuart in 1819 could be the translation of a late popular name referring to the King of Navan in the Ulster cycle. The subdivision names of Navan and Creeveroe, and the Bull's Track stones, show that abundant oral tradition once existed.

RÁTH CIMBAÍTH

The hillfort in Tray townland is another historic monument which is missing from the earlier written record. However, drawing on material from *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, the 'Book of the Taking of Ireland',¹²³ the Annals of the Four Masters say that one of the forts built in Ireland by the legendary Irial son of Éremón in Age of the World 3520 was *Ráth Glaise Cuilg* 'fort of [the] stream of [the] sword', also called 'Cimbaeth's rath at *Eamain*'.¹²⁴ Since

118 Lawlor 1912, 107 §30.

119 Reeves 1860, iv 209-10; Glancy 1957, 338n; Lynn 1975-6, 129.

120 Hamlin & Lynn 1988, 19-21; Mallory & McNeill 1991, 123.

121 Cahill 1989, 30.

122 Glancy 1957, 365; Joyce ii 222. See the discussion by Mícheál Ó Mainnín, forthcoming.

123 *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: Raith Glaisse Cuilg* LL i l.1905 verse, not named in prose, no *Ráth Cimbaith*; Macalister v 190 §501 prose, *Ráith Cimbaith i nEmain*. Some mss (R1f, R3) place *Raith Cimbaith* in *Seimne* i.e. Island Magee, probably copying from *Raith Chungeda*. Verse p.428 v.8 as in LL i l.1905.

124 *AFM* i 36,37n.

Cimbaeth was husband to Macha in the story of the building of Emain (*Echtra Macha*), Jim Mallory suggested that *Ráth Cimbaíth* could have been intended for the monument now called Haughey's Fort (H 835452) on the summit west of Creeveroe.¹²⁵ Later he suggested that Haughey's Fort, on a hill with a ritual pool to its north-east, might be the original 'twin' of Navan east of it, which has Loughnashade in virtually the same position. However, since both people and legend appear to have deserted Haughey's Fort long before Navan, Mallory concluded that 'the onomastic legends of the site that emphasise dual entities are drawn from the mythic world of the Indo-Europeans rather than the physical landscape of the Navan complex',¹²⁶ putting the place-name and the twin-legend into the far pre-history of the site. Cimbaeth's fort does not feature in Ulster Cycle tales, but the name could be a medieval deduction by someone who had seen Haughey's Fort, while the alternative 'stream of the sword' could possibly indicate a find like those of sword-mould fragments in the pool at the King's Stables below it. Another annal records the finding of an unusual sword at Emain in AD 1115.¹²⁷ Since then many other ancient objects have been found nearby.¹²⁸

TULLYWORGLE

Although this place is never named in the tales, spellings like *Tiremorgane* in 1609 made Glancy think that the Archbishop's townland of Tullyworgle north of Navan (H 849461) might have been earlier *Tír na Morríghna*. This form, meaning 'land of the *Mórrigán*', would include another name for the Irish war goddess, a parallel to the goddess Macha.¹²⁹ However, Tullyworgle is more likely to have been *Tír Uí Mhuireagáin* 'land of *Ó Muireagáin*' or Morgan, a surname 'in the 16th century most numerous in Down and Armagh'.¹³⁰ Other townland names nearby, such as Ballybrolly and Ballycrummy, appear to be based on family names.

THE BULL'S TRACK

The Bull's Track stone on the old road west past Navan Fort, and another in Drumconwell¹³¹ show marks explained locally as bull's footprints, and stories which linked a bull with the Ulster Cycle and St Patrick survived in recent oral tradition. The story connecting the bull with St Patrick says that it kept knocking down his first church. He was attempting to build in the hills to the south of Armagh at Armaghbrague, explained as *Ard Macha Bréige*, 'false Armagh'. When Patrick cursed the bull it leapt to Navan Fort.¹³²

125 Mallory 1988, 7.

126 Mallory 1994, 187, 190, 192.

127 *Chron. Scot.* sa; Forbes, 1990.

128 Cahill 1989, 29; Warner 1986; Warner 1994a, 40-1.

129 Glancy 1957, 344; Glancy 1954, 78.

130 Woulfe 1923, 620.

131 Warner 1986a, 6.

132 MacNeill 1962, i 159.

The connection of this bull with the Ulster Cycle does not agree with the manuscript stories, where the bull Donn Cuailnge which was the object of the Cattle Raid of Cooley never came as far north as the Navan area. However, the medieval place-name legend of Slieve Gallion in Co. Derry says the Donn Cuailnge killed the hound Callann after which that mountain is named *Sliabh [g]Callann*.¹³³ Likewise, the landowner called Dáire in Cooley who kept the bull in the Táin¹³⁴ seems likely to be connected with the landowner called Dáire who gave St Patrick the land of Armagh.

PART I B: PLACE-NAMES IN SOUTH ARMAGH

Apart from the Plain of Macha, adventures in the Ulster Cycle tales often happen farther south in Co. Armagh, on the way through the hills towards Dundalk. Two mountain place-names in the area, *Sliabh gCuilinn* and *Sliabh Fuait*, regularly appear in the texts. The first survives as the isolated hill of Slieve Gullion in South Armagh (J 024203), and is interesting for the strong if late local tradition of the connection of Cú Chulainn with the area. The name of *Sliabh Fuait* was used until the 17th century (*Sliabh Fuaid*) but is more difficult to locate precisely.

SLIEVE GULLION

Slieve Gullion appears in the early Ulster genealogies as *Síd gCulind*, ‘otherworld hill of Culend’.¹³⁵ Later mythological traditions connected the supernatural hag Cailleach Bhéara with the summit cairn.¹³⁶ The element *Culend* looks like the word for ‘holly’, but many *síd* sites are qualified by a personal name and this is often how the name is explained in later texts.¹³⁷ Cú Chulainn, chief hero of the Ulster Cycle, was brought up in Dundalk, *Dún Dealgan*, and earned his name ‘Hound of Culann’ by a boyhood feat of killing and then acting as a replacement for the guard dog of Culann the smith, to protect his cattle in *Mag Muirthemne*, Co. Louth (*TBC* I 1.601; cf. *TBC* II 1.914). In the body of the Táin, the Ulster bull *Donn Cuailnge* is kept hidden ‘in the wastes of Slieve Gullion’.¹³⁸

When the Táin tells how Cú Chulainn guarded the approach to Navan fort from the south, it is clear that no connection is made between his name and the mountain name. These have different spellings, indicating a broad, and a slender or palatal, *l*:

¹³³ *Met. Dinds* iv 170-1, 421.

¹³⁴ *TBC* I 1.3790, *TBC* II 1.79,87 etc. See my forthcoming article on the significance of Dáire.

¹³⁵ eg. Dobbs 1922-3, xiii 332-3.

¹³⁶ MacNeill 1962, i 162.

¹³⁷ Dobbs 1923, 406 §2 & n.18; van Hamel 1933, *OCC* 124 §52.

¹³⁸ *i ndiamraib Slébe Culind*, *TBC* I 11.998,963; cf. *TBC* II 11.1319.

Co n-accai ní intí Cú Chulaind: Bude mac Báin ó Shleib Chulind, 'Cú Chulaind saw someone: Bude son of Bán from Slieve Gullion'.¹³⁹

However, in the later text called *Cóir Anmann* 'The Fitness of Names', the two were treated as identical, so that Cú Chulainn's name was made *Cú Chuillinn* after *Cuillinn* the craftsman whose hound he killed, or from a place called *Cuillinn Murthemne*.¹⁴⁰ Around 1786 Archdall recorded that the mountain called *Slieu Gullen* got its name from 'Cuilean, an artificer, who lived in the reign of Conchobbar Mac Nessa, king of Ulster, and by whom the celebrated Cuchellain was fostered'.¹⁴¹ In the 19th century John O'Donovan repeated that Slieve Gullion got its name from 'Cuileann an artificer', who was 'Cuchullin's tutor', and that the Cailleach Bhéara was 'supposed to be Gullen's daughter'.¹⁴² Since place-name legends are so much a part of Irish tradition the connection established in folklore has now been widely accepted.¹⁴³

Joyce rejected this story as 'in the oldest and best authorities it is *Sliabh-Cuillinn*... the mountain of holly'.¹⁴⁴ Ó Máille explained the name from a common hill-element *cuilleann* which he interpreted as 'a steep unbroken slope',¹⁴⁵ but the distinction between this term and *cuileann* m. 'holly' has been further discussed by Greg Toner, who suggests *cuilleann* could be a derivative of *cuileann*. In fact the early references to Slieve Gullion given by Toner show that its normal spelling in Irish from the 6th to the 12th century was *Sliab Cuilinn*, clearly either the basic word for 'holly' or the personal name with the same spelling.¹⁴⁶ Whatever the original meaning, Slieve Gullion is not only frequently mentioned in Ulster Cycle texts but has been associated in popular tradition with one of their chief heroes.

SLIAB FUAIT

Much effort has gone into identifying the mountain called *Sliab Fuait*, frequently referred to in early texts. The name no longer survives, but the texts make it clear that it lay to the south of the Armagh plain.

The name *Sliabh Fuaid* was still in use in Irish texts in the 17th century.¹⁴⁷ On Bartlett's map of south-east Ulster dated to 1603, the name *SLEW BODEH* (where capitals indicate a district name) is divided by a row of peaks from *Mulloch-canash* (Mullyash mountain in Monaghan), while on the other side

139 *TBC* I i.1491; similarly in *TBC* II i.1775.

140 a river in Louth, *TBC* II i.3608; *Cóir Anmann* ed. Stokes 1887b, 400 §266.

141 Archdall 1786, i 51 n.43.

142 *AFM* i 168n: AD 517; Ordnance Survey Name Book of Forkill parish.

143 Dobbs 1923, 418 n.18.

144 Joyce 1869-1913, i 513 cf. ii 131-2.

145 Ó Máille 1960, 61; the word *cuileann* is masculine, the other *cuilleann* feminine.

146 Toner 1996-7, 98-9. Toner, G. 1996-7. 'A re-assessment of *cuilleann*', *Ainm* vii 94-101.

147 Dillon 1995-6, 146.

of it there is *Slew tallogh vallon*, now the townland of Tullyvallon.¹⁴⁸ On the Escheated County map of the *Fves* (1609), 'the name *Slew Fode* is given to a mass of summits at the point where the baronies of Armagh and Fews and the County of Monaghan meet'.¹⁴⁹ Only names in Co. Armagh are shown, but in the area around are: *Tonregie*, Tanderagee; *Tulbrone*, Tullybrone; and *Armaghonaga*, Armaghbrague townlands in Lisnadill parish; and to the south *Tulliuolan*, Tullyvallon.

O'Donovan explained *Sliabh Fuaid* as 'a mountain near Newtownhamilton',¹⁵⁰ and the highest peak in the hills there is Carrickatuke (*Carraig an tSeabhaic* 'rock of the hawk', H 903318, 1304 feet). Carrickatuke is in the townland of Armaghbrague, on which, according to recent folklore, St Patrick attempted to build his first church before he settled in the plain.¹⁵¹ *Sliabh Fuaith* has been viewed from the aspects of, first, the routeways through it and places associated with it, and, second, explanations of the name.

[A] PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH SLIAB FUAITH

The tales of Cú Chulainn's youth in the Táin say that when he was a little boy he asked his mother in *Dún Dealgan* /Dundalk to point out to him the direction of Emain Macha. She showed him but said, '*Sliabh Fuaith* is between you' (*TBC* I 1.413). Nevertheless the boy crossed the hills and took his place among the warriors. When he first took arms, he took the road (*slige*) back to *Sliabh Fuaith* where the older warrior Conall Cernach was posted that day to intercept travellers to Emain (*TBC* I 1.665-70).

SLIABH MONDUIRN

Cú Chulainn took Conall's place and then made his charioteer drive farther, to *Loch Echtra* and then to *Sliabh Monduirnd* on which was a cairn called *Finncharn (na Foraire)* 'white cairn (of the watching)' (*TBC* I 1.697, YBL). From here they could see *Mag mBreg* (the plain of Meath), Tara and Kells. The later version says that Cú Chulainn went south of Conall (*fodes*) and the view is divided between unnamed places in Conchobar's province of Ulster and those in *Magh mBreg*, expanded to *Temair 7 Taltiu, Cleittech 7 Cnogba 7 Brug Meic ind Óc* 'Tara and Teltown, Cleitech and Knowth and New Grange' (*TBC* II 1. 1059). The mountain (*mons/sliabh*) of *Mondorn* appears even earlier in Muirchú's Life of St Patrick, as the place to which some people fled north in their chariots from Patrick's fire at *Ferta Fer Féicc* near the Boyne, and in the Laud Genealogies, as the place to which some of the Corcu Óche fled

148 Esch. Co. Map 2; O'Donovan quotes this map (*AFM* vi p.1923: AD 1592n) as 'an old map of Ulster in the State Papers Office'.

149 Hamilton 1913, 313 n.29; *Esch Co. Map* no. 27, *Fves*.

150 O'Donovan 1856, *AFM* i 26n.

151 MacNeill 1962, i 59, ii 475-7; Joyce 1869-1913, ii 436.

south when displaced by the inundation of Lough Neagh.¹⁵²

Despite O'Donovan's location of *Sliab Monduirn* as near Ballybay in Monaghan, other scholars have identified it with the peaks of Carrickatuke in Armagh, or Mullyash mountain, in Monaghan on the Armagh border (H 869258), both of which have summit cairns.¹⁵³ The alternation of *Sliab Fuait* and *Sliab Monduirn* in the annal for AD 875 might suggest that they were the same place (*A. Innisfallen, AU*). However, a *dindsenchas* poem (often called the 'poet's view' from *Sliab Fuait*) located *Sliabh Moduirn* [sic] in *Mugdorna*.¹⁵⁴ Haley, following MacNeill's location of the tribe *Mugdorna*, in Cremorne Co. Monaghan,¹⁵⁵ rather than his location of *Sliab Monduirn*, pointed out that the mountain and its cairn *Finncharn* must be looked for farther south. Thus he found Fincarn Hill (H 824143, 759 feet) in the hills beyond Loughs Muckno and Ross.¹⁵⁶ This area was within Conchobar's Ulster, but beyond the present survey of Co. Armagh.

ÁTH NA FORAIRE

In the later version of the Táin, Cú Chulainn asked his charioteer at Navan where the great road south led, and was told it went to a place called *Áth na Foraire*, the 'ford of the watching' in *Sliabh Fuait* (*TBC II ll. 990-5*). Conall's post in this version is thus located more precisely in the Irish tradition of combat at the ford, its name perhaps influenced by the epithet of *Findcharn* in version I. In the tale called *Mesca Ulad* 'The Drunkenness of the Ulstermen', *Áth na Foraire* comes after *Sliab Fuait* on a journey from *Mag Macha*, the Armagh plain,¹⁵⁷ implying that the ford was to the south of the hills. However, the late version of the story of Cú Chulainn's death is confused about *Áth na Foraire*, locating it once in the hills, called *Sliabh Fuaid*, once on the 'plain of Emain', *Mag na hEamna*, and once between *Machaire na hEmna* and *Sliabh Fuaid* i.e. to the north of the hills.¹⁵⁸

From their interpretation of the Táin, Murray (1933) and Arthurs took *Áth na Foraire* as located between Navan and *Sliab Fuait*, and considered identifying it with Tassagh bridge over the river Callan (H 869371) north of

152 Muirchú I §§14,18 in Bieler 1979, 84,90; Byrne 1994, 100. The Laud text does not equate *Cúl Breg* and *Mondornd*, and Byrne's suggestion of Slieve na Calliagh seems too far south and west (even though it does have two summits called *Carn Bán* 'white cairn'). Like Kaarina Hollo, I would favour locating the 'gravemound of Fiacc's men' on the north side of the river near Slane: Hollo 1998, 18-21.

153 *AFM* i 26-7, 38-9; AW 3501,3579n; MacNeill *JRSAL* lvii (1927) 155; Murray, *JCLAS* viii 1 (1933) 12.

154 *Met. Dinds* iv 164.

155 Tempest *JCLAS* vii 4 (1932) 466. The two similar names in the same area have also been confused in the Vita Quarta of St Patrick, Byrne 1994,100. Only *Mugdorna* survives, in Cremorne, Mourne Mts.

156 Haley 1970, 40. The summit is annotated 'Finn Mac Cool's Grave' on OSNI 1:50,000 sheet 28.

157 Watson 1941, 1.258.

158 van Hamel 1933, *OCC* 97 §30; 96 §28; 116 §46.

the high ground on the way from Armagh to Keady.¹⁵⁹

In the later version of the Táin, Conall was concerned that the Ulaid would censure him for letting the young Cú Chulainn go on alone south of *Áth na Foraire* into the *cocrích* or 'borderland' (*TBC* II 1.1022). It seems unlikely that the stories would use this term to refer to part of the Macha plain. The present-day County Water which flows from beside Mullyash mountain via County Bridge (H 893247) and forms the boundary between counties Monaghan and Armagh almost to Lough Patrick (H 884192), was called in the 16th century *Owne nee Coiggrý*, in Irish *Abhainn na Cóigríche* 'river of the borderland'.¹⁶⁰ It seems the two 'borderlands' are the same.

Although according to tradition the ancient province of Ulster stretched as far south as the Boyne, the Irish Annals also show *Sliabh Fuait* functioning as a natural boundary, as in the 'harrying of Uí Néill...' and 'gathering of the men of Ireland... south of *Sliabh Fuait*' in AD 859, 875, 1005-6 (*A. Innisfallen*). It appears that in practice the hills have always constituted a physical border to the hinterland of Ulster.

BÉAL ÁTHA AN AIRGID

The same accounts which contain *Owne ne Coiggrý*, the County Water, mention a place called *Bealanargitt* as one of the boundary points between O'Hanlon's territory called Orior and the O'Neill lands called Tyrone.¹⁶¹ The ford called *Belanagert* still marked the western boundary of the Co. Armagh barony of Orior (*Oryer*) c. 1655,¹⁶² but in the 16th century Tyrone was still being used in its original sense 'Eoghan's land', the land of their 5th century ancestor Eoghan son of Niall here including the territory of the O'Neills of the Fews.

In Irish texts *Bealanargitt* appears as *Béal Átha an Airgid* in accounts of the road from Dundalk to Armagh, for example the journey across *Sliabh Fuait* quoted by O'Donovan from 'a paper manuscript... in the College of St Isidore in Rome': *assin Sradbhaile tria Bhéalach Mhór an Fhedha go Béal Átha an Airgid tar Sliabh Fuait go Ard Macha*.¹⁶³ *Bealach Mór an Fheadha* 'great road of the wood' is the name for the route, where the 'wood', Irish *fíodh* (cf. the district name *Fíodh Chonaille* below), gave rise to the later anglicised barony name Fews.¹⁶⁴ *Béal Átha an Airgid* 'approach to the silver ford' has been identified with Silverbridge (H 963179), in the townland of Carrigans south of the hills and on an old line of road a little to the east of the current main road from Newtownhamilton.¹⁶⁵ From Silverbridge there is a B-road heading west into Monaghan, as well as the road to Dundalk. From its position, the ford at

159 Arthurs 1954, 36-7.

160 *Cal. State Papers* vol. cxxix 332,334 (1587), cxxxv 522 (1588).

161 *Cal. State Papers* vol. cxxix 334 (1587), cxxxv 521 (1588).

162 *Civ. Surv.* x 69 §77

163 *AFM* vi pp2352-3n, sa. 1607.

164 Hamilton 1913, 312.

165 Laoide, 1904, *Seachrán Carn tSiadhail* 108-9, quoting O'Donovan's source.

Silverbridge may have been the place intended by *Áth na Foraire* in the tales, but there was another significant place on the route.

DORSEY

When Cú Chulainn first travelled north from Dundalk he was attacked by the boys of Emain. He retaliated and knocked down fifty before they could reach *Dorus Emna*, the entrance of Navan fort (*TBC* I 1.436). From archaeology and references in the Annals we know that there were other defences on the old road not mentioned in the tales, the extensive earthworks called *Doirsi Emna* 'entrances to Emain' from which the townlands called Dorsey (H 944200) a little north of Silverbridge were named.¹⁶⁶ According to the Annals of Connacht in 1224, guards were placed 'on the routeways of *Sliabh Fuait* and the Gates of Emain and the Wood of the Conaille', and in 1640 *Doirsi Emna* appears anglicised as *Dorsiene*.¹⁶⁷

The earthworks, first described in 1707 when already partially destroyed, were linked across an area of bog and controlled two routeways approaching along ridges from the south, from Glassdrummond and Silverbridge. Five townlands called Dorsey stretch for 5 miles north of the Dorsey Ramparts, along the route to Newtownhamilton. The western route had to cross the Dorsey River, and the old ford in this area was probably beside the ramparts at Drummill Bridge (H 942190).¹⁶⁸ Dating of timbers found at the Dorsey associates the site with the timber building excavated at Navan, and with the enclosure itself. The site straddles both the pass through the hills to Navan via Newtownhamilton, and its possible branch route via Tullynowood and the course of the Callan.¹⁶⁹

The ford at Silverbridge is only 2 miles south of the Dorsey, which has variously been described as an enclosure, or a system of cross-ridge dykes of slightly different dates. It is likely that one or other of these fords in the area of the Dorsey was intended for *Áth na Foraire* in the Ulster Cycle tales.¹⁷⁰

LOCH ECHTRA

In the Táin the boy Cú Chulainn visited Conall in *Sliabh Fuait* and went past him to *Loch Echtra*. The obvious meaning of this name is 'lough of adventure'. In the later version the lough is in the borderland, *cocrích*, and the name is slightly different: *Loch Echtrann* (ll. 1022,1035) 'lough of strangers', probably connected with Cú Chulainn's statement that one often meets a warrior there (*TBC* I 1.677,688; II ll.1018,1036). At first Arthurs felt inclined

166 A. Tig. AD 1176, A. Conn 1224. The modern townlands are: Dorsey, Dorsey Cavan O'Hanlon, Dorsey Hearty, Dorsey Macdonald, Dorsey Mullaghglass.

167 A. Conn. AD 1224: p.6 §13 *ar slighib Sleui Fuaid 7 ar doirsiu Emna 7 ar Fid Conailli; Inq. Ult. Arm.* §36 Car. I.

168 Tempest 1930, 189-90,194,224.

169 Lynn 1989, 5. Enclosure H938187 to H 953194.

170 Tempest 1930, 225.

to dismiss *Loch Echtra* as not a real name, but then found other references to it as one of seven lakes which erupted during the reign of Partholán,¹⁷¹ and as one of the landmarks listed as part of the view in the *dindsenchas* poem on *Sliabh Fuait*.¹⁷²

MacNeill and Tempest's investigations on this poem, called by them 'the poet's view from Slieve Fuait' (1932), led them to think that Carrickatuke, in the townland of Armaghbrague, was the mountain called *Sliabh Fuait*. The list of landmarks includes to the east the Mourne Mountains; to the north Slemish, Lough Neagh and Slieve Gallion; and to the west Slieve Beagh. However, not all the places mentioned can be seen from Carrickatuke. Names may have been added from different sources for effect, such as *Loch Echtra* and *Sliabh Mo[n]duirn* from the Táin. The seven verses of place-names repeat *Sliabh Cairthind* and include both *Sliabh Slanga* and *Sliabh Bairche*, two earlier names for the highest of the Mournes, Slieve Donard.¹⁷³

Murray pointed out that, from their opening and closing lines, the verses on the view formed a separate poem on *Ard Aisse* 'height of the ridge'.¹⁷⁴ Like Tempest and MacNeill, Murray did not make the obvious identification of *Ard Aisse* with Mullyash. Since he thought Mullyash was *Sliabh Monduirn* which is mentioned in the view, it could not be part of *Sliabh Fuait*.

Arthurs' interpretation of the Táin, added to the Callan routeway traced by Fr Murray, made him identify *Loch Echtra* with Tullynawood lake (H 860295), the source of the Callann. 'Here perhaps for a person journeying south from Armagh the *macha* ended. *Loch nEchtra* would be the lake beyond, for *echtra* is primarily connected with *echtar* a preposition meaning "outside"'. Arthurs explained the meanings *echtra* "adventure" and *echtrann* "stranger" as secondary developments.¹⁷⁵

Although Arthurs criticised Hogan for locating *Loch Echtra* south of *Sliabh Fuait*, the idea of watching for outsiders visiting Emain makes it more likely that *Loch Echtra* was on the far side of *Sliabh Fuait*, 'beyond' the mountain from Emain. Because it is on the way to *Sliabh Monduirn*, identified as the upland which includes Fincarn Hill, *Loch Echtra* must be a lake in the valley running south-east from Castleblayney to the current border of Monaghan and Armagh. Since MacNeill has plausibly identified *Snámh in Tuirc* 'swimming place of the boar' in the 'poet's view' with Muckno Lake (later *Loch Mucshnámha* 'lake of pig-swimming'),¹⁷⁶ *Loch Echtra* may be Lough Ross on the county border. Haley expected a big lake, because the rest of the seven lakes of Partholon's reign were large.¹⁷⁷ *Loch Echtra*, visible from Mullyash, could possibly mean the whole stretch of water from Lough Muckno to Lough

171 Arthurs 1954b, 37 §9, 67; *Loch nEchtra in Airgiolla: Lebor Gabála Éirenn LL i* 16 l.493; AFM AW 2535 *Loch Eachtra Sléibhe Fuait*.

172 Met. *Dinds* iv 162.

173 Ó Mainnín 1993, 154.

174 Murray 1933; Arthurs 1954b, 33; Gwynn Met. *Dinds* iv 419.

175 Arthurs 1954b, 67.

176 MacNeill & Tempest 1932, 466; cf. Haley 1970, 213 n.76.

177 Haley 1970, 40.

Ross, with the *fertais* or ‘sandspit’ mentioned in the *Táin* lying between the two (*TBC* I l. 677; *TBC* II l.1036). The ‘poet’s view’ contains other doublets, as already pointed out.

As with Macha, understanding of the name *Loch Echtra* has been coloured by its use in the stories. However, the original sense seems to be Armagh-centred, indicating beyond the mountain from the Macha plain. We now turn to other places located in *Sliab Fuait*.

NEMED

The Ulster warrior Feradach Find Fechnach came from a place called *Neimed Slébe Fuait*, ‘the sacred place of *Sliab Fuait*’, which has not been identified (*TBC* II l.4053, 4098, 4467). *Nemed* can also be a supernatural personal name. *Nemed* was the husband of the goddess Macha according to the poem on *Mag Macha*¹⁷⁸ and one of the places mentioned in the poem on the view from Mullyash was *Fert Mná Nemid* ‘the grave of Nemed’s wife’.¹⁷⁹ However, somewhere in Ulster, and mentioned next to *Mag Coba* in west Co. Down, was a river called *Bó Nemid* which was dangerous for the king of the province to drink.¹⁸⁰ The name could mean ‘Nemed’s cow’ or ‘cow of the sanctuary’, possibly referring to the place called *Nemed* in *Sliab Fuait*. Thus the river could be the Callan, which rises in Tullynawood Lough (H 860295) in the hills and flows down through the plain, dividing Navan and Armagh. The sources of other rivers such as the Boyne (‘she of the white cows’) and Shannon were also regarded as sacred places.¹⁸¹

CALLAN

The Callan is mentioned in the *Táin* as ‘our river at Emain’, with a dangerous pool over which the young Cú Chulain carried the other boys when they played their water sports.¹⁸² The river is small now but its name means ‘noisy one’, and other texts call it one of the ‘three black rivers of Ireland’.¹⁸³ In AD 846 Niall mac Aedha king of Tara was drowned in it, and gained the epithet Niall *Caille* ‘Niall of the Callann’.¹⁸⁴ Presumably the river was dangerous when in spate, like the ‘river of Inis-na-Subh in *Sliabh Fuait*’, which flooded in rainy weather in 1158 and drowned 30 people.¹⁸⁵

In another Ulster Cycle tale, *Tochmarc Emire*, the warrior Cú Chulainn

178 *Met. Dinds* iv 124 l.3.

179 *Met. Dinds* iv 162-3, cf. 124, on the burial of Macha wife of Nemed in *Mag Macha*. Apparently Armagh is visible from Mullyash (Mrs Sylvia McRoberts, Mayor of Armagh *pers. comm.* 2001).

180 Dillon 1951, 20-3.

181 *Met. Dinds* iii 26, 286.

182 *TBC* II l.1138.

183 McKay 1999, 32; *AFM* i 42 (AW 3656); LG v 196.

184 *AU*, A.*Innisf.* AD 846; *AFM* i 470, AD 844.

185 *AFM* ii 1130. John O’Donovan’s identification, ‘Inishnasoo near Newtownhamilton’ (n.b.), is not on maps and is no longer known in the area.

describes to his future wife Emer in poetic terms his journey from Emain Macha to her home in Luglochta Logha. *For úan dá ech nEmna* ‘on the foam of the two horses of Emain’ is explained as coming by a stream *Uanuib* ‘foam river’ which derived from the foam made by the horses of an otherworld king called Nemed.¹⁸⁶ Nemed’s horses could also be the source of the Callan.

ARDACHADH, CLOENLOCH

Two other places in *Sliabh Fuait* appear in the annals, *Ardachadh* ‘high field’ and *Cloenloch* ‘crooked lake’, in both cases in accounts of armies attacking Ulster, in AD 821 and 1010.¹⁸⁷

The name *Ardachadh* no longer survives, but the place also appears in an Ulster Cycle tale, in which Cenn Berraide attempted to gain the kingship by carrying the wounded King Conchobar back to Emain without his feet touching the ground. However, Cenn Berraide collapsed and a sod was laid over him at *Ardachad* of *Sliab Fuait*.¹⁸⁸ The only modern name in the hills containing the element *achadh* ‘field’ is Aughnagurgan, the townland which contains Tullynawood, though echoes of the story could possibly be preserved in the English name Deadman’s Hill in the east of the range (H 929316).

Following O’Donovan, *Cloenloch* seems likely to be Clay lake, which is crooked, ‘shaped like a boot’,¹⁸⁹ in the parish of Keady in the western part of the range (H 833324), while *Dún Droma* mentioned on a similar expedition in AD 1007 is thought to be Dundrum townland (H 870348) a few miles north of Tullynawood. If correctly identified, they offer further proof that different routeways were in use, all through *Sliab Fuait*.

DERRYNOOSE

Finally the church of *Doire Nuis* is located in *Sliab Fuait* in the early Irish Calendar of Oengus,¹⁹⁰ and this has been confirmed as the parish of Derrynoose (church H 793321) by the investigations of Frs Murray (1933) and McDermott. Although the church was ‘not in the mountainous part’, Arthurs concluded that *Sliab Fuait* was ‘so well known that places (such as Derrynoose) which are not exactly in its range could be located by reference to it’.¹⁹¹

[B] SLIAB FUAIT: ITS LOCATION.

It is clear because of the various routeways through it and places in it that *Sliab Fuait* cannot be regarded as the name of one peak, but of the range of

186 Van Hamel 1933, *Tochmarc Emire* §§9,17,36.

187 AU; AD 819 and 1009 in *AFM* i 430, ii 762.

188 Meyer 1906, 6 §7.

189 Arthurs 1954b, 37.

190 Stokes 1905a, 262: *Daire Mis* Dec. 24.

191 Arthurs 1954b, 37-8.

hills south of the plain of Macha. Liam Mac Mathúna, in his study of Old Irish words for heights, has demonstrated that the meanings 'moor, moorland, mountainous land' as well as 'mountain' occur for *sliab* in early Irish texts.¹⁹²

Hogan (1910) and Hamilton had already suggested that *Sliab Fuait* was not one peak but a hill region: 'all the evidence... points to the conclusion... range of mountains'.¹⁹³ Both Murray and Arthurs came to the same general conclusion,¹⁹⁴ but Hamilton's view was probably the most accurate in scope, including the whole range from Mullyash in Monaghan as well as Carrickatuke and Deadman's Hill in Co. Armagh.

Liam Mac Mathúna noted that while many early Irish settlements and churches were on little hills (*tulach* or *druim*), *sliab* had a different significance. '*Sliab*... is used of higher, rougher ground, inaccessible and difficult to traverse... Because they are far removed from man's everyday life and because their summits are held to be close to heaven, mountains are thought to be on the border of this world and the preternatural other world...'.¹⁹⁵

In the story explaining the Ulstermen's sickness, *Noenden Ulad*, Macha came to their assembly on the plain from the dwelling of her husband Cronn, 'on the heights of mountain ranges and of wildernesses'.¹⁹⁶ Throughout the Ulster Cycle storytelling tradition, *Sliab Fuait* is presented as a wild untamed border area, the place of magic and danger. Cú Chulainn found and won his chariot horses there, as lake monsters like the Scottish 'waterhorse'. He caught the Grey of Macha as it emerged from the Pool of the Grey in *Sliab Fuait* and the horse went back into the pool at the end of their lives.¹⁹⁷ After his first combat, and again in wooing his wife Emer, he brought deer and swans, the wild creatures of *Sliab Fuait*, alive to Emain.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, when the history of the O'Neills in the Book of Clondeboy recounted the drowning of Niall Caille, the Callan was called '*Callann of Sliabh Fuaid*'.¹⁹⁹

The later term Fews²⁰⁰ not only covered the same general area, but had the same connotations. Indeed its fearsome reputation, as 'wild country called the Fews', or 'dread defiles', continued through the 18th century, when the road past Newtownhamilton acquired another guardian of travellers in the form of 'Johnston of the Fues', of Johnston's Bridge and the townland Dorsy Cavan O'Hanlon (H 9522).²⁰¹

192 Mac Mathúna 1984-8, 44-5.

193 Hamilton 1913, 313.

194 Murray 1933, 14; Arthurs 1954b, 38.

195 Mac Mathúna 1984-8, 38.

196 *i mbennaib sliab et díthrub*: Hull 1968, 28 §1.

197 *i taib Lindi Leith hi Sléib Fúait*, Henderson 1899, *FB* §31; *LL* ii ll.14005,14105.

198 *TBC* I l.800; *i ndiamraib Sléibí Fúait*, *TBC* II l.1152; Van Hamel 1933, *TEM* §89.

199 (AD 846); Ó Donchadha 1931, 22.

200 Not derived from (*Sliab*) *Fúait* but from *Fíodh* (*Conaille*), Muhr 2001, 301, and below.

201 Paterson 1938, 247-8.

[C] SLIAB FUAIT: THE MEANING OF THE NAME.

Arthurs took a different approach to the significance of the name *Sliab Fuait*, considering first what Irish place-name tradition tells about its meaning.²⁰² The traditional explanations are that the mountain is named (i) from a legendary character called *Fuat*, (ii) from a sod *fót* that Fuat brought with him from the Otherworld, which would turn over if a lie was told on it. (In fact the name Fuat is another pronunciation of *fót*). (iii) This sod was recognised by St Patrick's horse, so that Patrick gave the place another name, *Neimheadh* 'sanctuary'.²⁰³ (iv) *Sliab Fuait* was named from a different sod in an Ulster Cycle story: the sod laid on Cenn Berraide who died attempting to carry the wounded king Conchobar back to Navan without letting him touch the ground.²⁰⁴

Arthurs considered that *Fót*, genitive *Fuait*, was indeed the element in the name, but that it was akin to Latin *vastus* and meant originally 'distance, ground', so that, rather than 'mountain of the sod', *Sliab Fuait* meant something like 'the mountain of the desolate region', 'a natural and fitting term for the district beyond the Macha... the cultivated land'. He agreed with Murray in his interpretation of Tullynowood (H 8529) near Aughnagurgan as *Tulaigh na bhfód*, 'hill of the sods'. However, he considered *Sliab Fuait* to be a 'much older name', which in its very meaning contrasted the wildness of the mountain with the civilisation of the plain.²⁰⁵ Outside the Ulster Cycle both names appear, in the schematic political system in *Lebor na Cert*, as titles of the king of Airgialla: *Rí Fuaid*, *Rí Macha*.²⁰⁶

FORKILL

The Ulster Cycle tale *Tochmarc Emire*, Cú Chulainn's wooing of his wife Emer, mentions a place on the road between *Sliab Cuillinn* and *Sliab Fuait*, and provides the Irish name of the village of Forkill: *Foircéal* 'trough'.²⁰⁷ Forkill village is between two quite small hills (J 014157), but the other side of the valley north past Slieve Gullion is formed by foothills rising north-west towards Deadman's Hill. This usage is another indication that *Sliab Fuait* is a name for the range or hilly region, not a peak.

202 Arthurs 1954b, 34.

203 *Met. Dinds* iv 162-6, 166-8. Compare the story in the Tripartite Life below.

204 Meyer 1906, 6 §7.

205 Arthurs 1954b, 37-8. The contrast remains: Oram, R. 2001, 991. *The Architectural Heritage of Co. Armagh* in Hughes, A.J. & Nolan, W. 2001 ed. *Armagh History and Society*, 991-1035.

206 Dillon 1962, 79,80; cf. Candon 1996, 45.

207 Van Hamel 1933, 35 §33; Arthurs 1954a, 14, who explains *Oircel* of the text as 'hiding place'; Hughes 1991-3, 102-4; not *Fuarchoill* 'cold wood': Leslie 1911, 304.

MIDLUACHAIR

According to the legends, five roads radiated from Tara to the far points of Ireland.²⁰⁸ The routeway north was called *Slige Midluachra* ‘the road/cutting of *Midluachair*’, and it is mentioned several times in the earlier version of the *Táin* (*TBC* I ll.1034, 1489, 4152-3). After Cú Chulainn’s fight with Nath Crantail in *Cuailnge*, Cooley (*TBC* I l.1487), the Connaught queen Medb headed north into *Cuib* (Iveagh, Co. Down) with Cú Chulainn following, and continued on *Slige Midluachra* to Dunseverick. It has been assumed from this passage that the road extended to the north coast, although Haley considered that Dunseverick in this instance was more likely to be a mistake for Downpatrick.²⁰⁹ At the end of the tale the bull came north on *Slige Midluachra* to *Cuib* to die (*TBC* I l.4152). The road is named in the later version only in the summarised itinerary (*TBC* II l.296).

In general a routeway is likely to take its name from the place to which it goes or a point on its course. The route over the hills to Armagh has also been considered as a branch of the *Slighe Midluachra*,²¹⁰ and the tale of Cú Chulainn’s death, *Brislech Maige Muirthemne*, states that he travelled from Navan towards Dundalk ‘on *Slige Midluachra* southward round *Sliab Fuait*’.²¹¹ However, given that he travelled via Forkill above, the Newtownhamilton road may not be intended on this occasion. In another early tale, Cú Chulainn, disturbed by the loss of an Otherworld lover, leapt towards *Luachair*, ran wild in the mountains, and slept each night on *Slige Midluachra*.²¹²

It seems that the original place from which *Slige Midluachra* was named was in the south of Co. Armagh. In the early version of the *Táin*, Medb and Ailill divided their cattle-prey from Cooley, sending part by *Midluachrae* and part by *Bernas Bó nUlaid*, the reason for its name ‘pass of the Ulster cows’ (*TBC* I l. 1034). It has been identified with the Windy Gap in the hills west of Carlingford.²¹³ The three sons of king Conchobar’s son Fiachna, Ros, Dáire and Imchad, are associated with three places or districts, all of which seem close to each other: *Cuailnge*, Cooley in Co. Louth; *Mag Coba*, Iveagh in west Co. Down; and *Midluachair* (*TBC* I l.3778). The church of Kilnasaggart (J 061149, *Cill na Sagart* ‘church of the priests’) beside the present Newry-Dublin railway line was in *Midluachair*,²¹⁴ and it appears that this valley was ‘the rushy middle-place’ which gave its name to the routeway called *Slige Midluachra* through the hills.²¹⁵

208 *Met. Dinds* iii 278; *AFM AD* 123.

209 Hamilton 1913, 311; Lawlor, H.C. 1938a; Haley 1970, 101, calling Lawlor’s article a ‘fantasy’.

210 Hamilton 1913, 310.

211 *iar Sligi Midluachra timchell Sleibi Fuait fades*, *LL* l. 13894.

212 *Serglige Con Culainn* ed. Dillon 1953, 29 l.831.

213 Haley 1970, 76-9. Shown on OSNI 1:50,000 sh.28, (J 130139).

214 *Féilire Gormain* ed. W. Stokes 1895, Oct 26th; Reeves 1853, 224.

215 Haley 1970, 21n,99,170,209.

In the 16th century Ulster tale *Caithréim Conghail Cláiringhnigh* the name *Midluachair* was replaced by *Iomaire Muilleand*, 'furrow of mills',²¹⁶ and some such Irish name was reflected in anglicised forms like *Innermallane*.²¹⁷ Later still the Irish form changed to *Bealach an Mhaighre* 'Pass of the Salmon',²¹⁸ anglicised as the Moiry Pass. The ruins of Moiry castle are still to be seen (J 057146).

FIODH CONAILLE

Conall Cernach, whom Cú Chulainn found guarding the approach to *Emain* through *Sliabh Fuait*, was one of the three chief Ulster heroes, and like Cú Chulainn was closely associated with the region of South Armagh. In the *Táin* he was also given a dwelling in *Midluachair* (*TBC* I 1.3479, II 1.4076). In the genealogies he was considered as the ancestor of the *Conaille* tribe, centred on Co. Louth, whose territory was thus sometimes called *Caílle Conaill* 'Conall's land'.²¹⁹ *Caílle* is easily confused with Irish *Coille* 'wood', and it has often been suggested, from a reference in Archbishop Dowdall's register in 1540 to a church in the Jonesborough area spelled *Fyconnell*, that there was an Irish name *Fiodh Conaill* 'Conall's wood'.²²⁰ However the references in Irish texts are generally to *Fiodh Conaille* 'wood of the Conaille'.²²¹ Although this wood seems to be the origin of the barony-name Fewes, the connection with Conall Cernach is thus indirect. Killeavy, *Cill Shléibhe* 'the church of the mountain' beside Slieve Gullion, was also in Conaille territory at one time.²²²

HOMES OF THE HEROES

The legendary Ulster heroes who assembled at Navan were drawn from all over the province, as can be seen from examining their 'addresses' given in the muster roll, *Tóchustal Ulad*, quoted in the *Táin*.²²³ Apart from king Conchobar's son Cúscraid Mend Macha, who is summoned from Macha itself (*Maich*, *TBC* I 1.3487), the other heroes from Co. Armagh all come from south of Navan. Feradach from *Nemed* and Conall from *Midluachair* have already been mentioned.

216 MacSweeney 1904, ITS v 168.

217 Barbour's Bruce xiv 101-2; Scottish Texts Soc. 1980-5; *UJA* ser.i v (1857) 7.

218 *AFM* vi 2222, 2224, 2256: AD 1600-1.

219 McCann 1952-3, 31-2.

220 Murray, L. 1925-32, vol. vii 92; understood as Creggan parish, Arthurs 1954c, 46; McGleenon 1987, 14; Dobbs 1922, 4 §1 n.12.

221 *Mart. Tallaght* gl. 183; *AFM* 1097; A. Conn. 1224; Kelly, F. 1997. *Early Irish farming*, 390 n.203.

222 Ó Fiaich 1969, 86.

223 *TBC* I 1.3455f, II 1.4053f; Muhr 1994.

FATHOM

Uma mac Remarbisi had his dwelling at *Fethain* (*TBC* I 1.3468), elsewhere called *Fedain Cuailnge*, ‘watercourse of Cooley’.²²⁴ This is the townland of Fathom, beside the Nerwy river, which contains a hill 841 feet high (J 094231) overlooking the road south of Newry to the Cooley peninsula in Co. Louth.²²⁵ Part of the possessions of the monastery of Killeavy in 1546,²²⁶ in 1586 this vantage point was the site of a small castle occupied by the O’Neills. In that year Bagenal’s *Description of Ulster* records ‘Shane O’Neil dwellinge within less than a mile to the Newrie, at a place called *Fedom*, suffringe no subject to travell from Dundalk northward’.²²⁷

CARNBANE

Carnbane, the ‘white cairn’, is now a townland name attached to an industrial estate on the outskirts of Newry (J 076294), and the huge cairn, described in 1744 as 180 yards round and ten high, has gone.²²⁸ In 16th and 17th century sources Carnbane was part of an old district called *Moycarne*, equivalent to the Irish form *Magh in Chairn* ‘plain of the cairn’, which was recorded as the site of a battle between the Ulaid and Cenél nEogain in AD 1149.²²⁹ However, in the Ulster cycle the place is depicted as the home of Sencha the spokesman: *Sencha mór mac Ailella meic Maelchloid a Carnmaig Ulad* ‘Great Sencha son of Ailill mac Maelchloid from the Cairn-plain of the Ulaid’.²³⁰ The cairn also featured in the itinerary of the Earl of Sussex in AD 1556: *Mahere Carran alias Molloughe Cloughlan Carran beyond the Nurie... a great hill of stones in O’Hanlon’s country*, and this text suggests that it functioned at that time as the inauguration place of the O’Hanlons of Orior.²³¹ As with the O’Neill castle at Fathom, this usage would fit the theory that the places mentioned as the dwellings of heroes in the Ulster Cycle tales were places of continuing importance or note in historical times.

THE DANES’ CAST

While it has been asserted that the campaign of the Táin never mentions the Danes’ Cast,²³² others have said, ‘The Táin even preserves a reference to the earthworks as follows... “He (the Brown Bull) went on to *Slighe Midluachra* in Cuiv and made a trench there”’.²³³ *Cuib*, anglicised here as ‘Cuiv’, became

224 *TBC* II 1.4067; Watson 1941, *MU* II.100,620.

225 Haley 1970, 75, but unident. 152; Toner & Ó Mainnín 1992, 25,44; Muhr 1994, 153; 1995, 53.

226 Archdall 1786, i 52.

227 ed. Hore, *UJA* ii (1854) 151.

228 Harris 1744, 203; Toner & Ó Mainnín 1992, 12.

229 Mooney 1956, 206-7; *AFM* ii 1988.

230 Watson 1941, *MU* 1.756.

231 Brewer & Bullen 1867-73: *Cal. Carew* 1515-1575, 259; Muhr 1996a, 42.

232 Dobbs 1912, 340.

233 Walsh 1987, 7; from Kane 1909 see Muhr 1996b, 54.

the barony of Iveagh on the western edge of Co. Down.²³⁴ The passage quoted seems to be that at the very end of the earlier version of the tale, when the Brown Bull, *Donn Cuailnge*, comes home to Ulster to die. The most recent editor, Cecile O'Rahilly, translated this as, 'he travelled along *Slige Midluachra* to *Cuib* - it was in *Cuib* he used to abide with the dry cows of *Daire* - and there he pawed up the earth. Hence the place-name *Gort mBúraig*'. Earlier in the tale where the bull *concechlaíd búrach* 'dug a *búrach*', the word was also translated 'pawed the earth' by Cecile O'Rahilly.²³⁵ However, if *búrach* in *Gort mBúraig* can be interpreted more precisely as 'trench', then the place-name means 'the enclosed field of the trench', while the bull was in exactly the right area for the 'Danes' Cast', the linear earthwork of which portions survive today between Newry (Goragewood) and Scarva.²³⁶

In the later version of the story, the Ulster hero Fergna mac Findchonna came from *Búrach*, and was also called the king of *Búrach Ulad* 'Trench of the Ulaid'.²³⁷ It is difficult to think of a better name than 'Trench of the Ulaid' for the Danes' Cast, which lies roughly on the county boundary and divided the Airgialla of Armagh from the Ulaid of east Ulster in early historical times. A few miles east of the Danes' Cast, Lough Brickland, another name reflecting the Ulster Cycle, became an important border stronghold of the Magennis in Co. Down.²³⁸ Something of the Ulster Cycle tradition survived locally at the beginning of the 19th century, when the 'Danes' Cast' was attributed to 'Mabhe Cruachan, an enchantress'.²³⁹

Another routeway less often mentioned in the tales is that from the north-east towards Navan.²⁴⁰ The tale called 'the Colloquy of the two Sages', *Immacallam in Dá Thuarad*, gives this route in some detail, as one of the poet-sages travels to Navan from Scotland, landing at Island Magee and crossing the Bann.²⁴¹ The poet's journey then brings him *for Tuathaib Hua mBresail* 'across the people of *Uí Bhreasail*', a historical division of *Airthir* near Armagh, and *for Ard Sailech .i. Ard Macha indiu*, 'over the willow height, that is today Armagh', before reaching *Sídbrug na hEmna*, 'the otherworld dwelling of Navan'.²⁴²

Not only is this 8th or 9th century tale unusual for making Navan explicitly a supernatural place, but for an early Ulster Cycle reference to historical Christian Armagh, giving the alternative Irish name *Ard Saileach* 'willow height' used in later Patrician material.²⁴³ The same phrase '*Ard Saileach*

234 Muhr 1996b, 5.

235 *TBC* I 1.4153 tr. p.237, l.966.

236 Lynn, C. 1989b, 'Linear earthworks in Drummiller Co. Down & Goragh Co. Armagh', *Emania* vi 15-16.

237 *TBC* II 1.4093, ref. *Tochim na mBuiden* 1.4525.

238 Muhr 1996a, 53; 1996b, 17,53-6.

239 Stuart 1819, Appendix iii 583f, not reprinted in 1900.

240 Watson 1941, *MU* 1.255f; Stokes 1905b, 10 §5; Muhr 1996a, 53-5.

241 Flanagan 1970, 32.

242 *Imm DT*: Stokes 1905b, 10 §5.

243 *Lebor Brecc* sermon, Stokes 1887a. ii 472.

which is now /today called *Ard Macha*’ is repeated in three late Ulster Cycle tales.²⁴⁴ Another 9th century tale, the ‘Exile of the Sons of Dóel Dermait’, seems to have known the name, since it sets a simple rural scene at *Ard Macha* claiming, according to the conventional chronology, that ‘it was a wood at that time’.²⁴⁵

PART II PLACE-NAMES IN THE LIVES OF ST PATRICK

We have seen how some of the place-names of the Ulster Cycle can be traced through to their modern equivalents, and how others demonstrate that there was a continuing tradition of and interest in the Ulster Cycle in the area now called Co. Armagh. The other important genre of early literature relating to the area is the accounts of the life of St Patrick, which describe how the saint founded the church of Armagh and established other Christian cells round about. These texts are the 7th century Lives written in Latin by Muirchú and Tírechán, and the Irish *Tripartite Life* of c. 900 AD.²⁴⁶ Where the Ulster Cycle tales, following the literary convention of a setting on the pagan past, generally avoid mention of Armagh, the Lives of Patrick never bring him to Navan, or certainly not by that name.

MACHA

By using the place-name Macha, the Lives make it clear that Patrick had adopted the whole plain, for example, making for *Mache* his ‘desired land’ when he was about to die.²⁴⁷ In the *Tripartite Life* the angel sent Patrick to ‘the Macha’, and he later blessed the Macha from a hill called *Druim Chaili* ‘the maiden’s ridge’.²⁴⁸ At the Macha, Patrick and the local landowner Dáire viewed what is now the Cathedral Hill from a place called ‘Dáire’s rath today’ *Ráith Dáire indiu*, before Dáire gave Patrick the site of his first church at *Ind Fherta* (see below). I strongly suspect that the names of both these vantage points are oblique references to the earthwork or mound at Emain Macha, which has a wide view of the area, although this cannot be proven.²⁴⁹ However, the *Tripartite Life* is full of place-names said to be in use in its time (‘today’), and although the name *Ráith Dáire* has been lost, some of these are still known.²⁵⁰

244 *Oídheadh Chloinne Uisnigh*, ed. C. Mac Giolla Léith 1993, 1.340; *Táin Bó Flidaise* II ed. E. MacKinnon 1905-8, *Celtic Review* i 116; *Tóraigheacht Gruaidhe Griansholuis*, O’Rahilly 1924, 54.136.

245 Hollo 1992, §19.

246 Muirchú and Tírechán ed. Bieler 1979; *Trip.* ed. & tr. Stokes 1887a i. For note on dating, see fn 1.

247 *tellurem cupitam*, Bieler 1979, 116 = Muirchú II 4. Unfortunately Bieler’s index combines *Macha* the plain with the church site of *Ardd Machae*, 1979, 261.

248 *Trip.* 174, 226-8; 236 *Druim Chaili: ro bendach Pátraic asa dib lámaib in Machai*.

249 *Trip.* 228. See my forthcoming article on the significance of Dáire, who according to 17th century tradition had given all the townlands of Coswoy, including the Navan, to the church: Glancy 1954, 83.

250 Ó Fiaich 1958, 168. He names *Talaghtboe* and *Tullyleckeney*, but no references are given.

TAMLACHTA BÓ

The foundation of Dáire's daughter Ercnat at *Tamlachta Bó* 'burial-place of the cow[s]' is mentioned in the Tripartite Life immediately after the founding of Armagh (*Trip.* 232). What must be the same land unit was recorded in the 17th century as *Tawlaghboe etc.*, which is now the townland of Tamlaght (H 8245) immediately west of Tray, Creeveroe and Navan.²⁵¹ It was known in 1609 that Tamlaght had belonged to the archbishop, although there is no memory of the church.²⁵²

ARD SAILEACH

In both early and later lives Patrick asked Dáire for a hill as the site for his church, a hill which Muirchú named as *Dorsum Salicis* 'willow ridge'.²⁵³ The hill is not named in the account in the Tripartite Life, although an Irish version *Ard Saileach*, 'willow height', appears in the *Lebor Brecc* sermon drawn from it.²⁵⁴ The form *Ard Saileach* must have been familiar in the 9th century, for it to be borrowed into the tale of the Poets' Colloquy.²⁵⁵

Although Glancy gave '*Ardsallagh*, site of monastery', or 'Part of *Ardsaillech* (in Corporation)', as the equivalent of the 17th century minor name *Downullay*, which had been partly held by the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul,²⁵⁶ it is not clear that *Ard Saileach* continued as a living name. Glancy said the 'older generations' used the translation Sally Hill for the hill on which the medieval cathedral stands.²⁵⁷ Gwynn, in his edition of the Book of Armagh, used *Drumsallagh* as if it were a living name.²⁵⁸ In the papers of T.G.F. Paterson is an unsigned list of names of subdenominations within the townland of Corporation, compiled by someone from estate papers 'in preparing the maps at time of the Church Act'.²⁵⁹ In this list *Drumsallich* appears as the name of a land unit containing 'cathedral and Market St down to Mall river', *ie.* the Scotch Street River which on Rocque's map (1760)

251 Reeves 1860, iii 194.

252 Glancy 1954, 82; cf. Hamlin 1989, 42. Guided by 17th century subdivision names such as *Chalderagh* and *Dysart* (Glancy 1959, 365) the Historic Monuments branch of DoENI Environment and Heritage Services have now identified a possible site, a rectilinear enclosure in the neighbouring townland of Ballydoo. (cf. Muhr 2001, *Armagh History and Society* p.327 n.92).

253 Muirchú I 24; Bieler 1979, 108.

254 Stokes 1887a, 472.

255 Stokes 1905b, 10 §5.

256 Glancy 1954, 81,95; Arthurs 1956-7, iv 37.

257 Glancy 1957, 328n.

258 'now Drumsallagh', Gwynn 1913, cclxxxii; Bieler 1979, 209 §2.

259 *i.e.* for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, 1869-70; Armagh Miscellanea vol. v 'Local Data' p.30; pointed out by T.J. McGeown. A letter in 1963 from JBA Boyle to TGF Paterson suggested the list was copied by his father from a manuscript in the possession of his grandfather Hugh Boyle, 'presumably made by McBride, the well-known 19th century Armagh surveyor and map maker' (Catherine McCullough, Armagh County Museum pers. comm).

flowed across the bottom of Scotch Street and along the west side of the Mall.²⁶⁰

ARMAGH

At first Dáire refused Patrick's request, and gave Patrick the site called *Ind Fherta* at the foot of the hill. Later Dáire changed his mind and gave Patrick the hilltop, where the saint founded the 'city'; or 'church'²⁶¹ which is called *Ard Macha*, 'the height of (the plain of) Macha' or 'Armagh'. Although Armagh is there 'today' (*Trip.* 228), no reason is given for the apparently new name, intended by Patrick to be the high point of the Christian plain. Like most of the place-names that follow, it has no ecclesiastical elements.

TELACH NA LICCE

The sequel makes it appear that the cathedral hill was uninhabited before, since from it Patrick moved a hind and fawn northwards to another site, a glen²⁶² or hill called the 'mound of the flagstone today' *Telach na Licci indiu* (*Trip.* 230). This name survived to the 17th century, belonging to the Archbishop and spelled as *Tolynaleckey* in 1609.²⁶³ As *Tullyleckeny*, it was called a subdenomination of *Knockadrain* in 1633.²⁶⁴ *Knockadrain* (*Cnoc an Droighin* 'blackthorn hill'²⁶⁵) is an obsolete name in what is now the Corporation of Armagh. However, the position of the hill and its name were shown on Rocque's map of Armagh (1760), and it became the site of the present Roman Catholic cathedral.²⁶⁶

CENGoba: KINNEGoe

Another townland name seems to preserve a church foundation named in the Tripartite Life. Ten king's daughters arrived at 'the maidens' hazel', *Coll na nIngen*, near Armagh, on pilgrimage to Patrick. The saint was summoned and he told them that three would die and be buried where they were, six come to *Druim Fénneda* and one, Cruimthir, would settle 'on this hill to the east', at *Cengoba*. There he planted Patrick's Appletree and gave Cruimthir a doe to milk (*Trip.* 232). The first two names are unidentified, but *Cengoba* 'smith's hill' is likely to be Kinnegoe (H 871524), a townland and small hill in the parish of Loughgall 5 miles north of Armagh, although the names of the

260 Although the stream is now culverted, the foot of Scotch St is still called the 'Bridge' locally. On Rocque's map the stream continued under the Danes Bridge at the north end of the Mall. This name may be preserved in that of the Dean's Bridge one mile further north.

261 *civitas*, Bieler 1979, 110 *Muirchú*; *aeclesiam*, *Trip.* 230.

262 *saltus*, Bieler 1979 *Muirchú* 112.

263 Glancy 1954, 78: 'pt Knockadrain'.

264 Glancy 1957, 347; Ó Fiaich 1958, 168; also *CPR Jas I* 1615, 1620.

265 Arthurs 1956-7, iv 36.

266 Glancy 1954, 81; 1957, 346n. More recently known as Sandy Hill (Chris. Lynn *pers. comm.*)

townlands of Congo and Kinego to the north-west in Tyrone (parishes of Drumglass and Killyman) also derive from *Cengoba*.²⁶⁷ In local tradition the nine came to Armaghbrague, the hill south east of Armagh.²⁶⁸

Three female followers associated with churches in the plain of Macha, Erc daughter of Dáire of *Tamlachta Bó* and Cruimther of *Cengoba*, with Patrick's sister Lupait at *Ind Fherta* below, are also known as Patrick's sewing women in the list of his attendants (*Trip.* 266).

TEAMPALL NA FERTA

According to the Lives, St Patrick's first dwelling and place of worship in the area was at the foot of the present Cathedral hill, a site called *Ind Fherta* (*Trip.* 228, 236), which Muirchú described more fully as 'now the Gravemound of the Martyrs beside Armagh', *nunc..Fertae Martyrum iuxta Ardd Mache*.²⁶⁹ As Reeves explained, the word *martyr* 'in early Irish-Latin, denotes reliques of saints'²⁷⁰, here presumably those of Peter and Paul mentioned below, as the sources are reticent about an early Irish saint or martyr connected with the site. The 'shrine of the martyrs' (*sargifagum martirum* glossed *ferti martair*) is mentioned again in the 7th century Book of the Angel, as the goal of a prayerful Sunday procession.²⁷¹

Reeves also collected many place-names containing the word *fert(a)*, which he considered 'originally denoted a pagan grave of a peculiar form'.²⁷² The Early Irish dictionary gives it the senses 'mound, tumulus', often over a grave, sometimes explained as a *ráth* 'ringfort' or found at an *oenach* or 'assembly' site (*DIL*). As regards the forms *fert* and *ferta*, Thomas Charles Edwards points out that *fert* o,m is used of one burial mound, while *ferta* is collective - either of mounds or the burials in a mound.²⁷³ *Tírechán's* Life of Patrick contains a description of the building of 'a round ditch after the manner of a *ferta*' at the royal site of Cruachu for the burial of two young female converts of Patrick, the daughters of king Loegaire mac Néill, who died after their baptism. That place with their bones was then given to Patrick as the site of a church.²⁷⁴

Chris Lynn has discussed the early descriptions of *Ind Fherta* in his account of his excavation in 1979-80 which uncovered an early Christian cemetery in the expected area. This was the garden of Dobbin's House in Scotch Street, Armagh, and at least one of the graves was dug between the

267 Kinego in Killyman was church land in the early 17th century, while Kinnegoe in Loughgall was not.

268 Reeves 1860, iii 194, 1857, 314 n.m. *The Life of St Columba*.

269 Muirchú Bieler 1979, 108.

270 Reeves 1860, ii 201.

271 Bieler 1979, 191,241; Reeves 1860, vi 27

272 Reeves 1860, vi 27-9.

273 Charles-Edwards 1976 p.83n (Charles-Edwards, T. 'Boundaries in Irish Law', in *Medieval Settlement* ed. P.H. Sawyer, 83-7.)

274 *Tírechán* §26: Bieler 1979, 144-5: *Fossam rotundam in similitudinem fertae. Et... ferta...*

mid-5th and mid-7th centuries AD.²⁷⁵ Muirchú's word *nunc* 'now' might suggest a mound had been erected as a Christian monument, 'on the other hand it is possible that an existing prehistoric monument had provided the focus for the earliest Christian burials in the area'. Muirchú says Dáire unwisely attempted to use 'the meadow of the Christians' as grazing for his horses, as if he still owned it,²⁷⁶ despite having granted it to the saint.

In the later Tripartite Life Patrick's place of worship at *Ind Fherta* was 'in a strong fort', and contained a graveyard as the grassy area²⁷⁷ This life also describes how Patrick measured out 140 feet for the enclosure or *lios*, 27 for the house, 17 for the outbuilding and 7 for the oratory (p.236), implying a prominent landmark around AD 900. In 1090 *Daimhliac na Ferta* 'the stone church of *In Fherta*' was burned with a hundred houses round it (*AU*).

The prefix *teampall* 'church', and a later alternative interpretation of *fert* as the word meaning 'wonder, miracle', did not appear before the 12th century. In AD 1179 *Teampall na Ferta* and the church of St Brigit escaped a fire which burned the churches of Armagh, probably, as Reeves says, because at that date they were outside the monastic city.²⁷⁸ By 1430 *Na Ferta* had become a nunnery with an abbess,²⁷⁹ and its later history is linked with St Brigit's church, which was then also a women's house. The name continued in 17th century tradition, and has been generally located in Scotch Street, which appears to be that called *Templefartagh St* in 1666.²⁸⁰ Although Rocque (1760) listed the name as *Temple Lafarta* beside his inset map of the city of Armagh, he exchanged its location with that of St Brigit's or Bride's.²⁸¹

The site in Scotch Street is near the enclosed ellipse of common now called the Mall, which was used for horse racing in the 18th century.²⁸² Rocque's map of Armagh city marks the winning post on its western side. After the story of Dáire grazing his horses at *Ind Fherta*, as in Muirchú, the Tripartite Life adds three other stories involving Patrick and horses or chariots (*Trip.* 234-40). The first and probably the most important concerns Patrick's sister Lupait, whom he punished for unchastity by driving over her three times in his chariot. She died absolved and went to heaven, and appears to have been buried at *Ind Fherta* (*Trip.* 234). In fact the *Vita Secunda* or second Latin life of Patrick begins with Patrick and Lupait 'whose relics are at Armagh'.²⁸³ This tradition was so strong in the area of Armagh that when, in the early 17th century, a woman's body was found at the church site in Scotch Street, it was assumed

275 Lynn 1988, 70-5, 82.

276 Doherty, C. 1991, 85.

277 Muirchú, Bieler 1979, 108-9 in *herboso loco Christianorum*; *Trip.* 228: *isin ráith chobhsaidse thís, ina reicles*.

278 *AFM* sa; Reeves 1860, ii 204.

279 Chart 1935, *Reg. Swayne* p.128.

280 Reeves 1860 ii 203-4; *Inq. Ult. Arm.* §22 Car. II.

281 Rocque 1760; Camblin 1951, pl.38.

282 Stuart 1819, 552.

283 *Cuius reliquiae sunt in Ardmacha*: ed. Bieler, L. 1971, 51. *Four Latin Lives of St Patrick*, Dublin. Byrne, 1994, 12.

to be that of Lupait.²⁸⁴

All the stories in this section seem to take place around Armagh. In the next incident, angels removed for Patrick a stone that was in the path of his chariot, from which the stone, possibly a familiar monument, was called 'the angels' flagstone'. This was at the place called *Druim Chaili* 'the girl's ridge', from which Patrick blessed in *Macha* (*Trip.* 236). In view of what follows, it has been suggested that the stone obstructing Patrick's chariot-route was that against which the Ulster Cycle heroine, Deirdre, flung herself as she was being taken from *Emain* to *Oenach Macha*.²⁸⁵ The next anecdote tells how Patrick measured out the rath and *In Fherta*, and an angel took him to Rome to get various relics (*taissi* or *martra*) of the saints, including those of Peter and Paul who had their own shrine and later church in Armagh.²⁸⁶ Then the Life says, 'At the southern cross in *Oenach Machae*, there four chariots were brought to Patrick'. A northern cross is also mentioned, and connected with a vision of Judgment Day.

OENACH MACHA

Despite the geographical proximity of Navan and Armagh, *Oenach Macha*, 'the assembly of Macha', is the only place-name in the plain of Macha to appear as a scene of action in both Ulster Cycle and Patrick stories. The secular literary and historical references to *Oenach Macha* have already been discussed above. However, in the Tripartite Life the general association of St Patrick's church at *Ind Fherta*, chariots, Lupait's death and burial, relics, and the name *Oenach Macha*, suggests a location for the old *Oenach* site close beside Armagh. The obvious place, in view of its known use as a race-course, is the Mall or common just below the site of *Ind Fherta*.

Tírechán says Patrick visited the assembly of Tailtiu, while according to the Tripartite Life he both visited that 'royal assembly' and blessed its site.²⁸⁷ The later place-name poems on the assemblies at Tailtiu and Carman say that St Patrick blessed these sites,²⁸⁸ while a place called *Martartech* 'relic house' close to the site of *Oenach Taillten* survives as the parish of Martry.²⁸⁹ Charles Doherty has noted evidence that some monasteries had taken over the function of the *oenach* by the 8th or 9th centuries, so that assemblies at Tailtiu, Cruachu and the monastery of Lynamly are named together in one of the Irish

284 Reeves 1860, ii 201,203; vi 30: quoting Colgan 1647 *Trias Thaumaturga* 226a; Ward *Rumoldus* p.184.

285 Brian Lambkin, unpublished part of lecture 'Patrick, Armagh and Emain Macha' Maynooth 1987, cf. *Emania* ii; ref. *Longes Macc nUislenn*, LL v 261 l.34583. Although even in LL *Oenach Macha* is corrected to *Oenach Muirthemne* as in the other two MSS, the editor Hull 1949, 310-11 supports Macha as the better reading.

286 *Trip.* 238; cf. Bieler 1979, 122, 160 (*Tírechán* §48); 186 (*Liber Angeli* §19); AU 1126.

287 *Ad Taltenam, ubi fit agon regale: Tírechán* §9, Bieler 1979, 132; *intoínach rigdai: Trip.* I 68,70.

288 *Met. Dinds* iii 16; iv 152.

289 MacNeill 1962, i 319. Other exx: *Trip.* 194, 468 (LB) (*Mag Raigne*), 250; AU 722, 1055 (Tyr?).

triads.²⁹⁰ It seems quite possible that St Patrick's first dwelling and place of worship at the 'gravemound' was beside a monument beside the traditional assembly ground, which had been Christianised by termon crosses and relics of saints, and by Patrick's sister taking the place of Macha in the grave which made it a sacred place.

The accounts of their deaths (and indeed of Deirdre's) have so many points in common: an unsanctioned marriage alliance, the (king's) chariot, death at the *oenach*, that they could be variations on one story. While Macha was a pagan who had died at *Oenach Macha* in a chariot-race, Lupait was a repentant sinner who had been run over by a chariot but had gone to heaven.²⁹¹ If the Mall area is accepted as the *oenach* site, the ritual salute of king Muirchertach to Armagh (AU AD 1103) involved appearing at the assembly ground below the city, heading west to pay respect to the old Ulster royal site at Navan, and returning by a righthandwise circuit to St Patrick's church.²⁹²

The original *ferfa*, in which Macha was considered to be buried, may have been nearby, rather than within the church site. Although we have no written description, Rocque's map of Armagh shows that in 1760 there were mounds at the Mall: a very large one at the southern end nearest Scotch Street and the Gaol, and two others near the 'winning post' on the western side. Another aspect of the mounds at assembly sites was their use as platforms for spectators, called *forad*, and the Annals of Ulster record the burning by lightning of the abbot's *foradh* at Armagh in AD 823. However as Aidan Macdonald points out, *forad* may simply refer to the abbot's house.²⁹³ There is no record of the removal of the Mall mounds, but the large mound would qualify in form and position to be that from which Patrick's first church was named.

Although no archaeological investigation of the sites of the Mall mounds has been possible, Chris Lynn has determined from excavation some other earthworks in the Scotch Street area which confirm its importance in early times. A circular ditch 11 metres in diameter was of late Neolithic date, but would have been almost invisible in the early Christian period. There were also sizable linear ditched features up to 2m deep which appeared to be prehistoric. The flat Mall area would have been the flood plain of the now culverted Scotch Street river (see above, *Ard Saileach*), but 'assembly places by lakes or rivers' are also among the types discussed (along with hilltops) by

290 Doherty 1980, 'Exchange and trade in early medieval Ireland', 81; Meyer 1906, 5 §35.

291 As Chris Lynn points out, the story makes Lupait, like the goddess Macha, 'trifunctional': Lupait's sin against chastity involves the third function (fertility), her death by a chariot involves the second (warfare) and her acceptance into heaven makes her sacred. (cf. Dumézil, G. 1968, *Myth et Epopée* vol. I, Paris; Lynn, 1992 *Emania* x 33-57, 1994 *Emania* xii 5-20. See references Waterman ed. Lynn 1997, 228b-9. F.J. Byrne is prepared to accept her death as a foundation sacrifice, 1994, 12, 70.

292 cf. A. Candon 1996, 44-5: 'Telach Óc and Emain Macha c.1100', *Emania* xv 39-46.

293 *tene di nim forsa foruth n-abbadh i nArdd Machae*, AU 822/3 p.280. Macdonald, A. 1981, 310: 'Monastic Archaeology and the Annals of Ulster', 304-319, in Ó Corráin, D. ed. *Irish Antiquity*, Dublin.

Máire MacNeill.²⁹⁴

Wells were another feature found at ancient assembly places. The Book of the Angel describes the area eastward from ‘the city of Armagh’ as the place where Patrick used a well for baptising converts. The text says this was close to the city, and also that some inhabitants of the region kept the ecclesiastical termon restricted. One day, when Patrick fell asleep by the well after his exertions, he was shown a vision of the much greater sphere of influence which his hill-top church would have in the future.²⁹⁵

In excavating Market Street in Armagh, at the bottom of the Market Square and on the slope down to the Mall, Chris Lynn²⁹⁶ found a spring issuing from the sandy subsoil. About 1200 the spring had been dammed to make a small lake, now drained, but in previous centuries it (and possibly others on the same spring line) would have provided feeder streams to the Scotch Street River. The topography of the first millennium thus provides a well, a river, and ancient earthworks and burial mounds, all suitable for an Early Irish assembly site. Even in Rocque’s day there was still enough space between the Mall and the settlement on the hill of Armagh to show that an *oenach* site at the Mall could be a place with its own name and traditions compared with the hilltop church.²⁹⁷

TRIAN CONCHOBAIR

Oenach Macha is not the only possible place-name link between the Patrician material and the Ulster Cycle in this section of the *Tripartite Life*. There is also the place-name *Trian Conchobair* ‘Conchobar’s third’ at Armagh, in which a farm (*orba*) was being cultivated by Patrick’s household when a reaper died of thirst and was buried ‘at the cross at the entrance to Patrick’s house’. This cross may be one of those at *Oenach Macha* which follow in the Life, already mentioned above.²⁹⁸ The thirds of the city of Armagh, *Trian Mór*, *Trian Massáin*, *Trian Sacsan*, are attested in the Annals in the 11th-12th centuries. *Trian Mór*, ‘big third’, which was to the west of the Cathedral,²⁹⁹ was probably *Trian Conchobair*. Although *Trian Conchobair* could be a reference to Conchobar of Macha, 7th century Uí Bhreasail king of Airthir well after the time of Patrick, that Conchobar’s name seems intended to recall Conchobar King of Navan in the Ulster Cycle.³⁰⁰

294 MacNeill, M. 1962, I 258-9. MacNeill, M. 1962. *The Festival of Lughnasa*, reprint 1984 2 vols, Dublin.

295 Bieler 1979, 184 = *Liber Angeli*.

296 Pers. comm. 2001. The lake was there till the early 18th century and was known as Lough Lappan, probably Ir. *Loch Lapain* ‘lake of mire’ (Stuart’s Armagh p.504 and note; O’Reilly’s Dictionary sv. *lapach*). I am very grateful to Dr Chris Lynn, Assistant Director of Historic Buildings and Monuments, DoENI EHS, for sharing his archaeological expertise with me for this paper.

297 The location has already been suggested by Brian Lambkin (1987).

298 Crosses at Patrick’s house and *Oenach Macha*, *Trip.* 236,238.

299 Reeves 1860, iv 212; *AU* 1103.

300 *AU* 698; Arthurs 1954, 47-8; cf P. Kelly on a 9th century O’Neill Conchobar, in Mallory 1992, 88.

NEMED

Another possible link between the Ulster Cycle and the Lives concerns the places called *Nemed* 'sanctuary' which are referred to in stories about Patrick's horse. The first place, 'in the east' and called 'land of Patrick's seat' (*Trip.* 240), could be the site of the *fidnemed* 'sacred tree' at Armagh, which according to the annals was burned by lightning in AD 995.³⁰¹ In the second story Patrick's horse refused to budge when a grain of wheat fell from its load 'where the cross is on the road by the southern *Nemed*'.

As already related (*Sliab Fuait* c above), the medieval place-name poems place the stumbling of Patrick's horse on the sod of truth which is said to have given *Sliab Fuait* its name.³⁰² The 'southern *Nemed*' thus seems likely to be *Nemed* in *Sliab Fuait*, the place which was the home of the Ulster Cycle warrior Feradach Find Fechnach (*TBC* II ll.4053). If the river *Bó Nemid* 'cow of Nemed' already mentioned³⁰³ was the Callan which rises in *Sliabh Fuait*, *Nemed* would be the place of its source, at the lake at Tullynawood (H 860295). Tullynawood was on a western routeway from the Dorsey to Armagh. Murray's etymology of this name, *Tulach na bhFód* 'hill of the sods', makes sense as a later coinage to give a particular location to the various legends of magical sods brought together in the dindsenchas poem. Patrick is only described as using the *Slige Midluachra* routeway in the Tripartite life (*Trip.* 218,244), but one of the Latin lives says he went to *Mag Breg* by *Sliab Fuait*.³⁰⁴

Druim Fénneda where some of Patrick's nine female followers settled is not identified in the Lives (*Trip.* 232), but later oral tradition placed this at Armaghbrague,³⁰⁵ which is part of the upland area, i.e. *Sliab Fuait*.

The Lives of Patrick never show him visiting Emain, but a theme grew up in early Irish religious poetry of comparing flourishing Christian churches with the abandoned tribal capitals of pagan times. The Calendar of Oengus compared Armagh with Tara as the most important place in Ireland, and *Emain* 'of which only the stones remain' with the monastery of Glendalough.³⁰⁶

The old Irish poem on St Patrick, *Génair Pátraic*, known as Fíacc's hymn, contains a verse directly contrasting *Ard Macha* with *Emain Macha*, 'In Armagh there is kingship /long ago it deserted Emain'.³⁰⁷ Similarly, the Tripartite Life also allows St Patrick a verse in which he says, 'It is Armagh I love - dear the dwelling, dear the hill... Emain of the warriors will be waste':

301 Reeves 1860 iv 210; AU 996. For the translation, Binchy, D. 1971 'An archaic legal poem', *Celtica* ix.152-68, 162 l.32.

302 *Met. Dinds.* iv 166,168.

303 Dillon 1951, 20,22. A person called Nemed was Macha's husband in some accounts, see fn. 5.

304 *trans montem Fuoith, Vita Tertia* 157 §58: Bieler 1971, *Four Latin Lives of St Patrick*, Dublin.

305 Reeves 1860, iii 194.

306 Stokes 1905a, 24 §165; Sharpe 1982, 57.

307 Stokes 1887a, ii 408: v.22 *In Ard Macha fil rígi, /Is cian doréracht Emain.*

bid fás Emain na curad (Trip. 252). These references, while they put the warrior heyday of Navan firmly in the pagan past, also show that it was not forgotten.

In later texts both places are mentioned side by side. In the *dindsenchas* of *Mag Macha* both the pagan and the Christian stories of the plain are told, while the third Macha is buried in (Patrick's) Armagh. Similarly Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe's poem on the 'timeless, undecaying capital' of Armagh compares it complimentarily to Tara and other chief places of the men of Ireland and says that Patrick chose the hill 'overlooking soft-turfed Eamhain of the Ulaidh'.³⁰⁸

In general the Ulster Cycle tales avoid mentioning Armagh. The lack of overlap in the early period is noteworthy, given that Navan is less than 2 miles from Armagh, earthworks on both hills existed and were clearly recognisable at the time the stories were written, and both hero tales and saints' lives were most likely put in writing by churchmen.³⁰⁹ However, the idea that the Ulster Cycle tales were a literary creation designed to flatter Armagh but under the name Emain Macha³¹⁰ seems less likely than that the authors of their present form believed in maintaining a strict sense of literary and historical genre in what they chose to record. They may well have preferred to keep Ireland's pagan past to stories of the past, and to concentrate accounts of the deeds of saints on proven successes, rather than admit secular aspirations still current. References in the annals, the Book of Rights, and in poems show that *Emain Macha*, supposedly long abandoned, remained prized territory for ambitious chieftains, the 'symbolic centre' of Airgialla, and 'emblematic capital' of 14th and 15th century O'Neills.³¹¹ In the midst of all this it had become church property. One of the obscure poems in the earlier version of the death-tale of Cú Chulainn seems to prophesy 'that tonsured ones will till the lands of Emain',³¹² and the site certainly belonged to the archbishop by AD 1145.

PART III CONCLUSION

Place-names in both genres are focused on the plain called *Macha*, the Ulster Cycle tales on *Emain Macha*, Navan, the Lives of Patrick on *Ard Macha*, Armagh. Routeways are also important, from the plain to Dundalk over the hills southwards (*Sliab Fuait*), Dundalk to the Newry area by the Moiry Pass, and to the plain from Co. Antrim across the upper Bann. Although the names have often changed with the passage of time, the plain, the hills and the routeways are significant today. Two tribal names used in the

308 Williams 1980, 190.

309 P. Kelly in Mallory 1992, 88; Kelleher, 1971, 122-5 J.V. 'The Táin and the Annals', *Ériu* xxii 107-27.

310 Bruford 1994, 25, in Mallory 1994.

311 Warner 1994b, 71.

312 *LL* ii 1.14179; Radner, J. 1982, p.56. 'Fury destroys the world: historical strategy in Ireland's Ulster epic' *Mankind Quarterly* xxiii 41-60. Ref. Tymoczko, M. 1981, *Two Death Tales from the Ulster Cycle*, 67.

early period are referred to in later barony names: *Airthir* anglicised as Orior, and Fews, anglicised from *Fiodh*, earlier *Fiodh Conaille* 'wood of the Conaille'.

The Ulster tales make far more explicit use than the Patrick material of a contrast between *Macha*, the 'cultivated land', and the untamed mountain south of it - a contrast brought out in the meaning of the place-names *Macha* and *Sliab Fuait*. The identification of *Sliab Monduirn* around Fincarn Hill in Monaghan makes the topography of the Táin much clearer, and *Loch Echtra* (alias Lough Ross) becomes the lake 'beyond' the mountain as viewed from the Macha plain. However, there is a connection between the worlds of *Sliab Fuait*, mountain, and *Macha*, plain: the Callan river.³¹³ Despite the lack of evidence in the written texts on St Patrick, the contrast between mountain and plain has been preserved in the tradition that Armaghbrague, the highest townland in the hills, was called 'false Armagh' because it marked the site of his first, unsuccessful, attempt to establish a church.

The archaeological landscape is only partly represented in the stories. Navan Fort is pre-eminent, and the palace or tree called *Craeb Ruad* has become a townland, but other important sites such as the Dorsey Ramparts, Loughnashade, Haughey's Fort, and the King's Stables are referred to inconclusively, or late, or not at all. Nevertheless there are enough references to local place-names to indicate that at least some of the authors and redactors had the real landscape in view.³¹⁴ In more recent oral tradition, stories attached to the place-names indicate that people continued to remember the connection of the Ulster Cycle stories with the area.

The location of *Emain Macha* has long been established, as documented here. However, the 17th century and earlier administrative sources shed some light on the process whereby Navan became one modern townland and Creeveroe became the townland beside it. Navan may once have included Creeveroe, but we have no records of early bounds and subdivisions. Although the bounds of Creeveroe may have undergone some changes, the sites of the 'house' and the 'stone' of the name, recorded in the 17th century, are likely to have been in or near the borders of the current townland. Likewise, several place-names in the Tripartite Life of St Patrick can still be traced around Armagh as the names of pieces of ground, and some of the stories, with locations, were current in local tradition.

It is true that the same personal name seems to appear in the name of the townland Drumconwell, with its inscribed stone, and *Feart Conmhaoil* of the annals. However, a far more plausible site for the assembly ground called *Oenach Macha* has lain unrecognised largely because of the expansion of the town of Armagh. Apart from the name of St Patrick's first church in Scotch Street, the Mall has lost its *fertra* or gravemound(s), but restore the mounds and

313 For the Callan, see *Nemed* above. For the mythological connections of the rest of the Blackwater basin and Lough Neagh, see Muhr, 'The Location of the Ulster Cycle iii', forthcoming in *Emania*.

314 Cf. Mallory, J. 1987. 'The literary topography of Emain Macha', *Emania* ii 12-18.

its use as a racecourse as recorded by Rocque's map and one can see continuity in usage of the ancient *oenach* site. Haley suggested that the hills of Navan and Creeveroe were the 'twins of Macha', and Mallory suggested Navan and Haughey's Fort. Following the idea that Navan in the tales is code for Armagh, Bruford suggested Armagh as its political twin.³¹⁵ However Navan and a perhaps equally ancient assembly ground at the Mall, connected by the old road across the Callan, could also be seen as organically related: 'like its two kidneys in a beast', as was said of Tara and Uisnech in Meath.³¹⁶ This identification of the *oenach* site has implications for the growth of early Christian Armagh and the interpretation of the whole area.

Another significant location in the area is the long-lost early church at Tamlaght/Ballydoo, along the same road from Armagh and immediately west of the Navan group of sites. All the land along this road seemed to end up in church hands. Indeed, if the stone which once existed at the edge of Creeveroe were that intended as the stone on the road to *Oenach Macha* in the Deirdre story, and the stone in the area which angels removed from the path of Patrick's chariot, then *Druim Chaili*, the Girl's Ridge, from which Patrick blessed the plain of Macha could be Navan itself. It has a good view of the lands around, and the original *caile* might have been Deirdre or Macha, as on this occasion there is no story of female converts to explain the reference.

As with many early Irish churches, few of the Armagh names in the Lives of St Patrick have any ecclesiastical significance. His first church was at the 'Gravemound', and the hill called 'willow height' becomes the 'Height of Macha'. Other churches were at Tamlaght(*boe*), the 'burial ground of the cows', *Tolaynaleckey* 'knoll of the flagstone', and Kinnegoe, 'smith's hill'. This feature implies that pre-existing names were used. However, it is also interesting to note how many of the places mentioned, especially in the secular literature, were actually lands owned by the church in medieval and later times. We know that Emain was in church hands by 1145 (*AFM*). By the end of the 16th century it is clear that Tamlaght with Tray and the townlands around also belonged to the Archbishop; while Creeveroe, Drumconwell, Armaghbrague and Aughnagurgan (the townland containing Tullynowood) belonged to the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul in Armagh. Fathom and Moiry belonged to the nunnery of Killeavy, and Carnbane to Newry abbey.³¹⁷ Did the church have spiritual or strategic interest in controlling these places, some of which were contested by secular chieftains?

Finally we note the connection of the places in these accounts with the townland system of landholding. It is normally true that names surviving from the early literature are those of major natural features, routeways and important settlements as here. Townlands are not usually identifiable before the appearance of some in the lists of lands owned by 12th and 13th century monasteries, for example the lands of Newry abbey, or those of the monastery

315 Bruford 1994, 25.

316 Best, R.I. 1910, 152-3. 'The settling of the Manor of Tara', *Ériu* iv 121-72.

317 Archdall 1786, 52. Kinnegoe in Loughgall, Dorsy, Silverbridge, and Forkill are not church lands (Forkill in *td* of Shean).

of Saints Peter and Paul in Armagh.³¹⁸ However, here *Emain*, *Craebnuad* and *Doirse Emna* became the townlands of Navan, Creeveroe and Dorsy, as the churches of *Cenngoba* and *Tamlachta Bó* became Kinnegoe and Tamlaght, while *Drum Sallich* and *Tolynaleckey* continued as minor names. Although only Navan is mentioned throughout, the reappearance of the others in Plantation documents enables us to trace them all to the present.

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(Places in this article: **Part I Secular: A Armagh plain:** *Macha*, *Emain*, *Oenach Macha*, Drumconwell, Creeveroe and divisions; Loughnashade, Kings Stables, *Ráth Cimbaíth*, Tullyworgle, Bull's Track, **B South Armagh:** *Slieve Gullion*, *Sliab Monduirn*, *Sliab Fuait*, *Áth na Foraire*, *Béal Átha an Airgid*, Dorsey, *Loch Echtra*, *Nemed*, Callan, *Ardachadh*, *Cloenloch*, Forkill, *Midluachair*, *Fíodh Conaille*, Fathom, Carnbane, *Búrach Ulad*, **Part II Lives of St Patrick:** *Ind Fherta*, *Ard Macha*, *Ard Sailech*, *Telach na Licce*, *Tamlachta Bó*, *Cenngoba*, *Oenach Macha*, *Nemed*).

318 Reeves, W. 1847, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down Connor and Dromore* 117; Arthurs 1956-7, iv 34.

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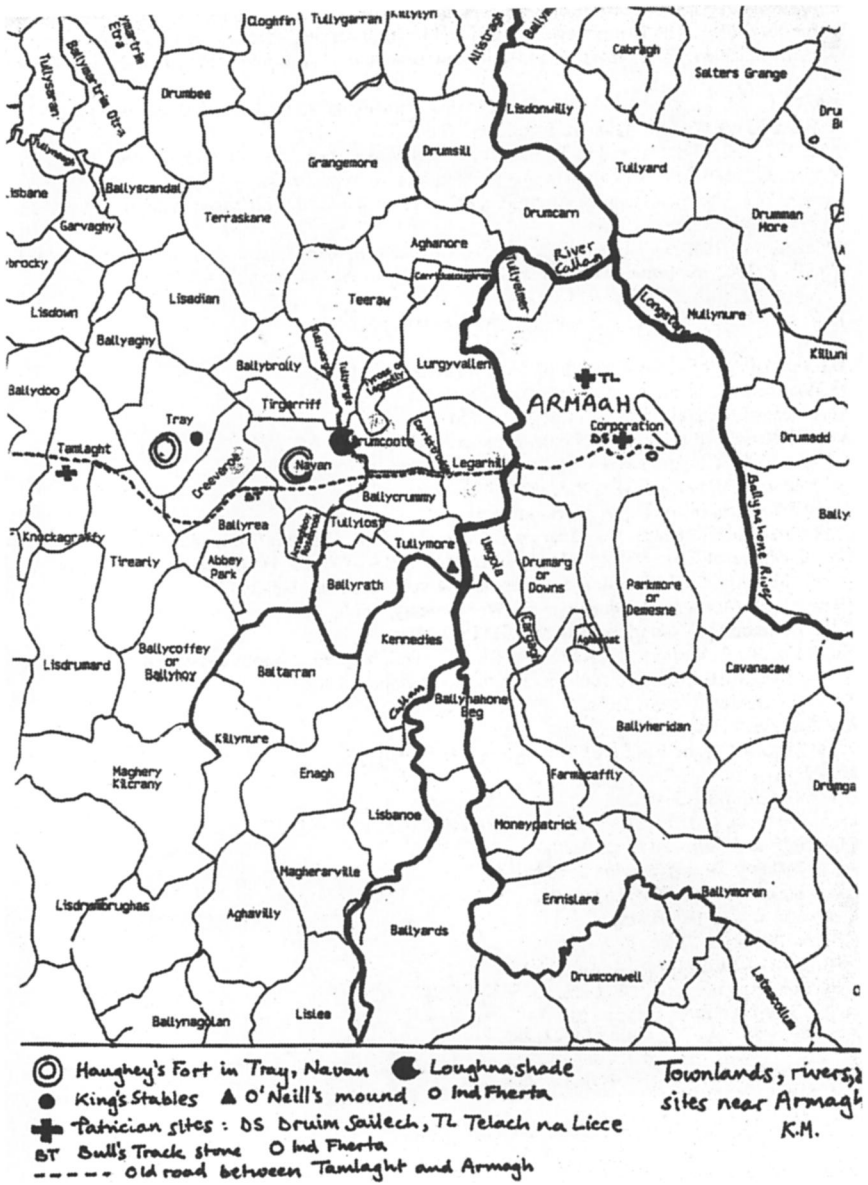
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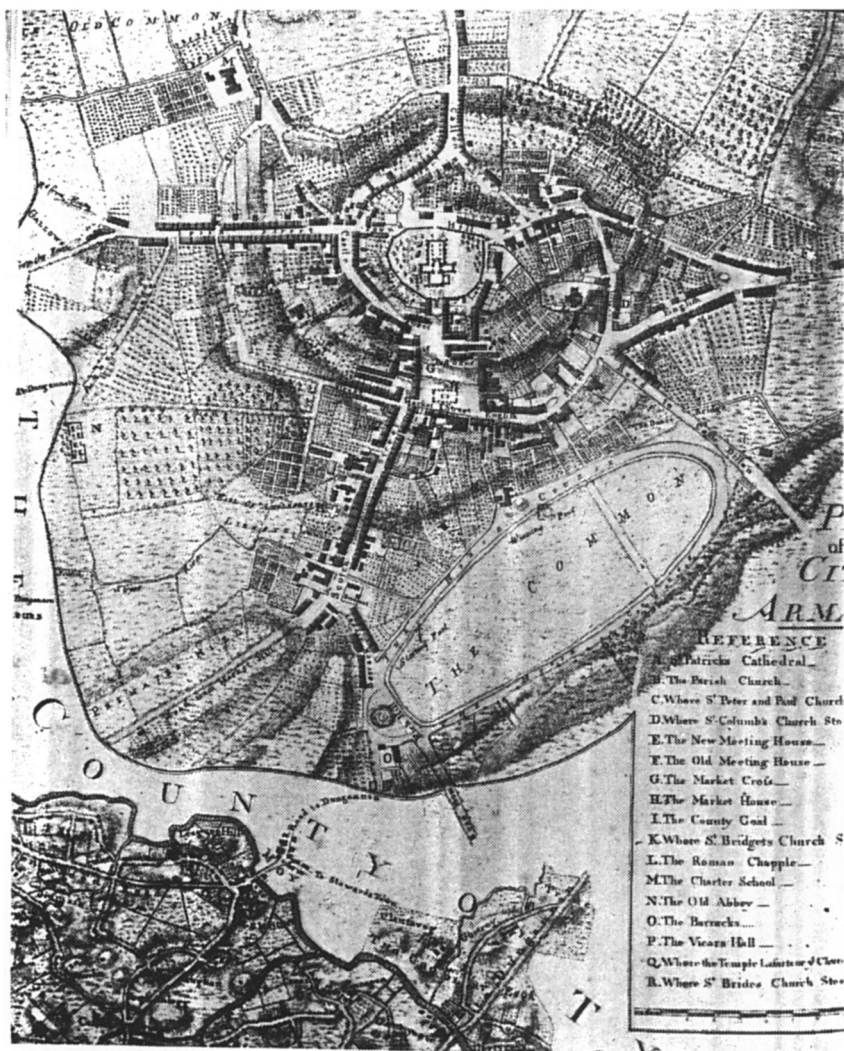
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ABBREVIATIONS

- A. *Conn Annals of Connacht*, ed. M. Freeman, 1944, Dublin.
 AFM *Annals of the Four Masters* ed. J. O'Donovan 1856.
 AI *Annals of Innisfallen*, ed. S. Mac Airt, 1951.
 A.L.Cé, *Annals of Loch Cé*, ed. W.M. Hennessy, 2 vols, London 1871.
 A.Tig. *Annals of Tigernach*, ed. Stokes *Revue Celtique* xvi-xviii, 1895-7.
 AU *Annals of Ulster*, ed. Mac Niocaill & Mac Airt, 1983.
 BUPNS *Bulletin of the Ulster place-name society*.
 CPR *Calendar of Patent Rolls of James I*: facsimile ed. M. Griffith, Dublin 1966.
 CSP *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland 1509-1670*, ed. H. Hamilton, E. Atkinson, R. Mahaffy, C. Russell & J. Prendergast, 24 vols, London 1860-1912).
 Chron. Scot. *Chronicum Scottorum*, Ed. W. Hennessy, 1866.
 CMCS *Cambridge/Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*
 Esch. Co. *Maps*: Bartlett, R. 'South-east Ulster', 1603, map no. 2 published with the maps of the Escheated Counties, 1609, H. James, Southampton 1860.
 Frag. *Annals* see Radner, 1978.
 Inq. Ult. Hardiman, 1829.
 JCLAS *Journal of the Co. Louth Archaeological Society*.
 JRSAI twice
 Lebor Gabála McAlister
 LL = *The Book of Leinster*, ed. Best & O'Brien, 6 vols, 1954-67.
 LU *Lebor na hUidre*, ed. Best, 1929.
 Mart. Tallaght. Best & Lawlor, 1931.
 Met. *Dinds* = Gwynn 1913 etc, 5 vols.
 SAM = *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*.
 TBC I = O'Rahilly 1976.
 TBC II = O'Rahilly 1967, from LL.
 Trip. *The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. Stokes 1887, vol. i.
 UJA *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*.
 ZCP *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*.





Rocques's Map 1760 (this piece in Camblin) Plan of Armagh 1760