The landscape and settlements of the Uí Dhálaigh poets of Muinter Bháire[1]

ELIZABETH FITZPATRICK

Katharine Simms has published much on the works and social world of Gaelic hereditary learned families and especially about those who practised poetry and law in later medieval and early modern Ireland.[2] Inspired by Simms' scholarship, my current concern as an archaeologist of Gaelic peoples is to identify and interpret some of the settlements and material culture of legal, bardic and medical families, with particular reference to their school buildings and residences *c.*1200–1650. In this essay, the landscape and settlements of the Uí Dhálaigh poets of Muinter Bháire are brought back into view and placed in the context of what is currently known about the preferred settlement forms of learned families.

1 My thanks to Ita O'Daly and the community of Sheepshead Peninsula for their support during the survey of the Uí Dhálaigh settlements, to Paul Naessens and Cormac Bruton for their contributions to the survey, and to Paul Walsh, director of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, for sharing the findings he made at Dromnea in 1985. 2 Katharine Simms, 'Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh: a fifteenth-century inauguration ode?', *Ériu*, 31 (1980), 132–45; 'Irish literature: bardic poetry' in J.R. Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1985), pp 534–9; 'Bardic poetry as a historical source' in Tom Dunne (ed.), *The writer as witness* (Cork, 1987), pp 58–75; 'The poet as chieftain's widow: bardic elegies' in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Kim McCone (eds), *Sages, saints and storytellers: Celtic studies in honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth, 1989), pp 400–11; 'Bards and barons: the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the native culture' in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds), *Medieval frontier societies* (Oxford, 1998), pp 177–97; 'The brehons of later medieval Ireland' in Daire Hogan and W.N. Osborough (eds), *Brehons, serjeants and attorneys* (Dublin, 1990), pp 51–76; 'Images of warfare in bardic poetry', *Celtica*, 21 (1990), 608–19; 'An Eaglais agus filí na scol' in Pádraig Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *An dán díreach* (Maynooth, 1994), pp 21–36; 'Literacy and the Irish bards, in Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in medieval Celtic societies* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 238–58; 'The contents of the later commentaries on the brehon law tracts', *Ériu*, 49 (1998), 23–40; 'Charles Lynegar, the Ó Luinín family and the study of *seanchas*' in T.C. Barnard, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Katharine Simms (eds), *A miracle of learning. Studies in manuscripts and Irish learning: essays in honour of William O'Sullivan* (Aldershot, 1998), pp 266–83; 'The dating of two poems on Ulster chieftains' in A.P. Smyth (ed.), *Seanchas: studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis John Byrne* (Dublin, 2001), pp 381–6; 'Native sources for Gaelic settlement: the house poems' in P.J. Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (eds), *Gaelic Ireland: land, lordship and settlement* (Dublin, 2001), pp 246–67; 'References to landscape and economy in Irish bardic poetry' in H.B. Clarke, Jacinta Prunty and Mark Hennessy (eds), *Surveying Ireland's past: multidisciplinary essays in honour of Anngret Simms* (Dublin, 2004), pp 145–68; 'Bardic schools, learned families' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland*: *an encyclopedia* (New York and London, 2005), pp 35–7; 'Muireadhach Albanach Ua Dálaigh and the classical revolution' in Ian Brown, T.O. Clancy,

The Uí Dhálaigh poets are associated with Muinter Bháire, which is synonymous with Sheepshead Peninsula between Bantry Bay and Dunmanus Bay in the barony of West Carbery in Co. Cork (pl. 18). In the pre-Anglo-Norman period, Sheepshead formed part of the territory of Corca Loígde in the overkingdom of Desmuman. During the later medieval period, it lay in the small Ó Mathghamhna lordship of Fionn Iartharach in the Mac Cárthaigh Riabhach overlordship of Cairbreach.[3] The Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire are an interesting case study of the circumstances in which Gaelic hereditary learned families received and held their landholdings and the types of settlements that they established on their lands.

THE UÍ DHÁLAIGH

The progenitor of the many Uí Dhálaigh poetic families in the Gaelic lordships of the four provinces of Ireland was Cúchonnacht Ua Dálaigh, also known as Cúchonnacht *na sgoile*, who at the time of his death in the monastery of Clonard in 1139 was recorded as *ard-ollamh le dán* or 'chief ollamh in poetry'.[4] Mac Cana has suggested that 'the school which gave him his epithet was presumably the monastic school of Cluain Iraird [Clonard]'.[5] He is also associated with Leckin near Bunbrusna in the kingdom of Tethba (in what is now Co. Westmeath), which is regarded as the original patrimony of the Uí Dhálaigh sept.[6] Between the twelfth century and the seventeenth century, new branches of Uí Dhálaigh became established in Clare, Cork, Roscommon, Sligo and Bréifne.[7] They are found in south Munster by the end of the twelfth century and were certainly well established in Muinter Bháire by *c.*1300. The Irish chronicles note that Ragnall Ua Dálaigh, who died in 1161, and Gilla na Trinóite Ua Dálaigh, who was slain in 1165, both held the office of *ollamh Desmhumhan lé dán* or 'ollamh of

Susan Manning and Murray Pittock (eds), *The Edinburgh history of Scottish literature, 1: from Columba to the Union* (until 1700) (Edinburgh, 2006), pp 83–90; 'The poetic brehon lawyers of early sixteenth-century Ireland', *Ériu*, 57 (2007), 121–32; 'Images of the galloglass in poems to the MacSweeneys' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *The world of the galloglass* (Dublin, 2007), pp 106–23; 'The Donegal poems in the Book of Fenagh', *Ériu*, 58 (2008), 37–53; 'The transition from medieval to modern in the poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn' in Padraigín Riggs (ed.), *Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn: his historical and literary context* (London, 2010), pp 119–34; 'The selection of poems for inclusion in the Book of the O'Conor Don' in Pádraig Ó Macháin (ed.), *The Book of the O'Conor Don* (Dublin, 2010), pp 32–60; 'Bardic poems of consolation to bereaved Irish ladies' in Conor Kostick (ed.), *Medieval Italy, medieval and early modern women* (Dublin, 2010), pp 220–30. **3** K.W. Nicholls, 'Lordships *c.*1534' in Duffy et al. (eds), *Gaelic Ireland*, pp 24–5. **4** *AFM*, s.a. 1139; Simms, 'The poetic brehon lawyers', 121–2, explains that two words were used to describe the privileged arts: '*dán*, which meant primarily a talent, a gift from God; and *cerd*, which meant rather a craft, an acquired skill'. **5** Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The rise of the later schools of *filidheacht*', *Ériu*, 25 (1974), 126–46 at 34. **6** John O'Donovan, *The tribes of Ireland: a satire by Aenghus O'Daly* (Dublin, 1852), pp 4, 10. **7** Mac Cana, 'Rise of the later schools', 128 n. 8.

Desmond in poetry',[8] with the implication that they were in the service of Diarmait Mac Cárthaig, king of Desmond, in the late twelfth century. Ragnall may have been the direct ancestor of the Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire.[9] Simms has highlighted the mobility of learned families and the fact that an outsider, like Ragnall for instance, could be appointed to the service of a king or lord on the basis of 'superior proficiency in his art' and that in many cases the descendants of a newly appointed ollamh subsequently established hereditary claims to the office that he had held and to its attendant lands.[10] The Uí Dhálaigh were particularly successful at bedding themselves into new positions and consolidating hereditary claims to their ollamhships in lordships such as Carbery and Duhallow.

There are conflicting accounts about how the Uí Dhálaigh came to settle on the Sheepshead Peninsula. Sir Richard Cox in *Regnum Corcagiense* (written in 1687) claimed that Muinter Bháire was, 'according to Irish custome, given to O'Daly, who was successively bard to O Mahown [O'Mahony] and Carew, and to O Glavin, who was their Termond or Steward'.[11] In his later work, *Carbriae notitia*, compiled in 1690, Cox revised this statement, claiming instead that it was Carew who granted the Muinter Bháire lands to the Uí Dhálaigh.[12] It has been convincingly argued by Anne O'Sullivan that it was the Anglo-Norman Carew family, sometime allies of the Meic Cárthaig,[13] who settled the Uí Dhálaigh onto the Muinter Bháire lands of the Sheepshead Peninsula at some point after the late twelfth century.[14] This claim was made by the ollamh and family head of the senior Uí Dhálaigh line of Muinter Bháire, Tadhg Ó Dálaigh, in his poem *Gabh mo gherán a Sheóirse* ('Heed, O George, my complaint'), addressed to Sir George Carew and compiled *c*.1618. Tadhg wrote: *Rinn cheana do chin fine mar fuair cenn ar gceirdi-ne; deantar lat usaile oram, glac an uair-se a uraghall* – 'The head of our poetic family once got a promontory from the head of your family; deal generously, as I advise, receive now my complaint about it'.[15] That the Uí Dhálaigh had settled in Muinter Bháire by *c*.1300 is attested by a plea roll dated 1299–1300, which records that Maurice Carew sued them for lands there.[16] Their association with the Carew family is also noted by Sir George Carew in his *Pacata Hibernia*, in which he wrote:

> This odalies [O'Daly's] Ancestor had the county of Moynterbary given unto him by the lord presidents ancestor, many hundred yeares past, at which time Carew had to his inheritance the moiety of the whole kingdome

8 *AFM*, s.a. 1161; *AI*, s.a. 1165.6. 9 J.E. Doan, 'The Ó Dálaigh family of bardic poets, 1139–1691', *Éire–Ireland*, 20:2 (1985), 19–31 at 22. 10 Simms, *Kings*, pp 87–8. 11 NLI, MS 11966, p. 27. 12 Anne O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly and Sir George Carew', *Éigse*, 14 (1971–2), 27–38 at 29 n. 19. 13 *AI*, s.a. 1198.5. 14 O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', *Éigse*, 14 (1971–20), 27–38 at 30. 15 Lambeth Palace, MS 605, fo. 239; O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', 27, 34, 37. 16 'Repertory of plea rolls' in *Reports from the commissioners [...] respecting the public records of Ireland: with supplements and appendices* (3 vols, London, 1815–25), ii (Rept vi), pp

> of Corke, which was first given by King Henry the second unto Robert fits Stephen; the service which odaly and his progenie were to doe, for so large a proportion of lands unto Carew and his successors, was (according to the custome of that time) to bee their rimers, or chroniclers of their actions.[17]

The Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire, or the Carbery O'Dalys as they are sometimes designated,[18] constituted a senior and junior line. The senior Uí Dhálaigh are associated with Dromnea and Farranamanagh and the junior line held lands at Ballyroon towards the western end of the Sheepshead Peninsula. Both families are also probably related to the Uí Dhálaigh Fionn family of Nohavaldaly, who were poets to the Uí Chaoimh of Duhallow.[19] Members of the senior and junior lines are cited in English administrative documents for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the death of the ollamh of the senior line, Aonghus, son of Aonghus Caoch Ó Dálaigh Cairbreach, is recorded in the Irish chronicles for 1507.[20] The last known professional poet of the Dromnea branch of the family, Conchobhar Cam Ó Dálaigh Cairbreach, was still practising as late as 1660, at which time he composed an elegy on the death of Domhnall Ó Donnabháin, chief of Clann Chathail.[21]

THE LANDS OF MUINTER BHÁIRE

Sheepshead Peninsula first features on a map of the province of Munster made by the cartographer Francis Jobson for Lord Burleigh in 1589 (pl. 19). The map refers to the entire peninsula as 'Rymers', thereby identifying it as the land of the Uí Dhálaigh poets.[22] Art Hughes has argued that Jobson's map is accurate in its designation of the whole peninsula as Uí Dhálaigh land because, in his poem to Sir George Carew, Tadhg Ó Dálaigh of the senior Dromnea branch of the family emphasizes the large amount of land that had been granted by Carew's ancestors to the Uí Dhálaigh sept.[23] Tadhg writes: 'Though every ollamh thinks that this grant of land we got was enormous, we gave your family renown that lasted long after'. Baptista Boazio's somewhat later map of Ireland attaches the legend 'Sr Peter Carew Monter Varie [Muinter Bháire]' to the peninsula and the place-name 'Sheepesheade' is attributed to the most westerly point.[24] A seventeenth-century map of the province of Munster by John Speed, dated 1610, shows the peninsula with 'Moenker Vary' marked along the southern coast of the central area of the peninsula where the townlands of Dromnea and Farranamangh are

391, 573. **17** Thomas Stafford, *Pacata Hibernia; or, A history of the wars in Ireland during the reign of Queen Elizabeth: taken from the original chronicles* (2 vols, London 1633; repr. London, 1810), i, pp 528–9. **18** O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', 27. **19** Ibid. **20** *AFM*, s.a. 1507. **21** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, pp 12–13. **22** TCD, MS 1209, no. 36. **23** A.J. Hughes, 'Land-acquisition by Gaelic bardic poets: insights from place-names and other sources', *Ainm: Bulletin of the Ulster Place-name Society*, 6 (1994–5), 74–101 at 97. **24** TCD, MS

situated.[25] The position of the place-name on Speed's map may suggest that the core or *ceann-áit* (head place) of the patrimonial lands of Muintir Bháire was originally identified with Dromnea and Farranamanagh and that the name came to be applied to the whole peninsula, which was coterminous with the parish of Kilcrohane. The combined senior and junior lines of the family held thirty-six ploughlands (three ploughlands of which were church lands) on the peninsula in 1599.[26] However, when the first population census of Kilcrohane parish was taken in 1659, there was a total population of two Irish and no English in Dromnea and eight Irish and no English in the adjoining townland of Farranamanagh. On the lands of the junior line of the family at Ballyroon, there was a much larger population of thirty-nine Irish, with no English present in 1659. Significantly, the tituladoe to the lands of the parish at that time was Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh.[27]

The Sheepshead Peninsula is an upland region, 24.5km long and 5km wide at its widest point, projecting into the Atlantic between Bantry Bay and Dunmanus Bay. The spine of the peninsula is characterized by upland extending from Knockboolteenagh north of Durrus at the eastern end of the peninsula, to Ballyroon Mountain at the narrow tapering western point of the headland named 'Muntervary' or 'Sheep's Head'. The principal heights are Rosskerrig Mountain, Caher Mountain and Seefin (*Suidhe Finn*), which, at 345m above sea level, is the highest point on the peninsula (pl. 18). The upland character and marginal quality of the land there prompted Richard Cox to remark that it was 'a barbarous country, in which there is nothing observable but Coolnalong, a pretty seat belonging formerly to Mucklagh, a seat of the Carthyes'.[28] During the medieval period and probably well into the seventeenth century, parts of the Sheepshead Peninsula had woodland cover. This is suggested in particular by the use of the root word 'Ross', from the Irish *ros*, meaning wood, used in the townland names Rossmore, Rossnacaheragh and Rosskerrig on the southern side of the peninsula. One nineteenth-century reading of the townland name Dromnea suggests that it is *Drom an fheadh/fheadha* – 'hill of the wood'.[29] The extent to which the woodland of the Sheepshead Peninsula was exploited for charcoal for iron smelting is not known, but the Bantry woodlands were felled by 1750 for that purpose.[30] Bedrock geology on the peninsula is characterized by green and purple sandstones, fine-grained grey sandstones, siltstone and minor mudstone.[31] Significant deposits of copper on the northern coastline and

1209, no. 83. **25** *Pacata Hibernia; or, A history of the wars in Ireland during the reign of Queen Elizabeth especially within the province of Munster under the government of Sir George Carew*, ed. Standish O'Grady (2 vols, London, 1896), i, map between p. xxii and p. 1. **26** J.S. Brewer and W. Bullen (eds), *Calendar of the Carew Papers, 1589–1600* (London, 1869), p. 352. **27** Séamus Pender (ed.), *A census of Ireland, circa 1659* (Dublin 1939), pp 226–7. **28** NLI, MS 11966, p. 27. **29** www.logainm.ie (Place-names Database of Ireland), s.n. **30** J.K. Hourihan, 'Rural settlement and change near Bantry, 1600–1845', *Bantry Historical and Archaeological Society Journal*, 1 (1991), 44–53 at 44–6. **31** Markus Pracht and A.G.

lead/silver at the eastern end of the peninsula were mined in the modern period. The bedrock generally yields poor quality building stone, which tends to be quite friable and shatters easily. For masons, working this stone, especially for architectural features such as windows, doorways and arches, would have been a challenging task. This is evident in the remaining walls of the late medieval buildings on the Uí Dhálaigh lands at Dromnea and Farranamanagh and in the surviving high medieval masonry of Kilcrohane parish church.

UÍ DHÁLAIGH SETTLEMENTS ON THE PENINSULA

The Uí Dhálaigh settlements avoid the precipitous northern coastline of the Sheepshead Peninsula and concentrate on the south coast at Dromnea, Farranamanagh, Kilcrohane and Ballyroon (pl. 18). The upstanding pre-modern archaeology of the peninsula consists of prehistoric stone circles, stone rows and standing stones, promontory forts, medieval enclosed settlements, a later medieval parish church at Kilcrohane, burials grounds, holy wells, *cillíní*, tower houses at Rossmore and Farranamanagh and the early modern Coolnalong fortified house at Gearhameen, west of Durrus. Dromnea townland is traditionally regarded as the location of the senior line Uí Dhálaigh bardic school, at least in the late medieval to early modern period.[32] The tower house at Farranamanagh, west of Dromnea, is generally proposed as the late medieval residence of the family,[33] and Kilcrohane was the parish church of the peninsula and the Uí Dhálaigh burial place.[34] Ballyroon at the western end of the peninsula was the settlement of the junior line of the family that included a residence and possibly another school attributed to Aonghus Ó Dálaigh.[35]

Residences of Uí Dhálaigh senior and junior lines

Dromnea, from the Irish *drom Naoi* ('hill of Naoi'),[36] *drom an fheadha* ('hill of the wood') or *drom an fhéich* ('hill of the debt'),[37] is a low but distinctive domed hill south of Rosskerrig Mountain on the south side of the Sheepshead Peninsula. It rises to a height of 58m OD at its north-eastern end and gradually declines south-west to Dunmanus Bay (pl. 20). It commands extensive views over the bay, looking out to Carbery Island, Cold Island, Furze Island and Horse Island and further south to Mizen Head Peninsula. The hill is characterized by exposed sandstone outcrop, blanket bog and marginal rough grazing, with a dense cover of gorse and heather on its upper reaches. A stand of conifers on the northern

Sleeman, *Geology of west Cork: a geological description of west Cork and adjacent parts of Kerry to accompany the bedrock geology 1:100,000 scale map series, sheet 24, West Cork* (Dublin, 2002), pp 5, 12, 13, 15, 76–7. **32** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 12; O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', 27, 31. **33** J.N. Healy, *The castles of County Cork* (Cork, 1988), pp 200–1. **34** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 13. **35** Ibid., pp 13–14; O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', 31. **36** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 12. **37** www.logainm.ie (Place-names Database of Ireland), s.n.

down-slope of the hill are the only trees in this environment now, but an interpretation of the place-name Dromnea as *drom an fheadha* suggests that the hill was formerly wooded. Within the *c.*380 acres of Dromnea townland[38] there is a holy well, a large rath, a stone row and the remnants of a late medieval building that is regarded in local tradition, of at least two centuries, as the bardic school of the senior line of the Uí Dhálaigh poets. The well is designated 'Tubberdromnea' on the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey Fair Plan map and has been recorded as 'holy' although it is locally known as the 'Well of the Poets'. It lies directly south of the old Sheepshead road or Sheepshead way (pl. 18). Situated on a gentle down-slope commanding extensive views south to Dunmanus Bay, the rath, which is enclosed by a single bank and outer fosse, was recorded by the first Ordnance Survey as 'LisDromnea' (pl. 18). It is a convincing candidate for the pre-tower house residence of the senior line of Uí Dhálaigh on the Sheepshead Peninsula, an impression that is compounded by the former presence of a monumental prehistoric stone row just 50m north-east of the rath. The hereditary learned classes were dedicated to the past and it is likely that their obsession was not just confined to the written word but extended to fixed and portable antiquities in their immediate environments.[39] The entrance to the rath is positioned at north/north-east, facing the former great stone row of Dromnea, which was cleared during agricultural improvements in the more recent past. Fortunately, the stone row was recorded in 1845 by John Beirne, a civilian assistant with the first Ordnance Survey. Beirne's sketch (pl. 22) shows three standing stones, one of which is extraordinarily large. Beirne described the alignment 'about 3 chains east of the old fort [LisDromnea]' as 'three remarkable Gallauns placed E and W, one of which is about 16 feet high and about 6 feet broad, inclining a little to the south'.[40]

In keeping with some hereditary learned families, such as Meic Aodhagáin of Ballymacegan and Park, Uí Chléirigh of Kilbarron, Uí Chonchobhair of Aghmacart, Meic Fhlannchadha of Knockfinn and Urlan, and Uí Mhaolchonaire of Rossmanagher, Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire were tower house-dwellers by the late fifteenth or sixteenth century. West of Dromnea Hill, the base of a tower house can be seen on the northern shore of Farranamanagh Lough (pl. 21). In the nineteenth century, the place-name Farranamanagh was believed to be a corruption of *fearann na manaigh* meaning ground or land of the monks or lay brethren (on a monastic estate), but in modern scholarship the place-name is interpreted as an *fearann meánach*, which reads as 'the medium or middle ground'.[41] The tower house was constructed on the brow of the east/north-east end of a broad ridge, overlooking the lake and Dunmanus Bay. It was reached from the bay through a channel to the lake, which is now marked by a footbridge.

38 www.archaeology.ie. **39** See, for instance, John Bradley, 'An inscribed stone axehead from Gorteen, Co. Clare', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 21 (1979), 11–14. **40** Ordnance Survey Memorandums for Co. Cork, 2, pp 457–8. **41** www.logainm.ie (Place-names

Apart from the obvious advantages of being positioned in close proximity to the lake and the sea, this setting has an aesthetic or pleasurable quality that would have been a consideration in choosing the site for the tower house.[42] There is no evidence to suggest that the tower house was built on an earlier fortification or on the site of the castle allegedly built in 1214 by Mac Cuidithi.[43] Just the ground floor of Farranamanagh tower house, with internal dimensions of 4.8m north-west–south-east by 6m north-east–south-west, remains (pl. 23). The north-west, north-east and south-east walls preserve a large amount of wall fabric that consists of blocks of green sandstone laid down in quite even courses and levelled up with thin sheets of shale and slate throughout. The bonding material is rough shell-based mortar with lots of aggregate of small stones, probably from the lake bed, which was also the material that would have originally been used to harl the walls of the building. The stout batter at the base of all four walls is a surviving feature of the defences of the building. Part of the embrasure of what was once a large window that looked south-east onto the lake, also remains in place. The doorway of the tower house was formerly situated in the north-west wall. There is no trace of a surrounding bawn, but it perhaps ran west and south of the tower house to a mooring area on the lake shore.

The junior line Uí Dhálaigh, represented in the seventeenth century by Aonghus Ó Dálaigh or Aonghus Ruadh, author of the infamous satire 'Tribes of Ireland', and referred to as Ó Dálaigh of Cahir, held lands at Ballyroon at the western end of the peninsula (pl. 18).[44] Local knowledge points to the remains of Aonghus Ruadh's residence on the brow of a south-facing slope at Ballyroon. The site is marked by a native enclosed settlement, probably a cashel (implicit perhaps in Aonghus' epithet 'of Cahir') which is masked by a thicket of briars. To the immediate south side of it, there are wall-footings of a rectangular building, out of which cut stone, including the remains of the frame of a square-headed two-light window of late sixteenth- or seventeenth-century type, has been recovered.[45]

The Uí Dhálaigh bardic school

The remains of a late medieval building, recorded in nineteenth-century local tradition as a 'college' used by the senior line of the Uí Dhálaigh, lie in a secluded flat-bottomed shallow valley, orientated north-east–south-west, on the northern side of Dromnea Hill (pl. 24). The building would have been visible from the Uí Dhálaigh tower house at Farranamanagh Lough and probably reached from there by a natural route running south-west from the hill. The schoolhouse building was the source of considerable discussion during the progress of the first Ordnance Survey of Co. Cork in 1845. The key people in

Database of Ireland), s.n. **42** O.H. Creighton, *Designs upon the land: elite landscapes of the Middles Ages* (Woodbridge, 2009). **43** *AMisc.*, p. 91. **44** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, pp 13–14; O'Sullivan, 'Tadhg O'Daly', 31. **45** The window fragment has been incorporated into

that enquiry were John Beirne, who recorded the physical remains of the building and local traditions about it, John O'Donovan, historian and antiquary with the Ordnance Survey, who commented on Beirne's findings and on the memorandums of Captain Larcom, who was head of the Ordnance Survey. It is important to note that O'Donovan did not set foot in Co. Cork during the survey of that county, and that he conducted all of the work on the place-names of the county from his office in Dublin. The value of O'Donovan's comments, therefore, lies, not in a comprehensive evaluation of the physical remains of the 'college', but in his understanding of the history of Muinter Bháire and how the building at Dromnea should be classified on the Ordnance Survey six-inch map. In describing the ruins at Dromnea in his edition of *Tribes of Ireland* published in 1852, seven years after the building was surveyed by Beirne, O'Donovan made some amendments to Beirne's original notes. Beirne had recorded the family name of the occupants of the valley at Dromnea in 1845 as 'Nicholson' but O'Donovan corrected it to 'Nicholas'.[46]

In his report to Captain Larcom, dated 19 April 1845, Beirne described what he had seen at Dromnea:

> In the townland of Dromnea there stands the remains of an ancient edifice now incorporated within the dwelling house of George Nicholson [*recte* Nicholas] and said to be the remains of an old college. The northern side wall is about 10 feet high and 25 feet long, in which there is a small window similar to one in the western end of Kilcrohan old church. This ruin is evidently one of considerable antiquity, although I could not obtain any information from the gentry of this part of the country respecting it except its being called by the peasantry 'the old college'.[47]

Captain Larcom subsequently wrote to the antiquary George Petrie, seeking his assistance in identifying the building. Larcom believed that it might be 'an old residence and not an ecclesiastical building', but Petrie replied that he had never heard of the building and suggested that Larcom might contact William Hackett of Midleton for further information.[48] The outcome of that contact is not recorded.

Beirne also collected folklore in the locality about the use and founder of the building, but in his account he does not cite his sources at Dromnea. On 24 May 1845, he wrote:

> A family of the O'Dalys founded a college at Drumnea, one of whom was Carroll O'Daly … Another of his family became a priest who afterwards founded the church of Kilcrohan. Tradition says that the king of Spain

an outbuilding on the local O'Mahony farm. **46** O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 12. **47** Ordnance Survey Memorandums for Co. Cork, 2, pp 455–6. **48** Ibid., p. 456.

> sent over three of his sons to be educated here, one of whom died and was interred in Kilcrohan church. It is further stated that the daughter of the earl of Cavan eloped with this Carroll O Daly and returned with him to his own country and made a portion of this college their residence for some time.[49]

Beirne suggested that the 'college' might have been noticed in Comerford's *History of Ireland*. O'Donovan was subsequently engaged to comment on Beirne's findings. He was scathing of the suggestion that Comerford's history might be useful and he debunked the local tradition collected by Beirne. He wrote: 'Comerford's *History of Ireland*, so much talked of by the Irish peasantry, is a bad abstract of Keating's, but neither Comerford nor Keating have a word about this place'. He continued, 'The tradition about this place is all false. There never was a college there. Carroll O'Daly did not belong to this house and the Muntervary were not the O'Dalys but a collateral branch of the O'Driscolls. This is a grand specimen of the fabrications of local traditionalists!'[50] However, O'Donovan's scholarship brought new clarity to what Beirne had seen and recorded at Dromnea in 1845: 'The fact is that the O'Dalys came here in the 14th century from Clare as poets to McCarthy Reagh and O'Mahony the Western, and this house was their dwelling and schoolhouse'. O'Donovan's interpretation of the building at Dromnea as a native schoolhouse was pioneering and, over a century and a half later, there is now a programme of research in place to identify the types of buildings erected by Gaelic learned families, among the most diagnostic of which was the *sgoilteach* or schoolhouse. O'Donovan understood that 'college' meant native schoolhouse because he had already encountered traditions relating to the schoolhouses of the Meic Aodhagáin lawyers in north Galway and the Uí Dhálaigh poets in north Clare during the progress of the respective Ordnance Surveys of those counties:

> Now, from the names which the peasantry give the ruins of the houses of the MacEgans of Galway and O'Dalys of Corcomroe or Burren in Clare, I am inclined to believe that this is the ruin of O'Daly's houses. Whatever name was applied to MacEgan's house at Duniry, Co. Galway might be safely used here.[51]

He should have been less dismissive of the local tradition at Dromnea, since, after all, what was preserved in the collective memory was knowledge of a seat of learning, regardless of the term used to describe it. O'Donovan advised Larcom that what local tradition called the 'old college' at Dromnea must be designated

49 Ibid., pp 460–1. **50** Ibid., p. 463. **51** Ibid., p. 458.

'ruins of O'Dalys bardic schoolhouse or seminary' on the Ordnance Survey six-inch map.[52]

The south-west end of the small valley in which the remains of the bardic school are situated is today occupied by a suite of farm buildings that were constructed after 1842–5 (pl. 24). These include two dwellings and five outbuildings. A comparison between the present set of buildings and those on the site when Beirne conducted his survey in 1845 shows that, apart from a length of the north wall of the bardic school, nothing of the upstanding masonry of the pre-1845 buildings was preserved above ground level. This was also confirmed by the building inspection conducted on the site by the author in March 2010. In 1845, the remains of the school, as recorded by Beirne, consisted of the northern long wall of the building, *c*.7.62m long and *c*.3.5m high, which was incorporated into the dwelling of George Nicholas (fig. 27.8). The Nicholas house was aligned east–west. Beirne did not suggest that any other part of it contained wall fabric of the school. However, O'Donovan, who did not actually see the site but was perhaps drawing on additional notes recorded by Beirne, wrote in his *Tribes of Ireland* in 1852:

> The 'Old College House' still remains and forms the residence of a farmer, Mr George Nicholas. The walls are well built, and cemented with lime and mortar, and from fragments of ruins still to be seen close to what remains, it may be inferred that it was once a house of some importance.[53]

The 'fragments of ruins' to which O'Donovan refers are not explained by him or by Beirne; he could have been referring to architectural features such as window- and door-stones from the schoolhouse itself or additional ruined buildings associated with the schoolhouse.

Sometime after 1845, the current dwelling on the site, which has a north–south alignment, was built in the general location of the Nicholas house. The new dwelling preserved some of the remains of the north wall of the school which was examined by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland in 1985, at which time it was interpreted as the possible remains of a tower house and recorded as being 5.1m long, 2.4m high with a batter at the north-east corner.[54] Today, those remains consist of a length of wall, 96cm thick, set against the north gable of the house. It is considerably shorter, at just 4.65m, and lower, at 2m, than that recorded by Beirne in 1845 (pl. 25) and by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland in 1985. The presence of modern cement in the upper masonry courses indicates that the wall fabric of green, grey and purple sandstone was rebuilt in more

52 Ibid., p. 463. 53 O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 12. 54 Archaeological Survey of Ireland, SMR0129-015; Denis Power et al. (eds), *Archaeological inventory of County Cork*: 1: west Cork (Dublin, 1992), p. 357; in the same year, Paul Walsh also made some notes on the site and produced an elevation and plan of the remains.

recent times. There is no trace of the 'batter' earlier observed by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. The wall contains a rectangular single-light cut-stone window, which is chamfered and punch-dressed in a style typical of late medieval stone dressing. The eastern jamb-stone has been reset back to front, with the chamfer turned inwards rather than outwards, which suggests that the wall fabric has been considerably disturbed over time, albeit in its general appearance it reflects that seen in Beirne's sketch of 1845 (pl. 25). An examination of the interior of the current house on the site did not reveal any additional features. It may be concluded that the 'old college' was not a tower house but probably a single-storey *sgoilteach* of which a sizeable portion of the northern long wall remained in 1845, but which has been considerably altered since.

At the north-east end of the floor of the valley that housed the school, there is a covered well and early field walls constructed of very large upright slabs (pl. 24). The well chamber, that once contained a fresh spring providing the valley settlement with water, is a dry-stone construction, the greater part of the south or back wall and the angle between the south and west walls being natural rock outcrop topped with neatly coursed small blocks of green sandstone and shale. The roof is corbelled using large stone slabs, a technique that suggests that the well is of some antiquity.

South of the school, on the south-eastern declivity of Dromnea Hill, there is a nest of four roofless and ruined stone huts, and one isolated hut nearby that is buried in dense vegetation cover. They are low-slung mortared structures, the largest of which is 7.5 by 3.7m internally, with walls 70cm thick, constructed of the local green and purple sandstones. This group of buildings is noted on the first Ordnance Survey and two of the huts are specified in the *Primary valuation* of 1851–3 as 'houses' occupied by Denis and Timothy Sullivan. Both parties are documented as having leased the houses, but with no attendant land. During the eighteenth century, the settlement pattern in the greater Bantry region, inclusive of Sheepshead Peninsula, was a combination of clustered and dispersed houses associated with the rundale field system. Each hut cluster had infield used for arable farming, usually for the growing of potatoes and oats, as well as outfield for grazing, and mountain pastures for summer grazing.[55] The hut cluster at Dromnea could therefore be interpreted as vernacular dwellings of farming tenants at Dromnea during that period or, as the *Primary valuation* indicates, the dwellings of herds during the nineteenth century. However, there are certain aspects of the huts that suggest that their primary construction and original use could have been associated with the school. The dramatically exposed location of the hut cluster on the edge of the hill, overlooking Dunmanus Bay and its islands, sets it apart from the nineteenth-century farming settlements of the peninsula, which tend to be located in sheltered areas such as valleys. Features of

55 Hourihan, 'Rural settlement and change', 47.

the huts, such as their wall fabric, dark and comfortless interiors without hearths, and the ample provision of keeping-holes or wall-cupboards in their gables and long walls, also hint at an earlier purpose. At bardic schools, the *sgoilteach* or schoolhouse was part of a suite or complex of buildings. An anonymous seventeenth-century poem, *Aonar dhamhsa eidir dhaoinibh*, refers to the 'three forges' of the bardic school, in other words to three buildings that were central to the layout of a bardic school. These were *teach meabhraighthe*, the house of memorizing, *teach luighe*, the house of reclining (meaning composition); and *teach breithimh*, the house of the critic (meaning examiner).[56] As McManus has observed, these activities of memorizing, composition and being examined are also cited in Thomas O'Sullevane's posthumous eighteenth-century account of a typical bardic school. He describes one of the buildings, possibly the 'house of composition', as

> a snug, low hut, and beds in it at convenient distances, each within a small apartment, without much furniture of any kind, save only a table, some seats and a conveniency for cloaths to hang upon. No windows to let in the day, not any light at all us'd but that of candles, and these brought in at a proper season only.

He goes on to explain that each pupil worked his poem

> each by himself upon his own bed, the whole next day in the dark, till at a certain hour in the night, lights been brought in they committed it to writing. Being afterwards dress'd and come together into a large room, where the masters waited, each scholar gave in his performance.[57]

The large room referred to here may be the schoolhouse or 'house of the critic'. There are also earlier references to the physical surroundings of a bardic school in Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn's *Anocht sgaoilid na sgola* or 'On the breaking up of a school', written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. It refers to *na leabtha* (beds) and *na botha* (huts) where Fearghal Ruadh Ó hUiginn used to conduct his school, and it implies that the students composed while sitting or lying on beds in the dark in separate huts.[58] This method of learning how to compose in darkness is also referred to in Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh's sixteenth-century poem 'Art versus nature', where he chastises a fellow poet for composing in the open air, which was regarded as a breach of professional etiquette – he

56 Damian McManus, 'The bardic poet as teacher, student and critic: a context for the grammatical tracts' in C.G. Ó Háinle and D.E. Meek (eds), *Unity in diversity: studies in Irish and Scottish Gaelic language, literature and history* (Dublin, 2004), pp 102–3. **57** *Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde, lord deputy general of Ireland … with a digression containing several curious observations concerning the antiquities of Ireland* (Dublin, 1744), pp 108–9. **58** Osborn Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry* (Dublin, 1970), p. 282.

writes 'without a dark hut, without hardship, with leave to take delight in lofty invention, a grassy scaur, a view of mountains, an airy prospect are thine'.[59] For the archaeologist, all of these comments are potentially useful clues to the physical manifestation of the bardic school on the landscape.

Kilcrohane parish church

Sheepshead Peninsula was coterminous with the medieval parish of Kilcrohane. The parish church of Cill Crocháin and its attendant graveyard are positioned on a south-east-facing slope, east of Dromnea on the south coastline of the peninsula with ready access to the sea. From the quay at Kilcrohane, the principal view is to the Uí Dhálaigh settlements at Farranamanagh and Dromnea and to Rosskerrig Mountain (pl. 26). The sizeable church (pl. 27) is 13 by 5.65m internally and constructed of the local green sandstone. An examination of the wall fabric suggests that there are three phases of construction in the building relating to the high, late and post-medieval periods. There is no evidence for any building fabric earlier than *c*.1200. Very few of the architectural fixtures of any period survive in the building, but the remains of the high medieval round-headed doorway, the head of which is dressed with diagonal tooling indicative of a twelfth- to fourteenth-century date, is incorporated into the south long wall, and a plain single-light window of late medieval type remains in the east gable. There is also an attic window in the west gable and the external face of that gable is battered. Both of those features suggest that there was a first floor at the west end of the building, perhaps a priest's apartment. There was considerable instability where the coarbship of Cill Crocháin was concerned, with the vicarage void in the later fifteenth century and usurped by the priest Diarmuid Ó Suilleabháin between *c*.1475 and 1481.[60] In 1515, the perpetual vicarage was again declared vacant, so long in fact that it had devolved to the apostolic see. It was unlawfully detained by the priest Risteard Ó Mathghamhna, who was ordered to be removed and replaced by one Cornelius Ó Ceallacháin, priest of the diocese of Ross.[61] In the later medieval period, the offices of coarb and erenagh were distinguished by two things – the possession of old monastic lands subject to a bishop's levy, and the facility of learning, which the holders of these hereditary offices used in the service of their lords. Mac Cana has noted that several of the learned families who emerged as poets, historians, physicians and lawyers in the Gaelic and gaelicized lordships of Ireland during the later medieval period performed the dual role of either coarb or erenagh of church lands combined with learned person who had appropriate knowledge to resolve legal disputes.[62] A third attribute of those offices, particularly where bardic

59 Ibid., p. 265. **60** J.A. Twemlow (ed.), *Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: papal letters, 1471–84*, 13:2 (London, 1955), p. 761. **61** Anne Fuller (ed.), *Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: papal letters, 1513–21*, 20*: Leo X Lateran registers*, pt 1 (Dublin, 2005), pp 218–19. **62** Mac Cana,

families were concerned, was the obligation to dispense hospitality. Several bardic families kept a *tighe aoidhedh coitchinn* ('general guest house'), which has important implications for archaeological investigation of the settlements of these families.

Since the Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire originally emerged from the early medieval monastic school at Clonard, a later role for that branch of the sept as erenaghs of Kilcrohane might be expected, but that does not appear to have been the case. Kilcrohane is regarded in local tradition as the Uí Dhálaigh burial site and within the graveyard there is a plain ledger attributed to the family, mounted on a more recently constructed stone table on the immediate south-west side of the church (pl. 27). Cut from the local very friable green sandstone, the original surface of the slab has eroded. A more recent inscription 'O'D – M' meaning 'Ó Dálaigh Muinter Bháire' has been cut into the upper end of the slab surface.

THE UÍ DHÁLAIGH SCHOOL IN CONTEXT

In late medieval and early modern Europe, schools were built almost exclusively in urban environments, with the school invariably tied to the church, and indeed schools were often situated next to parish churches in the towns and cities.[63] In contrast, the Gaelic school was usually in a rural and often sequestered location, the geographic insularity of the setting conveying a sense of monastic retreat from the world. This is most obviously seen in respect of those institutions dedicated to the art of poetry in coastal Gaelic lordships on the western seaboard, such as the bardic school at Dromnea and that of the Uí Chléirigh at Kilbarron in south-west Donegal. However, it must be added that the schools were not so remote as to be inaccessible and were generally located at a convenient but discrete distance from a routeway.

A sense of physical exile from the concourse of society characterizes the setting of the Uí Dhálaigh bardic school. Apart from the fact that the school building was secluded in a depression, the hill itself has the appearance of an island in the bay, especially when looking south from the old road to Ahakista (pl. 20) and west from the quay at Kilcrohane (pl. 26). On the eastern declivity of the hill, the stark exposure of the hut cluster (of as yet undetermined date) to the Atlantic also evokes a sense of isolation. Those who contrived the school settlement in this environment could have been consciously imitating the hermitical setting of an early medieval island monastery. Thomas O'Sullevane's eighteenth-century description of a bardic school in the introduction to Carte's Life of the duke of Ormond (notwithstanding the fact that O'Sullevane has been accused of forgery and an over-active imagination) supports a view of the bardic

'The rise of the later schools', 129–31. **63** Annemarieke Willemsen, *Back to the schoolyard: the daily practice of medieval and renaissance education* (Turnhout, 2008), pp 23–4, 92–3.

schools as sequestered institutions. Damian McManus has explained that, in respect of the educational routine and conditions of a bardic school, 'much of O'Sullevane's account is supported by the evidence of poetry'.[64] O'Sullevane's comment about the ideal location of a bardic school – that 'it was likewise necessary the place should be in the solitary recess of a garden, or within a sept or inclosure, far out of reach of any noise, which an intercourse of people might otherwise occasion'[65] – should therefore be given some credence, not least because the landscape settings of known school settlements tend to support that opinion.

What the Gaelic schools, especially those dedicated to poetry, share in common with their European urban counterparts is their general proximity to a parish church and/or their location within land denominations that have 'kil' (*cill*, church) as a root or stem word in their place-names. Some of the many examples include Kilbarron (Uí Chléirigh), Kilronan (Uí Dhuibhgeannáin), Kilcrohane (Uí Dhálaigh), Kilsarkan (Uí Dhálaigh) and Kilbrack (Uí Dhuibhdábhoireann). The correlation of 'kil' place-names with learned families, and/or the occurrence of a church on the lands of bardic families, often points to their role as lay erenaghs and coarbs of those church lands. This finding has important implications for the identity of the Gaelic schoolhouse or *sgoilteach*.

There are several important clues in the literature produced by the schools themselves about the types of buildings that housed their activities. The use of schoolhouses is attested in three instances in sixteenth-century manuscripts, specifically in relation to two law schools and a medical school. In each case, the schoolhouse building is variously referred to as *sgoilteach* and *tig na scoile*. The schools concerned are the medical school of the Uí Chonchobhair of Aghmacart, Co. Laois, and the respective law schools of the Meic Aodhagáin at Park, Co. Galway, and the Uí Dheóradháin of Ballyorely in Co. Wexford. A marginal comment scribbled by one of Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann's pupils who was working on the legal glossary now known as MS Egerton 88, which was compiled 1565–70 and mostly in the Meic Aodhagáin law school at Park, north-east of Tuam, refers to the *sgoilteagh* ('schoolhouse'),[66] while the schoolhouse of the Uí Dheóradháin legal family at Ballyorely, Co. Wexford, is also mentioned in a marginal note in the same manuscript. Ó Duibhdábhoireann's school was typically peripatetic, and he is found not only at Park in Galway but also at Ballyorely in Wexford in the spring of 1566, gathering manuscript material for his legal glossary. The note reads *Misi Domnaill a dtig na scoile dam.i. a mBaile Orlaith aniu* ('I am Domhnall who is in the schoolhouse, that is, in Ballyorely today').[67] Another schoolhouse in use in the sixteenth century was situated in the

64 McManus, 'The bardic poet as teacher', p. 121. **65** *Memoirs of the marquis of Clanricarde*, pp 107–8. **66** S.H. O'Grady (ed.), *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1926), p. 120. **67** Nerys Patterson, 'Gaelic law and the Tudor conquest of Ireland: the social background of the sixteenth-century recensions of the pseudo-historical prologue

settlement of the Uí Chonchobhair medical family at Aghmacart. Risteard Ó Conchobhair, while transcribing a copy of *Liber pronosticorum*, recorded his place and circumstances of writing as *a bhfhocair mo magistir agus mo brathar a ttech na sgoili a nAchadh Mhic Airt in .6. la do Mharta agus dar mo urethir sum iotmhar ocarac.1590* ('in the company of my master and kinsman [Donnchadh Óg Ó Conchubhair] in the schoolhouse in Aghmacart on the 6th day of March. And upon my word, I am thirsty and hungry').[68]

For the archaeologist, the appearance of the *sgoilteach* or schoolhouse and its material culture are of particular interest. Do we have any idea what a native schoolhouse looked like and are the schoolhouses such as those mentioned in relation to the Meic Aodhagáin, Uí Dheóradháin and Uí Chonchobhair, in sixteenth-century contexts, quite late developments? Is there a distinction between the types of school buildings used by legal and medical families who had no association with hereditary church roles, and bardic families who were also erenaghs and therefore stewards of church lands and responsible for maintaining the fabric of the church in their care; and were the school settlements of the late medieval period broadly similar to those used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries or are there significant changes in the settlement arrangements of the schools of learned families in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

As to the appearance of the *sgoilteach*, the English Jesuit and martyr, Edmund Campion (1540–81), in his *History of Ireland* (1571), described the interior of a law school of the late sixteenth century, apparently based on a personal encounter. He wrote:

> I have seene them where they kept school, ten in some one chamber, grovelling upon couches of straw, their bookes at their noses, themselves lying flatte prostrate, and so to chaunte out their lessons by peece-meal, being the most part lustie fellowes of twenty-five years and upwards.

This description implies that a group of students used a single chamber to chant their lessons. There is material evidence too for what may now be defined as the *sgoilteach* of native learned families, at least as it appeared in the sixteenth century. Simms has noted that for the fourteenth century 'we have evidence for fixed schools, each located at the home of a chief poet, using books in their studies',[69] but it can be argued that by the fifteenth or sixteenth century there existed a specific building, referred to as a *sgoilteach*, devoted to the scribal and learning activity of Gaelic professional schools. It assumed a particular architectural form that has gone unnoticed by field archaeologists and

of the *Senchas már*', *IHS*, 27:107 (1991), 204; William O'Sulllivan, 'The book of Domhnall Ó Duibhdábhoireann: provenance and codicology', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 276–99. **68** Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha, 'The medical school of Aghmacart, Queen's County', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster*, 2 (2006), 11–43 at 13–14. **69** Simms, 'Bardic schools, learned families', p. 35.

architectural historians. Research to date suggests that it was a private institutional space, often sequestered on the landholding of the family and separate from the residence of the ollamh. The gated defensive aspect of several ollamhs' residences, such as the walled and gated promontory of the Uí Chléirigh in Kilbarron, the Uí Dhálaigh tower house at Dromnea, which would have had an attached bawn with gate entrance, and the cashel of Cahermacnaghten with its late medieval strong gate-house entrance, which was the Ó Duibhdábhoireann ollamh's *ceann-áit* before the fashionable sixteenth-century tower house in nearby Lissylisheen became the main residence of the family, may point to the fact that manuscript libraries of learned families were generally housed in the security of the ollamh's residence. On the basis of current field evidence, the *sgoilteach* on the other hand appears to have been a non-defensive building, single-storey and generally open-plan, with the proportions of a medieval hall or parish church, ranging in size from *c.*10 by 5m to 15 by 7m.

Archaeological investigation of a building known as Cabhail Tighe Breac, tucked away in the small Kilbrack sub-denomination of the Cahermacnaghten landholding of the Uí Dhuibhdábhoireann, in the Burren, Co. Clare, supports a case for its role as a *sgoilteach* of the Cahermacnaghten law school from the close of the fifteenth century through to the early seventeenth century. From the mid-seventeenth century, it was modified for use as a domestic residence after Kilbrack was apportioned to Turlough O'Brien.[70] The combined seasons of excavation directed by the author in 2008 and 2010 (licences 08E435 and 10E146) in the interior of Cabhail Tighe Breac suggest that when first constructed it was a single-storey rectangular building, 15.5 by 7m internally, the long axis of which was aligned east to west. The original plan of the building was bipartite, consisting of a large eastern room and a smaller, perhaps subdivided, western chamber. The building was entered at the east end of the north wall through a semi-pointed doorway decorated with a continuous half-roll and fillet moulding more typical of an ecclesiastical building, and which finds its closest correspondents in the moulded doorways of the some of the late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century parish churches of the Burren. A total of seven windows of Tudor late gothic form, originally shuttered and not glazed, provided a relatively bright interior. Two large wall-cupboards or keeping-holes for storage were placed in each gable. The roof was probably thatched and of cruck construction, with the crucks springing from the tops of the thick walls. Due to the fact that the building had an afterlife as a domestic residence in the mid- to late seventeenth century, and had intermittent use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, finds from its primary period of use are, unsurprisingly, rare. The building would have been cleaned out many times. During the 2008 season, a small fragment of slate bearing a single inscribed character was

70 R.C. Simington (ed.), *Books of survey and distribution, 4: Co. Clare* (Dublin, 1967), p. 465.

recovered from a primary floor deposit at the west end of the building. It is potentially diagnostic of school activity and a fortunate survival of the cleaning out of the building that took place in the later periods of its use. Cabhail Tighe Breac appears to have been first built and used in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as is suggested by a radiocarbon age-range of 1488–1603 (2 sigma) obtained from a faunal sample in a primary occupation layer of the entrance through the western partition of the building. The wall-footings of a building of similar proportions occur on the landholding of the Uí Dheóradháin in Ballyorely, Co. Wexford, and recent electrical resistance survey (licence 10R44) conducted in the Uí Chonchobhair medical family landholding at Aghmacart, Co. Laois, has confirmed the presence of building foundations on the site of the 'infirmary field' north-east of the Augustinian priory and north of the tower house residence of the Uí Chonchobhair. The foundations appear to constitute two buildings, the larger of which is 10 by 5m and therefore a possible candidate for the *sgoilteach* of the medical school in which Risteard Ó Conchobhair transcribed a copy of *Liber pronosticorum* in 1590.

The Uí Chléirigh family of poets and historians are associated with the tower house and complex of buildings on a walled promontory overlooking the Atlantic in the townland of Cloghbolie in the parish of Kilbarron in south-west Co. Donegal. One of the very ruined buildings on the windswept promontory is comparable in scale to Cabhail Tighe Breac and could have been a schoolhouse but, as already noted, an initial reading of the arrangement of late medieval learned family settlements suggests that, if this is a consistent pattern, the ollamh's residence and the schoolhouse dedicated to learning and writing combined with accommodation for pupils, were placed at a discrete distance from each other. Less than 1km north-east of the promontory, there is a building in Kilbarron townland, 10.3 by 4.9m internally, which has been classified as a church and a possible adjoining priest's residence of fifteenth- or sixteenth-century date,[71] but it lacks several key characteristics of a church. It has no evidence of an east window, or important liturgical fixtures such as an aumbry or a piscina, it has an odd juxtaposition of doorways in the long walls of the building and it appears to have a dais at the east end of the interior, which has been misinterpreted as an altar base. The ground around the church is regarded as a graveyard that marks the location of an early ecclesiastical site dedicated to St Barrind, but there is no evidence at all for any grave-markers. In 1903, F.W. Lockwood noted that there were foundations of other buildings or 'cells' adjacent to the Kilbarron building.[72] Traces of one of those, abutting the north wall of the main building, have been proposed as a priest's residence, but an agglomeration of 'cells' observed by Lockwood could suggest a bardic

71 Brian Lacey, *Archaeological survey of County Donegal* (Donegal, 1983), p. 276. **72** F.W. Lockwood, 'Kilbarron Castle and Church, Co. Donegal', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 9 (1903), 111–16.

schoolhouse settlement. It is tempting to suggest that 'Kilbarron church' is a *sgoilteach* and attendant settlement created by the Uí Chléirigh when they succeeded the Uí Scingín,[73] as chroniclers and poets to the Uí Dhomhnaill, in the fifteenth century.

As only a portion of the north long wall of the building traditionally regarded as the Uí Dhálaigh schoolhouse at Dromnea survives above ground level, it is not possible to determine the overall dimensions of the *sgoilteach* there, and it can only be assumed that it was comparable to those already noted. Branches of the Uí Dhálaigh elsewhere in Ireland are attributed buildings that may be recognized as schoolhouses. In the lines 'The house of O'Dalaigh, great its wealth/bestowing without folly at a white house/it were a sufficiently loud organ to hear his pupils reciting the melodies of the ancient schools', Aonghus Ó Dálaigh refers to what appears to have been the schoolhouse of his kinsmen, the Uí Dhálaigh of Finnavara in Corcomroe.[74] The Uí Dhálaigh of Corcomroe were also keepers of a *tigh aoidhedh coitchinn*, reference to which is made in the obituary of Tadhg son of Donnchadh who is described as ollamh of poetry and keeper of a house of general hospitality on his death in 1514.[75] It is not yet known whether the *sgoilteach* and *tigh aoidhedh coitchinn* of the late medieval and early modern periods were two separate buildings or one building that combined both of those functions, but the *tigh aoidhedh coitchinn* was an enduring feature of bardic settlements, mentioned for instance as early as 1244 in the obituary for Donnchadh Ó Dálaigh, who is described as a 'man renowned for poetry and for a guest-house',[76] and as late as 1612 in respect of Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa, who is described as *fear tighe aoidheadh go comhchoitchionn*.[77] In most cases, it seems, keepers of a *tigh aoidhedh coitchinn* were bardic families who were generally also erenaghs of church lands. The schoolhouse buildings already discussed here are late in origin and their users were not erenagh families, but they appear to borrow their basic plan and proportions from the medieval parish church or medieval hall. Where the ollamh of a school was also an erenagh, it is possible that school activity took place in a building attached to the church in his care or even within the church itself, at the west end of a long parish church for instance, where an upper floor might otherwise be interpreted exclusively as a priest's residence. The recovery, in a colonial context, of slates carrying medieval Hiberno-English inscriptions from the interior of Smarmore Church, Co. Louth, in 1959, suggests that some parish churches may have served educational purposes as well as the cure of souls.[78]

73 Patrick Woulfe, *Sloinnte gaedheal is gall: Irish names and surnames* (Dublin, 1923), p. 639.
74 O'Donovan, *Tribes of Ireland*, pp 82–3. 75 *AFM*, s.a. 1514. 76 *AMisc.*, pp 122, 123.
77 Pól Breathnach, 'Short annals of Fir Manach', *Irish Book Lover*, 23 (1935), 7–10 at 8.
78 A.J. Bliss, 'The inscribed slates at Smarmore', *PRIA*, 64C (1965), 33–60; Derek Britton and A.J. Fletcher, 'Medieval Hiberno-English inscriptions on the inscribed slates of Smarmore: some reconsiderations and additions', *Irish University Review*, 20:1 (spring 1990), 55–72.

To conclude, this study of the Uí Dhálaigh settlement on Sheepshead Peninsula, and its broader context, shows that an integrated approach to the various buildings that constitute the cultural landscapes of these families is essential to understanding the way in which Gaelic learned professions settled their landholdings and organized their activities. Despite the often exiguous nature of the evidence, some certainties are beginning to emerge – the presence, at least by the sixteenth century, of the *sgoilteach* as a particular building dedicated to writing and learning, and the separation in the late medieval period of the ollamh's gated residence from school buildings. Unclear as yet is whether the arrangement of bardic, legal and medical schools differed, and whether their layout altered in tandem with architectural fashion between the fourteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There also remains much work to be done in materializing the *tigh aoidhedh coitchinn* and in clarifying the physical identity of bardic school buildings where ollamhs were also erenaghs.

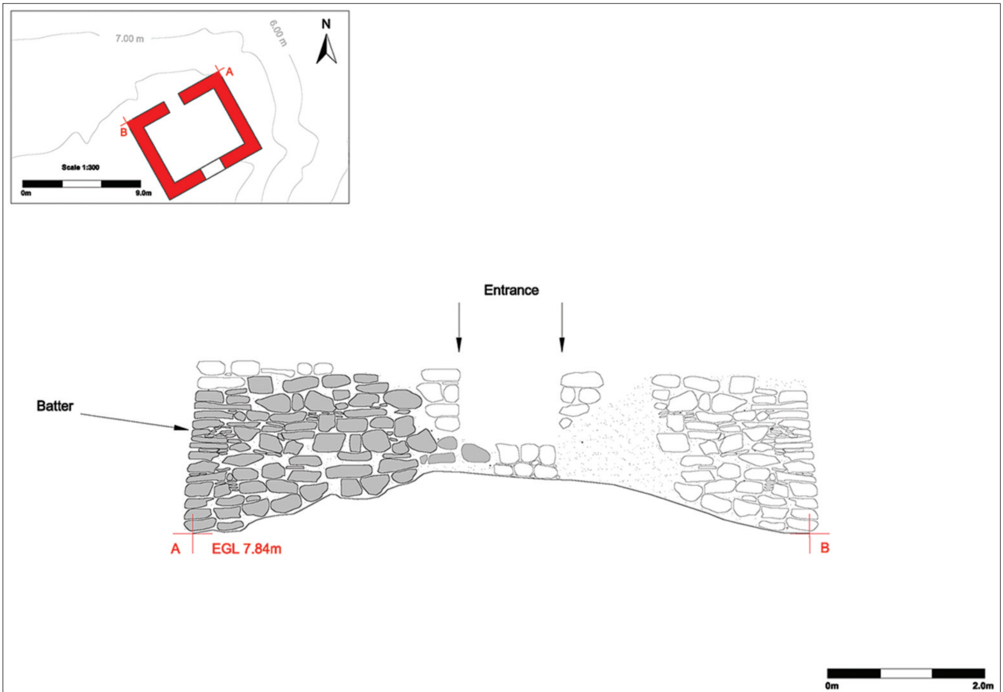
18 Key places in the cultural landscape of the Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire, Sheepshead Peninsula (drawing by Cormac Bruton).

19 Extract from 'The provence of Munster' by Francis Jobson, 1589 (TCD MS 1209, no. 36). Sheepshead Peninsula is designated 'Rymers', indicating that it was the landholding of the Uí Dhálaigh of Muinter Bháire.

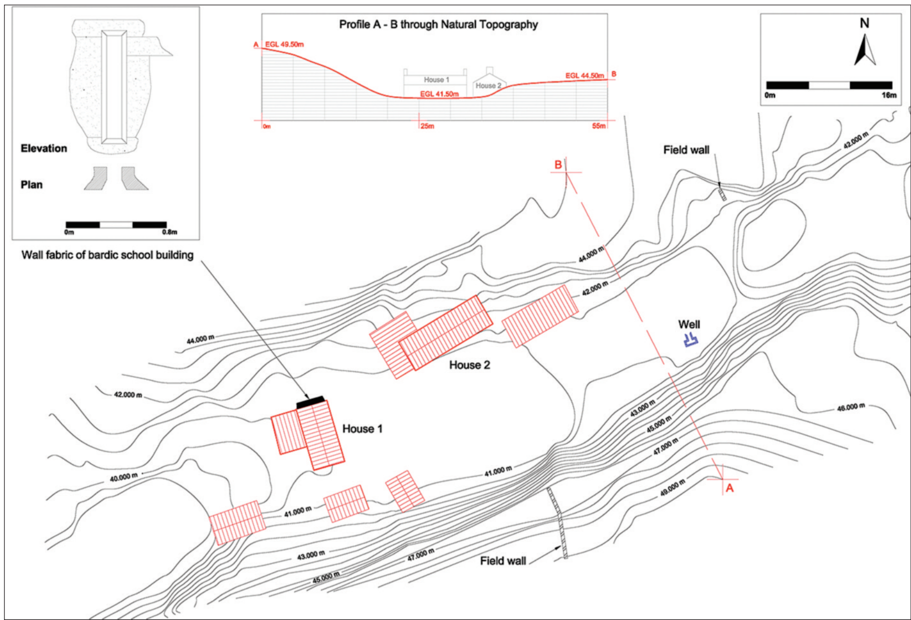
20 View looking south to Dromnea from the old Sheepshead route to Ahakista (photograph by the author).

21 View looking west over Farranamanagh Lough to Seefin (*Suidhe Finn*) with the Uí Dhálaigh tower house (bottom right) clad in vegetation near the shoreline (photograph by the author).

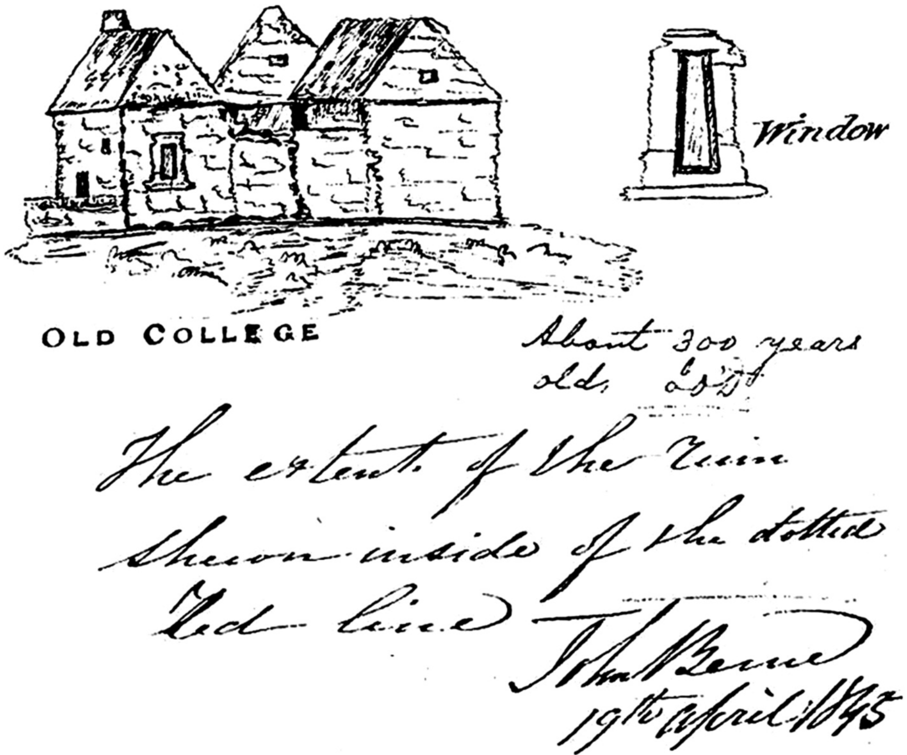
22 John Beirne's sketch of the stone row in Dromnea townland, 1845 (Ordnance Survey Memorandums for Co. Cork, 1845, vol. 2).



23 Plan and elevation of Farranamanagh tower house (drawing by Cormac Bruton).



24 Plan and profile of the farm buildings in the valley at Dromnea, showing the remaining fabric of the north wall of the bardic school. The domestic well and field walls shown on the plan are likely to be contemporary with the school building (drawing by Cormac Bruton).



25 John Beirne's sketch of the north wall of the 'Old College' or bardic school, in the context of the nineteenth-century Nicholas farm settlement at Dromnea (Ordnance Survey Memorandums for Co. Cork, 1845, vol. 2).

26 Dromnea viewed from the quay at Kilcrohane church, with Rosskerrig Mountain left of picture (photograph by the author).

Map Key	Symbol
Building	
Contours	10.000m
Ledgers	
New Entrances	
Windows	

N

0m 20m

14.000m
Gate
Existing Road
Boundary Wall
Gate
Road to the Quay
13.000m
12.000m
O'Daly Ledger
12.000m
11.000m
10.000m
9.000m
8.000m
High medieval doorway (blocked)
Late medieval archstone used as grave marker
Coffin resting stone

27 Plan of the church and graveyard at Kilcrohane, with the Ó Dálaigh ledger indicated (drawing by Cormac Bruton).