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Report on the historical background to the Round Hill monument in Ballyea West townland, Lismore civil parish, Co. Waterford, sites and monuments reference WA021-022, October 2016.

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Abstract

This paper surveys the principal historical, hagiographical and onomastic sources for the Lismore area with special reference to the Round Hill located in the townland of Ballyea West and civil parish of Lismore. These range in date from the twelfth century (?) hagiography surrounding Saint Cartach or Mochuda of Lismore to the early 19th century Ordnance Survey material. Other significant sources are the annals and related material for the period of the Anglo-Norman conquest of east Munster, temporal records of the lands of the church of Lismore down to the 17th century, records of the Boyle New English plantation of the Lismore area, and several other sources. The target of this research is to find surviving references to SMR monument number WA021-022 and thus elucidate its history.¹

Ballyea West

The Townland of Ballyea is first recorded as Balleghyeigh in 1600, when one Teig O Haherne (modern Ahearn) dwelt there.² Logainm, the Place Names Database of Ireland, derives the name from Baile Uí Aodha, presumably from a family who had farmed this townland at some stage in the late medieval to early modern period when such townland names come into existence. Around the same time the corrupt form 'Ballyrea' occurs among the lands of Sir Walter Raleigh.³ The episcopal estate of

¹ A significant number of additional sources to those listed in this paper were examined in the course of my research, but are omitted from this report as they contained no relevant information.

² Fiant of Elizabeth no. 6475 from *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns* (Dublin, 1994).

³ *Calendar of the patent and close rolls of chancery in Ireland, of the reigns of Henry III, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth; Charles I*, ed. James Morrin (3 vols, Dublin 1861–63), ii, 325.

Lismore had fallen into the hands of Raleigh following the suppression of the Desmond rebellion during the 1580s, and he subsequently sold the estate to Richard Boyle, earl of Cork, in 1603 when he was imprisoned for treason. In the royal confirmation of these lands to Boyle we find Ballyea listed as one of the members of the manor of Lismore.⁴ Our next set of references to Ballyea derive from the Boyle Papers.

In June of 1603 Boyle leased the $\frac{3}{4}$ ploughland of Ballyea to Michael Hughes for twenty one years. The rent was ten 'conyes' or rabbits per week every week from mid-summer until Candlemas (February the second), delivered to Lismore Castle. If Hughes is unable to provide the conyes 'owing to war or rebellion' then he is to pay £7 ster. per annum in lieu thereof. This reference indicates that Ballyea was a managed rabbit warren.⁵ The next definite date we have is during November of 1636, when Boyle leased for thirty one years to Hugh Croker his 'connywarrens' on the $\frac{1}{2}$ ploughland of Ballyea and the $\frac{1}{2}$ ploughland of Ballynitie and Fflemings Land (apparently the modern townland of Deerpark East to south of Ballyea). Croker was to pay an annual rent of £33 10 shillings and provide a stated number of rabbits 'in serviceable manner three or four days every week' during the season, to Lismore Castle. Croker was also subject to the feudal incidents of heriot and muster and suit of court to the court and mill of Lismore.⁶ He was not to alien (sell) without licence and agreed to 'keep the warren in like strength as he received it and to build a stone house within 3 years'.⁷ Shortly before this one Barnaby Goss had been a resident of Ballyea.⁸

The entire parish of Lismore had originally been church land, and indeed an episcopal seat until united with Waterford, in 1363. While the Tudor conquistadors, and especially Sir Walter Raleigh, had initially fought the Church over title to the manor of Lismore, Boyle eventually reached a settlement regarding the lands of Lismore with Bishop Atherton. Such was Boyle's influence that he managed to get a relative, Michael Boyle, consecrated as bishop of Waterford & Lismore, in 1619, and this delayed the settlement until John Atherton became bishop, in 1636. Atherton had been a champion of the Protestant Church in its efforts to regain usurped episcopal temporalities, but won many enemies among the landlord class for this and was

⁴ *Calendar of the Irish Patent Rolls of James I* (Dublin, 1966), 42.

⁵ NLI, Ms 6140, p. 23.

⁶ Heriot was the giving of the 'best beast' to the overlord upon the death of the tenant, while muster involved the tenant coming with arms to support the lord upon summons.

⁷ NLI, Ms 6140, p. 23; NLI, Ms 6142, p. 18; NLI, Ms 6248, p. 21.

⁸ NLI, Ms 6142.

executed in Dublin in 1640 on trumped up charges of buggery and bestiality.⁹ Before this he had, however, reached a settlement with Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, regarding the manor of Lismore. In July of 1637 Atherton succeeded in obtaining an order, confirmed by an act of state of the Irish Council, granting him the manor of Lismore.¹⁰ This was followed by a release back to Boyle of these lands in March of 1638, for sixty years, made by Bishop Atherton with the permission of the dean and chapter of the church of St. Carthage of Lismore, and subject to a chief rent to the see.¹¹ This consisted of £20 per annum for Killbree and New Affane and 20s. for Killcloher. The lands and rights in question consisted of the town and lands of Ardmore, Kilbree and New Affane, a quarter of the fish of the weir of the river of Lismore, the manor, castle, town and lands of Lismore, Ballyea, Ballyinn (Ballyin Lower and Upper in Lismore parish), Ballynaspick (Bishopstown near Mothel), Bewley (in Kilmolash parish) and Killmolash and the ½ ploughland of Killclogher (Kilcloher in Whitechurch parish). This episcopal rent was still being collected in 1664 but subsequently the Boyle family appear to have extinguished this, perhaps when the lease expired, or perhaps in exchange for allowing the Church to retain some fragments of these lands.¹²

The *Civil Survey* of 1656 indicates that the then townland of Ballyea corresponds to the modern townlands of Ballyea East and Ballyea West, and the division is likely to have been made in the early eighteenth century, as we shall see.¹³ It is interesting to note that of the estimated one hundred plantation acres in the townland forty is described as 'arable' and the remainder as 'fuzzy', indicating that the greater share of the townland was covered in low scrubwood, an ideal habitat for rabbits. Surely the Round Hill was also covered with scrubwood at this time. A detailed history of the possession of the townlands of Ballyea is beyond the scope of the present paper, but we do possess some information.¹⁴ In 1700 the earl of Cork leased for a term of three lives 'Ballynelligan and that part of Ballyea which is bounded by the high road leading from Lismore to Cappoquin to Balygallane ford', 170 statute acres in all, to Richard

⁹ Rictor Norton (ed.), 'The Life and Death of John Atherton, 1641', *Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook*. 16 February 2004, updated 15 June 2008
<<http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/atherton.htm>>.

¹⁰ NLI 6142, p. 153.

¹¹ NLI 6142, pp. 152-3; NLI, Ms 42018, Lismore Deeds, Bundle 6.

¹² William Henry Rennison (ed), 'Joshua Boyle's accmpt of the temporalities of the bishoprick of Waterford', *J Cork Hist Archaeol Soc* 32 (1927) 42-49; 35 (1930) 26-33; 36 (1931) 20-24. See vol. 32 pp. 47-9.

¹³ Robert C. Simington (ed), *The Civil Survey (A.D. 1654-56)* (10 vols, Dublin 1931-61) vii (1945), p. 7.

¹⁴ For the following information see Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 52/415/35096, 64/499/44897, 93/132/65132, 150/629/101717, 187/550/128247, 261/333/170150.

Baggs of Lismore. This clearly relates to the present Ballynelligan Glebe and Ballyea West. Ballygalane ford is that ford on the Blackwater at Round Hill, once comprising of several islands in the river, but which were absorbed in the north bank in the early twentieth century. In 1723 Richard earl of Cork leased to Baggs 'the 128 statute acres of Ballyea then and lately in the possession of John Clasic'. This appears to relate to Ballyea East. In 1724 Baggs sold the remainder of the lease of 1700 to Sion Hill of Lismore. In 1751 Charles Baggs of Lismore sub-let 'Ballynelligan and the quarter ploughland of Ballyea' to Christopher Musgrave, and in 1758 sold his interest in the 128 acres of Ballyea (East) to Richard Kiley. In 1767 Kiley in turn released his interest to Denis Callaghan of the City of Cork. By 1851 most of Ballyea West was held immediately by Henry Wigmore while the Duke of Devonshire (heir to the Boyle family here), held Ballyea East directly.¹⁵ By this time Ballynelligan Glebe had reverted to the Church. The Round Hill itself, however, consisting of 4.147 acres, was also held directly by the Duke of Devonshire, and was heavily planted with deciduous trees.

The Round Hill: monastery or castle?

An interesting indirect reference to the Round Hill occurs in 1652 when Irish troops, under the direction of Major Thomas Downing, marched 'from Ballyanker to the warren of Lismore and after to Affane'.¹⁶ As we have seen, the Round Hill itself appears to have been part of a farmed rabbit warren in the seventeenth century. The first direct mention of the Round Hill that I can uncover was that by Charles Smith in his history of Waterford, published in 1746:¹⁷

(There is) "one rath at Lismore, from whence the name of that place, i. e. the large fort. It is erected on the top of an hill called the Round Hill, of a pretty steep ascent, and is situated near the Black Water river, about half a mile to the west of Lismore [sic]. It was surrounded by a double fosse which is now almost filled up."

Elsewhere in this volume Smith correctly locates 'The Round Hill' to the east of the town, and gives it the ancient name of Dún Sginne, associating it with the seventh century flight of Mochuda or Cartach from Rahan to Lismore, all of this despite asserting that the Round Hill was built by the Danes!

¹⁵ Griffith's Primary Valuation, townland of Ballyea West.

¹⁶ Cromwellian depositions, Co. Waterford (TCD Ms 820, ff. 320-22).

¹⁷ *The Antient and present state of the County and City of Waterford* (Dublin, 1746), pp. 351-2.

The early American travel writer, Jonathan Carver, in a book published in 1779, plagiarises part of Smith's account.¹⁸ The essence of Smith's account can also be found in the account of the Round Hill by Holmes, writing in 1801, and by the anonymous engraver who published a book of prints of notable castles in Britain and Ireland in 1831, as well as by Lewis in 1837, who adds the detail that Cartach first settled in the Round Hill fortress, Dún Sginne, upon his first arrival at Lismore.¹⁹

Such was the opinion of the Round Hill among early antiquaries and travel writers. By the early twentieth century however a more rigorous approach was adopted. Well-known historian Patrick Power, writing in 1907, derives the place-name Ballyea from Baile Uí Aodha and mentions the Round Hill which he says is composed largely of alluvial gravel deposits and surrounded by two ancient roadways. He also records the Irish names *Lios Mór* and *An Dún* for the Round Hill, which he claims to have gotten from Irish speakers, and identifies the hill as a motte and bailey, a type of early Anglo-Norman fortification featuring a small timber or stone castle upon a hill, often manmade, with accompanying fortifications at its base.²⁰ The same year the noted Irish historian Goddard Orpen, in a paper on the motte and bailey, wrote of the Round Hill as follows:

“There is a mote near Lismore, upwards of a mile from the cathedral and the present castle. It stands near the river, guarding what seems to have been an ancient ford. It is a typical Norman mote, with small wedge-shaped bailey, forty paces long by twenty-four at the wider end, and is, I think, the site of the castle commenced by Henry and finished by John. Mr. Westropp, indeed, asserts that this mote is the prehistoric fortress called Dunsginne, or Mag Sgiath, and afterwards Lismor, mentioned in the 'Life of St. Carthach', who formed a religious establishment at Lismore about the year 633. But the Great Liss, Lis Mor Mochuta, as it was called after the saint, in all probability surrounded the church and monastic buildings, as in similar cases elsewhere,

¹⁸ *The New Universal Traveller* (London, 1779), p. 561.

¹⁹ G. Holmes, *Sketches of some of the southern counties of Ireland* (London, 1801), 186; *The Delineator, a series of splendid engravings of remarkable edifices, places of antiquity, and views of celebrity* (London, 1831), 59-60; Samuel Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Ireland*, 2 vols (London 1837; repr. Port Washington NY & London, 1970), entry for 'Lismore'.

²⁰ P. Power, *The place-names of Decies* (London, 1907), pp. 18-19. A motte and bailey is a fortification with a wooden or stone tower situated on a raised earthwork called a motte, to which is joined an enclosed courtyard or bailey, the whole surrounded by a protective palisade and ditch.

and certainly the monastery was not on the mote. The present castle is said to be on the site of the monastery.”²¹

Orpen’s reference to Westropp relates to his (Westropp’s) paper on the same subject as published in 1904, when he opined that the original monastery of Lismore was on the Round Hill and that the castle built by Prince John in 1185-6 lay on the site of the present Lismore Castle.²² Modern archaeology agrees with Orpen rather than Westropp in relation to the Round Hill. The Archaeological Survey of Ireland tells us that the Round Hill is:

“Situated on a natural hill overlooking the floodplain of the W-E Blackwater River with the stream c. 150m to the N. The motte is a flat-topped mound (diam. of top 13m; diam. of base 40m; H 7.5m at S to 10m at SW) with a subrectangular bailey (dims. 34m N-S; 19.5m E-W at N to 10m E-W at S) attached to the S. The bailey is raised 5m over a flat-bottomed fosse (Wth of base c. 3m; ext. D 1.7m). Both are surrounded by an earthen bank (Wth c. 7m; max. ext. H 5m) except at E where there is a natural cliff-edge (Anon. *Journ. Royal Soc. Antiquaries Ireland* 27 (1897), 271-2). It is planted with deciduous trees.”²³

The Round Hill: Origins

We must relocate to the twelfth century in order to address this question. Lismore was a famous early church establishment dating to at least the seventh century, essentially a large village or small town centred on its main and ancillary churches, inner settlements of clerics, and outer settlements of lay people. The term ‘monastery’ is not sufficient to describe such an establishment, which would have had schools, hospitals, markets, and industrial areas, inhabited by both laymen and clerics, many of whom would not have been celibates. Modern historians prefer terms like ‘major church establishment’ or ‘monastic town’ rather than the inadequate ‘monastery’ to describe such sites. The physical geography of major early Irish church settlements is well understood. Suffice it to note that Lismore was such an establishment, with literally dozens of churches in its core surrounded by what

²¹ G. H. Orpen, ‘Motes and Norman Castles in Ireland’ in *The English Historical Review* vol. 22, No. 87 (1907), pp. 228-254, 440-467: 456-7.

²² T.J. Westropp, ‘On Irish Motes and Early Norman Castles’, *Journ. Royal Soc. Antiquaries Ireland*, Fifth Series, Vol. 34, No. 4, (1904), pp. 313-345: 324.

²³ <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>, (accessed 25 October 2016).

must have been a small town on the banks of the Blackwater. At its center lay its sacred precinct at the heart of which must have been its great church. That the present cathedral sites on or very near the site of this ancient great church of Lismore is certain, for churches are one of the few man made structures that tend to endure on the same site regardless of the vagaries of time. Lismore was a major church with many subsidiary churches and chapels within its sacred precincts, outside of which lay the urban surrounds and lay population. We may take the location of the original main church at Lismore as agreeing with that of the present cathedral, even if most of the evidence for the layout of the early ecclesiastical establishments here is now destroyed due to centuries of warfare.²⁴

This is not the place to give a detailed history of the church of Lismore, but certain developments are relevant to the present study. Munster had been divided between two competing kingdoms since 1118, that of Thomond or Limerick, ruled by the O'Briens, and that of Desmond or Cork, ruled by the McCarthys.²⁵ The border of these ebbed and flowed between both halves. Clare, North Tipperary and much of Limerick always lay in Thomond, while Waterford, Cork and South Kerry always lay in Desmond. All of South Tipperary, parts of Limerick and all of North Kerry lay in the zone of a moving border between both, moving from one to the other at different times. The McCarthys held on doggedly to their ancient center, Cashel, but were eventually expelled around 1140. The evidence indicates that they moved their headquarters to Lismore, where king Domnall McCarthy had a house, in 1165, and from the hinterland of which (the petty-kingdom of Déisi Mumhan) various McCarthy offensives were launched during the 1140s and 1150s against the O'Briens. There is evidence to suggest that pre-Norman fortifications at Molana on the Blackwater below Cappoquin, built by the McCarthys, were a defence against riverine attacks on Lismore.²⁶

Further confirmation of much of this is found in the pattern of Anglo-Norman occupation here from 1185 onwards. We know that in general the Normans adopted pre-existing native Irish borders and boundaries when dividing up their conquests.²⁷ When parcelling out Munster between his knights Prince John retained in his own

²⁴ For a discussion of the nature of early Irish 'monastic' towns see my *Colmán of Cloyne: a Study* (Dublin, 2004), 76-8, and the references listed therein.

²⁵ For what follows see Paul MacCotter, 'The rise of Meic Carthaig and the Political Geography of Des Mumu' in *Journ. Cork Hist. and Arch. Soc.* 111 (2006), 59-76.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁷ Paul MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland: territorial, political and economic divisions* (Dublin, 2008, rep. 2014), *passim*.

hands various territories, including the territory of what had been the native kingdom of Déisi Mumhan. While scholars have traditionally equated this territory with modern Co. Waterford, in fact it also included a significant part of southern Tipperary, running several miles north of the present border. The sources tell us that John built three castles in 1185 in south east Munster, at Lismore, Ardfinnan Co. Tipperary and Tibberaghny, Co. Kilkenny. These three castles protected respectively the western, northern and eastern borders of John's demesne, all lying on or near the borders of what had been Déisi Mumhan.

The evidence for this encastellation process comes from a number of sources. An early and near contemporary poetic account of the Norman conquest of Ireland relates that when King Henry II of England visited Lismore, in 1171, he wished to build a castle there, but the project was postponed.²⁸ Later, with the publication of his account of the conquest of Ireland, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, Gerald de Barry ('Gerald of Wales'), a Cambro-Norman noble, who had accompanied Prince John to Ireland in 1185, states that John built three castles (*castorum*), at Tibberaghny, Ardfinnan and Lismore.²⁹ The native annals also speak of John's visit and castle building, but mention only Ardfinnan and Tibberaghny.³⁰

It is certain therefore that John built a castle of some kind at Lismore in 1185. It is also probable that the McCarthy kings of Desmond had some kind of castle or fortification at Lismore before John's arrival. We can then add to the picture the existence of an episcopal residence at Lismore in a castle first recorded in 1218. This does not mean that the episcopal castle was built in 1218, and it is certain that this Anglo-Norman bishop's residence succeeded a native Irish bishop's residence at Lismore.³¹ Little is known of such bishop's residences at this period but they are usually erected close to the cathedral, and there can be no doubt but that the later episcopal castle here, given its proximity to the cathedral, was built on the site of the present Lismore Castle. It may be that this was built on the site of the earlier McCarthy fortification. When the Normans arrived in Ireland they were not backward in seizing church property for strategic reasons, but in such cases, once the conquest had been completed, the lands were either returned to the Church or the Church was

²⁸ G.H. Orpen (ed. & tr.), *The song of Dermot and the earl* (Oxford, 1892), 195.

²⁹ A. B. Scott & F. X. Martin (ed. & tr.), *Expugnatio hibernica: the conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis* (Dublin, 1978), 232-4.

³⁰ *Annals of the Four Masters, Annals of Loch Cé*, both 1185.6. (I have used the Celt editions, for which visit <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/publishd.html>).

³¹ H. S. Sweetman & G. F. Handcock (ed), *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland* (5 vols, London 1875-86), i, no. 851.

compensated for their loss. Lismore is not found among the many such examples we know of. There is no evidence that John later retained any property or royal demesne in or around Lismore or its hinterland, all of which formed part of the landed possessions of the see of Lismore. It should be noted that these lands must have been inherited from the pre-Norman church of Lismore, and the entire cantred containing these lands, Tarmun, takes its name from the Irish term *tearmann*: church property.³² Note also that John's chief or demesne castle of his lordship in Co. Waterford was located at Dungarvan, a distance to the south east.

Lismore had been plundered by Strongbow as early as 1173 (when he levied one thousand marks from the 'great church' there), and the castle which had a few years earlier been built by John at Lismore was destroyed in 1189, along with the castle of Tibberaghny, also of motte and bailey construction, in a major Irish revolt involving the Uí Fhaeláin kings of Déisi and others.³³ Given its association with Tibberaghny and Ardfinnan, probably also originally a motte and bailey, this castle built by Prince John can only have been the motte and bailey on the Round Hill.

What of the identification of the Round Hill with various early names for Lismore as we have noted above? There is, of course, no evidence whatsoever for this, despite such an assertion being made by various past antiquarians. Once mistakes get into the historical 'system' it is notoriously difficult to remove these. Two places are mentioned as being the original name of Lismore. The first is Mag Sciath, said in one version of the life of Cartach and another of Declan to be the old name of Lismore, while Keating in his seventeenth century *History of Ireland* names 'Dunsginne' as its old name.³⁴ Regarding Mag Sciath, such hagiography is likely to have been composed several centuries after the *floruit* or period of the saint in question, and the element 'Mag' of course indicates the name of a territory or plain, a superdenomination, and not a single place. It may well have been the name of the great plain around Lismore as known during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, when such hagiography was

³² Paul MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, 247-8.

³³ *Annals of Inisfallen*, 1173.4, 1189.1, 1189.2, *Miscellaneous Irish Annals (McCarthy's Book)*, 1174.2. For Tibberaghny see Orpen, 'Motes and Norman castles', 252 and Archaeological Survey of Ireland KK038-011.

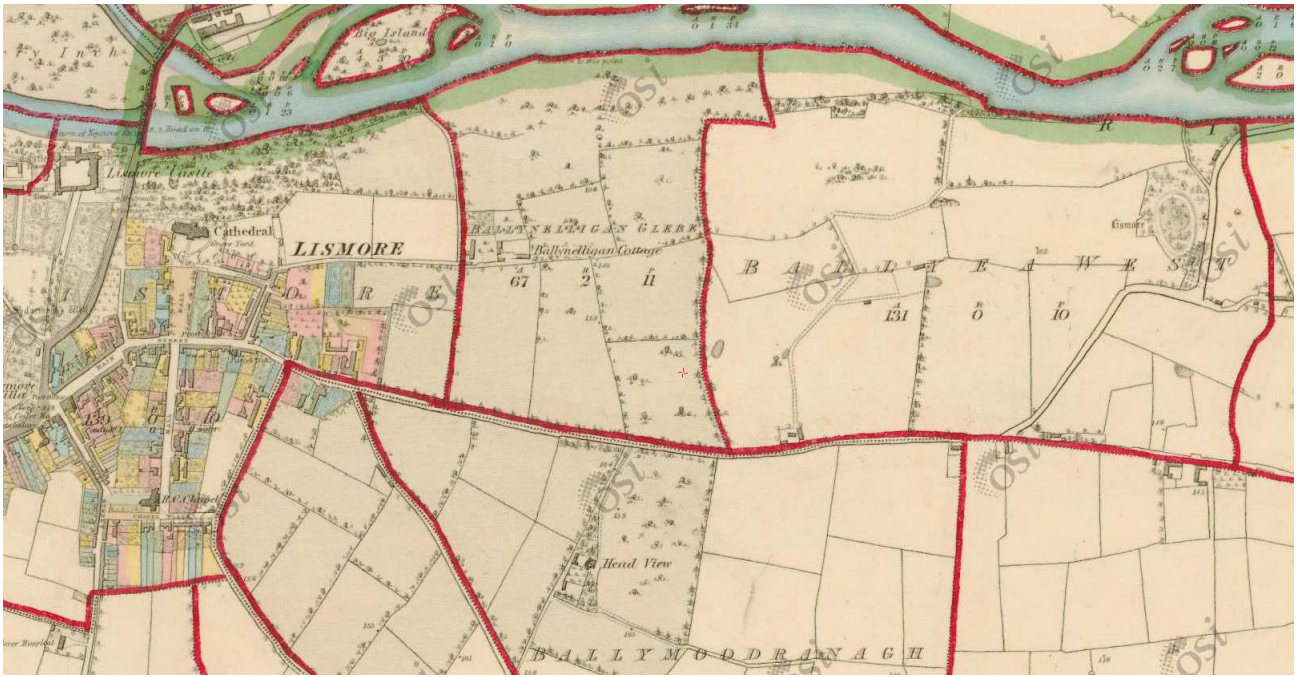
³⁴ P. Power (ed. & tr.), *Life of St Declan of Ardmore and Life of St Mochuda of Lismore*, ITS 16 (London, 1914), 13, 15, 23, 143, 162; Charles Plummer (ed), *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (2 vols, Oxford 1910, repr. 1968), i, 197; ii, 37, 39; D. Comyn & P. S. Dineen (ed. & tr.), *The history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating*, ITS 4, 8-9, 15 (4 vols, London, 1902-14; repr. Dublin 1987), iii, 122.

composed. As to 'Dunsginne', Keating was writing a thousand years after the events he was describing, and the name does not appear to be known from any other source. We may also note that the reference in Cartach's life to Mag Sciath goes on to describe Cartach's church of Lismore as a great lios in circular form, a description more fitting to the current cathedral than to Round Hill. It is, of course, perfectly possible that the Anglo-Norman motte and bailey built upon Round Hill replaced an earlier native fortification or dún, for such a practice was common,³⁵ but this was certainly not the site of the early church and monastery of Lismore. Important early Irish church sites do not move over a mile down river for no apparent reason.

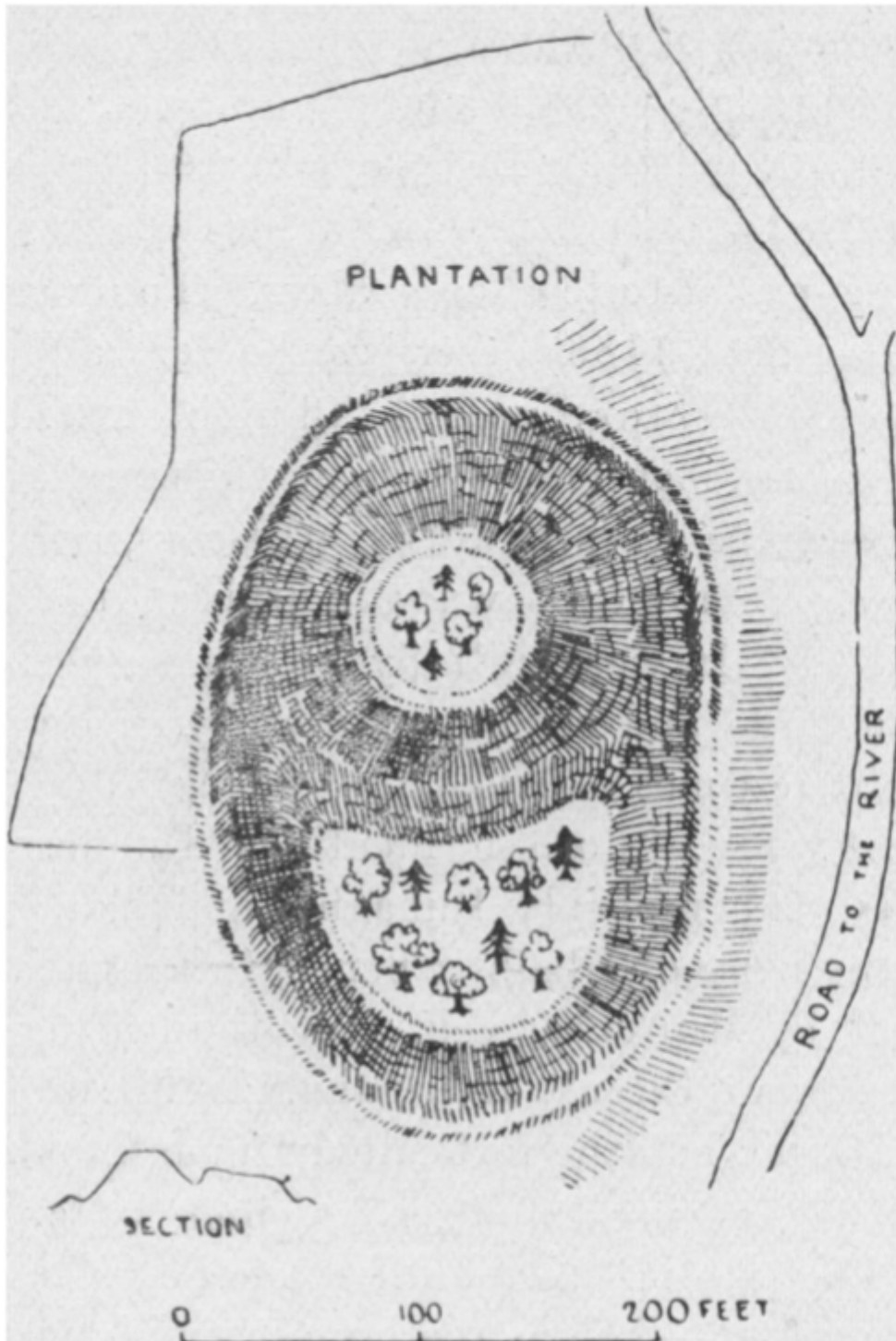
Conclusion

It is certain that the cathedral of Lismore lies on or near the site of the chief church of the monastic town of Lismore. It is also certain that the present Lismore Castle lies on the site of an earlier episcopal castle which is at least as old as 1218. That both sites must have lain within the monastic town is certain. The monastic town of Lios Mór Mochuda lay where the present town of Lismore stands, and did not at any stage contain the Round Hill. The Round Hill is a motte and bailey castle construction built under the orders of Prince John of England in 1185 and which was slighted four years later, permanently losing all strategic importance. The historical record contains no accurate evidence of what may have lain on this site before 1185, if anything, and archaeological investigation is required to answer this question. There is no reliable evidence to connect the Round Hill with any ecclesiastical settlement at any period.

³⁵ C. Ó Drisceoil, 'Recycled Ringforts and Motte Castles' in *County Louth Archaeological Journal* 25/2 (2002), 189-201.



1841 Ordnance Survey map, Lismore town and the Round Hill. Note the distance between Lismore Castle and the motte



THE MOTE OF DUNSGINNE, LISMORE.

Westropp's sketch of the Round Hill, circa 1904



Down Survey barony map of 1656 showing Lismore and its hinterland. The Round Hill is not shown. The town, castle and cathedral are shown adjacent and the next item on the east bank of the Blackwater is Kilbree Castle. Ballyea is mis-spelled Ballylea.



Round Hill motte as seen from the north