

Herbert's contribution, on the development of depictions of Gregory the Great in Irish sources of the pre-Viking era (pp 181–90), stands out in its sophisticated integration of Latin and vernacular sources. The other contributions tend to have a heavy emphasis on Latinate culture, although some contributions also focus on aspects of Old English literature, but the vernacular culture of the Celtic-speaking countries gets short shrift. To some extent this reflects the scholarly interests of the volume's dedicatee and, by extension, the research interests of her former students and colleagues, but it would have been nice, for example, in the study of 'Thomas Becket and Ireland', by Colmán Ó Clabaigh and Michael Staunton (pp 87–101), which, though interesting, is largely confined to Latin sources, to have seen some mention of the Irish vernacular Life of Thomas Becket preserved in a manuscript in the King's Inns Library, Dublin. Similarly, Sinéad O'Sullivan's work on the Latin glosses on Martianus Capella (pp 28–38) is thorough and rigorous but, by reading the Latin glosses in isolation from the vernacular glosses (such as the Old Welsh glosses found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 153), one gains only a partial understanding of the way that this fascinating text was read and understood by medieval literati, and absorbed into the textual culture of the early Middle Ages.

As one would expect in a collection in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly, there is a wide array of contributions on art historical, and particularly iconographical, study. For example, eschatological themes are to the fore in the chapters by Jane Hawkes (pp 230–42) and Carol Farr (pp 291–301). It is a shame that there are only black and white plates to accompany these chapters, but one understands the financial constraints which militate against the inclusion of colour images in academic publications. Another focus of study is, of course, the works of Bede: indeed, the chapters by Arthur Holder, on Bede as heresiologist (pp 105–14); by Scott DeGregorio, on Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the Ezra portrait in the *Codex amiatinus* (pp 115–25); and by Alan Thacker, on 'Bede and his Martyrology' (pp 126–41), form a particularly compelling triptych. Adomnán's *Vita sancti Columbae* also fittingly receives the attention of a number of contributors.

Unfortunately, the format of the book is irritating: the decision to have consolidated endnotes at the back of the volume is mystifying. Having to turn to the end of the book to check every citation, or quotation in its original language, was tiresome, and it makes it inconvenient for students to photocopy an individual chapter. Although the publisher seems to favour endnotes as a rule, surely these could have been located at the end of each individual contribution. However, this is a relatively minor criticism, and should not detract from the fact that this is a rich and substantial volume, an essential addition to the library of anyone working on the early medieval visual and/or literary culture of Britain and Ireland, and a fitting tribute to a scholar who has made such a great contribution to the exegesis and elucidation of early medieval texts and iconography.

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MEDIEVAL IRELAND: TERRITORIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVISIONS. By Paul MacCotter. Pp 320, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2008. €55.

This book attempts to delineate the administrative structures and divisions of Anglo-Norman Ireland, and the boundaries and borders of pre-invasion Gaelic Ireland, at both a local and regional level (p. 16). This is possible as the Anglo-Norman colonists adopted the divisions of pre-invasion Ireland to a large extent: the *cantred* equates to the Irish *trícha cét*, the *theodum* is the Irish *túath*, and the *villate* is descended from the indigenous *baile* or *baile biataig* (p. 59). The number of *trícha céts* in Ireland had been recorded before the invasion: the poem 'Cá lín thriúcha i nÉirind áin?' (appendix 1) lists between

176 and 184 (according to the version) and the author is of the view that these figures are 'approximately accurate' and were based on a survey of twelfth-century Ireland (p. 41). Furthermore, an enumeration of cantreds and lesser land-units which is preserved as a prologue to a record of royal revenue in the Dublin exchequer dating to around 1298 'is none other than a version' of the schema outlined in the Irish poem (p. 59).

The author's examination of the evidence for the relationship between indigenous Irish and Anglo-Norman divisions, and of the earlier origins of these divisions, has produced important insights. While the *trícha cé*t – essentially the local kingdom – became established during the eleventh century, the antiquity of its names and the nature of its borders suggest that it is 'a spatial unit which has undergone little alteration for centuries' and is to be equated with the *túath* or local kingdom of the early Irish laws of c.700 A.D. (p. 103). However, within its boundaries, the twelfth-century *trícha cé*t (which could vary greatly in size) contained the 'late-*túath*', a term coined by the author to distinguish it from the *túath* of the earlier period (p. 23) and the existence of which previously had gone unnoticed (p. 89). This 'late-*túath*', ruled by the *táisech túaithe*, was the 'smallest political community', but had no fiscal relevance. On the contrary, while it is suggested that military service may have been levied from the 'late-*túath*', tax was paid by each *baile* (*biataig*) (p. 22). The latter is first attested in eleventh century and, while the *trícha cé*t is considered to have contained a notional number of thirty of these, there is no evidence that the 'late-*túath*' contained a fixed number of *baileda biataig* (p. 48). The *baile biataig*, then, is the basic unit of kinship-based, taxable landholding and, being a 'systematic organization of land resources', contained 'a mix of arable land, grazing and turbary in related proportions' (p. 24). For this reason, it ranged in size from 700 to 7,000 acres in accordance with land quality.

The author's discussion of the employment of the term *baile* in toponyms, and the potential link between the emergence of the *baile biataig* in the eleventh century and the unique emergence of surnames in Ireland, largely in the same period, is of great interest. Might the adoption of the surname formula Ua (later Ó) X or Mac Y as the 'new technical term for the kin-group' be connected with the emergence of *baile* as the 'new technical term for the estate' (p. 96) (as in a toponym such as *Baile Uí C[h]omgáin*, 'Ua Comgáin's *baile*', first recorded in a grant of 1133)? There is no evidence for *baile* in the sense of estate in the laws or in the literature before c.1100 and no certain evidence for it as a toponym that is earlier than the eleventh century. Its widespread use thereafter 'can only be explained if *baile* is understood as a technical term coined to refer to an assessment unit which is part of a new taxation system' (pp 94–5). In the author's view, 'any pre-invasion toponym in *baile* must represent a *baile* (*biataig*)', a *baile*-estate (p. 85); however, shortly after the invasion, the term became 'debased' and *baile* came to refer to 'a range of holdings, from large colonial *touns* to any rural farm or landholding, especially one tenanted by Irish' (p. 87). Early evidence of this can be found: the townland of Ballyfouloo in the parish of Monkstown in Cork is 'a certain example of a new and debased usage of the term *baile* occurring within two generations of the Invasion' (p. 86).

More research is needed to confirm some of these conclusions, as is stressed by the author. Nonetheless, the broad outline is in some respects clear; the development from fortified *rá(i)th* (or ringfort) to unfortified *baile* agrees well with 'current thinking on the origins of the *baile* and recent archaeological research on the abandonment of the *ráith* after AD 1000' (p. 108). This points up one major concern: while the author has clearly consulted experts on the Scottish side, notably Taylor (pp 95n, 116), in relation to the application and chronology of *baile* in Scotland, there is nothing throughout the book of the most recent scholarship on either *ráith* or *baile* in Ireland (Toner, 'Settlement and settlement terms in medieval Ireland: *ráth* and *lios*', *Ainm* 8 (1998–2000); idem, *Baile: settlement and landholding in medieval Ireland* *Éigse* 34 (2004)). This is of some consequence as Toner has carried out a thorough examination of the term *baile* in literary texts of the period and his conclusions are important in terms of establishing the 'defining characteristic' of the *baile*, namely 'occupied space'. Nor is there any reference to

published volumes on Irish toponymy some of which are of particular relevance to the topic in question; note, for example, the 1992 volume on the heavily-colonised area of the Ards in County Down (*Place-Names of Northern Ireland*, volume 2). On the other hand, the largest section of the book, 'A gazetteer of the cantreds, *trícha céts* and local kingdoms of Ireland' (pp 125–254), is a splendid achievement and, while ongoing toponymical surveys will do much to assist in the clarification of the boundaries of individual cantreds and *trícha céts*, toponymy itself will also benefit hugely from this gazetteer. The book does not have a concluding chapter; this would have done much to bind the whole together.

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THE BOOK OF HOWTH: THE ELIZABETHAN RE-CONQUEST OF IRELAND AND THE OLD ENGLISH.

By Valerie McGowan-Doyle. Pp xvii, 206. Cork: Cork University Press. 2011. €39.

This volume offers an important re-assessment of a tract long familiar to historians of Tudor Ireland, *The Book of Howth*, together with a study of its compiler, Christopher St Lawrence, seventh Lord Howth, and his reasons for writing the *Book*. The author argues convincingly two points: first, that the seventh lord is in fact the compiler, a point left uncertain by the editors of the nineteenth-century printed edition. Second, she also demonstrates that Howth's clear and definite purpose in writing is obscured by the editors' failure to appreciate the structural or organisational arrangement of the manuscript as it now is, so giving the impression of a largely chaotic and random compilation. Once the *Book's* intended structure is recovered, it becomes apparent that Howth compiled it in the decade to 1579, and chiefly between 1569 and 1573, in response to Lord Deputy Sidney's policies which threatened the displacement of the Old English from their traditional status as the custodians of English civility in Ireland. The *Book* thus offers a very valuable window on the reaction in this crucial decade of a minor peerage family of the Pale to growing New English dominance and the creation of an alternative historically-based explanation for the failed medieval conquest. All this is very well done. The volume underlines the importance of the 1570s in the developing colonial conflict between New and Old English. It elaborates on the wider significance of the cess controversy in this dispute; and it is also very revealing of the alternative strategies for rewriting history then developed so as to saddle the rival elite with the blame for failed conquest.

The discussion of Howth's career and political attitudes raises more questions. This is not just because the terminology is occasionally clumsy ('justice of the peace commissions' (p. 34)) or unclear: what are 'Counter-Recusancy' (p. 2), or the 'Elizabethan re-conquest' (title page (p. iii), as opposed to the 'Elizabethan conquest' of the dust jacket)? Belatedly in the conclusion, the author usefully addresses the possible applicability of Lawrence Stone's *The crisis of the aristocracy* (1965) thesis to the deteriorating position of the Old English aristocracy, particularly in respect of their role as counsellors and military leaders when faced with Tudor centralisation and a standing army. Another way of looking at the Tudor peerage in Ireland, however, is in terms of service nobles and regional magnates. The evidence adduced here would suggest that Howth saw himself chiefly as a Tudor service noble, hence his generally supportive attitude to successive governors, as noted by the author, despite his opposition to Sidney. His modest income, drawn from ancestral landholdings in the Pale maghery (listed in appendix A), probably prompted his eager pursuit of commissions and his regular attendance at council, but we lack a more rounded discussion of Howth's role within the Dublin county community.

As to the early Tudor background to Howth's views about degeneracy (gaelicisation) and the Gaelic recovery, this is certainly more complex than is implied by the author's