

**The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo:
Perspectives on their History, Archaeology and
Architecture, 1400-1540**

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Glossary

Arcade: A series of arches set on the same plane.

Ashlar masonry: Stone cut and dressed with right-angled corners, having a regular shape.

Aumbry: Recess in the church or sacristy wall, used for the storage of sacramental vessels.

Capital: Uppermost member of a column or pier.

Chamfer: Oblique surface produced by cutting a corner away at an angle, usually 45 degrees.

Chancel: Eastern part of the church, site of the main altar.

Crocket: Gothic ornamental feature, often foliated placed at regular intervals on the external edges of such features as hood mouldings, arches, gables and spires.

Crossing: Point of intersection of nave, chancel and transept.

Extrados: Outer extremity of the arch

Finial: An ornament, sometimes foliated, at the top of a spire, pinnacle of a gable which acts as a terminal.

Hood moulding: The projecting moulding of the arch over a door or window; also called a dripstone.

Intrados: The underside of an arch; lower curve of the arch.

Lancet: Tall narrow window aperture with a pointed head, characteristic of the Early English phase of Gothic architecture.

Nave: Western part of a church, the area used to accommodate the laity.

Oculus: Roundel or circular window

Ogee Arch: A pointed arch composed of reversed curves, the lower concave, the upper convex.

Pilaster: A partial pier or column often with a base, shaft and capital, embedded in a wall and projecting slightly.

Piscina: Stone basin with a drainage channel used for washing the sacramental vessels, set within a recess. Usually located on the south wall of the chancel. The plural form is *piscinae*.

Quoin: Angular course of stone at the corner of a building

Respond: Half-pier or column engaged to a wall at the end of an arcade from which the first arch springs.

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

Rubble Masonry: Stonework of or roughly dressed stones, can be coursed or uncoursed (random rubble).

Sedilia: Seats used by the clergy officiating at mass. Usually grouped in threes, located on the south wall of the chancel. Its less common singular form is *sedile*.

Spandrel: The triangular space formed between the sides of adjacent arches and the line across their tops.

Stoup: Fixed basin for holy water set in a niche and corbelled out from the wall.

Tracery: Subdivision, usually of a window into sections by means of stone bars or ribs, also called mullions.

Transept: Section of the church situated at right angles to the nave and chancel. Cruciform churches have two transepts; friary churches tend only to have one.

Note

It is worth noting that although the mendicant religious houses in question in this study are commonly known as abbeys, this colloquialism is a misnomer. The term abbey can only be correctly applied to those religious houses which were under the control of an abbot. This office, to which one was elected to for the remainder of one's lifetime, was an important one amongst the Cistercians but did not exist within the mendicant orders. Mendicant houses were controlled by a provincial, who was elected for a fixed term. Superiors of non-Franciscan mendicant houses are known as priors, hence the houses of Augustinian Friars, but the Dominican houses in particular are often called priories. Such houses can therefore be correctly termed either friary or priory and it is this nomenclature which will be used in this study. Franciscan houses will be referred to as friaries.

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Abstract

The religious houses founded by the Mendicant orders in Mayo between 1400 and 1540 are the concern of this study. The history, archaeology and architecture of five case study sites are discussed, namely the friaries of Burrishoole, Moyne, Murrisk, Rosserk and Strade. The literature relevant to this study was reviewed and a number of key issues highlighted. These include the lack of scholarly attention devoted to medieval studies, attitudes to the medieval period in Ireland, and the debates concerning the Reformation in Ireland and the Dissolution of the monasteries. A number of methodologies were utilised in this study, including architectural surveys of the case study sites and comparative analysis. Primary source material was integrated into this study, although the dearth of documentary sources for the late medieval church in Ireland should be noted. The history of the friaries was examined and placed in the broader context of developments in late medieval Ireland, where they formed part of the revival of the Gaelic and Gaelicised communities in the fifteenth century. Architecturally, the friaries display the Late Irish Gothic style. Moyne and Rosserk are structurally well preserved with their domestic ranges intact, making them the most complete of the case study sites. The architectural surveys found that the friaries contain varying amounts of ornamentation with fine examples at Strade and Rosserk. This study makes an important contribution to the growing field of medieval studies in Ireland by focusing on a group of friaries which have elements of Irish and even European importance.

Chapter One:

Introduction

“An important exception to the generally depressing state of the Gaelic church was the revival in the mendicant orders. One manifestation of this was the efflorescence of Irish Gothic architecture”.

(Ellis, 1998, p. 196)

This research aims to explore the mendicant friaries in late medieval Mayo in terms of their archaeology, architecture and the circumstances of their foundation. The mendicant orders are any of the various religious orders (as in the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites or Augustinians) in which monastic life and outside religious activity are combined, and in which neither personal nor community tenure of property are allowed under original regulations. These orders originally came to Ireland in the thirteenth century, leading to the first phase of friary building. The second phase of friary building, which took place in the fifteenth century, is the concern of this study. This proliferation of friaries was a feature of the increasing power of the Gaelic community in the west of Ireland in the fifteenth century and also of the Gaelic sympathies amongst the Anglo-Irish (Rae, 1993), a group whom Nicholls (2003) refers to as the ‘Gaelicised’ community. These friaries were infused with a revived architectural spirit (Harbison *et al.*, 1993), which makes them architecturally distinct as a group. They exhibited an eclectic style of architecture known as Late Irish Gothic which included such elements as pointed arches, characteristic of the Gothic style, in addition to reviving elements of older styles such as the rounded Romanesque arch. This study aims to investigate, analyse and catalogue this style as exhibited in Mayo’s late medieval mendicant friaries.

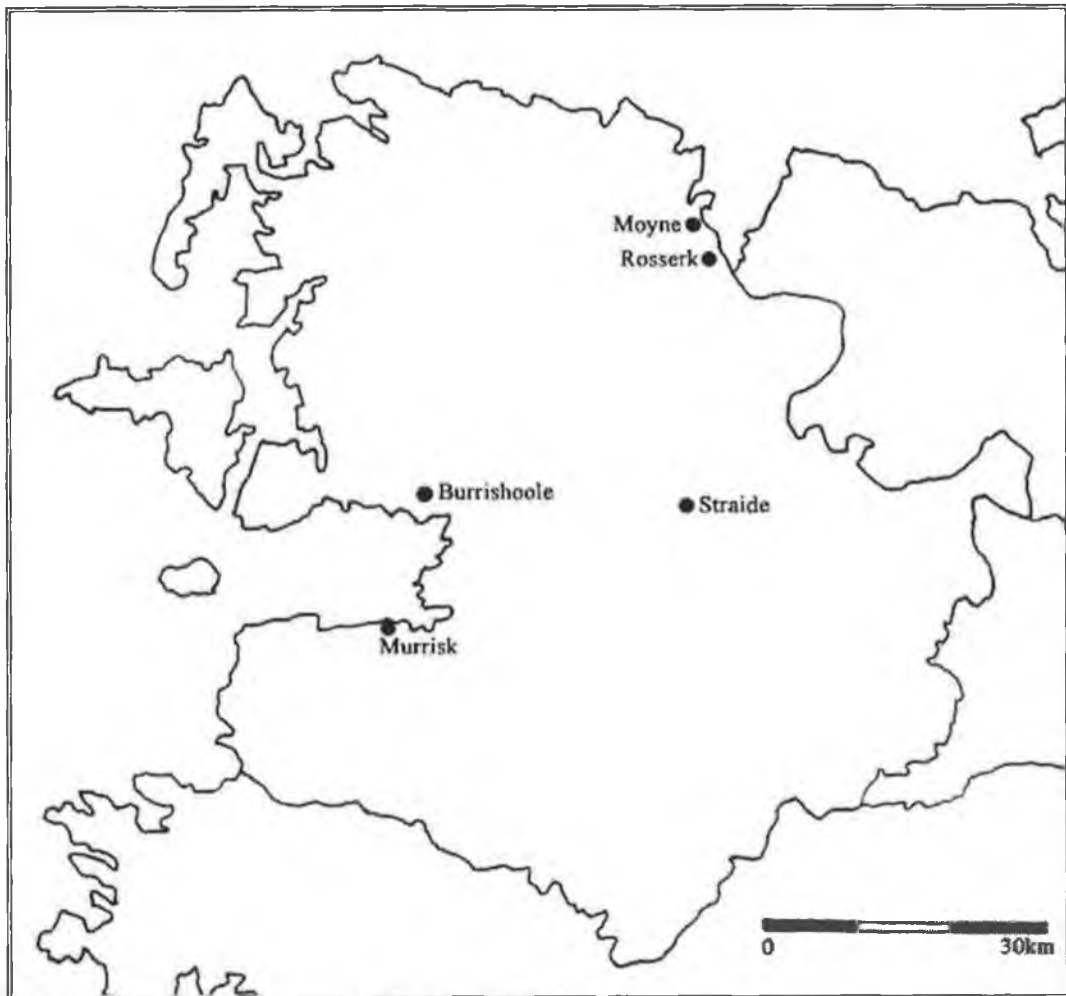
The three main components of this thesis will deal with the history of this group of friaries, the architecture of the friaries and their associated archaeology, particularly in artefactual form. According to Roe (1966), the potential worth of material gained from the study of medieval religious houses can scarcely be exaggerated from the point of view of interest in the life and thought of medieval Ireland.

Approximately nine new friaries were built by the mendicant friars in Mayo in the fifteenth century, and these are now in various states of repair. Moyne and Rosserk are the best preserved of these. Their churches and domestic buildings remain intact

but they are missing their roofs. These two friaries are considered to be among the finest in Western Europe in terms of preservation (Jenner, 1993).

Four mendicant orders are listed above; of these, only the Carmelites did not establish a new foundation in Mayo in the fifteenth century. For the purpose of this research, one house with significant remains from each of the three other orders will be studied in depth (See Figure 1.1). Murrisk is an Augustinian house, overlooked by Croagh Patrick and situated on the shores of Clew Bay. Murrisk was home to the Austin Friars or Eremites of Saint Augustine. These friars should not be confused with the Augustinian Canons Regular, who were not mendicant friars and who could more favourably be compared with the Cistercians in terms of their religious practices and architectural layout. Burrishoole is a Dominican house also known as Saint Mary's Priory and is located near Newport. It was founded by Richard de Burgo of Turlough, County Mayo. The Franciscan Order is actually comprised of three separate elements, namely the First Order or Order of Friars Minor, a Second Order of Contemplative Nuns (the Poor Clares), and the Third Order or Tertiaries, also called the Order of Lay Penance. Moyne Friary is situated on the edge of Killala Bay and belonged to the Franciscan First Order. The remains here are extensive and many rooms retain their vaulted ceilings. The Tertiaries were particularly popular amongst patrons in late medieval Ireland. They founded a house less than four kilometres away from Moyne Friary called Rosserk, which will also be included as one of the principal case studies for this research. No comparable development of a Franciscan Third Order took place in England and there were only two houses of this order in Scotland (Barry, 1987). Additionally, there is nothing similar on the Continent, where the Third Order was a secular group living amongst the community. This order was especially widespread in Connacht and Ulster in the later Middle Ages. Additional friaries will be examined for comparative purposes.

This research covers the date range 1400 to 1540 and is principally concerned with mendicant friaries built at this time. However, considerable rebuilding and renovation took place in many of the older foundations in the fifteenth century. For this reason,



Map 1.1: Location of the case study sites in County Mayo

the Priory of the Holy Cross in Strade is included in this study. It was originally founded for the Franciscans in the thirteenth century and was subsequently transferred to the Dominicans. The Priory has many important fifteenth century features, including a tomb niche and *Pietà*.

The study will examine the influences that shaped the development of the Late Irish Gothic style that is evident in these friaries. The fact that these foundations belonged to the mendicant orders means that a certain restraint was manifested in the decorative features of the buildings, as the rules pertaining to tenure of property forbade excesses in terms of decoration and stylistic embellishments. This was especially true of those houses that adopted the Observant reform. This reform stressed strict observance of the rules and constitutions of the various orders and was a reaction to the perceived laxity of principle within the religious orders, known as Conventualism. In addition, attention will also be devoted to the way in which the mendicant friars adapted the claustral plan. The Cistercians, who introduced this plan to Ireland, had specific dictates on how buildings should be arranged within the confines of the claustral plan. Therefore, the plan was very much standardised by this order, so much so that it was said a blind monk visiting a different Cistercian house would be able to navigate simply by using his knowledge of the plan (O'Reilly, 1998). The mendicant orders were initially less stringent and systematic in their approach to an architectural framework; Saint Dominic viewed such a framework as being directly contrary to the pursuit of poverty (Fawcett, 1996). As the orders became more institutionalised in response to their rapid growth, they gradually came to favour a more organised architectural setting. This study will assess the extent to which Cistercian ideas pertaining to layout were incorporated into mendicant houses and will also seek to address the degree of standardisation of layout that existed in the mendicant friaries as opposed to the Cistercian abbeys.

Medieval friaries did not exist in isolation in the landscape, but had associated elements such as granges, field systems and gatehouses. This research will seek to ascertain the presence of such archaeology related to the chosen study sites.

This study is defined not only in terms of its aims and objectives but also in terms of the spatial and temporal limits of the subject matter it encompasses. Firstly, County

Mayo has been chosen as the geographical location for the study as it provides a study sample of sufficient size to allow for a valid analysis of the archaeology and architecture of the mendicant friars without being so large as to prohibit in-depth scrutiny of particular sites. The sites chosen for in-depth examination are indicative of the principal regions within the county where friary building was particularly popular – namely the north and west. The temporal limits of this study are defined as covering the late medieval period, but more specifically the years from 1400 to 1540. Very little building activity took place in Ireland in the fourteenth century for reasons including the Black Death, civil unrest caused by the Bruce Invasion and the decline experienced by the English Lordship in Ireland. The friaries pertinent to this research date from the fifteenth century. The end of the medieval period in Ireland has usually been placed at *c.* 1534 (Rae, 1993), a date that is associated with the Tudor reconquest of Ireland. However, the date range of this study extends to 1540 in order to encompass the initial impacts of the Henrician Reformation and the Dissolution of the monasteries in its scope.

Medieval friaries did not exist in isolation in the landscape, but had associated elements such as granges, gardens, field systems and gatehouses. Many were bounded by outer precinct walls or enclosures. This area, however, has not been included in the remit of this study, the archaeological component of which will focus on the friary buildings themselves and the artefacts associated with them.

This study draws from the disciplines of archaeology and history in addition to studies of architecture, thus displaying the multidisciplinary that is characteristic of the field of heritage studies. By doing this and by combining secondary and primary data in a new synthesis, this study aims to contribute to each of these fields individually and to the broader area of heritage studies. This research not only deals with the friaries themselves but also attempts to elucidate some details of their context in terms of historical and architectural developments that impacted on their foundation and growth. This contextualisation can be compared to Smith's (2001) metaphor of using wide angles and zoom lenses in order to understand a historical situation.

The importance and value of this research are evident on a number of levels. Firstly, the majority of the friaries in question have not previously been subjected to intense

scrutiny in a single study. In addition, this assemblage of friaries has not been studied as a group. Little in-depth comparative evaluation of these friaries has taken place, with the exception of the comparisons drawn between Moyne and Rosserk. The style in which these friaries are built is known as Late Irish Gothic. Champneys (1910) first noted the existence of this style and its characteristic features; however with the exception of Leask (1960), little attention has been given to describing and cataloguing this style. This study aims to uncover how this Late Irish Gothic style is exemplified in the friary buildings in County Mayo. No comprehensive analysis of the late medieval mendicant friaries in County Mayo has been undertaken, despite the comparative rarity of these buildings in a European context. The sites included as cases studies are representative of elements of the medieval Irish church that are of European importance, such as the development of the 'Third Order Regular' and the Observant reform which became dominant in Ireland but was never particularly significant in England. The additional evidence provided by adopting a multidisciplinary perspective adds to the validity of this study.

Gillespie (1998) outlines the three major organising principles which historians use in presenting the past – people, place and time. In this instance, the people are the mendicant friars; the place, County Mayo and more specifically the mendicant friaries; and the time, 1400–1540. This chapter is followed by a review of the literature pertaining to this research, which expresses views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and evaluates the source material relevant to this study. The theoretical basis of this research is also assessed as part of the literature review. The methodology utilised is outlined in Chapter Three, which will show the appropriateness of the techniques used to gather data and explain the methodological approaches that were employed. Following this are the three core chapters of the study, which are arranged thematically. The first of these presents a discussion of the historical background of the friaries in question and of Ireland and Mayo in the late medieval period and examines daily life in a medieval religious house. Chapters Five and Six furnish an in-depth scrutiny of the physical remains of the friaries and their associated archaeology. Chapter Six will also investigate how archaeological monuments have been used for nationalistic purposes and the importance of antiquarianism in relation to such structures. In Chapter Five, findings from the surveys of the Franciscan friaries are outlined and discussed. Chapter Six deals with

the architecture and archaeology of the Dominican and Augustinian houses. Finally, Chapter Seven comprises the conclusions of this research and presents a critical analysis of the evidence uncovered during the course of this study.

Chapter Two: **Literature Review**

Introduction

The literature relevant to this study forms a continuum, ranging from works dealing specifically with the individual friaries in question to more general works that are necessary to place the friaries in their local, national and European contexts. Many works will fall somewhere between these two extremes. This research has three main strands dealing with history, archaeology and architecture, and these are reflected in the literature consulted. A number of significant issues and debates pertinent to this research were observed in the course of reviewing the literature. These debates include the past neglect of the study of the medieval period, the need for a greater focus on the medieval period within Irish disciplines such as history and archaeology, and the progress that has been made thus far. The 'two-nation theory' of medieval Ireland, referring to the degree of involvement between the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish, and whether such distinctions are even relevant are addressed. There is also a continuing debate about the nature of the Reformation that took place in Ireland in the mid-sixteenth century, and whether this can in fact be called a Reformation at all (Bottigheimer, 2000). The topic of the Dissolution of the monasteries is also inherent in this contentious issue. Such issues as those outlined above will be considered in this literature review, in addition to revisionist approaches in Irish historiography pertaining to medieval studies. Overall, this review will critically evaluate the key sources relevant to this research, it will broach the main problems and questions that have been addressed to date, and will present the major issues and debates surrounding the topic. Having established the context of this research, gaps in the literature will be highlighted in order to distinguish what has previously been done from what needs to be done, which will help to justify this research.

The Architecture and History of the Religious Orders

Roe (1966), in her presidential address to the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, praised Leask as one of the few to focus on the medieval period at that time. Leask's (1955, 1958, 1960) three volume *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings* deals with 1,000 years of ecclesiastical architecture in Ireland from the early Irish monasteries and round towers up to the end of the medieval period. O'Keefe (2000) points out the existence of conceptual weaknesses, especially in the first volume (1955), but insists that it remains the standard text in its field, as does O'Connor (1998). Considering its broad focus, Leask's work could not deal with individual friaries in

great depth; instead it outlines the framework of architectural developments, allowing the study sites to be compared and contrasted with contemporary examples of mendicant and other foundations. It also has a strong pictorial focus as Leask believed illustration to be essential to the study of buildings (Leask, 2003). Plans and photographs of the buildings in question are complemented by Leask's own drawings of architectural features. Champneys' (1910) *Irish Ecclesiastical Architecture* covers similar ground, in terms of content. Both describe the main stylistic and structural developments in ecclesiastical architecture, illustrating how different buildings conform to these and what variations occurred. Despite the passage of time and the information that has come to light through research and excavation in the intervening years, these publications have not been surpassed as far as providing a general survey of Ireland's medieval ecclesiastical architecture is concerned. Leask (2003) also authored *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses*, which has long been a major source in the study of medieval Irish castles.

Another approach to the study of medieval architecture is to confine the study to a particular religious order. One such example is Stalley's (1987) *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*. Despite dealing with a different order to those included in this research, it is nonetheless relevant for the purpose of comparison because it deals with the claustral plan introduced into Ireland by the Cistercians and used, with adaptations, by the mendicant friars. Similarly, Doggett (1996) deals with the medieval monasteries of the Augustinian Canons Regular, who, unlike the Eremites of Saint Augustine or Augustinian friars, were not mendicants. Doggett (1996) believes that this order has been neglected in comparison with the attention received by the Cistercians and Franciscans. He believes that this is attributable to the fact that the order died out in the later medieval period and lacked the cohesiveness of the other orders. Dealing with such aspects as the features of the monastic plan, life in the monastery and the abbot's place within the monastery, Doggett's (1996) study can only redress the balance to a small extent due to its brevity. Martin (1961) has a specifically historical focus and deals with the reform in the Irish Augustinian Movement in the fifteenth century in Ireland. In contrast to Doggett (1996), his subject matter is that of the Augustinian friars as opposed to the Augustinian canons. He discusses how the Observant movement manifested itself in the Augustinian order in the fifteenth century and accounts for the growth of the Augustinian friars in the

west of Ireland at this time. Martin's (1961) study forms part of a volume entitled *Medieval Studies*, covering varied aspects of the medieval world, principally, though not exclusively, pertaining to the church in Ireland as well as England and Europe.

Mooney (1955, 1956, 1957a and 1957b) scrutinises the architecture of the Franciscan First Order in Ireland prior to the Reformation. Each element of friary architecture, both the church and domestic buildings, is discussed in depth. It should be noted that Mooney is occasionally dogmatic, refuting the views of others without fully justifying his reasons. Moyne Friary is one of the best preserved friaries of its time and is well integrated into Mooney's study, where it is discussed in the light of the varied features of Franciscan architecture in Ireland, both standard and unusual. His focus on the domestic or conventual buildings is uncommon within literature on monastic buildings in general, which usually tend to focus on the features of the church and cloister but spend little time considering the features and functions of the rooms within the domestic complexes of such buildings. Although Strade Friary was also a Franciscan foundation, it only remained so for a short time before being transferred to the Dominicans. This fact is reflected in the amount of attention it receives from Mooney. In any case, it is the fifteenth century developments at Strade, associated with the Dominican order, which are the concern of this study. Although this series of articles by Mooney are considered to be the standard work on Franciscan architecture in Ireland, they only deal with the architecture of the Franciscan First Order in Ireland and not the Franciscan Third Order Regular. Thus, such houses as Boofenaun, Killeenbrenan and Rosserk, which fall within the remit of this research, are not dealt with by Mooney in this instance. In fact, despite having by far the greatest number of fifteenth century houses of any religious order in Ireland (Watt, 1998), a major study of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in Ireland has yet to emerge. This may be a reflection of the paucity of architectural remains and archival evidence associated with this order. Watt (1998) states that this order was favoured amongst those in Gaelic Ireland; hence it is largely undocumented and beyond the historian's grasp. The fact that there was no significant, comparable development of Third Order friaries on the Continent or in Britain means that a broader comparative dimension for this order is lacking. Both of these factors contribute to validating this research, as Rosserk, the best preserved of the houses of the Franciscan Third Order, is included as a case study in this research. Nowhere in Ireland is the full layout of a

Franciscan Tertiary house so fully preserved as it is at Rosserk. Also relevant to this study are Mooney's (1958-59) discussions of the Franciscans in County Mayo. Further sources dealing with the Franciscan Order in Ireland include those by Meehan (1877), who reports on the state of the order in the seventeenth century, and Conlan's (1988) *Franciscan Ireland*, which focuses on the history of the Franciscan order in addition to placing Irish developments in their European context.

A number of studies have also been undertaken pertaining to the Dominican order, and these address aspects of their history and architecture. Mould's (1957) treatment of the order is primarily historical in nature and deals with the broad span of Dominican activity in Ireland from the arrival of the order in Ireland up to modern times. In contrast, Conlan (2002) only covers the medieval period, and despite focusing principally on architecture, historical detail is also included to more clearly elucidate key events that collectively and individually impacted on the foundation and growth of the friaries. Flynn (1993) deals with the Irish Dominicans from a historical perspective in the years between 1536 and 1641, encompassing the suppression of the monasteries and its aftermath. He also discusses the Observant movement in Ireland and its impact within the Dominican Order.

The gazetteer approach is a popular one where a selection of sites is divided, perhaps by county, date or alphabetically, and their history and/or archaeology and architectural features are outlined. Such an approach was used in Harbison's (1970) *Guide to the National Monuments of Ireland*, where the sites and monuments are listed by county, and in Gwynn and Hadcock's (1988) *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland*, in which the houses are divided by order with a historical account of each one based on documentary sources. While this approach certainly has its benefits, such as concise information in a single entry for a particular source, drawbacks include a lack of comparative detail or focus on styles and movements. In addition, they tend to be very factual in nature and sometimes lack the discursive element of writings by Barry (1987) and O'Keefe (2000). Other works adopting this approach include Archdall (1786), McParlan (1802), Harbison (1989) and Meehan (2002).

The majority of the publications mentioned above would be placed towards the specific end of the continuum mentioned earlier; however, there are others of a less

specific nature that outline the background context of medieval Ireland. In the field of history, these include works by Moody and Martin (1994) and medieval histories by scholars such as Otway-Ruthven (1968), Curtis (1973), Cosgrove (1981), and Richter (1988). Curtis (1973) only deals briefly with the church in medieval Ireland, focusing instead on the political situation and the relationship between the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish. Foster (1989) sets out the framework of post-medieval developments that had a major impact on perceptions of the medieval period and the amount of scholarship devoted to it. From an archaeological and architectural viewpoint, Barry (1987), Harbison *et al.* (1993), O'Brien and Harbison (1996) and O'Keefe (2000) provide contextual material for an Irish setting. Craig (1989) and Rothery (1997) both survey the development of architecture in Ireland from its early origins, each adopting a slightly different focus. The latter builds up a chronology of Irish architecture using specific case studies complimented by succinct drawings of elevations and other features of the relevant buildings. In contrast, Craig (1989) adopts a more discursive approach, addressing the major trends in architecture with accompanying photographs. McCullough and Mulvin (1987) also focus on the varied architectural types found in the Irish landscape. While the architecture of Britain and Ireland from 600 to 1500 is discussed by Archer and Smith (1999), the broader European situation is dealt with by Cruickshank (1996). Hourihane (2003) discusses Gothic art in medieval Ireland, although he concerns himself only with certain areas of Gothic art, for example doorways, but excludes other significant aspects, such as tomb sculpture. The church in medieval Ireland is explored by Watt (1998), who adopts a predominantly historical focus while asserting that much work remains to be done regarding Irish medieval ecclesiastical archaeology. In addition, he states, "of all the medieval centuries the fifteenth has been the least well studied" (Watt, 1998; p. 264). It is often those centuries of the medieval period in which the Anglo-Normans arrived and settled that are the focus of medieval studies in Ireland, which is ironic considering that the medieval period as a whole was often overlooked due to the involvement of these new arrivals. Duffy *et al.* (2001, p. 21) acknowledge a "modest but encouraging" revival of interest in post-Norman Gaelic Ireland.

Medieval Studies in Ireland

Duffy *et al.* (2001, p. 32) suggest that a historiography of Irish archaeology would reveal that the emphasis given to the study of Irish prehistory and early Christianity

during the so-called 'Celtic' revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been a "stubborn legacy" to the discipline. It has been suggested by O'Connor (1998) that the preponderance of studies dealing with the prehistoric and early Christian periods in Ireland could be a manifestation of the natural predilection of archaeologists for studying periods for which there is little in the way of documentary evidence. In addition, he states that the focus on these earlier periods was "partly an archaeological reflection of the nationalism that pervaded much of Irish society" (O'Connor, 1998, p. 11). It is acknowledged that within the context of Irish archaeology, much progress has been made regarding the area of medieval archaeology. However, the view of archaeology as a discipline primarily concerned with prehistory seems to persist within the broader archaeological setting outside of Ireland. Archaeological texts concerned with areas such as theory and methodology frequently overlook the medieval period. Renfrew and Bahn (2000), for instance, mention the medieval period ten times (and only briefly in each case) in their 640-page volume. No mention is made within this source of how to study medieval archaeology or of its importance, and while social, environmental and cognitive archaeology are explored, this is done in relation to prehistoric case studies. To a certain extent, this is reflective of the interests of the authors, both of whom are prehistorians. Gilchrist (1999) comments on the scarcity of interaction between archaeological theory and medieval archaeology.

A further illustration of the neglect of medieval studies comes from O'Connor (1998), who concluded that the medieval period was under-represented in Irish archaeology. Using the evidence of the archaeological papers published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* and *Journal of Irish Archaeology* between 1987 and 1997, he found that only 16 articles dealt with aspects of the medieval period, while 137 covered the prehistoric and Early Christian periods. O'Connor (1998) uses these findings to underscore what he considers to be the continued neglect of the medieval period in Irish archaeology.

Ireland was not the only place where such a negative bias towards medieval studies was evident. The Gothic style was prevalent in Europe in the medieval period; the term Gothic has pejorative connotations, which hint at the perception of the later

Middle Ages in post-medieval times. It was coined by the sixteenth century Italian artist and historian Giorgio Vasari to refer to all medieval art, which was judged to be the work of barbarians (Yarwood, 1976). It was called Gothic after the Visigoths, an early Germanic people who sacked Rome in AD 410 (Wilkins *et al.*, 1997). The Gothic style was judged by Renaissance scholars to be crude and without reason. Incidentally whilst it was fashionable, the Gothic style was known as *opus modernum* (modern architecture). Vasari, however, had articulated the thinking of his time, which equated medieval architecture (and by extension the medieval period in general) with barbarism, a view Nelson (2003) believes persists today in some quarters. Renaissance scholars spurned the immediate past, the medieval period, and instead invoked the distant eras of classical learning. It is a recurring theme in history that people of one era reject the style and learning of that which preceded them and the Renaissance attitude to the Middle Ages is an example of this.

Cunningham and Gillespie (2003) discuss the lack of documentation associated with Gaelic Ireland. They attribute this to a number of factors. Many of those records that existed have been destroyed; other types of records were never made in the first place. As explained above, outside of the Pale, Ireland was composed of a series of semi-autonomous lordships, many of which paid little attention to the dictates of the King or his officials. A lack of effective centralised government resulted in a lack of the documents associated with government rule. The oral tradition in Ireland remained very strong, further militating against the production of written documents. Even the twelfth century visitor Giraldus Cambrensis bemoaned (amongst many other things) the state of Irish chronicles. He described them as being:

“heaped together by the native writers in a loose and disorderly manner, with much that is superfluous or absurd, and being composed in a rude and barbarous style”
(Wright, 2000, p. 5)

The study of the Gothic style in Ireland, according to Hourihane (2003), has suffered as it has been seen as the art of the invader, a perception that does not account for its popularity in the architecture of the Gaelic revival in the fifteenth century. Harvey (2003, p. 151) states that the traditional view of medieval Britain depicted it as the scene of an oppressive feudal society, and believes that the popular conception of “a medieval ‘dark period’ of superstitious backwardness and straight-jacketed serfdom

has continued". Interestingly, the Gaelic-Irish were often viewed in medieval times as being wild and uncivilised by the British, a society which is now often stereotyped in these same terms when referring to the medieval period. Such a portrayal of the Irish can be observed in the work of writers such as Giraldus Cambrensis. Griffiths (2003) deals with the perceptions that the peoples of the British Isles had of each other in the fifteenth century, as well as the judgments made by European travellers about these groups. In both Britain and Europe, the study of medieval archaeology lagged behind that of earlier periods. It was in Britain in the 1950s when post-war reconstruction was undertaken that interest in the medieval period began, as previously buried medieval material was uncovered. This interest in the archaeology of the Middle Ages was to surface at a much later stage in Ireland.

Locally-based studies

Another area of literature to be considered concerns local studies dealing with County Mayo or areas within it. Gillespie (1998, p. 9) refers to "the influential position of the county as a unit of study of Irish local history in the past". Two major histories of Mayo have been published by Knox (1908) and Quinn (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2000, 2002) and continue to be relied upon by those studying aspects of the county's history. A problem with both of these sources is their age. Quinn's volumes are collections of articles he published in the *Western People* from 1931 to 1939. Thus, new perspectives have not been taken into account in these works. In addition, Quinn's writings can, on occasion, be seen to rely on opinion rather than fact. Ní Cheanáinn (1988) discusses selected aspects of Mayo's history, while O'Hara (1982) has edited a volume of contributions regarding varied aspects of the heritage of County Mayo. Such aspects as history, geology, place names and archaeology are included in this edition. Meehan's (2003) *The Story of Mayo* is a wide-ranging study covering such aspects pertinent to this study as religious buildings and pilgrimage.

Other studies have been undertaken covering small areas of the county. Morahan (2001), for example, deals with Croagh Patrick and its immediate vicinity and hence includes Murrisk Friary within its remit. Donohoe (2003) records the history of Crossmolina in a style that can be unfocused and confusing. Local folk tradition is integrated into the account, which deals with the monastic tradition in Errew. Corlett's (2001) *Antiquities of West Mayo* is a chronological account of the

archaeology of the area comprising the baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk, which were part of the ancient territory known as Umhall. It combines discussion of archaeological sites and artefacts with pertinent historical detail and context, whilst incorporating references to folk beliefs associated with the antiquities. It has a strong pictorial basis, including numerous high-quality photographs and figures, and includes the friaries of Murrisk and Burrishoole, which are case studies in this research.

Comparative evidence

In contrast to the local aspect, there is also the broader comparative dimension to this research. Friary buildings did not spring up in isolation from other architecture; instead they were influenced, to varying degrees, by the architecture of other areas, for example other parts of Ireland and Britain in addition to influences from continental Europe. Historical and archaeological studies of ecclesiastical buildings in Britain include those by Greatex (1994), Postles (1996), McHardy and Orme (1999), and Licence (2003). Colvin (2000) studies the phenomenon of chantries, endowments of chapels or altars made in Western Europe in the later Middle Ages by those anxious to ensure their salvation. Clark (2000) considers the Henrician Reformation and the reaction and resistance it encountered at Saint Albans Abbey in Hertfordshire. The issue of the Reformation is one which is dealt with elsewhere in this review. Stollard (1993) examines the social history of the cathedral in medieval England. He explains many principles of ecclesiastical building that were commonplace in Britain and Ireland and the symbolism these buildings would have had for the congregations. The varied needs of the laity and clergy were catered for by the evolving design of ecclesiastical buildings.

Yarwood (1976) focuses on the architecture of Britain throughout history. Her chapter dealing with the use of the Gothic style in ecclesiastical architecture provides a framework for the development of the main phases of the Gothic style in Britain. Many of these developments have parallels in Ireland. Ultimately, the paths of the Gothic style in Britain and Ireland diverged as the former embraced Perpendicular Gothic architecture, while the latter, particularly in the west, evolved the Late Irish Gothic style, combining disparate influences of earlier styles. Fawcett (2002) has a more limited temporal scope than Yarwood (1976), which facilitates a greater

concentration on individual features. In his study of Scottish medieval churches, Fawcett (2002) includes within his remit cathedrals, abbeys, priories, friaries, collegiate and parish churches, as well as lesser chapels. He focuses on the architectural features such as towers, windows, columns and arcades, as well as the furnishings such as altars, *sedilia*, *piscinae* and choir stalls that are associated with the buildings in question. Clearly documented within this volume are the many stylistic variations that evolved during the medieval period. It allows for parallels to be made between Scottish architectural practices and Irish ones in the Middle Ages. In addition, Fawcett (2002) deals with Scottish examples of features that have not survived well in an Irish context, such as choir stalls and decorative painting. Dent and McDonald (1998) address the ecclesiastical heritage of the Scottish Borders, taking a fourfold approach that encompasses the historical background, the Christian community, social and environmental impacts, and architectural and archaeological remains.

In a historical vein is Knowles' (1962) tripartite study of the religious orders in England. He deals with the history of the introduction and development of the various religious orders, including the mendicant friars, to England. The study also incorporates a view of the monasteries in the medieval world and chronicles their position in later medieval times and in the Tudor Age. It also deals with the Dissolution of the monasteries in England. In contrast, Crossley (1935) deals predominantly with the architecture of monastic houses in England. Although generally on a much larger scale than what would be found in Ireland, these English religious houses incorporate many similar features to Irish examples.

White Marshall and Rourke's (2000) study of High Island, an early Christian monastery off the coast of County Galway, provides a comparative dimension for this research. Although it deals with a site dating from a different period to the case study sites in this research, it provides a framework for the multidisciplinary study of ecclesiastical sites. It covers such aspects as the monastic church and living quarters, the enclosure wall, burials, decorated stonework and the monastic watermill. In addition, it makes widespread use of historical and modern photographic, pictorial and cartographic evidence in order to chart the evolution and decay of the site. Conjectural reconstruction is also used as a tool for interpretation of the evidence.

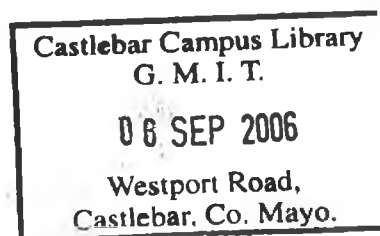
Growth of medieval studies in Ireland

Reviewing the literature concerning archaeology over the past two decades, it is clear that there has been an increasing amount of attention devoted to the study of Ireland's medieval archaeological endowment. Barry (1987), who wrote the first synthesis of work pertaining to the medieval period, stated that medieval archaeology was at a youthful stage in both Britain and mainland Europe, but that it was in its infancy in Ireland. This was by no means a new revelation. The dominance of prehistoric and early Christian archaeology and the consequent neglect of later periods had been decried much earlier by Raftery (1963), who remarked on the irony that much more was then known of man's life in 1600 BC than in AD 1600. He argued, with perhaps an element of exaggeration, that "no study worth talking about has ever been done on the material remains of the period from the thirteenth century onwards". Roe (1966) also commented on the surprising extent to which the study of medieval Irish remains had been ignored and emphasised the potential worth of the study of such material. Barry (1987) believed that the concentration on these earlier periods was intended to emphasise Ireland's unique cultural identity, free from the impact of subsequent invaders and colonisers. Archaeology was not the only discipline affected. The impact of this phenomenon has also manifested itself in the writing of medieval history (Cosgrove, 1990), which, coloured by a nationalist agenda, tended to view the coming of the Anglo-Normans as the beginning of an unwanted British presence in Ireland. In such an atmosphere, medieval studies could not flourish. This attitude to medieval studies becomes most evident from the foundation of the state in 1922 onwards. Ellis (1986) believes that a nationalist perspective is still evident in Irish archaeology and believes that the notion of the 'Gaelicisation of the Anglo-Irish' is a nationalist contrivance.

McNeill (2002) refers to the 'lost infancy' of Irish medieval archaeology and notes that excavation was crucial to this process. Irish archaeology has now, he states, been enabled to move on from simple description to explanation and debate, a move that he believes is exemplified by O'Keefe (2000). Some areas of neglect remain, he concedes, and he highlights the tendency to jump from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Similarly, O'Keefe (2000) also concludes that the study of medieval archaeology is no longer in a state of infancy, but emphasises that imbalances remain.

He notes that much more is known about the archaeology of the colonial period (1169 to the early fourteenth century) than the later Middle Ages (the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries). The tendency to overlook the fifteenth century has also been noted by Watt (1998). The amount of progress yet to be made with regard to studies of the medieval period in general and the fifteenth century in particular help contribute to the justification of this research.

While an increase has clearly taken place in the study of aspects of medieval Ireland, it is also evident that certain areas have received more attention than others. One area that has benefited from the increased focus on the medieval period is the archaeology of towns. Johnson (2000) undertook a review of urban archaeology research on behalf of the Heritage Council. Although, as the author points out, it is incorrect to regard urban archaeology and the urban Viking and medieval material as being synonymous, much of the archaeological excavation in towns deals with material of a medieval nature (other earlier archaeological layers of a non-urban nature may underlie the urban material). The increase in urban excavations is a result of the increase in construction and redevelopment in urban areas. Johnson (2000) claims that the growth in urban excavation has not been accompanied by a parallel advance in urban archaeological research. McNeill (2000) states that the study of medieval castles in Ireland has suffered at the expense of interest in other types of monuments, and cites Leask's decision to publish a three volume study of ecclesiastical buildings (1955, 1966, 1978) and only a single volume on castles (2003) as being indicative of this trend. Conversely, Sweetman (1999) argues in his *Medieval Castles of Ireland* that the study of castles made great progress in Ireland from the 1990s onwards. O'Connor (1998) states that in terms of medieval archaeology, a greater amount of attention has been devoted to urban topics than to rural areas. In contrast to McNeill (2000), he contends that in Ireland, those archaeologists interested in non-urban archaeology mostly tend to concern themselves with researching castles. O'Connor (1998) argues for the need to redress the neglect of medieval rural settlement; hence the Discovery Programme initiated a project with this aim in 2001. Further justification for this research is provided by O'Connor's (1998) feasibility study, as the mendicant friaries that are the subject of this research are both medieval in date and rural in location.



Duffy *et al.* (2001) argue that the post-Norman Gaelic world is worthy of attention. Indeed they consider this “the missing slice of the cultural spectrum” (Duffy *et al.*, 2001, p. 34). O’Conor (1998) addresses the contribution made by historians and historical geographers to the study of rural medieval Ireland, as do Duffy *et al.* (2001). An interdisciplinary approach to the study of the medieval period has been adopted in this research as it allows a greater insight into the phenomenon of mendicant friaries in late medieval Mayo. Such an approach has also been characteristic of a series of county histories entitled *History and Society*, which Duffy *et al.* (2001) praise for their contribution to the study of Gaelic Ireland. Aspects of history, archaeology and historical geography have been combined into these studies. A number of counties have so far been published in this series including Galway (Moran and Gillespie, 1996); Cork (O’Flanagan and Buttimer, 1993), Tipperary (Nolan and McGrath, 1985), Waterford (Nolan and Power, 1992) and Donegal (Nolan *et al.*, 1995). The time span covered varies from one volume to the next, but most address some aspects of the medieval period in their particular county. In the Cork volume, O’Brien (1993) aims to explain the political, social and economic circumstances of late medieval Cork, while Nicholls (1993) discusses the development of the many essentially autonomous lordships in that county. Empey (1985) and Nicholls (1985) address aspects of Anglo-Norman and Gaelic communities in the County Tipperary volume, while Hennessy discusses parochial organisation in the county in medieval times. Simms (1995) and MacEiteagáin (1995) both examine Donegal in the late medieval period; the latter author draws attention to the fact that by this time, the Renaissance was underway in Europe. He assesses the impact of contact with centres of Renaissance activity on the lordship of Tír Chonaill, and in the process approaches an aspect rarely dwelt upon in the literature: the fact that much of the late medieval period in Ireland coincided with a time when the Renaissance was underway in Europe.

Two-nation theory

A prominent issue dealt with in the literature concerning medieval Ireland is that of the so-called ‘two-nation theory’. This theory implies that a dichotomous society existed in Ireland in medieval times. Of the two groups which constituted this dichotomy, the first are variously known as the Gaelic-Irish, the Irishry or Wild Irish and the second group, descendants of Anglo-Norman settlers, known as the Anglo-

Irish, Old English or Englishry. It suggests that a complete cultural and territorial schism existed between these two groups and represents them as opposing factions. Perhaps this belief is a product of the same nationalist influences which sought to overlook medieval studies as they dealt with 'invaders' (Barry, 1987) and their impacts. However, this notion is now believed to constitute a gross oversimplification of the reality of the political, cultural and social dynamics of late medieval Ireland. Some historians have gone so far as to propose the abandonment of the distinction between the two groups on the grounds that this inheritance is a hindrance which has nothing to contribute to the field of medieval studies, a move that Ellis (1986) propounds as being inherently misleading. He takes issue with MacNiocaill's contention that this distinction is "a bit of inherited old rope which has nothing to contribute to Irish medieval studies, methodologically or otherwise" (cited in Ellis, 1986, p. 163).

Cosgrove (1981) suggests that there were in fact three groups in late medieval Ireland, which he terms *Saxain*, *Gaedhil* and *Gaill*, adopting the nomenclature of the Irish annals. *Saxain* describes the 'English by birth', *Gaill* refers to those who were 'English by blood' or Anglo-Irish, whilst the Gaelic-Irish identified themselves as *Gaedhil*. However, the situation in Ireland was even more complex than even this classification suggests, as Cosgrove (1981) and Barry (1993) both acknowledge. The prevailing reality was that no direct correlation necessarily existed between descent and allegiance. Outside of the Pale, the country was composed of autonomous and semi-autonomous lordships under Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish control. Decisions were taken based on immediate political advantage and neither the Gaelic-Irish nor Anglo-Irish appear to have had any sense of unity as a group. It is wrong to credit these late medieval groups with nationalist sentiments that had not yet emerged. Davies (1999) states that people in Britain in medieval times understood that they belonged to a locality and to the church but that they would have had little concept of a national community, except as subjects of the king to whom their feudal lord owed allegiance. Frame (2001) states that the Irish had a strong sense of collective identity, based around language and custom, even before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. This, however, never manifested itself in centralised structures of government or even political unity. One cannot assume that the Gaelic-Irish were being wilfully disloyal to the crown, as they lay beyond the scope of the English institutions in Ireland; for

the most part, the monarchy was irrelevant to them. Continuous antagonisms did not exist between the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish, but instead a “fragmentation of authority” existed (Barry, 1993, p. 101). Frame (2001) believes that a sense of cultural oneness with political fragmentation was a persistent feature of Gaelic Ireland.

The Reformation

The Reformation in the British Isles took place in a number of stages, each associated with the particular monarch who presided over it. Of these, the Henrician and Elizabethan Reformations had the most significant impact in Ireland. It is only the first of these phases, the Reformation under Henry VIII and its ensuing break with Rome, which falls within the temporal scope of this study. A feature of the Henrician Reformation which is particularly pertinent to this study is the Dissolution of the monasteries, which was instigated by Henry VIII. Bradshaw was one of the first historians to adopt a revisionist approach to the Reformation in Ireland, a stance which is clearly evident in his *Dissolution of the Religious Orders in Ireland Under Henry VIII* (Bradshaw, 1974). In it, he sets out to assess the available evidence in order to evaluate the previous perceptions of the Dissolution in Ireland. He notes, for instance, that the Dissolution was not simply a product of the Reformation and Henry VIII’s break with Rome in 1536, but rather that a process of dissolution had been undertaken by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey between 1524 and 1529. There were, he states, excellent reasons for this, both religious and more broadly social. He also aims to rehabilitate somewhat the various parties involved in the Suppression, stating

“Few historians have had a good word to say for the monks and friars who occupied the religious houses in Ireland at the time of the Dissolution, or about those who participated in the campaign to suppress them and enriched themselves from the confiscated properties. This book has a good word to say for both”

(Bradshaw, 1974, p. viii)

Bradshaw (1974) dismisses the pervading negative attitude to both the monks and friars at the time of the Dissolution and those who participated in the campaign of suppression. He emphasises the importance of the Observant movement, which significantly impacted on three of the four mendicant orders in Ireland compared with England where it had little impact. He outlines a number of factors which he believes

provide convincing evidence that the state of monasteries in late medieval Ireland was not as dire as had been previously believed and had not deteriorated as much as in England. Bottigheimer (2000) and Bradshaw (2000) both make their individual assessments of the nature and extent of the Reformation and the impact of the revisionist approach to history on the study and interpretation of this period. Both reach strongly opposing conclusions, which are indicative of the dichotomy of opinion in historical circles regarding the Reformation and Dissolution in Ireland. The former acknowledges this dichotomy, although he does not embrace it, highlighting its “vexed nature as a topic” (Bottigheimer, 2000, p. 581).

Conclusion

What emerges from the foregoing evidence is that there are gaps in the knowledge of late medieval religious houses and, indeed, of late medieval Ireland as a whole. While general works on medieval archaeology and history are common, in-depth studies of individual religious houses are less so, with examples including Carville’s (1973) study of Holy Cross Abbey and Kalkreuter’s (2001) study of Boyle Abbey. A detailed study of the Cistercian Abbey on Clare Island has been completed by Manning *et al.* (2005). It addresses the history, architecture and archaeology of the abbey and its graveyard and associated monuments, in addition to including in-depth coverage of the Abbey’s wall paintings and placing it in its later Gothic context. Other, shorter studies of individual houses have appeared in archaeological journals including Leask’s (1943) treatment of Murrisk Abbey and O’Sullivan’s (1940, 1943) research on the monastic houses of Cork. Few medieval houses in Ireland have been excavated. This is due to a number of factors including the fact that much archaeology in Ireland is development-led; therefore rescue excavations are common. Excavation is more likely to take place in urban monasteries, many of which have deteriorated badly in condition with few remains above ground. The Dominican Priory of Saint Mary’s of the Isle in Cork has been excavated and the findings published (Hurley and Sheehan, 1995). Rural religious houses such as the case studies in this research are often well preserved due to the fact that development pressures were lower in such areas and the land was not needed for other purposes. This also means that fewer such sites have been excavated. One example of a rural medieval house that has been excavated is Mellifont, a Cistercian house, excavated by Liam de Paor in 1954–55.

The facts outlined above and the absence of a significant in-depth study of the fifteenth-century mendicant houses in Mayo makes them a viable choice for this research. This study occupies a niche in the literature outlined above, being a regionally-based study, including a group of religious houses not hitherto studied in detail as an ensemble, and some which have not been individually studied in detail. The combination of historical, archaeological and architectural material will be new with respect to most of these friaries overall. This research moves beyond previous work in its specific focus and context within existing literature, unlike the nineteenth-century sources. In addition, it involves the combination of data from disparate sources, which has not been utilised to study the group of friaries that form the core of this research. This study selectively draws upon the literature where it is relevant to the study and integrates it with discussion and analysis of survey findings.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the various methodologies – primary and secondary, qualitative and quantitative – that were utilised in the course of this research and discusses the appropriateness and suitability of these techniques in the light of the approaches that are potentially applicable to research such as this. The data collection techniques that were used are outlined, as are the methods which facilitated the analysis of the accumulated data.

Primary Sources

Primary and secondary research methods were utilised in the course of this research. Published primary sources such as the *Annals of the Four Masters* (1990), *Loch Cé* (Hennessy, 1997), *Connaught* (Freeman, 1970) and the *Irish Fiantis of the Tudor Sovereigns* (1994) were consulted for the purposes of obtaining historical evidence. With regard to sources, Gillespie (1998) makes the salient point that it is inadvisable to rely excessively on sources without adding much interpretation or explanation to them. Sources, he believes, “must be enticed to give up their secrets” (Gillespie, 1998, p. 8). Sources should not always be taken simply as statements of fact, instead one should bear in mind the leanings and bias of the writer. This was found to be the case with the primary sources that were consulted in the course of this research. In addition, it is important to bear in mind the views of Temple (2002) in relation to the growth of history writing which took place in the Middle Ages. He states that such works share a uniquely medieval worldview. Constructs of time and place in the medieval period were very different to what they are today, an issue discussed by Collingwood (1961). Therefore, it is necessary to view primary sources in the context of the time in which they were written, and to recognise that our interpretations of such sources can be coloured by our perceptions of the medieval period which are influenced by our modern experiences (Bloch, 1993). Written sources can be tendentious. In the words of a forthright eleventh century author, “with ink, anyone can write anything” (cited in Givens, 1999, p. 163).

The various Irish annals are one of the few surviving sources dealing with Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the late medieval period. Major events of the time are recorded, including battles and campaigns, deaths of prominent figures and occurrences such as famines, plagues and pestilence. As is often the case with medieval accounts, major

events in the lives of the notable few tend to be the focus with little concentration on details of the everyday existence of the nameless majority. Thus when it comes to evidence concerning medieval life, we are much better informed of the exception rather than the rule. In addition, the annals tend to focus on events that occurred locally. For example, the *Annals of the Four Masters* were compiled in Donegal and entries focus on Ulster and Connacht (Ó Clabaigh, 2005a). In spite of this, Cunningham and Gillespie (2003) argue that the annals could not be considered insular, as they include knowledge of significant events across Europe.

While the *Annals of Connacht* and *Loch Cé* were both written in the sixteenth century, the *Annals of the Four Masters* were compiled in the seventeenth century. Ó Clabaigh (2005a) asserts that the latter authors were influenced by the views of the Counter-Reformation, hence their habit of prioritising ecclesiastical entries. There is also a contrast between the factual reporting of the Henrician Reformation in the *Annals of Connacht* and *Loch Cé* and the editorialising style adopted by *the Annals of the Four Masters* on this subject.

Rather than presenting a coherent account of early Irish history, the annals contain entries relating to specific aspects of the time, arranged by year (but not necessarily in chronological order within this division). They are episodic in character but often leave significant gaps between what is chronicled and what is not. The later accounts did, however, exhibit a more discursive style than their earlier counterparts. Last (1995) analyses the use of medieval annals as historical sources and points out a number of difficulties inherent in their use. The events are largely unstructured apart from a loose (and sometimes inaccurate) temporal scale into which they are placed. There is a distinct lack of explanation of cause and effect; events seem to occur for no particular reason. Finally, he states, they lack any statement of context or conclusions.

MacNeill (2005) states that the strengths of archaeology lie in its independence from written documents, which tend to reflect the interests and biases of their authors. He also acknowledges, however, that medieval archaeology is concerned with a documented period, facilitating clearer chronologies and a sharpened focus on individuals and groups. In his juxtaposition of history and archaeology, he laments

the concentration on political history concerned with short-term and military events rather than the long-term view he associates with archaeology.

Mooney (1955, p. 135) described documentary sources as “the indispensable handmaiden of Irish archaeology”. A limitation on this study is the nature of the primary sources that were uncovered. These are sporadic at best and for the most part these fall after the 1540 cut-off point of the temporal range. In the late medieval period, literacy remained the domain of the few, hence the poor survival of documentary sources for medieval Ireland. The exhibition *Medieval Ireland 1150-1550* in the National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology and History reflects the trichotomous division of medieval society – power, work and prayer. Those in power produced the preponderance of surviving written material. Some of the religious community were literate, however many of the documents from religious houses were destroyed during the Dissolution or subsequent occupations. The people covered by the remaining category were mostly not literate. Hence the available documentary sources for the medieval period are biased in favour of those in power, generally colonial administrators whose view of Ireland was often coloured by their background. Not only are there few accounts of religious houses themselves but there is also a paucity of commentary from the ordinary people, those to whom the mendicant friars ministered.

Those documentary references which exist for the relevant friaries tend to focus only on major events in the history of the friaries such as foundation, fires and provincial councils. However, the post-1540 references are not entirely without use as those dating from after this time can detail the properties associated with the friaries such as lands, mills and messuages. Furthermore, many of the friaries did not cease to function as religious houses after their ostensible dissolution. In many instances, they were granted to sympathetic holders who allowed the friars to stay on. In addition, there are primary sources such as Donatus Mooney’s account of his visit to a number of Franciscan friaries in the seventeenth century, including Moyne and Rosserk (Meehan, 1877, Moloney, 1934). Such sources as this can elucidate details of life in a religious house, which although recorded at a later date than the limits of this study nonetheless suggest a large degree of continuity with late medieval practices. Comparing the details of accounts such as Mooney’s with those of other religious

houses for which such evidence has survived from the medieval period shows this to be the case.

A valuable source of information for this study, which is frequently overlooked, is nineteenth-century travel writing and the work of the antiquarians who travelled Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In such works, the author records his or her personal observations of a site and often includes descriptions of sites and monuments in a less advanced state of decay than at the present time, recording features that may no longer exist. A caveat regarding works of this genre should be noted, however, as the authors occasionally lack objectivity and local beliefs can be reported as fact. Many contain valuable illustrations and plates recording elements of structures that are no longer extant. These too should be approached with caution as the romantic conventions of the sublime and the picturesque can be evident; thus, buildings are shown in an aesthetically pleasing fashion and not according to the reality, which may sometimes be less in tune with these conventions. Examples from this genre that are relevant to this study include Barrow (1836), Fraser (1838), Otway (1839) and Greer (1918). Woods (1992) reviews such writings as source material and compares their style of anecdotal evidence to that given by a taxi driver to a journalist. Their existence as a contemporary and not retrospective record is seen as an advantage by Woods, who also acknowledges that this genre suffers the usual faults of the literary source, with the traveller's unfamiliarity with what they see sometimes proving problematic. Some modern authors have adopted the conventions of this genre, recording observations of archaeological monuments and other sites visited whilst travelling around Ireland, for example Jennett (1970 and 1980). However, Jennett also takes on one of the flaws of this genre, evidenced by his inclusion of inaccurate information. Beranger and Bigari's 1779 sketching tour of Connacht is dealt with by Harbison (2002). In this source, written observations undertaken at various sites are combined with sketches, watercolours and floor plans made by the two men on their travels. Sites such as Rosserk, Murrisk and Burrishoole are included. Travel writing had, incidentally, been undertaken in the medieval period, most frequently as a means of recording pilgrimages taken or as guides for prospective pilgrims (Scott, 2005). The theme of pilgrimage is a recurrent one in this research and is relevant to a number of the case study sites.

It is worthwhile to consult historical maps and depictions of these friaries as these can assist in determining phases of growth and decline, and can provide a means of understanding the appearance of the buildings at a particular time in the absence of substantial written sources to provide such data. Such images should be treated with the same caution as a written source, however. Antiquarian drawings are a case in point, especially one showing Strade Friary. This is clearly not a faithful representation of the actuality of what the artist saw. This is a reflection of the artistic conventions of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which focused on creating a picturesque representation of a scene. Other images have been influenced by the artistic conventions of the time in which they were produced. The margin for error in depictions is also extended by factors including bad draftsmanship and careless observation. The earliest surviving depiction of an Irish Franciscan friary is an image of Carrickfergus friary, dating to c. 1540, a time when the friary was still occupied by its religious community (Mooney, 1955). The late eighteenth century onwards is the most fruitful time for the production of views of the case study sites. Some cartographic evidence from before this time survives.

The use of modern maps was integral to this study. A variety of maps were produced in order to illustrate the distribution patterns of the houses of the various religious orders in medieval Ireland. Two distinct phases were relevant here, the original phase of introduction and growth of the so-called 'new religious orders' (the Cistercians and the mendicant orders) and the fifteenth century phase of expansion of the mendicant orders. A map was also produced to outline the locations of the five case study sites. Prunty (2004) in her *Maps and Map-making in Local History* outlines the various historical cartographic sources available to those studying Irish history. She also describes the different methodologies that can be utilised in the production of both computer-generated and hand-drawn maps.

The *Archaeological Inventory of County Galway* (Alcock *et al.*, 1999) adopts a similar approach to Harbison (1970). Its narrower study area allows a greater number of monuments within the county to be discussed individually and in more depth. A commendable feature is its use of aerial photography drawn from the collections of the Archaeological Survey of Galway and the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography (CUCAP). This tool has rarely been used in the other sources

consulted. Such surveys have been published covering a number of counties in Ireland including Monaghan, Cavan, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Laois, Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford (O'Connor, 1998), but no such study covering County Mayo has yet been published. Sweetman (1999) emphasises the importance of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. Within its publications, attention is given to the archaeological features associated with religious houses, such as monastic gatehouses. Such features are often accorded little prominence in the literature. Another source of aerial photographs is the National Photographic Archive, a branch of the National Library of Ireland.

Shanks and Hodder (1995) discuss the many ways in which the archaeological record may be perceived, handled and interpreted. These hinge on certain value judgements, with some aspects disregarded while others are emphasised. They take the example of a castle, archaeological studies of which would tend to focus on those aspects deemed worthy by conventional architecture. Measured plans would be drawn up and sequences of construction and alteration observed; line drawings would be prepared. However, they argue that this is but one method of representing the architecture. Turner, in his early nineteenth century studies of castles, focused on their situation within the landscape. Shanks and Hodder (1995) argue that a castle is both technical drawing and Romantic painting. So it is with the friaries that are the focus of this study. The two different ways of visual representation outlined above both have a place in this study. Antiquarian drawings, for example, are of value in interpreting these buildings and changing perceptions of them. As Shanks and Hodder (1995, p. 23) inquire "Were there no truths about the material past before the formalisation of archaeological methods from the late nineteenth century onwards?"

Taylor (1976) cites sculpture and decorated stone as potentially valuable sources of information, especially where there is a dearth of documentary sources. In this instance, evidence as to the date, origin and workmanship can be deduced using art historical methods. The value of comparative evidence is paramount in this instance as it is possible to discern the date of a particular feature by comparison with a similar feature in another site for which there is documentary evidence. In essence, this involves fitting a feature into a typology which has been compiled with reference to written sources. Comparative evidence also illuminates the circles of artistic

influence in which a feature was executed. This approach is summed up by Davis (1999, p. 418) as “the determination of chronology achieved by close inspection of a physical fabric, supported by available documents and comparative analysis with other monuments”.

The limits of this study are defined in terms of the buildings themselves. Although it is necessary to place the friaries in their broader context, such as in terms of the various mendicant orders and late medieval Ireland, such elements are not intended to distract from the main focus but will serve to enhance and compliment it. A further limit on this study is the spatial one, as discussed in Chapter One. This study is defined spatially in terms of County Mayo. Gillespie (1998) notes that the problem with locally-based studies is that they are often unconnected with the national perspective. In this research, attempts have been made to integrate the national perspective into the study where relevant and to the extent that the disparate collection of lordships that constituted Ireland in the Middle Ages can reflect a national perspective.

Survey Methodologies

As regards surveying and research methodologies, a number of sources were consulted in order to ensure that the most suitable methods are applied to the study. In the area of surveying, works by Baker (1993), Greene (1995) and Drewett (1999) are valuable. In addition, a number of research methods books, such as those by Hart (1998), Kitchin and Tate (1999), Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000), and Silverman (2000) were consulted.

Dallas (2003) outlines the various methods that can be used when undertaking surveys of historic buildings and covers a variety of methods from hand surveys to much more technical processes, such as architectural photogrammetry. These methods vary in their usefulness and possible applicability to a study such as this one. This research requires a certain type of data to facilitate the drawing of plans and elevations, but it does not involve the degree of detail that would be required for conservation work, where it may be necessary to record each brick in a building. Therefore, it is possible to rule out such techniques as photogrammetry and also orthophotography. Both of these approaches fall at the more detailed end of the spectrum of possible techniques.

At the opposite end are the techniques of hand survey, which are most suited to small areas. The most basic of these is the dimensioned sketch. This involves taking only a small number of measurements, perhaps two, on the long and short axes of a room. Details, such as windows, are sketched in without measurement. The potential for inaccuracy in this technique is significant; thus it did not feature prominently in this research.

Hand Survey	Dimensioned sketch Hand Survey
Instrument Survey	Electronic theodolites Electronic distance measurement Total station theodolites Laser scanning
Photographic survey	Pictorial photography Rectified photography Stereo photogrammetry Orthophotography

Table 3.1: Categorization of survey methods (Dallas, 2003), which are potentially applicable to this study.

According to Dallas (2003), the value of photography in studies of historic buildings is inestimable, including modern site record photographs and earlier photographs consulted for historic information. Photography also has a function as regards measurement of historic buildings. Most commonly, this involves the use of ranging rods in photographs to give an indication of the dimensions of the structure in question. Rectified photography involves obtaining a photograph so that the image is parallel to the façade and has a scale available relating it to the real façade. This can be a complicated process and is only suitable for certain types of buildings. Nonetheless, the importance of indicating scale remains. For the purposes of this study, the use of ranging rods for such a purpose is sufficient. More accurate information pertaining to the dimensions of the building can be obtained by direct measurement.

Architectural Survey

The primary aspect of this research also includes surveys of a number of case study sites, all of which have previously been mapped (Leask, 1943 and 1960). Complete surveys of them were therefore not necessary, but architectural surveys were undertaken to determine the type and variety of features there. Due to the size of the

friaries, the constraints of this study and the practical considerations of the architectural remains at each of the study sites, it was deemed necessary to choose an area of the friaries that could be commonly studied for each friary. Therefore, the church was chosen for more in-depth study as part of the architectural survey. The chancel, or choir as it is also known, is the eastern part of the church and contains the principal altar. It was the part of the church in which the friars would have sat during mass. The most elaborate features of friaries tend to be in the church not the domestic buildings, and the chancel typically contains a variety of features including a selection of window types, tombs and a piscina. The Church tends to be the best-preserved part of any friary and also contains the greatest number of features indicative of the age of a particular building. Murrisk is the only case-study site to have a single-celled church. All the others are divided into nave and choir and have a transept. Mendicant orders tend to favour simplicity of decoration, in keeping with their vows of poverty and this is reflected in their buildings. What decoration is found in the friaries tends to be concentrated in the church. Each of the five case study sites, regardless of condition, retains its church. Therefore, the architectural survey can be utilised to assess the degree of architectural commonality between the sites. The architectural survey involved:

1. the recording of these features,
2. their dimensions,
3. location within the chancel,
4. age,
5. condition
6. and a description of each one.

The results are listed at length as Appendix A. The recorded features were then plotted onto plans of the churches. Measurements were taken using a combination of twenty metre and hand tapes. A number of other features of interest outside the chancels of the case study friaries were also recorded. Colour photographs were taken of the sites and two-metre ranging rods included in these to indicate scale.

The case study sites in question, namely Burrishoole, Moyne, Murrisk, Rosserk and Strade are all designated as National Monuments and so are under state care. They are accessible to the public throughout the year. Therefore, there were no fieldwork restraints as regards access to the site. Throughout the study, photographs are used to

illustrate features of the friary that are referred to in the text. In addition, drawings can help to clarify architectural details and will be used for this purpose. Leask (2003) states that illustrations are essential to any critical and comparative analysis of buildings and that they are required to assist in judging the evolution, growth, development and age of a building. He stresses the need to use plans and illustrations in the area of architectural history. For the purposes of this research, plans are used in addition to drawings of features such as windows and also carved stone as found in features such as the cross-inscribed stones in Strade Priory.

AutoCAD (Computer-Aided Design) provides a valuable tool for the presentation of data gathered through architectural survey. Rather than providing the capability for producing a single drawing, it allows the user to create a flexible digital model. Floor plans for this study were produced using the AutoCAD software package Autodesk Architectural Desktop. These will be complimented by the inclusion of drawings illustrating the features and motifs of the relevant friaries. AutoCAD has the advantage of producing vector rather than raster graphics. This means that the user can zoom in on any section of an image without the image becoming distorted. Raster graphics, however, will become distorted and pixellated unless viewed at a particular size. Furthermore, a particular drawing can be plotted at any scale. Different layers can be included on a drawing. For example, the plan of Strade Friary included in this study (Figure 6.4) features four principal layers. The first is a line drawing of the plan, three others are colour-coded to correspond to the three phases of building activity. In AutoCAD, any layer or combination of layers can be turned on or off at a given time. Layers can also be locked or frozen to prevent changes being made to them. The OSNAP function allows the user to locate precise points on objects giving a greater accuracy to drawings and ensuring no unwanted gaps appear between lines when viewed up close.

Greene's (2001) strategy for investigating monastic sites

Greene (2001) outlines strategies for research and site investigation with respect to monastic sites. He notes that projects on a variety of scales can be undertaken; in combination, these can lead to the steady accretion of knowledge about individual sites, orders or monastic practices. He enumerates a number of methods, which can be utilised in the pursuit of knowledge about monastic sites, some of which will be

integrated into this research. Attempts can be made to determine the original layout of monasteries and modifications, such as expansion and contraction that took place and the reasons for these. Excavation can be undertaken at a site. Linked investigations should be pursued between sites with shared characteristics, for example the date of foundation, the size, the order, the presence of standing remains and earthwork features. In houses of similar foundation dates, he suggests that a common approach may be detected early on and in the subsequent history of the house, the ways in which the history and architecture of the houses diverged or paralleled each other would become apparent. He stresses the need for the recording of standing buildings due to the deterioration caused by such factors as air pollution, including that caused by particulate emissions from vehicles. Monastic cloisters are especially worthy of attention. Elements addressed would include the structure of cloister walk arcades, the cloister garth, drainage of the cloister and its position. Monastic precincts and properties should be investigated. This involves the study of the conventual or domestic buildings in addition to the grange associated with a monastery.

The study of artefacts associated with monastic sites can enhance the study of these sites and their remains. Greene (2001) states that there is a need for reports on anatomical research and burial practices in monastic churches and graveyards. The wealth of information produced by the study of environmental remains is emphasised by the author. Finally, the impact of the Dissolution, especially as regards the structural deterioration of the monastic buildings, is highlighted. Greene (2001) emphasises that the way in which monastic buildings were damaged or converted to new uses at the Dissolution or thereafter should be investigated using structural studies in addition to documentary, cartographic and pictorial research.

There are certain limitations pertaining to this research, which make some of Greene's (2001) proposals unrealistic and impractical. However, certain elements of it are quite suited to a study such as this dissertation. For example, undertaking excavation clearly is not a practical option for a study such as this one, nor was it be possible to deal with anatomical research and burial practices in relation to churches and graveyards as Greene (2001) suggests. Both this aspect and that of the study of environmental remains are reliant on the undertaking of excavation to produce data

for this sort of analysis. This study does, however, attempt to determine the original layout of the friaries included as study sites by using a combination of architectural evidence and assessment based on standard practices of friary layout and observation of the sites in question. Strade, for example, is home to two main phases of building activity, the first dating from the thirteenth century and the second, fifteenth century phase, which is the main concern of this study. At Moyne Friary, in contrast, the majority of the construction dates from the fifteenth century, but there are also sixteenth century insertions and additions. Some of the case study sites, such as Murrisk and Strade, retain little or nothing in the way of standing remains of domestic buildings. The use of wood is emphasised in such instances. This study also suggests reasons for the particular layout of the friaries in question.

Conclusion

Linked investigations have been undertaken on a local scale, having the geographical unit of the county as its basis. This study is primarily based on sites sharing the characteristics of century of foundation and the presence of standing remains. The friaries are representative of different orders, the Dominicans, Augustinians and Franciscans, but all are mendicant orders and as such have certain common characteristics. The ways that the history and architecture of the friaries were divergent or paralleled each other were investigated as part of this study. As part of this research, the complexes of standing buildings were recorded at each of the study sites as part of the architectural survey described elsewhere in this methodology. Only two of the study sites, Moyne and Burrishoole, retain their cloister arcades. These were investigated in terms of such factors as their structure and position. The case study sites have varying remains of conventual buildings; they survive completely intact structurally, with the exception of their roofs, at Moyne and Rosserk and to varying extents at the other houses. These domestic areas were investigated; the archaeology associated with the friaries was studied. Due to their small scale, the six-inch maps produced by the Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century allow the friaries to be placed in the context of their local landscapes by showing their proximity to sources of water and other, possibly associated archaeological monuments.

There are a number of artefacts associated with the friaries in question. These include a number of chalices, for example the DeBurgo-O'Malley Chalice associated with Burrishoole and other varied artefacts in the possession of the National Museum of Ireland. Finally, the impact of the Dissolution and subsequent events on these buildings was studied using a combination of visual observation of the sites in their current state as well as written, cartographic and pictorial evidence. The works of antiquarians and artists such as Beranger and Bigari (Harbison, 2002) help to indicate the effects of time on these buildings and can also help discover their earlier form and extent.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. The qualitative aspect was concerned with the origins and influences evident in particular features, for example whether arches are Romanesque or Gothic, or what kind of tracery was used in windows. The quantitative vein, in contrast, concerns the architectural study in which an inventory of features was carried out within the churches. By combining primary and secondary methodologies in respect of the five case study sites, a picture of the history, archaeology and architecture of these houses was built up. The various methodologies outlined above facilitated the collection and analysis of material relating to these five sites, which have not heretofore been studied collectively in such a manner.

Chapter Four: **Historical Context**

Introduction

In studying the history of a group of medieval friaries, a number of perspectives must be taken into account in order to elucidate such aspects as the foundation and growth of these religious houses but also a variety of other elements concerning the historical context of the times, everyday life in a medieval friary, social and economic history and the impact of events at regional, national and even European levels. Therefore in this study, the history of the late medieval mendicant friaries in Mayo is explored using multiple perspectives ranging from the macro to micro levels. Religious houses do not develop or exist in splendid isolation, but instead are shaped and influenced by numerous factors as diverse as the actions of a local chieftain or the wish of a British monarch to divorce his wife. This chapter is arranged thematically according to the various historical perspectives that will be considered for the years 1400–1540. These include the history of monasticism and of the mendicant orders in question; Mayo and Ireland in the late medieval period; the history of the five case study sites; and the Dissolution of the monasteries. Social and economic aspects of life in a late medieval friary will also be considered.

Ireland before 1400

Before turning to the years 1400–1540, it is necessary firstly to look back to before this time in order to appreciate more fully those events and developments which took place before 1400 and were to impact upon the mendicant friaries in late medieval Mayo. Barry (1993) notes that for England and north-western Europe, the fourteenth century was one of crisis. Ireland was similarly affected, with consequences that would last into the fifteenth century. Factors contributing to this instability were the Great European Famine of 1315–1317, which Barry (1993) states was intensified in Ireland by the Bruce Invasion of 1315–18, war and ultimately the Black Death or Bubonic Plague of 1348–9. Climatic changes took place in the early decades of the fourteenth century, resulting in wetter and cooler weather. Severe weather conditions led to a number of famines, weakening the population before the Black Death.

Temple (2002) notes that a third of the population of Europe was wiped out by the Black Death in two years. Its effects in Ireland are not easy to gauge; this is mainly due to a lack of records pertaining to rural areas. It has often been assumed that the urban areas of the country were worst affected by the Black Death, but this may

simply be a product of the surviving records indicating its urban impacts. Certainly, it is clear from the writings of Friar John Clyn, based in Kilkenny, that the friars suffered a sharp decline in their numbers in urban areas due to the plague. It is believed that Clyn himself eventually succumbed to the disease. In Britain, Rowley (1988) states that almost 45% of all parish priests died during the plague. While this could possibly be put down to the nature of their work in urban areas, which would probably bring them into the worst affected areas, it is more difficult to account for the similar rate amongst the predominantly rural monks, 44% of whom perished. Furthermore in Meaux, a rural Cistercian Abbey in Yorkshire, only 10 out of 42 monks survived the first visitation of the plague (Schama, 2000). Rowley (1988) cites a mortality rate of 45% for parish priests in Britain during the Black Death, hardly surprising considering the community-based nature of their work. However, he also quotes a figure of 44% for monks based on the study of twelve of the more important houses. That these monasteries were based in rural locations and were populated by monks living an enclosed existence makes this statistic surprising. It suggests that the Black Death had a more powerful impact in rural areas than had previously been supposed. This could also suggest that the plague had more serious consequences in rural Ireland than had previously been acknowledged.

Kelly (2001) explains that pernicious impact of the Black Death on rural abbeys is because they offered the requisite conditions for the propagation of the plague bacillus. The flourmills and breweries at such sites were very appealing to the black rat and their close proximity to the monks' living quarters facilitated the spread of the disease. The impact of the Black Death has been proposed as a factor which drove the friars to rural areas in Ireland. However, they also experienced high mortality rates in other countries which were not followed by an upsurge in new rural houses. The chronicler Knighton noted the ill effects of the plague on the mendicants, of whom he was clearly not fond:

358 of the Dominicans in Provence died during Lent. At Montpellier only seven friars survived out of 140. At Magdalen seven survived out of 160, which is quite enough. From 140 Minorites (Franciscans) at Marseilles not one remained to carry the good news to the rest – and a good job too. Of the Carmelites of Avignon, 66 had died before the citizens realised what was causing their deaths; they thought that the brothers had been killing each other. Not one of the English Augustinians survived in Avignon – not that anyone will be upset by that”

(cited in Kelly, 2001, p. 116).

If it was the case that rural areas in Ireland were less seriously affected by the Black Death than the urban ones, then this may help to explain why the mendicant friars chose to locate there in the late Middle Ages as opposed to the urban areas which they had traditionally favoured. On the other hand, this could possibly be explained by the availability of patronage in rural areas amongst the Gaelic and Gaelicised Irish. Perhaps the increase in patronage by these groups is attributable to their relief at having been spared by the plague, similar to the construction of cathedrals in France in thanksgiving after the world did not end in the year 1000 as had been predicted. The lack of documentary evidence makes it possible only to speculate on the impacts of the Bubonic Plague in rural Ireland. The most widespread explanation has been that the Black Death impacted most strongly on the towns, which were occupied predominantly by those of Anglo-Norman descent, thereby weakening these communities. The Gaelic community was relatively untouched and this precipitated the Gaelic resurgence and the decline in the Irish lordship.

Another significant event in the fourteenth century was the passing of the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366. These were a series of legislative measures designed to halt the acculturation of the Anglo-Normans. The notion of the two nations of medieval Ireland has already been discussed in some depth in Chapter Two, and so need only be touched on briefly here. Historians such as Ellis (1988) who disagree with the notion of Gaelicisation tend to insist that cultural assimilation worked both ways, with the Gaelic Irish taking on aspects of the culture of the Anglo-Normans. Conversely, those who subscribe to the idea that the Anglo-Normans had taken on many Irish cultural characteristics would argue that this constitutes a cultural watershed and that by this time little difference existed between the two groups. The reality most likely lies somewhere between these two views. There was a degree of cultural interchange between both groups, whilst some members of each would still have retained distinct characteristics. For those who had become Gaelicised, the Statutes of Kilkenny were irrelevant as they did not curtail the perceived assimilation.

Ireland and Mayo 1400–1540

Much of what Ireland was like in terms of its cultural composition and governance has been discussed in Chapter Two and need not be duplicated here. However, many

of the perceptions of Ireland from the English point of view can be seen in the following extract from the *State Papers* of Henry VIII, which were produced on a continuous basis to keep the king updated on the “state of all the noble folk of [Ireland], as well as of the King’s subjects and English rebels, as of Irish enemies” (Hamilton, 1834, p. 1). They depict the Irish as a warlike nation, composed of counties controlled by local magnates:

“There be more than 60 counties, called regions in Ireland, inhabited with the King’s Irish enemies; some regions as big as a shire, some more, some less, unto a little, some as big as half a shire, and some a little less; where reigneth more than 60 chief captains, whereof some calleth themselves kings, some king’s peers, in their language; some princes, some dukes, some archdukes, that liveth only by the sword, and obeyeth to no other temporal person, but only to himself that is strong; and every of the said captains maketh war and peace for himself, and holdeth by sword and hath imperial jurisdiction within his ‘room’ and obeyeth to no other person, English or Irish except only to such persons, as may subdue him by the sword”

(Hamilton, 1834, p. 1).

Although the official is accurate in his description of the fragmentary nature of authority in late medieval Ireland, his description of the Irish as a warlike people is questionable. The late medieval period in Ireland is generally viewed as one of relative stability, not of tumult. In addition, the author’s final statement is at odds with historical evidence which states that even those in the higher echelons of Gaelic and Gaelicised society would submit themselves to punishments from the Observant friars (Bradshaw, 2002).

The geographical unit of County Mayo as we know it today did not exist in late medieval times; as was the situation in Ireland as a whole, this area was composed of a series of lordships under the control of various families. The MacWilliam Burkes and O’Malleys were particularly strong in Mayo at this time, controlling considerable tracts of land; other powerful families included the O’Dowds and the Barrets. The O’Malleys of this time were the ancestors of Grace O’Malley or Granuaile, known as the Pirate Queen, and are cited by Corlett (2001) as an example of a family who benefited from the Gaelic revival. In addition, Anglo-Norman families such as the de

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

Burgos had become Gaelicised, not only adopting the Irish language and customs, but also altering their names to become the Burkes. Both Gaelic and Gaelicised communities were part of the renewal in the fifteenth century, a compelling manifestation of which is the construction and patronage of new mendicant friaries in the west of Ireland.

Monasticism prior to the arrival of the friars

Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been a number of ways in which the monastic vocation has manifested itself, including the fundamental elements of prayer and asceticism, a life of discipline. Two principal forms of monastic life can be distinguished – the eremitical life is a reclusive existence in which the monk lives as a hermit cut off from the rest of the world and the company of others. In contrast, there is the coenobitical life in which the monk lives as part of a religious community. All of the mendicant orders fall within the latter category, and although the Augustinian friars are known as the Eremites of Saint Augustine, their lives would more correctly be considered coenobitical as they lived as part of a religious community.

Early examples of the monastic existence include the Desert Fathers, who between the third and fifth centuries lived a monastic existence based on ascetism and devotion in the deserts of Egypt. In Europe, Saint Benedict of Nursia is a key figure in the development of the monastic life. He formulated a rule for coenobitic monasteries that was to become dominant in Europe in the early Middle Ages to the extent that he is known as the father of western monasticism. Ireland in the early Christian period was home to a specific form of monasticism. This had developed along two lines; groups of hermits in remote locations and communities located on good land at nodal points, echoing the distinction between eremitical and coenobitical. The latter sites were associated with a particular saint who would be identified as the founder of the monastery. For example, Saint Patrick is associated with Armagh, Saint Ciarán with Clonmacnoise, and Saint Kevin with Glendalough. The early medieval Irish monasteries are associated with the production of manuscripts, high crosses and metalwork, including chalices and reliquaries, and contributed significantly to the Golden Age of Irish art. The form of monastic life that developed here was to spread to Britain and the Continent. This monastic system was to continue in Ireland until

the twelfth century when such factors as reform of the Irish church and the introduction of the monastic orders, the Cistercians and Augustinian Canons, caused considerable change to the ecclesiastical organisation of country. While some monasteries declined, others adopted the Augustinian rule and still others began to serve as parish churches (Manning, 1995).

The Cistercians were introduced into Ireland by Saint Malachy and founded their first house in Mellifont in 1142. This was significant for a number of reasons including the introduction of the claustral plan of monastic layout to Ireland, a development that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five of this study. The Cistercians practiced coenobitic monasticism based on the Rule of Saint Benedict within a two-tier monastic society. On one level, there were the monks whose lives were dedicated to individual and community prayer and spiritual reading. The other group consisted of lay brothers who worked in the abbeys and on their granges, that is the farms established to provide for the needs of the monasteries. There was a different vocation from that of the monks and they were not permitted to become monks under the rules of the Order. By 1200, the Cistercians had 21 abbeys in Ireland. The Augustinian Canons Regular were also brought to Ireland by Saint Malachy, who had been influenced by what he had seen of them at Arrouaise in France. They followed the Rule of Saint Augustine and by 1169 numbered about 65 foundations (Watt, 1998). Much of the growth in the order is attributable to the fact that so many of the early Irish foundations adopted the Augustinian Rule. The Augustinian order also expanded by such conversion of early Christian sites in Scotland.

The mendicant orders

Foundation and early expansion

While there are four mendicant orders – the Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans and Carmelites – only the first three established new religious houses in Mayo in the late medieval period. Each of the mendicant orders has a different founder and each shares certain elements of their lifestyle in common. They all eventually came to build friaries in Ireland based on the claustral plan. They believed in combining prayer and devotion with preaching and pastoral work in the community. The mendicant orders initially followed a rule of poverty and were supposed to beg for



Map 4.1: Cistercian houses in Ireland in 1228 (after Watt, 1998)

alms in order to sustain themselves. However, problems arose as regards how poverty should be interpreted. Despite having these aspects in common, differences characterised each of the mendicant orders, for example they adopted different approaches to issues such as education in accordance with the wishes of their founders. Indeed they were even distinguished by the colour of the habits that their brethren wore. In an Irish context, there are two significant phases in the development of the mendicant orders, a phase of initial settlement and growth in the thirteenth century, and a second, fifteenth century phase of reform, renewal and expansion.

Of the three mendicant orders that are the concern of this study, it is the history of the Augustinian friars or Eremites of Saint Augustine that is most obscure. Unlike the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who have a single identifiable founder who set out the initial precepts of the order and formulated a rule for their followers, the Augustinians did not have a commanding founding figure. Although influenced by Saint Augustine, as is shown by their adoption of his rule, the foundation of the Augustinian friars was not, according to Knowles (1962), a result of the Saint's direct personal influence. Instead they are believed to have descended from semi-eremital communities in Italy which predate the birth of Saint Francis *c.* 1181 (Knowles, 1962, Watt, 1998). In 1243, these groups were united under the Rule of Saint Augustine by Pope Innocent IV and given into the charge of Cardinal Richard Annibaldi, who was to have a decisive and lasting influence on the trajectory taken by this order. The 'Great Union' of 1256, a papal decree of Alexander IV, resulted in their adoption of the mendicant way of life. Hence the seemingly contradictory titles adopted for this order, calling them both eremites and friars, is in essence an indication of their movement from a semi-eremital to coenobitical existence. The Augustinians wore a black habit, but unlike the other mendicant orders, this did not make its way into the nomenclature of the order, unlike the Carmelites for instance who were known as the white friars. The Rule of Saint Augustine emphasised charity, devotion to the church and theological study. The Austin friaries in Oxford, Cambridge and London were particularly noted for their scholarship.

The Augustinian Friars came to Ireland by way of England and established their first foundation in Dublin *c.* 1282, by which time their presence in England had grown to

approximately 12 houses. Initially, Irish houses of the order were predominantly Anglo-Irish foundations based in urban areas and they did not have a significant presence in Connacht, in contrast with their later development. Administratively, the Irish Augustinian friaries constituted one of the five regions or limits that formed part of the English province. The Irish houses were governed by a vicar provincial who reported to the English provincial.

The Franciscans are also known as the Grey Friars because of the colour of the habit worn by members of the order. Their founder was Saint Francis of Assisi, born Giovanni Bernardone (c. 1181–1226). His life was documented by Thomas of Celano in his *First and Second Lives of Saint Francis*, a biography which was completed by 1247 (Burr, 1996a). This hagiography records Francis' early life as the son of a prosperous cloth merchant and his decision to renounce this wealth and finance in favour of subsistence by begging. By 1209, Francis had gathered twelve companions and received official approval for the order from Pope Innocent III. In addition to living in poverty, the order preached in the vernacular language in busy urban locations. The Franciscans lived according to the Rule of Saint Francis. The first rule, formulated in 1209, has been lost and it was the third rule, written in 1223 by Francis, that became the definitive constitution of the order. It emphasised poverty, even advising the brethren that they “must not ride on horseback unless forced to do so by obvious necessity or illness” (Burr, 1996b, p. 2). Personal and corporate poverty for the order were insisted upon. The friars clothing had to be the colour of ashes and lay brothers and priests had a shaved band three fingers wide above their ears. Franciscan clerics also shaved the crown of their head.

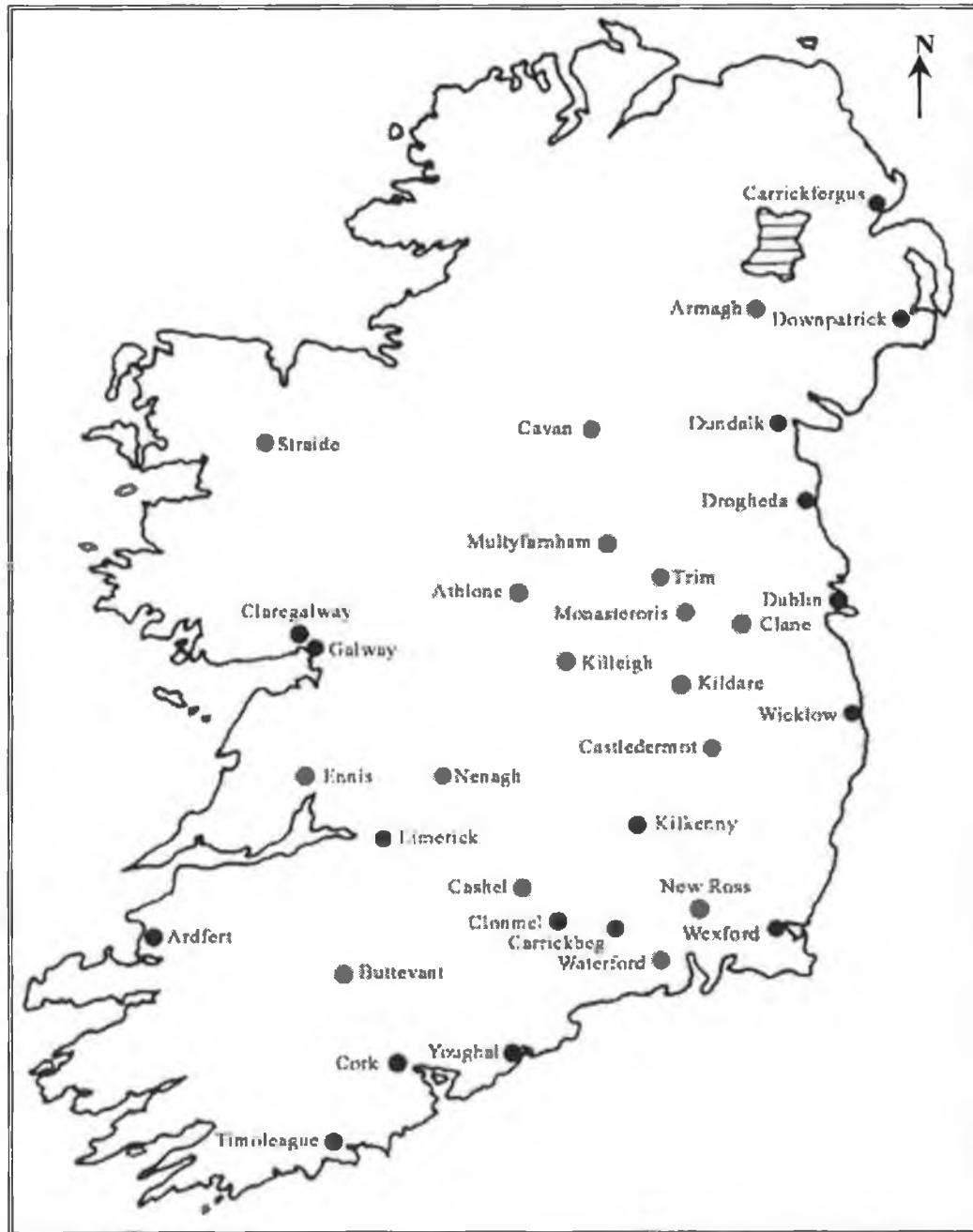
The Dominican Order is also known as the Order of Preachers or Blackfriars and was founded by Domingo de Guzmán, Saint Dominic (1170–1221) (Iturgaiz, 1996). Like Saint Francis, he too came from a privileged background and turned to a life of poverty and preaching. The Order of Preachers was granted its papal approval by Honorius III in 1216. Dominic did not formulate a rule for his order, instead he allowed his friars to choose one of the rules of religious life approved by the church. They chose the Augustinian Rule, thereby committing themselves to a life of poverty and strict observance. Mendicancy was adopted and according to Knowles (1962), the *raison d'être* of the order was the defence and preaching of their faith. All other

endeavours were to be subordinated to this pursuit, including manual labour. Education and learning were strongly emphasised by the founder as he felt they enabled his followers to preach more effectively. In contrast, while accepting learned men to his order, Francis did not especially encourage study, as he feared the impact it might have on his followers, believing they may become susceptible to pride (Ó Clabaigh, 2002). This attitude subsequently changed among the Franciscans. Saint Dominic founded the first order dedicated to preaching and study within the Christian church.

Similarly to the Augustinians Friars, the Franciscans and Dominicans also came to Ireland in the thirteenth century, settling predominantly in urban areas. They were popular with Anglo-Norman families, but unlike the Augustinians, they were also popular amongst the Gaelic-Irish. The Dominicans arrived in 1224 and founded houses in Dublin and Drogheda, followed by the Franciscans in 1234 who established their first foundation at Youghal. There is a tradition that these Franciscan arrivals came to Ireland from the Mediterranean via northern Spain, but this is dismissed by Conlan (1988) who states that it is more likely that they crossed Saint George's Channel from southern England and were of Norman-French extraction.

After the initial expansion in the mendicant orders in Ireland in the thirteenth century, their growth tailed off and the foundation of new friaries all but ceased for a time. This was influenced by the instability of life in Ireland in the fourteenth century, with unrest caused by the Bruce Invasion and the impact of the Black Death providing circumstances inhospitable to the establishment of new friaries. O'Sullivan (1940, p. 1) states that the decline of the religious orders in Ireland (with some exceptions, including the Franciscans) has been attributed to the fact that they were "haughty and overbearing, they kept within their cloisters and only when spiritual ministrations to the sick was necessary did they condescend to hold converse with the people in whose midst they had settled". However, once again in the fifteenth century an efflorescence of the friary building phenomenon took place, this time influenced by the revival in the Gaelic and Gaelicised communities and the strength of the Observant Reform.

The Gaelic renewal in fifteenth century Ireland has already been discussed in Chapter Two in terms of the scholarly debates over whether such a revival took place at all



Map 4.2: Franciscan Houses 1229-1336 (after Watt, 1998)



Map 4.3: Dominican Houses 1224-1305 (after Watt, 1998)

and how the different communities in Ireland perceived themselves. While some authorities, such as Ellis (1988), persist in disputing this phenomenon, Nicholls (2003) notes that the evidence would appear to suggest otherwise. Of those houses of monks and mendicant friars built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the majority were built by those of Anglo-Norman descent. The construction of friaries in the fifteenth century was most popular in the west of the country and the patrons of these were members of the Gaelic and Gaelicised communities. A revival in the Gaelic community need not necessarily have been at the expense of the Anglo-Irish community. It is surely possible that the Gaelic-Irish could have achieved an upturn in their fortunes while the Anglo-Irish recovered from the unrest and instability of the fourteenth century. Gunn (2000) notes that a steady recovery had taken place throughout the fifteenth century in the British Isles as the population started to rise again, while living standards by the end of the century were comparatively high due to the lack of population pressure. The building of mendicant friaries was not as significant in the east of the country as it was in the west and north in the fifteenth century, but this is not necessarily a result of antipathy towards ecclesiastical patronage in the east, but rather a reflection of the different influences at work in these regions. Simms (1989) contends that the English kings appointed administrator bishops to those dioceses where they had even partial control and they were not tolerant of the Observantines, due to the challenge they were believed to pose to the regular parish clergy. It has been popular among those who favour the notion of the Gaelic revival to point to the decline in the religious houses of the Pale while the mendicants prospered in the north and west in the fifteenth century. This is not entirely accurate as although the monastic houses of the Pale were in decline, religious patronage was at this time being directed instead towards the construction of parish churches, as was also the case in England and lowland Scotland. The refurbishment of old religious houses also took place in the Pale, in addition to the endowment of chantries and colleges (Lydon, 1998). As the lordship was loyal to the crown, it is not surprising that similar influences should be at work there as were in England. Gaelic Ireland, in contrast, was more strongly influenced by the Observant reform that was emanating from the continent in the fifteenth century and which was largely overlooked in England.

The Observant Reform

At the outset, the mendicant orders strictly implemented the various facets of their rules, especially the vow of poverty. However, it has been remarked by Ó Clabaigh (2002) that the mendicant orders were the victims of their own success. Patrons praised their commitment to poverty and considered the mendicants worthy beneficiaries of their generosity, for example in wills, thereby putting temptation in their way. This is evident in Rohrkasten's (1996) analysis of the wills of Londoners in medieval times which shows that one in five testators mentioned the mendicant friars in their wills in the late fourteenth century and one in ten in the following century. Such practices lead to an accumulation of wealth in contravention of the original regulations of these orders, which forbade individual and corporate possession of property. Martin (1961) believes that the Black Death and Avignon captivity (a period when the seat of the Pope was moved from Rome to Avignon 1309–1378) also contributed to the religious malaise in the fourteenth century. The Observant Reform aimed to return to the original ideals of the orders, especially where poverty was concerned. The perceived departure from the original rules against which the Observants reacted was known as Conventualism. The reform took root throughout Europe, especially in Italy, and was to have a significant influence in Ireland. The Observants were to have a comparatively minor influence in Britain, although the *Registrum Magni Sigilli Scotorum* records the existence in the burgh of Edinburgh of the "Lesser Friars from Observanti" (Smith, 1926–27, p. 253), a reference to Observant Franciscans. In England, only three of the Franciscan Conventual houses adopted the Observant reform and three new Observant houses were founded between 1482 and 1507. All six of these houses were suppressed in 1534 (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1988). Not all of the new fifteenth century friaries in Ireland were founded as Observant friaries; some were later converted to the reform. The large number of new houses being founded in Ireland at this time may have provided the impetus for the expansion of the Observant reform in the north and west of Ireland. In Britain, however, there were fewer new religious houses being founded compared with Ireland, therefore there were not as many potential new outlets for the Observant teachings there. The strength of the Observant reform in Ireland has been credited as one of the factors that restricted the influence of the Reformation there.

The Observant reform in each of the orders took place independent of the others, but they share certain characteristics such as their commitment to austerity, a stricter code of discipline, and a return to the poverty that initially distinguished the orders. This was reflected in their buildings in the fifteenth century. There emerged a keener awareness of the need to attend to the pastoral requirements of the laity amongst the reformed mendicants, a fact which surely assisted their widespread popularity among all classes of society in the areas where reformed congregations were dominant.

In Ireland, the Dominican Observance had been adopted in Drogheda by 1390 and houses were founded at Portumna (1414) and Longford (1420) specifically for the reformers (Ó Clabaigh, 2002). Conlan (2002) states that the Dominican order in late medieval Ireland did not split officially into Conventual and Observant factions as the Franciscans did, instead remaining united as one order but with a strong Observant branch. Despite the Dominicans being the first of the mendicant orders to adopt the Observant reform in Ireland, it did not experience the same profusion among them as it did among the Augustinians and especially the Franciscans. The Dominicans of Portumna believed that the choice of a rural location, remote from the turmoil of the world, would be the ideal place for a life dedicated to strict observance. This may help explain the predominantly rural location of the fifteenth century priories, as the search for solitude was a recurrent ingredient of the monastic vocation. It echoes the Cistercian decree, which stated that “monasteries should not be built in cities, castles or towns, but in places far removed from the conversation of men” (cited in Stalley, 1987, p. 61). The Observant reform appears not to have taken firm root within the Dominicans as it did in the Augustinians and Franciscans. However, eight of their 38 communities were to become explicitly Observant (Bradshaw, 1974).

Banada, County Sligo, became home to the first house of the Augustinian Observants in Ireland in 1423 with the permission of the order’s prior general, Agostino Favaroni. The first Observant Franciscan friary in Ireland was founded at Quin, County Clare in 1433, followed by Muckcross in *c.* 1445. Within the Franciscan order, the Observants had quasi-autonomous status until it was split into two separate orders by Pope Leo X in 1517. While the Franciscan Observants on occasion encountered opposition from the upper echelons of their order, this was not the case for the Augustinians whose Priors General acted as protectors of the Observants (Martin, 1961). No doubt the

fact that many of those who held this office were Italian helps to account for the strong Italian influence on the Augustinian Observants. In the fourteenth century, the Irish Augustinians were in the main of Anglo-Irish descent and those seeking to undertake further studies would travel to Oxford and Cambridge. In the fifteenth century, however, the friars of the predominantly Gaelic reform travelled to Italy for their studies, another indication of the significant Italian proclivity of the reform.

The Gaelic-Irish association with the growth of the Observant reform is evident amongst the Augustinian friars. They founded nine new houses in Ireland in the fifteenth century, of which seven were in areas of Gaelic-Irish control; three in the diocese of Killala and four in the diocese of Tuam. Two houses were founded in Anglo-Irish areas, namely Callan in County Kilkenny (1468) and Galway (1500). The former was founded with the help of Gaelic-Irish friars from Connacht. Banada and Murrisk were both founded specifically as Observant houses, as was Callan. Other houses were to adopt the reform subsequent to their foundation.

1460 was a significant year for the Observant reform, so much so that it came to be known to the Franciscans as 'the year of the Observance'. This is pointed out by a seventeenth-century chronicler cited by Ó Clabaigh (2002, p. 53) who notes that 1460

"in the old manuscripts is called the first year of the reformation not because before that there were not many reformed friars, but because from then entire convents were frequently reformed and new convents distinct from the others were built for the Observance".

It was also the year in which the Franciscan Observants in Ireland were officially recognised. Between 1460 and the passing of the Act of the Dissolution in 1536, ten friaries were founded specifically for the Franciscan Observants, while 28 of the 48 Conventual houses adopted the Observant rule (Ó Clabaigh, 2002). Confusion over whether certain Franciscan houses were Observant may stem from the fact that houses were known to change their loyalty from the Conventual faction to the Observants or vice versa, depending on such varied factors as the beliefs held by a changing friary population or the influence of a local lord. It was to be the case with both the Franciscans and Augustinians that the dioceses of the west of the country were particularly receptive to the reform of the mendicant orders, a support that existed

amongst the laity and the clergy. The support of the clergy for the mendicant friars often wavered on the continent, and the two groups were known to have had a sometimes rocky relationship due to the perception of the clergy that the popularity of the mendicant orders and their success in attracting alms was financially disadvantageous for them (Bailey, 2003). In addition, the mendicant orders (especially the Dominicans) focused on preaching the Christian doctrine, a task that had previously been regarded as the privilege of the bishops and their appointees (Rae, 1993).

Conlan (1988) charts the growth of the Observant reform amongst the Franciscans in Ireland following its official acceptance. He states that within a year of this, they had converted old friaries at Youghal, Timoleague and Multyfarnham to the reform in addition to establishing new Observant houses in Gaelic-Irish areas including Sherkin, Bantry, Kilcrea, Lislaughtin, Donegal and Dromahair. The Conventual friaries had typically been based in areas of Anglo-Irish influence, however they found it difficult to attract new members in these areas and in the second half of the fifteenth century, they started to expand and indeed flourish in Gaelic Ireland. Here they found patronage and a steady supply of new recruits, leading to the establishment of foundations such as Monaghan, Galbally, Stradbally and Inishmore (the largest of the Aran Islands). The success of the Conventual friars in Gaelic-Ireland has been largely overshadowed in the historiography of the late medieval church by the growth of the Observant reform in Gaelic Ireland and the decline of the Conventuals in Anglo-Irish areas. Table 4.1 and Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the strength of the mendicant orders in the west and north of Ireland in the later medieval period.

	Tuam	Armagh	Cashel	Dublin	New Houses
Franciscan:					
Conventual	5	1	7	1	14
Observant	2	2	4	2	10
Third Order	16	22	5	0	43
Dominican	8	1	1	0	10
Augustinian	8	0	0	1	9
Carmelite	1	2	1	0	4
Total	40	28	18	4	90

Table 4.1: Mendicant houses established in Ireland 1400 to 1508 (Watt, 1998).

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

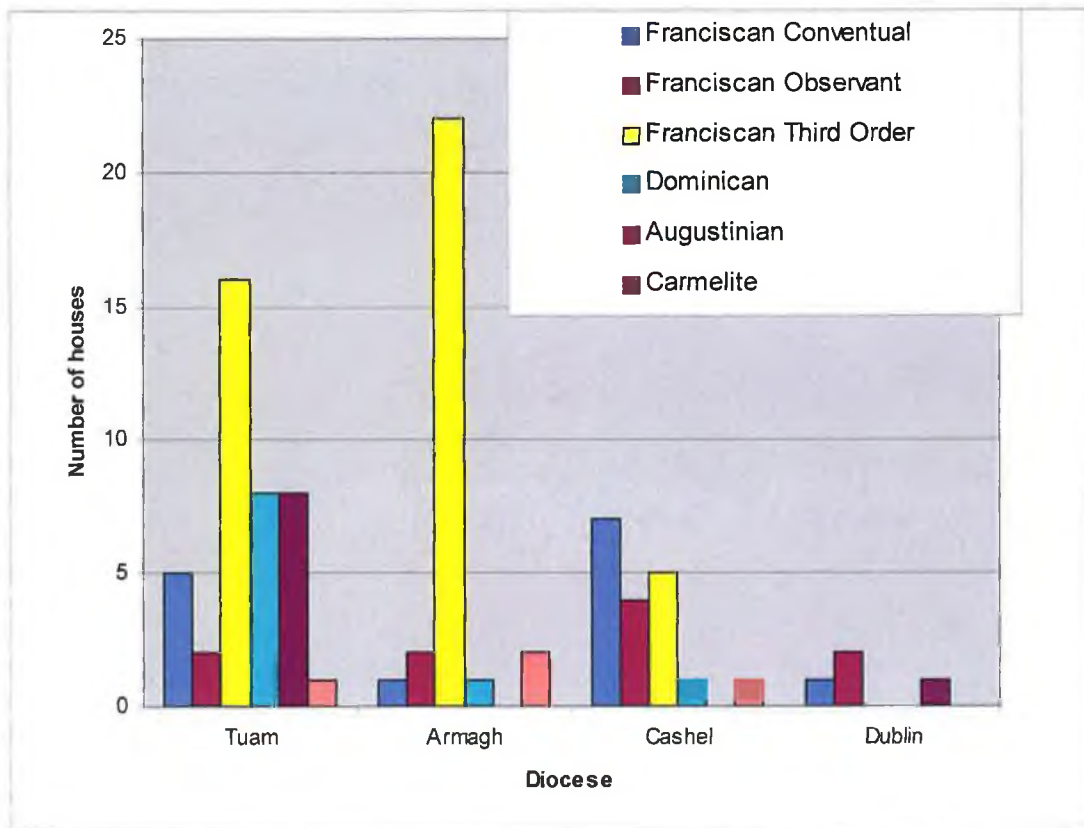


Figure 4.1: Mendicant houses established in Ireland 1400 to 1508 by diocese

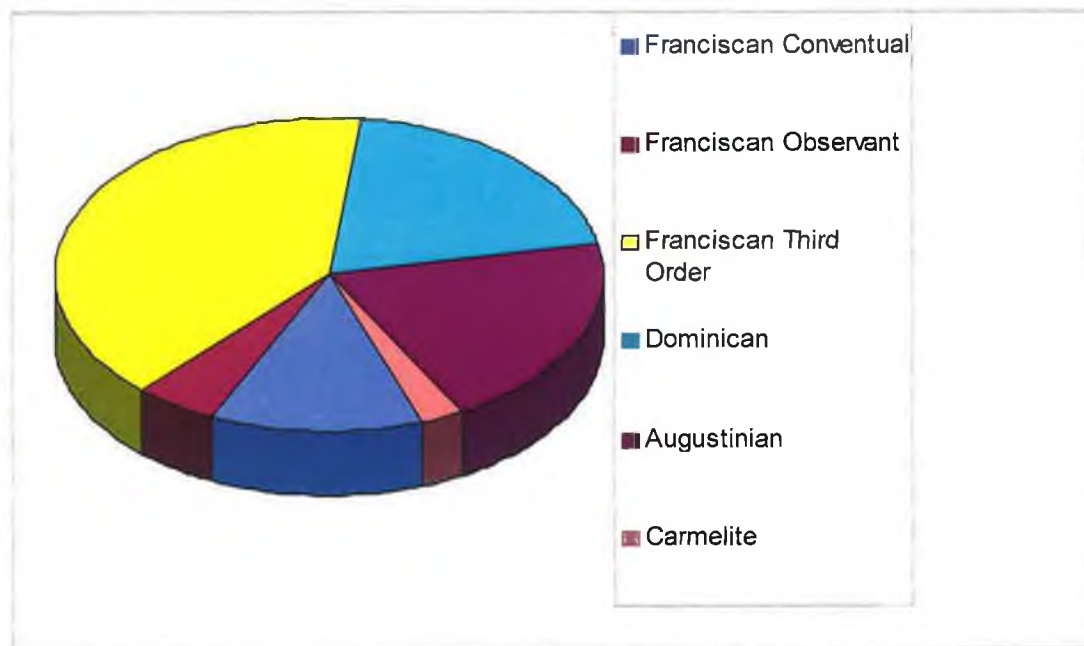


Figure 4.2: How the presence of the mendicant orders was reflected in the foundation of new houses in the archdiocese of Tuam 1400 to 1508.



Map 4.4: Houses of the Franciscan First Order founded in late medieval Ireland (after Mooney, 1955)

The mendicant friars in medieval Mayo

The Priory of the Holy Cross in Strade, County Mayo, was founded by Jordan of Exeter, Lord of Athlethan, for the Franciscan order and was the first religious house to be founded under Anglo-Norman auspices in County Mayo. In addition, it heralded the arrival of the mendicant orders into the county. The date of this foundation is unclear, however; O'Hara (1982) states that the friary was founded in 1240, while other sources are more vague, placing its foundation early in the thirteenth century. In any case, the Franciscans were to stay in Strade only for a short time. In 1252, it was transferred to the Dominican friars by its founder (or perhaps his son Stephen [Flanagan, 1992]) at the request of Jordan's wife, Basilia, daughter of Meiler de Bermingham. De Bermingham, of Athenry, was a high-profile patron of the Dominicans; hence Basilia conceived a plan to replace the Franciscans at Strade with Dominican friars. The earliest known list of founders of Dominican houses in Ireland dates from c. 1647. Under the heading of Dominican friaries in Connacht, it included Strade, stating that it was founded by the Mac Jordans, this being the Gaelic patronymic adopted by the de Exeter family. "*Conventus Stradensis a Barone de Galenga [Gallen] vulgo Mac Jordan erectus et dotatus*" (Fenning, 2002–3, p. 59).

Strade Friary was a daughter house of the Dominican priory in Sligo, a fact recorded in a sixteenth century register of Achonry "*Habent Monasterium de Strade Olim dicebatur filia de Sligae*" (Swords, 1997–9, p. 21). The community of Black Friars there was of medium size, according to Flynn (1993), and therefore would have housed between six and nine members. The Franciscans left the county and did not return until they founded a house at Moyne in the mid-fifteenth century. The *Annals of Loch Cé* date the burning of Strade to 1254, stating that "the monastery of the Friars preachers at Ath-lethan, in Luighne, was all burned" (Hennessy, 1871, p. 405). This provides further evidence that the Dominicans were in possession of Strade by this time. The Dominicans also founded a house at Rathfran in the thirteenth century, and the Carmelites also established a presence in the county at this time. Overall, however, the mendicant orders did not experience the degree of success in County Mayo in the thirteenth century that was the case in other more urban areas.

Mayo, in common with the rest of Ireland, experienced a slump in ecclesiastical building in the fourteenth century as the political, economic and social climates proved inhospitable to the establishment of new religious houses. In addition, the momentum which had stirred the initial expansion of the mendicant orders had faded. A combination of factors, including the stimulus of the Observant reform, the increasing confidence of the Gaelic and Gaelicised communities and the relative stability of the time, all contributed to providing a hospitable climate for a new incursion of the mendicant friars into the county. The absence or uncertainty of specific key facts pertaining to these new friaries is often attributable to a lack of documentary evidence resulting from both the nature of the Gaelic and Gaelicised communities, in which written records were not necessarily kept, and the destruction of records that took place during the Dissolution of the monasteries and subsequent to it. Hence the date of foundation of a particular house may be unclear, as may the identity of its founder and whether it was of Conventual or Observant affiliation. Mooney (1960, p. 12) notes that the word founder can have “a very elastic meaning”. In contrast to earlier Cistercian monasteries founded by wealthy lords, late medieval friaries were often financed by community subsidy (Barry, 1993), thus making it difficult to identify one particular individual as the founder. For example, Rae (1993) states that the confusion regarding the identity of the founder of Moyne Friary may be a reflection of the participation of many patrons.

Table 4.2 details the religious houses that were established in Mayo in the late medieval period. A number of houses were founded in the early part of the century, for example Ardnaree and Ballyhaunis both founded by the Austin friars in *c.* 1400 and *c.* 1430, respectively. The first foundation of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in Ireland was established at Killeenbrenan (also called Kilbrennan and Killina Bonaina) in south County Mayo (Mooney, 1958–59). Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) date its foundation to before 1426, while Mooney (1958–59) states that in 1457 it was recognised as the most important house of the Franciscan Tertiaries in Ireland.

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

Name	Order	County	Diocese	Date Founded	Dissolved	Re-estd/Contd.
Ardnaree	Augustinian Friars	Mayo	Killala	-1400	1577-82(?)	R
Ballyhaunis	Augustinian Friars	Mayo	Tuam	c. 1430	c. 1586(?)	
Boofeenau	Franciscan Third Order Regular	Mayo	Killala	1450+?	1605-(?)	
Burrishoole*†	Dominican	Mayo	Tuam	c. 1469	-1580	c. 1606 R
Cross‡	Augustinian Canons	Mayo	Killala	-1400	c. 1584	
Errew‡	Augustinian Canons	Mayo	Killala	1413	c. 1585?	
Killeenbrenan	Franciscan Third Order Regular	Mayo	Tuam	-1426	1574	
Moyne†	Franciscan First Order	Mayo	Killala	1455 (1455-60)	1590	1618 R
Murrisk†	Augustinian Friars	Mayo	Tuam	1456	1578	R
Rosserk†	Franciscan Third Order Regular	Mayo	Killala	-1441	c. 1578	1590 R
Strade†	Dominican	Mayo	Achonry	1252	1578?	R
Strade†	Franciscan First Order	Mayo	Achonry	-1252	1252	
Urlar	Dominican	Mayo	Achonry	c. 1430 (1434)	-1612	c. 1654 R

Case Study Sites†
Non-mendicant houses‡

Table 4.2: Late medieval religious houses in Mayo (using data from Gwynn and Hadcock, 1988)

The Franciscan Third Order Regular was highly successful in late medieval Ireland, especially in the north and west. Between 1400 and 1508, they were responsible for founding 43 new houses as compared to the 47 founded in total by the Franciscan First Order, Dominicans, Augustinians and Carmelites combined (Watt, 1998) (See Figure 4.1). There are two branches of the Franciscan Third Order, namely the Third Order Secular and the Third Order Regular. The former group were lay people who for one reason or another were unable to enter a convent and participate in the coenobitic lifestyle. Saint Francis had recognised this possibility and thus he composed the Third Order Rule, which such people could follow whilst still living in “the world”. This became a popular way of life for those whose circumstances precluded them from entering the mendicant First Orders. They lived a life of prayer, chastity, obedience and voluntary poverty.

As Bailey (2003) notes, the idea of religious poverty held considerable weight in the Middle Ages and was a form apart from the wholly involuntary privation that beleaguered so many at this time. By the later fourteenth century, groups of Tertiaries began to come together to live in communities and eventually they came to be regulated by the Pope. Hence they were to become known as the Third Order Regular. It has been suggested that their communities in Ireland consisted of men and women; Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) state that papal documents seem to infer that Irish Third Order houses had male as well as female occupants but add that there is no documentation for the continuation of this practice after 1457. Of all the mendicant orders, it is this one which besets the historian with the greatest paucity of documentary evidence, making it very difficult to surmise what the reasons for their resounding popularity in late medieval Ireland may have been. The provincial of the Irish Franciscans, Donatus Mooney stated in the seventeenth century that the Third Order members lived in communities of strict discipline, and combined pastoral duties such as tending the sick in the locality with educating the youth of the surrounding districts (Meehan, 1877). Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) state that schools were often attached to the Third Order houses. Perhaps the popularity of the order was attributable to the desire for learning on the part of the Irish in late medieval times. Mooney (cited by Meehan, 1877, p. 61), argues that “the Tertiaries, indeed did good

service in Ireland; for the liberality of the native princes enabled them to diffuse learning among the poorer classes, who were always addicted to booklore”.

The foundation of Rosserk friary in *c.* 1441 falls earliest of the four fifteenth-century case study sites in this study and like Killeenbrenan, it too was a house of the Franciscan Third Order Regular. It is generally credited to a family called Joye or Joyce, who Grose (1791) states were of great importance in Ireland and England in the fourteenth century. Harbison (1970) ascribed the foundation of this house to William Gannard, a patron more generally associated with developments at Ross Errilly Franciscan Friary in *c.* 1498. He also states that the date of foundation for Rosserk is 1460, but this is more likely to have been the foundation date of Ross Errilly. This uncertainty may well arise from the similarities between the names of both houses. In contrast to this, Kelly (1898) suggests a much earlier foundation date of *c.* 1400, as does Knox (1904). Harbison (2002) quotes a 1441 foundation date. Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) provide documentary evidence in the form of a papal document that Rosserk had been fully established by December 1441. In addition, a papal mandate licensing Rosserk and two other Third Order houses was issued by Eugenius IV in 1442. On 3 April, 1445, Pope Eugenius IV sanctioned the transfer of a chapel and some land by Donald Machoagaill, a layman of the diocese of Connor to the friars of Rosserk (Mooney, 1958–59), which calls into question a 1460 foundation date.

Mooney (1958–59) dismisses a claim made by O’Hara (1898) that prior to 1460, the disobedience of the Rosserk community in refusing to accept the Observant reform caused the friars to be placed under interdict and caused the house to be deserted by the friars. Mooney (1958–59) states that he knows of no authority to back this up, and in addition, the 1606 visit by Provincial Donatus Mooney to Rosserk would appear to further obviate the flaw in O’Hara’s (1898) contention. However, McDonnell (1976) bases his claim that the Rosserk friars did refuse to accept the reform on the fact that Moyne Friary was built in such close proximity specifically to accommodate Observant friars. He believes that the friars who wished to accept the reform left Rosserk for Moyne and that by 1469 the former was almost empty. The proximity of the two houses cannot necessarily be taken as definitive evidence in this instance. Although both were Franciscan houses, they belonged to different orders, namely the

First and Third Orders. Both had different founders, their closeness may merely spring from the availability of sufficient patronage and vocations in the area to support two religious houses. Very little is recorded of Rosserk's history in the decades following its foundation, although the *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland* (Anon., 1844, p. 178) notes that the friary "acquired a comparatively large degree of monastic celebrity".

Nearest in terms of foundation date and also in terms of geographical location to Rosserk is Moyne Friary, a house of the Order of Friars Minor. The foundation date of this house cannot be accurately pinpointed, but it falls between the years 1455 and 1460. Perhaps this confusion arises from the following details pointed out by Gwynn and Hadcock (1988). They state that the Franciscans secured the foundation before 24 March, 1455, which most likely means that by this time they had been granted the papal permission necessary to found the friary. In addition, in 1460 the friary was described as 'letely built' (Gwynn and Hadcock, p. 255). A member of the MacWilliam Burke family is often credited as the founder, although the date of foundation one accepts influences who the founder was likely to have been, according to MacHale (1985). He states that if the friary was founded before 1460 that the founder was Edmond MacWilliam Bourke, but by 1460 he had been succeeded in the chieftaincy by Thomas MacWilliam Bourke. Others have suggested that Moyne was founded by a Barret, but Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) believe that this springs from confusion between *Moyen* (Moyne) and *Boghmoynen* (Bofeenaun), which was founded by a Barrett c. 1450. Rae (1993) believes that this confusion is an indication of the involvement of a number of patrons. Ware (1750) names two founders for Moyne – MacWilliam Bourke and Nehemiah O Donachou. An entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters* for 1460 states:

"The Monastery of Maighin in Tir Amhlagaidh in the Diocese of Killalla [sic] was erected by MacWilliam Burke at the request of Nehemias O'Donuchadha, the first Irish provincial vicar of the order of St. Francis de observantia"
(O'Donovan, 1990, p. 1005).

A further documentary reference to the foundation of Moyne (Brussels MS.3410) places the foundation of the friary in the year 1460 and is similarly worded to the above example:

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“Anno Domini 1460: Mainistir na Maighne ar brú na múaidhe in easpuccóideacht chille haladh a cconnachtoibh do thógháil le Mac Uilliam Búrc an impide Nehemias Uí Dhonnchadha an céudbhíocáire provinnsi do bhí don observantia in Éirinn ag ord S.F. [Saint Francis]”

(cited in Moloney, 1934a, p. 197).

Late medieval friaries in the west of Ireland are often characterised by their piecemeal construction, so it is possible that having received permission to build the friary, construction may have commenced in that year and that major construction continued until 1460. Donatus Mooney recorded that in 1462, Donatus O'Connor, the bishop of Killala, consecrated the church at Moyne. The friary of Moyne was to rise to some significance in Irish Franciscan circles with Provincial Chapters of the order being held there in 1464, 1478, 1498, 1504, 1512, 1541 and 1550.

In 1606, a provincial of the Irish Franciscans noted that Moyne, Rosserk and Kilconnell “once ranked among the most famous houses of our order either at home or abroad” (Meehan, 1877, p. 55). He continues by praising the Anglo-Norman nobility for their patronage of the Franciscans in the Pale but states:

“Assuredly, their veneration for our institute could not have been greater than that which the De Burgos, O'Kellys and Joyces ever evinced for our poor habit and rigid rule. The De Burgos, I admit, entered Ireland as invaders; but in time they became more Irish than the Irish themselves; mingling their blood with that of the aboriginal magnates, the O'Flahertys, O'Dowds, and other princely families”

(cited in Meehan, 1877, p. 56).

The involvement of other families with Moyne is evidenced by the burials there, including the burial place of some of the O'Dowd family in the south chapel.

Quinn (1993b, p. 199) quotes “an old record” which states that Murrisk Friary was established for the Augustinian friars in 1227 “when Murrough O'Malley was Lord of Owl O'Maly [Umhail]”. No further detail is given as to what old record contains this information, and it is more commonly accepted that Murrisk Friary was founded in 1456. This is supported by the architectural evidence. Corlett (2001) states that it has been recorded that the foundation of this house was necessary because the people of the area had not hitherto been instructed in the faith, which would seem surprising for an area in which a place of pilgrimage such as Croagh Patrick is situated. Murrisk

was founded specifically as a house of the Augustinian Observant Reform, so perhaps this comment makes reference to the fact that prior to 1456 there was no Observant houses in the area and not that the people of the area had not been introduced to Christianity. Gwynn and Hadcock (1988) analyse the documentary evidence pertaining to the foundation of Murrisk. A papal mandate of 1456 was issued for Hugh O'Malley, a Banada friar, to build a monastery at Leitheimursge (Murrisk) on land granted by Thady or Tadhg O'Malley, captain of the nation. However, they also add that a 1656 document states that the founder of the friary was Lady Maeve O'Connor, wife of Diarmuid Bacach O'Malley who ruled the barony in which the friary is situated at this time. He was an uncle of Thady. It may again be the case that a number of different patrons were involved in the establishment and continued support of Murrisk. The friary was dedicated to Saint Patrick and some of his supposed relics were preserved there. The friary was also known as *Muirske*, and *Mons S. Patriltii*. Very little is known of the history of Murrisk, a factor Leask (1943) attributes to its remote location and paucity of endowment.

The last foundation of the five case study sites in this research is Burrishoole, a Dominican house, also called Saint Mary's Priory, which had somewhat controversial beginnings. Richard Burke MacWilliam Eighter of Turlough is credited as the founder in *c.* 1469. He had granted land for the foundation of a friary and the Dominicans soon took possession of it with the permission of the Archbishop of Tuam. They constructed temporary living quarters and began to cultivate the land, as well as celebrating mass and the divine office. The friars had unwittingly incurred excommunication because their foundation was 'irregular', that is founded without papal permission (Quinn, 1993a). This situation was remedied when Pope Innocent VIII granted a Brief of Foundation dated 19 February, 1486, thereby approving the house at Burrishoole and empowering its friars to erect a church with tower and bell, in addition to domestic quarters. According to the bull, this was because "the immense benignity of the Apostolic See always complies with the pious desires of the faithful of the religious orders and benevolently grants their requests" (Grose, 1791, p. 42). Furthermore, this papal bull empowered the Archbishop of Tuam to absolve those involved of the guilt and punishment they had brought upon themselves by establishing a religious house without the sanction of the Holy See. The founder, Richard Burke, within a year of its unofficial foundation, took the habit of the order

and remained a member of the Dominican house in Burrishoole until his death four years later. This is recorded in the *Annals of Connacht* in 1469:

“Richard son of Thomas Burke resigned his lordship and Richard son of Edmund Burke was made king in his stead; and in very sooth this is no ‘tone for an egg’”

(cited in Freeman, 1994, p. 549).

It is an indication of the popularity of the mendicant orders amongst those of means in late medieval Ireland that it was a common occurrence for a founder to enter a house of which he was patron as a friar in his final years and to remain there until his death. D’Alton (1928) suggests that Burke did this to atone for the violence he had instigated during his life. His death is recorded thus in the *Annals of Connacht* in 1473: “MacWilliam Burke, that is Richard, died. He had resigned his lordship before this time, for the sake of God” (cited in Freeman, 1944, p. 565).

Both Richard Burke’s passing and resignation of his lordship are also recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*. Rory O’Moran (*Ruricus Ymearan*) was the first Prior of Burrishoole. By the time the friary received papal ratification, his brother Donnell O’Moran had assumed the role (Quinn, 1993b). The foundation of Burrishoole by the Burkes is recorded in the same seventeenth century document mentioned in relation to Strade. This document, held in the Dominican archive at Santa Sabina in Rome, contains the following reference: “*Conventus Buresulensis [Burrishoole] erectus et dotatus a familia de Burgo*” (cited in Fenning, 2002–3, p. 59).

Pochin-Mould (1957) suggests that Burrishoole was home to a group of Dominican Tertiaries and comprised a community of both men and women. However, although the Franciscan Third Order was indeed abundant in late medieval Ireland, there is little evidence to support the existence of Dominican Tertiaries in this country. Pochin-Mould (1957) bases her supposition on the fact that during the Desmond war, a nun named Honoria de Burgo is believed to have concealed herself in the friary. She shared her surname Burke or de Burgo with the founder, so she may have been of the same family. She was likely to have been based in the nunnery to the south of the friary and sought refuge here during raids carried out by Sir Nicholas Malbie in the sixteenth century.



Plate 4.1: Convent to the south of Burrishoole Friary of which Honoria de Burgo may have been a member

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Foundation	Year	Notes, events, alterations, etc.
Mellifont	1142	The Cistercians and claustral plan are introduced to Ireland
	1203	Dominic begins his life of active preaching
	1209	First Rule of Saint Francis written
	1215	Foundation of the Dominicans as a diocesan congregation
	1216	Papal approval of the Dominican Order
	1224	Arrival of Dominicans in Ireland
	1234	Franciscans arrived in Ireland
Strade	c.1240	
	1252	Strade Friary transferred to the Dominicans
	1256	Augustinians became mendicant friars
	1282	Arrival of Augustinian Friars in Ireland
	1348	Black Death
	1366	Statutes of Kilkenny
Ardnaree	-1400	
Cross	-1400	
Errew	1413	
	1423	Observant movement of friars established in Ireland
Killeenbrenan	-1426	
Ballyhaunis	c.1430	
Urlar	1434	
Rosserk	-1441	
Boofeenaun	1450	
Moyne	1455	
Murrisk	1456	
	1461	Henry VI deposed; replaced by Edward IV
	1464	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1486	Burrishoole receives 'Brief of Foundation' making its foundation official
Burrishoole	c.1469	
	1478	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1480?	Strade tower, aisle and transept added
	1498	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1504	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1512	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1533	Henry VIII marries Ann Boleyn
	1536	Irish Dominican Province becomes independent 'Reformation Parliament' in Dublin; royal supremacy enacted
	1537	Act of parliament against authority of pope
	1539	Dissolution of monasteries within the Pale begins
	1540	
	1541	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1550	Provincial Chapter of Franciscan Order held at Moyne
	1595	Moyne granted to Edmund Barret
	1606	Donatus Mooney visits Moyne and Rosserk

Foundation dates taken from Gwynn and Hadcock (1989)

Table 4.3: Key dates concerning the case study sites.

The life of the friars

Prayer and preaching jointly constituted the impetus driving the lives of late medieval friars. The Irish friars, in common with their English and continental counterparts, followed the practice of travelling in pairs on preaching tours. The mendicant orders adopted what has been called a vernacular style of preaching, which differed from their contemporaries as they went out into the community to such places as markets and preached in the vernacular language of the people, instead of merely confining themselves to services in Latin in the church. In addition, unlike the Cistercians, they invited the public into their churches where they would be accommodated for mass in the nave and transept. The popularity of the friars is attested to by the large transepts found in their churches. The friars played a social role in their local communities. This involved leaving their convents behind and preaching in their local areas as the mendicant orders had originally been founded to do. They were also confessors and presided over baptisms, marriages and burials. Their buildings played a social role as they attracted people for worship, regular services and religious festivals. Even in the early seventeenth century, Mooney recalls that “the people of the whole district, for many miles around were in the habit of resorting to the monastery [of Moyne] on Sundays and holidays” (Meehan, 1877, p. 59).

In common with other religious orders, the mendicants recited the eight liturgical hours as shown in Table 4.4. The English friar Haymo of Faversham, Minister General of the order 1240-44, established the Franciscan manner of celebrating this liturgy (Ó Clabaigh, 2002) based on the practices adopted at the papal court. He felt that this abbreviated liturgy would be better suited to friars engaged in preaching and manual labour than the more elaborate monastic and secular offices. Such a move would also have made much sense for the other mendicant orders. Seven canonical hours were celebrated during the monastic day and an eighth at night. As the relative lengths of day and night varied with the season, so too did the exact time at which each office was celebrated. For example, Lauds were said at daybreak, but daybreak fell at different times in summer and winter. The hours were sung in chant. The monastic timetable is also a reminder of the discipline that permeated conventual life. Foucault (1991) states that it had three aims: establish rhythms, impose particular occupations and regulate the cycles of repetition. The religious orders were, he continues, “the great technicians of rhythm and regular activities” (Foucault, 1991, p.

150). The timetable could successfully eliminate the wasting of time by carefully assigning it to a range of occupations, both spiritual and practical. Time was allocated so that idleness was not possible. Temporal discipline was imposed from above by a system of formal rules designed to fulfil the official function of the establishment (Goffman, 1991).

1.30 a.m.	<i>Matins</i>
3.00 a.m.	<i>Lauds</i>
4.00 a.m.	<i>Prime</i>
9.00 a.m.	<i>Terce</i>
11.00 a.m.	<i>Sext</i>
12.00 noon	<i>None</i>
6.00 p.m.	<i>Vespers</i>
7.30 p.m.	<i>Compline</i>

Table 4.4: The eight liturgical hours. The timing of these hours is derived for a mid-summer timetable used by Cistercian monks at Melrose in Scotland (Dent and McDonald, 1998). These times would vary according to the season and depending on the house. For example, Matins could be said between midnight and 3.00 a.m. depending on the house and season (Gasquet, 1904).

Those friars who were priests celebrated a daily private mass in addition to the conventual or corporate mass. Prayers for the living and the dead were an important part of the friars' lives. The priests were obliged to celebrate a mass for the deceased friars of the order each week, whilst the lay brothers had to say a specified number of prayers for the same cause. Of course, there were also prayers to be said for the friary's benefactors. A necrology or register of the friars and their benefactors was kept in each friary so that the brethren would be aware of exactly who they were praying for.

Franciscan houses were under the control of a provincial, while Augustinian and Dominican houses were controlled by a prior. The provincial or prior would have delegated responsibility for different areas of the friary to different obedientiaries and these would have varied in number according to the size of the foundation. In a smaller house, one person may have filled several of these roles. Other offices would have rotated on a weekly basis, for example the hebdomadarian whose duty it was to say the conventual masses and to commence all the canonical Hours. Similarly, the office of antiphoner, whose obligations included the reading of the morning chapter, was filled on a weekly basis. Such offices would generally commence with Vespers

on a Saturday and conclude at the same time the following week. The office of Franciscan provincial was held for a set term after which the holder returned to his former position and rank within the friary. Saint Francis disliked the notion of a hierarchy amongst his friars, hence the rotating nature of the provincial office.

Pope Alexander IV, who established the Augustinians as a mendicant order, also decreed how they should be attired. He stated that they should wear a black habit with a black hood, as well as a leather belt and shoes (Mellor and Pearce, 1981). The Dominicans wore a black cloak and hood over white vestments (Archdall, 1786). They were to girt their habits with a leather belt from which they could suspend their knife sheath, handkerchief and purse. The Rule of the Franciscan Order specified the following dress:

“Let those who have promised obedience take one tunic with a hood, and let those who wish it have another without a hood. And those who must may wear shoes. All the brothers are to wear inexpensive clothing, and they can use sackcloth and other material to mend it with God’s blessing”

(Burr, 1996b, p. 2).

The habits worn by the friars were an instrument of discipline and a means of imposing uniformity. They embodied the essential unity that was sought within the religious orders so that not only were members of an individual house similarly attired, but so were the members of the order overall. The habit also served as a symbol of separation from one’s worldly possessions on entering the order. These belongings were abandoned on adopting the mendicant life, an act carried out in a very public way by the Franciscan founder.

Much of our knowledge of diet in the medieval period is based on written sources. However, these tend to be biased towards the upper ranks of society (Müldner and Richards, 2005), as indeed are many of the sources pertaining to medieval life. Cereals were important in the later medieval diet with the amount of meat and fish consumed varying between social groups. Reports differ as to whether the friars consumed meat. Initially, it appears that none of the orders did so. The Augustinian friars were granted leave to do so in 1377, however the Dominicans were forbidden meat except when sick. One of the features of the Conventual movement was that those involved wished to be allowed to eat meat. However, the Observant reform,

which was concerned with a return to basic principles, was unlikely to have countenanced such a move. So while meat may have been consumed in some Conventual houses, it would not have been appropriate for healthy Observant friars to consume meat, bearing in mind their quest for renewed austerity. The Rule of the Franciscan Order decreed that when the friars travelled, on being offered hospitality in a house “they can eat whatever food is set before them” (Burr, 1996b, p. 3). Consumption of meat was also forbidden by the Rule of Saint Benedict, except for the sick. Observance of fast days, when meat was forbidden, was also integrated into the constitutions of the religious orders. Müldner and Richards (2005) use stable isotope analysis to attempt to reconstruct diet in late medieval England, focusing on five case study sites, amongst them Warrington Augustinian Friary. Their findings emphasise the role of aquatic resources in everyday subsistence in their five case study sites.

Excavations on the Austin friary in Leicester (Mellor and Pearce, 1981) found the most common animal bones in descending order were cattle, sheep, pig and horse. Although these friars were granted leave to eat meat in 1377, not all species were used for food. Some bore marks of butchery, namely cattle, sheep, pigs, chicken, geese and ducks. However, even when meat was under interdict, the ban extended to quadruped flesh but not to that of fowl and fish. Some species were used to supply farm produce and others provided raw materials after death for trades including tanning and bone working.

Brussels MS.3947 contains the Latin text of Donatus Mooney’s account of his visit to Moyne and Rosserk in 1606. Mooney recorded the availability of food for the residents of Moyne. There was, he stated, an abundance of fish and a great abundance of vegetables and shellfish to be found with very little effort in the vicinity of the friary.

“Abundantia piscium ibi est maxima, et superabundantia leguminum et conchilium; ita ut nunquam deficient si vel minimum laborem quis insumat in eis in littore colligendis”

(Moloney, 1934b, p. 51).

The layout of monastic complexes was in itself an indication of discipline. Enclosure was a key aspect of the claustral plan, although it signified different things for the

different religious orders. For the Cistercians, it indicated a place closed in upon itself, open only to brethren who were not intended to leave it and closed to all outsiders. In contrast, the mendicant orders with their community role were permitted to leave the monastic enclosure. Yet while they were not obliged to stay within the physical confines of the friary itself, they were at all times obliged to abide by the conventual rules. In addition, as Foucault (1991) outlines, the concept of enclosure can be applied in a more flexible way than that outlined in relation to the Cistercians, based on the principle of elementary location or partitioning. "Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual" (Foucault, 1991, p. 143). This is illustrated in the diagrammatic representation of the monastic organisation structure outlined in Figure 4.3. Each individual was assigned a particular task within this structure, each task was specific to a certain location or locations, order pervades all.

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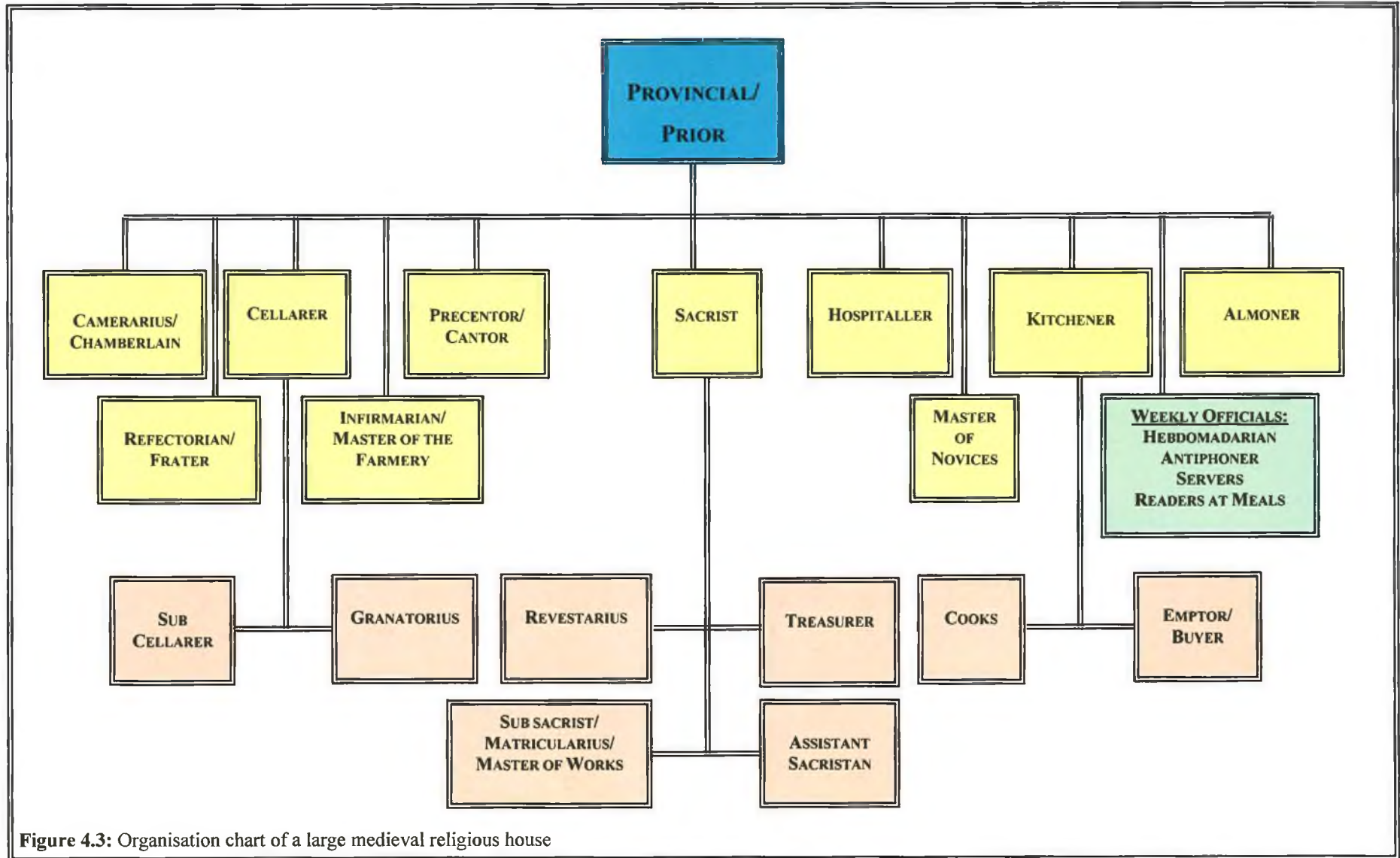


Figure 4.3: Organisation chart of a large medieval religious house

The Dissolution

“A heresy and a new error [sprang up] in England, through pride, vain-glory, avarice, and lust, and through many strange sciences, so that the men of England went into opposition to the Pope and to Rome...and they styled the King the Chief Head of the Church of God in his own kingdom. New laws and statutes were enacted by the King and Council according to their own will. They destroyed the orders to whom worldly possessions were allowed, namely the Monks, Canons, Nuns, Brethren of the Cross, and the four poor orders, i.e. the orders of the Minors, Preachers, Carmelites and Augustinians; and the lordships and livings of all these were taken up by the King. They broke down the monasteries, and sold their roofs and bells, so that from Aran of the Saints to the Iccian Sea there was not one monastery that was not broken and shattered, with the exception of a few in Ireland, of which the English took no notice or heed. They afterwards burned the images, shrines and relics, of the saints of Ireland and England...They also appointed archbishops and sub-bishops for themselves...scarcely had there ever come so great a persecution from Rome as this; so that it is impossible to narrate or tell its description, unless it should be narrated by one who saw it”

(O'Donovan, 1990, pp. 1445–1449).

Thus were the Reformation and Dissolution of the monasteries recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters* for the year 1537. It enumerates the perceived causes of the Reformation and depicts the methods and extent of the Dissolution. The last sentiment of this statement rings particularly true, as its cautionary note should act as a reminder to be wary of the veracity of accounts concerning this controversial phase of history.

For much of the late medieval period, the Crown had little or no effective authority over Ireland outside of the Pale. However, this was not to prevent Henry VIII attempting to enforce one of his most controversial and revolutionary policies even in the farthest reaches of a territory over which he had at best a tenuous hold. The notion of dissolving the monasteries was not by 1536 a novel one. A number of English monasteries had been dissolved between 1524 and 1529 by Thomas Wolsey, on behalf of Henry VIII with papal sanction. The Dissolution, which followed between 1536 and 1540, was not merely on a larger scale but was motivated by numerous factors aside from the ostensible rooting out of abuses in the church. In 1533, the *Annals of Ulster* recorded “the king of the Saxons went against the Faith and many foolish things were done by him against the church” (MacCarthy, 1901, p. 593).

The Henrician Reformation arose out of Henry VIII's wish to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boelyn and the Pope's refusal to sanction this. Henry

invoked the Statute of Praemunire (1393), which insisted that the Crown had no earthly master, and had parliament pass the Act of Supremacy (1534) declaring the king supreme head of the church in England. By renouncing the authority of the Pope, Henry would appear to have been aligning himself with the forces of the Reformation in Europe. However, the Henrician Reformation overlooked many of the doctrinal elements of Protestantism that were characteristic of the reform on the Continent. Hence Henry VIII's brand of reform has often been labelled 'Catholicism without the Pope', with the doctrinal changes associated with Protestantism actually being introduced by his children. Rex (1997, p. 33) refers to the "theological hotchpotch" promulgated by Henry. Bernard (1998) dismisses these views and refutes the notion that Henry's policies alternated between reform and reaction. However, the Act of Six Articles of 1539 rejected many of the reforms of European Protestantism. Haigh (1985) contends that Henry's religious policy was regulated partly by foreign policy and partly by Henry's affections. Part of the reason cited to justify the Reformation in England was the need to root out the widespread abuses within the church. Henry believed Rome should be dealt with first. He stated, "If a man should pull down an old stone wall, and begin at the lower part, the upper part thereof might chance to fall upon his head" (cited by Scarisbrick, 1988, p. 247). Intrinsic to Henry's reforming motivations were of course the fact that he was strongly anti-papal and his wish to end his marriage of Catherine of Aragon.

Henry's decision to suppress the monasteries could also be attributed to his reforming zeal as by this time many of the monasteries had plunged into severe decline, yet other motives also underscored this decision. Henry was not anti-monastic, unlike his advisor Thomas Cromwell, and had helped to found a number of monasteries. However, he saw the monasteries as foci of resistance to his anti-papal policies. He also needed to liquidate funds for war with France and Cromwell had promised that dissolving the monasteries would make him "the richest prince in Christendom". The process of dissolution involved the king's commissioners visiting the monastery and breaking the monastic seal to ensure that the abbot or prior could no longer take legal action in the name of the house. Any valuables would be collected and appropriated for the crown coffers. In England and Wales, the Dissolution had two main stages – 1536, when the smaller houses were suppressed, followed by the larger houses in

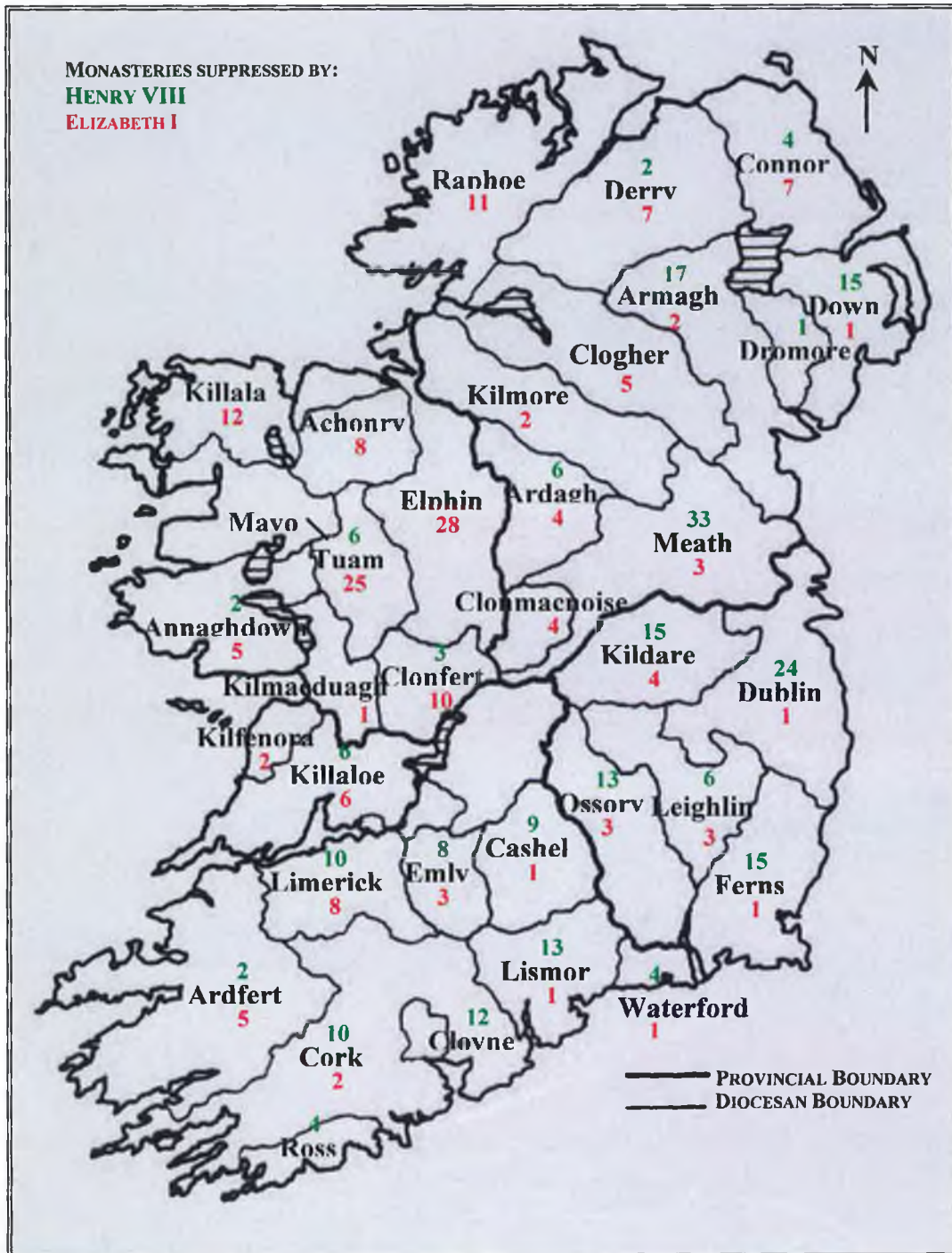
1537–41. Scottish houses largely escaped the influence of the Henrician Reformation.

In Ireland, the justification for the supremacy was couched in political rather than religious terms, thus circumventing controversial theological arguments and instead appealing to the loyalty of the settlers in the Lordship. Jeffries (2001) suggests that the Reformation would have held some attraction for the members of the Pale's colonial society whose speech and identity were English, but there was little to endear it to the Irish speakers of Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland. Indeed the colonial elites had been forewarned that resistance would be ill advised in a letter from the King read to parliament stating that if there was opposition "we shall so look upon them with our princely eye as his ingratitude therein shall be little to his discomfort" (Brewer *et al.*, 1862–1932, p. 388). Bradshaw (2000) notes that in both Ireland and Wales, the Crown lacked an effective bureaucracy and tended to rely on local elites to further its policies. They were then, in the case of the Dissolution, rewarded with a share in the monastic spoils. The suppression was thus only effective in the Pale and those areas where the Crown had significant support and subjects to carry out its wishes. Map 4.5 compares the number of houses dissolved in the Henrician and Elizabethan suppression campaigns (Edwards, 1973).

Henry VIII based his right to rule Ireland on the Papal Bull *Laudabiliter*, granted to the King of England by Pope Adrian IV on the pretext that the Irish church needed to be reformed. In Ireland, such figures as Lord Thomas Fitzgerald and Dr. George Cromer, Archbishop of Armagh, used this bull to defend their opposition to the supremacy. They argued that Henry's title to the Lordship of Ireland derived from it being granted to him as a papal fief and that by renouncing the Pope, he had forfeited his claim to the title. Hence he was no longer Lord of Ireland and could not claim supremacy over the country. In contrast to Dr. Comer, Archbishop Browne of Dublin wrote to Thomas Cromwell in 1535 of how he "hath endeavoured to the danger and hazard of his temporal life to procure the nobility and gentry of this nation to due obedience in owing of his Highness their supreme head" (Maxwell, 1923, p. 121).

Various reasons have been put forth for the failure of the Reformation in Ireland. Bottigheimer (2000) believes its success or failure hinged on the extent to which

The Mendicant Friars in Late Medieval Mayo



Map 4.5: Map comparing the number of houses suppressed in the Henrician and Elizabethan Dissolution campaigns (after Edwards, 1973).

religious heterodoxy impeded or assisted the agenda of the local elite. As noted in Chapter Two, political decisions and alignments were often made on such a basis in late medieval Ireland. Bottigheimer (2000) also criticises Bradshaw (1974) for implying that the Reformation failed due to the existence of characteristics wholly hostile to or irreconcilable with Protestantism. The success of the Observant reform in tackling decline in the mendicant orders had left these orders reinvigorated and even where houses did not convert to Observantism, few were immune to the changes that were made. This factor coupled with the pastoral work of the friars and their popularity in late medieval Ireland made it more difficult to suppress them. This was not necessarily the case in England where the Observant reform had barely taken root and where popular opinion was not so favourable towards the mendicants. The fact that the Observants were so respected in Ireland meant that their virulent hostility to the Reformation might then have been passed on to the secular masses. There was also an absence of indigenous preachers of Protestant beliefs outside the Pale, but a strong tradition of anti-reformation preachers. Thus many Irish houses, and especially those in rural Ireland, were to escape the Henrician Dissolution, however this should be considered only as a stay of execution. As can be seen in Table 4.2, all the case study sites in this research were to be dissolved in the late sixteenth century as Elizabeth I continued the religious policies of her father. The friaries were then granted to those who were (ostensibly at least) loyal subjects to the crown. These grants will be dealt with further in the following chapter as they provide valuable information on the nature and extents of the friary buildings and their assets.

The temporal limit of this study falls at 1540, hence it does not deal in depth with the history of the friaries subsequent to the Henrician Reformation. It should be noted, however, that the friaries continued to contest any attempts to suppress them, and the dates given in Table 4.2 are merely the date at which the friaries were officially dissolved and granted to new owners. The *Annals of Loch Cé*, for example, tells in 1590 of the destruction of the friaries by Sir Richard Bingham “they burned the monastery of Miaghin (Moyne)...and the monastery of Ros-Seirce (Rosserk); and they broke down their castles and burned their houses with their share of corn” (Hennessy, 1871, pp. 508–9). Some doubt exists as to whether the friaries themselves were burned as in an early copy of the manuscript, some of the above passage was crossed out. It was not uncommon for the friars to return again and again to these

religious houses, even into the late eighteenth century. Eventually, however, all were abandoned. The resilience of the late medieval mendicant friaries against suppression in the Henrician era and subsequently can be attributed to their strong basis in the community, their reformed nature, and their rural location far remote from the centralised power of the Tudor forces.

Chapter Five:
Archaeology and
Architecture of the Late
Medieval Franciscan
Houses

This chapter and the one which follows deal with the standing remains of the five case study sites that are the concern of this study. These have been divided into two groups for the purposes of this study on the basis of the order to which they belonged and considerations of their size. Therefore, the houses of the Franciscan order, Moyne and Rosserk (Plate 1 and 2), which are the largest of the sites in question and the most complete, will be discussed here in Chapter Five. Chapter Six will deal with the houses of the Augustinian and Dominican orders in late medieval Mayo, which are less complete than those of the Franciscans. Although Strade Friary was originally a Franciscan house, it remained so for only a short time before being transferred to the Dominicans. In addition, it is the friary's later architectural developments, carried out under Dominican auspices, which are the concern of this study. Hence Strade, Burrishoole and Murrisk will be dealt with in the following chapter.

The evidence presented in this chapter and the one that follows it was gleaned from extensive fieldwork carried out at the five case study sites in question. The nature and extent of this fieldwork was outlined in Chapter Three. To compliment the data gathered at the case study sites and to better facilitate the making of comparisons and drawing of analogies, observations were also undertaken at other medieval ecclesiastical sites. These include Islandeady Church in County Mayo, Ross Errilly Franciscan Friary, the Collegiate Church of Saint Nicholas of Myra in Galway and Melrose Abbey in Scotland. The data collected during the visits to case study sites have been collated and included as appendices at the end of this study. This mostly factual data provides a basis for Chapters Five and Six of this study which could then be discussed and analysed in depth using a combination of description of the features, attempts to understand their form and symbolism, in addition to making comparisons with other sites. The results of the fieldwork undertaken are presented in these chapters not only in written form but also in visual forms such as photographs, drawings and plans which will augment the text. Prior to delving into the specific character of the friaries in question in this chapter, it is worthwhile firstly to assess the evolution of monastic structures in order to gain an appreciation of the architectural influences which shaped the Late Irish Gothic

The Mendicant Friars in Late Medieval Mayo



Plate 5.1: Moyne Friary, a house of the Franciscan First Order



Plate 5.2: Rosserk Friary, a house of the Franciscan Third Order

friaries. To this end, the varied ways in which monastic settlements were constructed in Ireland will be profiled. In addition, the rationale upon which the claustral plan was based will be assessed in order to elucidate its development in Ireland from its introduction by the Cistercians to its usage by the mendicant orders in the fifteenth century.

Early Medieval Monastic Sites in Ireland

The distinction between the eremitical and coenobitical forms of monasticism was pointed out in Chapter Four and is reflected in the architecture favoured by the two groups. Foucault (1991) analyses the means by which discipline results in the organisation of space; the two forms of monasticism merely provide conceptually similar yet architecturally different methods for doing so. The means by which this was achieved by the coenobitical adherents will be discussed later in this chapter. Firstly, the architecture of the eremitical monks who were so prominent in early medieval Ireland will be explored.

Early medieval monastic sites in Ireland fall into two principal categories, divided in terms of their material of construction. Firstly, there are the stone-built hermitages, such as Skellig Michael, found on the west coast and its islands. The fact that these remote sites tend to exhibit good preservation has created a skewed impression of their dominance (Ryan, 2001), thus resulting in the second type being somewhat overlooked. Wooden structures would also have been common in early medieval monastic settings; however, their inferior rate of survival has militated against their ascendancy in archaeological literature.

The sites on the west coast are distinguished by such features as small stone churches or oratories, accompanied by *clocháns*, the circular corbel-built cells in which the monks lived, in addition to cross-inscribed slabs, a shrine and enclosing wall (Manning, 1995). The occupants of such sites were followers of the eremitic way of life. Although they lived as part of a community, they had withdrawn from the outside world and solitude was an essential ingredient of their vocation. This is reflected in the *clochán*, a place where the hermit would have spent much of his time. While solitude was necessary to body and soul, according to ascetic principles, it also provided a setting in which the hermit must confront temptation and the severity of

God alone (Foucault, 1991). In addition to the precipitously located Skellig Michael off the Kerry coast, other sites of this type include Inishmurray off the coast of Sligo, Saint Enda's Monastery on Inishmore in the Aran Islands and Saint Macdara's Island, County Galway.

For the second type of early medieval monastic site, the use of wood was initially favoured for construction, although stone was eventually introduced for the building of such edifices of specific religious importance as churches. In common with religious houses of the later medieval period, the different aspects of monastic life were catered for in separate areas and structures with related functions were grouped together. Hence the church, cemetery and round tower would be in close proximity to each other, but separate from the domestic quarters or monastic tenantry. The churches evolved from early wooden structures to masonry buildings which gradually became larger and more elaborate. Many of the sites were home to round towers, which in their context have been described as being analogous to the belfry towers in late medieval mendicant houses. Cross-inscribed stones and latterly high crosses were associated with early medieval ecclesiastical centres of this type. Examples of this second type of site include Glendalough, County Wicklow; Clonmacnoise, County Offaly; and Kells, County Meath.

The Claustral Plan

The design and adoption of the claustral plan heralded a new era in monastic planning, although there was a significant time delay between its original inception and its introduction to Ireland. An early and elaborate version of the claustral plan was drawn up in *c.* 820 by Abbot Heito of Reichenau in response to a demand from Saint Benedict of Aniane for a universally accepted plan type to promote the acceptance of a common way of life within the Benedictine order. These detailed plans were intended for use for a redesign of the monastery of Saint Gall in Switzerland. However, the renovations never took place, and although this plan is strongly associated with Saint Gall in regard to this monastery, it represents a perceived ideal of monastic planning which exists only in two-dimensional space. Nonetheless, it was to become the standard plan for western monastic houses for the remainder of the medieval period. Fawcett (2001) believes that the plan's compelling

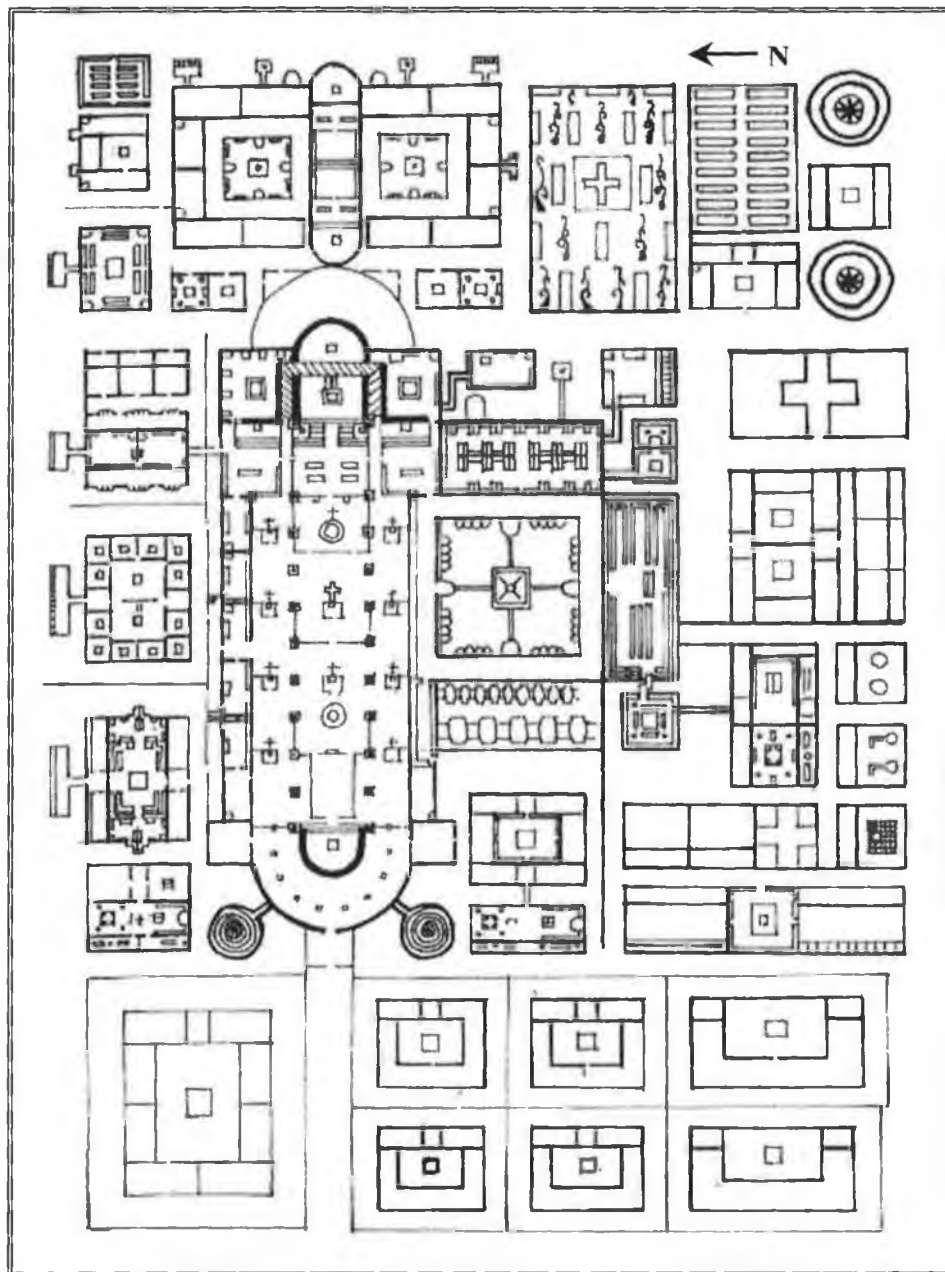


Figure 5.1: Schematic diagram of a plan for a monastery at Saint Gall, Switzerland, c. 819 (Redrawn after a ninth century manuscript; Stiftsbibliothek, Saint Gall). The cloister is at the centre of the plan with the church to the north.

functionality and practicality made it one of the most repeated of architectural formulae. McCullugh and Mulvin (1987) explore the notion of the claustral plan as an earthly manifestation of the heavenly Jerusalem. This form combined function and symbolism to good effect; the practical requirements of the monastic layout were fulfilled while simultaneously incorporating spiritual and symbolic reminders.

Life in a religious house is governed by the principle of order consisting of a routine of repetitive tasks which take place within an ordered and structured milieu, and this is reflected in the architecture of the claustral plan. The Cistercian Saint Bernard believed that “no order can contain an element of disorder, for disorder and order are incompatible” (cited in Hallissy, 2001, p. 272). The central feature of the plan was a cloister, initially that part of the monastery reserved for the community, now synonymous with a central courtyard. It was the hub of monastic life and facilitated movement to the range of monastic buildings. A church was located to the north of the cloister. This was the largest building in the monastic complex, having a cruciform shape. The reasons for its superior size were clear; the church was the focal point of the monks’ existence, their daily activities revolved around it. Arranged in an integrated order around the remaining sides of the cloister were the many domestic buildings. The residents of the monastery were housed within a self-contained enclosure in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict, which stated:

“The monastery should be planned, if possible, with all the necessities – water, mill, garden, shops – within the walls. Thus the monks will not need to wander about outside, for this is not good for their souls”.

(cited by Hallissy, 2001, p. 274)

Furthermore the architecture of the monastery constituted a continuous reminder of the monks’ vocation. Hallissy (2001) remarks that the claustral plan would serve to remind the monks that their lives were centred on the service of God and that the outside world was peripheral. The church would have been the tallest building of the complex and would have overlooked the cloister, its presence dominating all the activities that took place there. These included the reading and study which were commonly undertaken in this the brightest area of the monastery or simply its use as a circulation space for those going about their daily business in the monastery.

The cloister serves as the heart of the physical structure of the monastery, central to communication within the monastic complex. Its walkways are the arteries through which circulation takes place. They allow transition from the spiritually focused areas, such as the church and sacristy, to areas concerned with more earthly pursuits, such as eating and sleeping. The structure of the cloister, with its geometric shape and rhythmic arcades, architecturally exemplifies the order that was central to monastic life, emphasising regularity and uniformity.

The coming of the Cistercian Order to Ireland in *c.* 1142 on the invitation of Saint Malachy presaged the introduction of the claustral plan to the country (Figure 5.2 & 5.3). Although the claustral plan had been Benedictine in origin, according to Fawcett (2001) it was perfected by the Cistercians and was used in their first Irish foundation at Mellifont. Having suitably moulded this plan to their needs in Britain and on the Continent, the Cistercians embraced it in their Irish abbeys, pioneering what was to become the ideal monastic layout in this country. It was used, with some adaptations, by the orders of monks and friars who came to Ireland in the medieval period. The Cistercian's foundations were located in rural settings in keeping with the statutes of the order which insisted that "monasteries should not be built in cities, castles or towns, but in places far removed from the conversation of men" (cited by Stalley, 1987, p. 31). The principal change that the Cistercians made to the claustral plan was to incorporate areas within it to accommodate their lay brothers. Although their Irish monasteries were not as large as those elsewhere, they retained the conventions of the claustral plan, altering it only where it was made necessary by the site to do so. Still they maintained the traditions of uniformity and discipline which are associated with Cistercian architecture. This uniformity is reflected in an early dictate of the Cistercian leaders: "Unity of customs, of chants, of books; one charity, one Rule, one life" (cited in Stalley, 1987, pp. 52–53).

The Gothic Style

Attitudes to the Gothic style and the way in which the negative perception of it as the work of barbarians and art of the invader fed into the indifferent attitudes towards the medieval period as a whole were discussed in Chapter Two. This section will outline

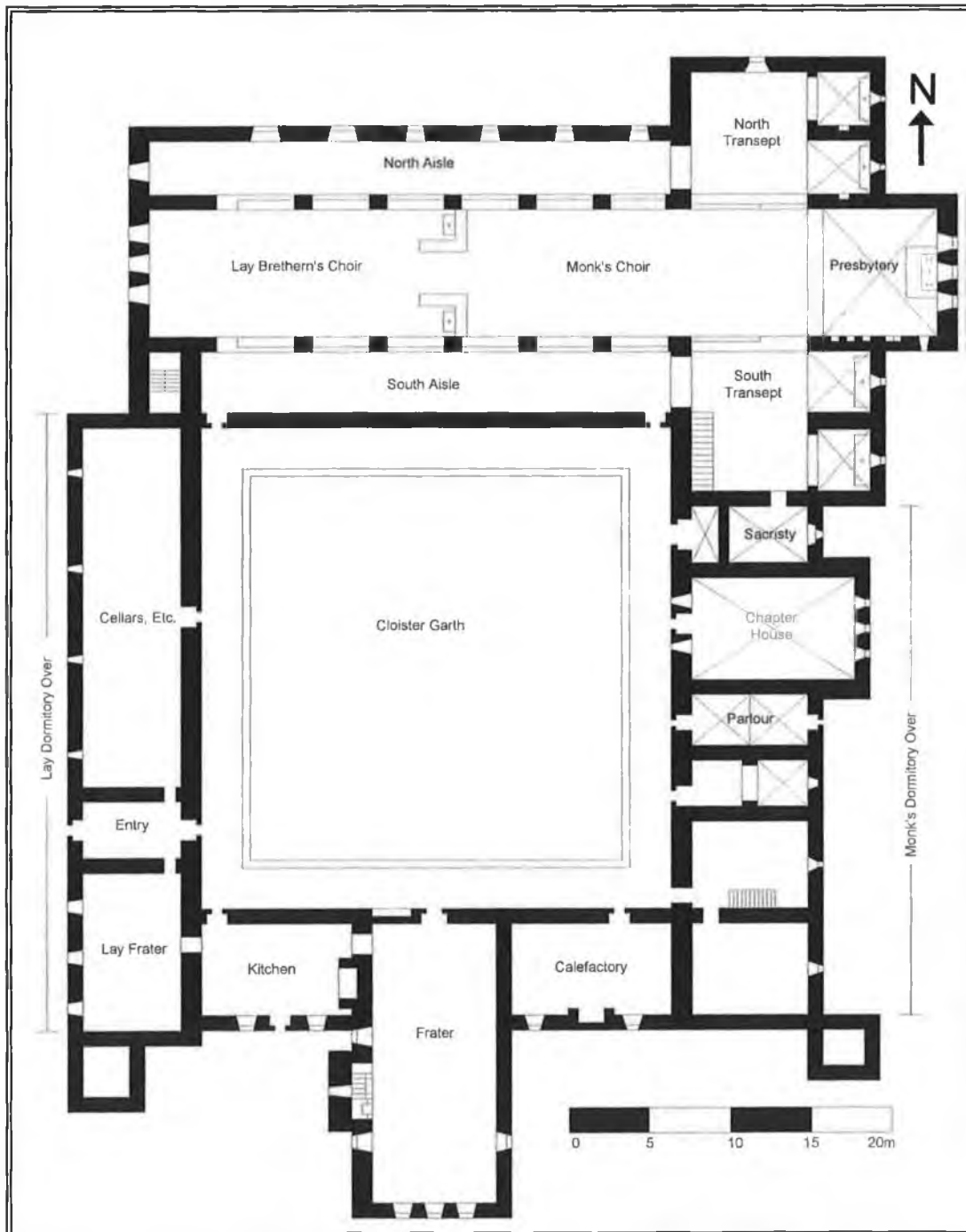


Figure 5.2: Ideal Cistercian layout, based on Jerpoint (after Leask, 1958)

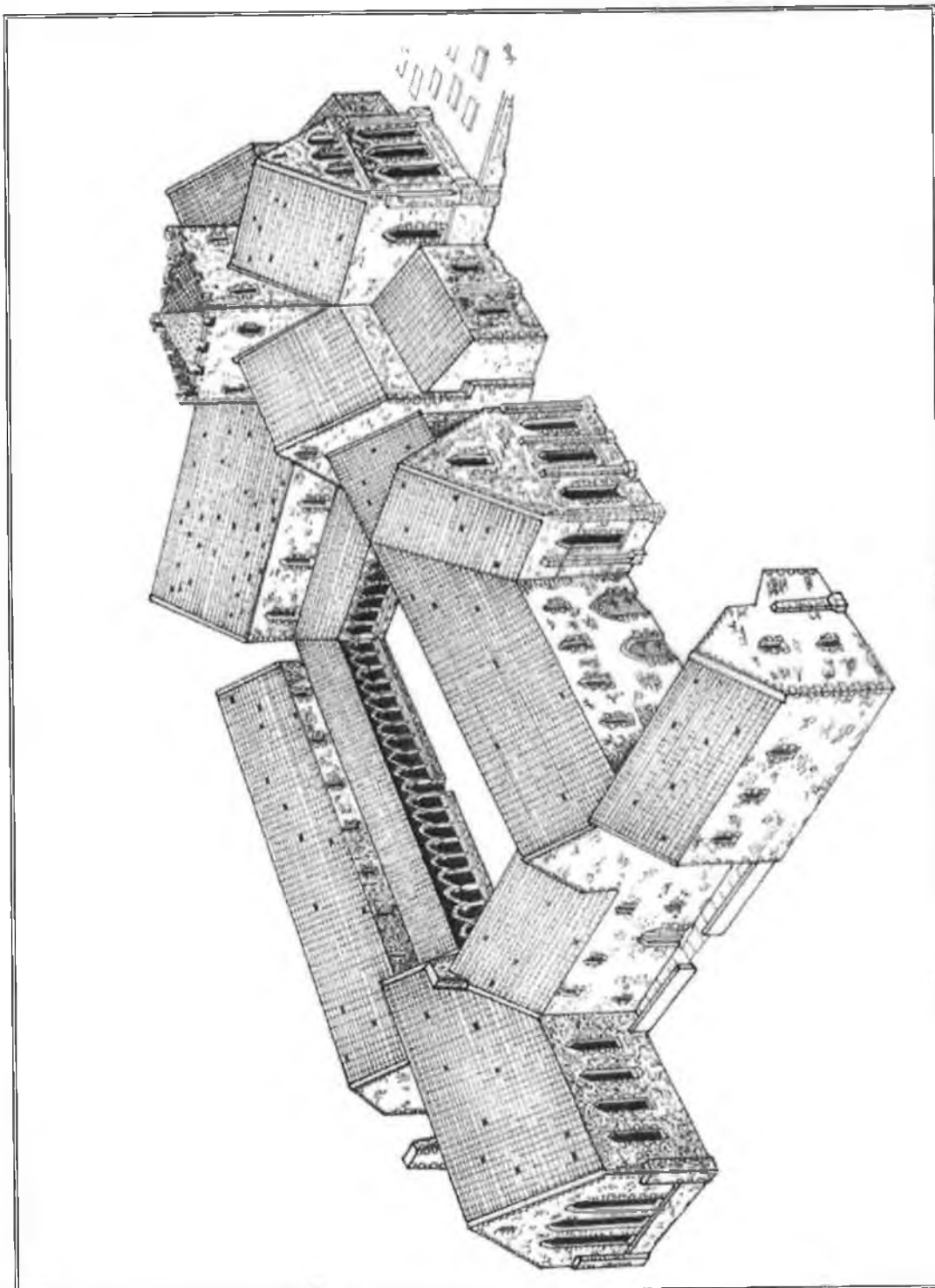


Figure 5.3: Conjectural reconstruction of Grey Abbey (redrawn after Stalley, 1987)

the principal phases of Gothic architecture, the development of the style in Ireland and the features of Late Irish Gothic structures.

In addition to having introduced the claustral plan to Ireland, Stalley (1987) notes that the Cistercians can also claim credit for having introduced the Gothic style to Ireland with buildings at Grey and Inch constructed late in the twelfth century. Its earliest incarnation was the Early English phase characterised by the tall, narrow, pointed windows which gave their name to the phase's other designation – Lancet. In Ireland and Britain, this style was to some extent austere, yet simple and uncluttered, characterised by the grouping of lancet windows. By its introduction of the pointed arch, the Cistercians paved the way for future developments in architecture.

The early phase of building at Strade Friary, associated with the Franciscans, provides an example of how an Early English Gothic building in the west of Ireland would have looked (Plate 5.3). Its seven lancet windows in the north wall of the chancel are typical of this early style where these tall, narrow windows with pointed heads are grouped together. Their narrowness contrasts with later windows which were much wider overall but were subdivided by stone mullions. The lancet window, however, would have admitted a good deal more light to a church than the smaller round-headed Romanesque windows would have done. The east window of Strade Friary has not survived in good condition. Although its base and jambs survive, the head of the window does not. It is evident from the façade that alterations were made to this wall in the fifteenth century and that the window which now remains is an addition from this time. Despite the fact that it is missing its head and is devoid of any remaining mullions, comparative and stylistic evidence point towards the fact that this would have been a tracery window, enclosed beneath a pointed arch with an external hood moulding. Prior to the insertion of this window, the east window would have been composed of a series of grouped lancets, the bases of which can still be seen on the eastern façade. In the centre, there would have been the tallest lancet flanked on either side by an equal number of lancets of descending height.

An Arab proverb states that the arch never sleeps; rather it strives ceaselessly to flatten out in the manner of a bent spring. It can stay in position only while its ends



Plate 5.3: Lancet window in the north wall of the choir of Strade Friary, dating from the thirteenth century. It is a characteristic feature of the Early English phase of Gothic architecture.

are prevented from spreading (Greening Lamborn, 1993). The pointed arch had long been in use in the Middle East and in areas of Moorish influence in Europe. It began to flourish in Europe in the medieval period due to an architectural climate that was particularly receptive to the possibilities it offered and assisted by new ideas then emerging in geometry. The pointed arch is more stable than flat elliptical arches; hence it is more suitable for use in stone vaults. There was a demand at this time for a system of stone roofing due to the number of timber-roofed Romanesque churches which had been ravaged by fire. Some Romanesque churches had stone vaults based on the semi-circular arch, however these did not offer the flexibility of design of the pointed arch. As Gothic architecture developed, buildings came to admit much more light as the windows and doorways became much larger. The buildings also became larger but with thinner and higher walls, leaving behind the blocky appearance of Romanesque architecture. The downward pressure was instead absorbed by the reinforcement of buttressing at certain key points. In the most elaborate Gothic buildings, these took the form of flying buttresses, however simple wall buttresses were also employed.

The first phase of Gothic, the Early English or Lancet, was followed in the thirteenth century by the Decorated Style, which as the name suggests is a style that involved a greater degree of ornamentation than the Early English. It was called High Gothic or Rayonnant on the Continent. This phase saw the introduction of tracery as well as a greater variety and complexity of stone vaulting and was developed in the mid thirteenth century. In Britain from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the third stage of the Gothic style arose. This was known as the Perpendicular style, so called because of its emphasis on the vertical lines in buildings. Windows became larger and fan-vaulted roofs became popular, as did four-centred arches. Flying buttresses were more commonly used. In France, the late incarnation of the Gothic style was known as Flamboyant, because of the flame-like shapes produced in tracery. Building activity took place on a reduced scale in mid-fourteenth century Ireland, but gradually recovered towards the end of the century. By the fifteenth century, Ireland had diverged from Britain in terms of its architectural developments and instead of embracing the Perpendicular style was adopting its own architectural style; the Late Irish Gothic. This is the style which is evident in the late medieval mendicant friaries in County Mayo and will be discussed further in this chapter.

Late Irish Gothic

The Late Irish Gothic style is an eclectic one, drawing influences from the three phases of Gothic architecture described above in addition to reviving certain elements of the Romanesque style – particularly the rounded arch. The diversity of this style makes it difficult to proscribe any rules or formats that would have been adopted in its buildings; instead each one is individual, yet all are linked by a common thread. Some Late Irish Gothic buildings are rich in carvings, others are almost entirely lacking them. Features such as cusped windows may be found in one location, but not in another. Despite this, it is still possible to identify unifying themes within this phase of architecture which can be used to identify this as a style.

In explaining the diversity of influences incorporated into Late Irish Gothic buildings, Mooney (1957b) notes that this applies not only to the buildings overall but is true even on the micro scale where even a single window will show different styles in its jambs, sills, tracery and mullions. However, he states that this does produce an effect that, perhaps surprisingly, is actually harmonious and that it rarely “goes so far as to produce a mere hotch-potch without artistic harmony” (Mooney, 1957b, p. 104).

While this chapter is concerned with the Franciscan order and its buildings, it is important to realise that there are difficulties in attempting to identify a building as Franciscan, as opposed to Dominican, Augustinian or Carmelite, purely on the basis of its architecture. Certain traits in buildings of the fifteenth century are particularly associated with one of the mendicant orders as opposed to the others, but there is not sufficient evidence on which to justify basing a stylistic breakdown by order. As a group, the late medieval mendicant friaries exemplify the Late Irish Gothic style and despite the diversity of influences they encompass, they can clearly be differentiated from other Irish ecclesiastical buildings such as Early Christian monasteries, cathedrals, Cistercian abbeys or parish churches on the basis of their architecture.

By way of summarising the principal architectural features of Late Irish Gothic sites, certain characteristic elements of these buildings can be pointed out. The variety of window types in Late Irish Gothic structures are in themselves a good indication of the eclectic nature of the style. Tracery windows, with or without cusps, are

widespread, especially for larger, more prominent windows. Some of these incorporate dagger and mouchette motifs. Twin-light windows are common in these buildings and are either round or ogee-headed. Most windows have a hood moulding or dripstone externally to carry rainwater away from the window; on occasion a carving may be found on one or both ends acting as a label stop. Single-light windows also occur in this style, although the lancet which was so dominant in the Early English phase is largely overlooked. Doors vary in terms of embellishment, but most common is the simple doorway with a pointed arch with chamfered intrados (interior curve of arch) and chamfer stops.

Choice of Sites

Mooney (1955) outlines a generalisation which states that the Benedictines chose the hill-tops for their foundations, the Cistercians the plains, the Jesuits the great cities and the Franciscans (and indeed the order mendicant orders) chose the towns. While this generalisation contains a seed of truth, it is an oversimplification which overlooks the reality of where the majority of mendicant houses in late medieval Ireland were located. As explained earlier, the initial propensity of the mendicant orders had been to settle in the towns where they would be close to the populations they served. The phase of friary building in the fifteenth century, however, saw a change from urban to rural locations for the new mendicant houses. The fact that this was contemporary with the Observant reform is hardly coincidental as the search for solitude has always been an integral part of monastic life. By establishing themselves in rural locations, the friars could return to the core principles of their orders and embrace a more contemplative existence. No doubt the prospect of expanding their operations to new parts of the country was attractive to those consumed by a reforming zeal. It gave the mendicants an opportunity to take their message to a new audience and also provided a recruiting ground for new members.

Certain key considerations had to be borne in mind when choosing a site on which to locate a friary. Availability of water was crucial. Moyne and Rosserk are both located on the shores of Killala Bay, Murrisk is on the shores of Clew Bay, while Burrishoole is situated at the edge of Furnace Lough. The rural locations chosen by the fifteenth century friars had a further advantage of a practical nature. Instead of being located near to or within the town walls with limited space, as had previously

been the case, they now had a greater area of land at their disposal which could be put to use for the purpose of supporting the friars. In addition, it also facilitated making additions to the friary buildings which could be difficult in a cramped urban context. As the friars grew in popularity, an expansion to their churches was often required, whilst an increase in the size of the monastic community sometimes necessitated additions to the conventual buildings.

Fraser (1838), in recording his travels through Ireland, remarks that it would be difficult to imagine a setting more suited to the seclusion of monastic life than that on which Moyne stands.

“Among the numerous remnants of ancient church edifices which we possess, there are none more perfect, or from situation more interesting than the abbey of Moyne”

(Fraser, 1838, p.355).

The architectural evidence of this friary is at odds with the idea that the friars lived a life of complete seclusion. The large nave with added transept and chapel indicate that Moyne serviced a sizeable population.

Moyne was described by Fraser (1838, p. 355) as lying in a “sequestered pastoral district”. On visiting Moyne, travel writer James Greer was firstly struck by the loneliness of the place. He remarked on the suitability of the location for a monastic community “away from noise, from care, from the tramp and traffic of the world’s ways, to have thoughts fixed on the quiet and rest that remaineth for the people of God” (Greer, 1918, p. 1). His second impression was of grandeur and majesty. He remarks on a phenomenon which appears to have become quite common among Irish medieval monastic houses, namely the accumulation of human bones in friary churches. Greer did not witness these bones himself, but remarks that some of his contemporaries had seen the piles of human bones in this “grand silent mansion of the dead where the great and the grand with the poor and the simple moulder together” (Greer, 1918, p. 8). In his tour of Ireland in 1835, Barrow (1836, p. 260) beheld a similar sight when he visited Ross Errilly Franciscan Friary and witnessed bones “heaped about in such glorious confusion as if a grand battle must at some period

have been fought in the neighbourhood". Documentary and photographic evidence for a similar sight at Burrishoole Priory will be recounted in the next chapter.

Moyne and Rosserk

In terms of layout, both Moyne and Rosserk (Figure 5.4 & 5.5) are similar, though not identical, and both adhere to the claustral plan. These friaries are constructed around a central courtyard or cloister with the church to the south and conventual buildings to the west, north and east. The churches are long and narrow in shape with both having a south transept. Moyne, the larger of the two sites, also has two chapels; one situated to the west of the south transept, the other along the south wall of the choir, towards its eastern end. Tall, slender belfry towers survive intact in Moyne and Rosserk and are situated over the division between nave and chancel. The lower levels of the domestic ranges at the two locations have vaulted ceilings, which are a contributory factor to the excellent state of preservation exhibited by these buildings. The survival of these vaulted roofs also makes it possible for the visitor to these sites to better appreciate the first floor of these establishments in a way not possible in those buildings which had wooden ceilings that are now destroyed. These friaries are among the best preserved Franciscan friaries in Europe (Jenner, 1998) and Rosserk is particularly notable as the most complete Irish example of a Third Order friary.

The majority of the stone construction that took place in the case study sites examined as part of this research was of rubble masonry, either random or coursed. Finely cut and dressed stonework such as ashlar masonry was more expensive and therefore used sparingly. It can be found as quoining, composing doorways and in the chancel arch in Strade Friary. The interior faces of the rubble walls were originally covered by plaster and were therefore not intended to be seen.

The church

The earliest Irish churches were a simple rectangular shape. This evolved into what O'Keeffe (2003) describes as a bicameral plan, namely a structure composed of two parts, the nave and chancel or choir. Subsequently, transepts were added to the standard church design, giving the church a cruciform shape. In friary churches, there was generally only one transept, giving the church a lop-sided plan, a mendicant adaptation of the claustral plan. The nave was situated at the western side of the

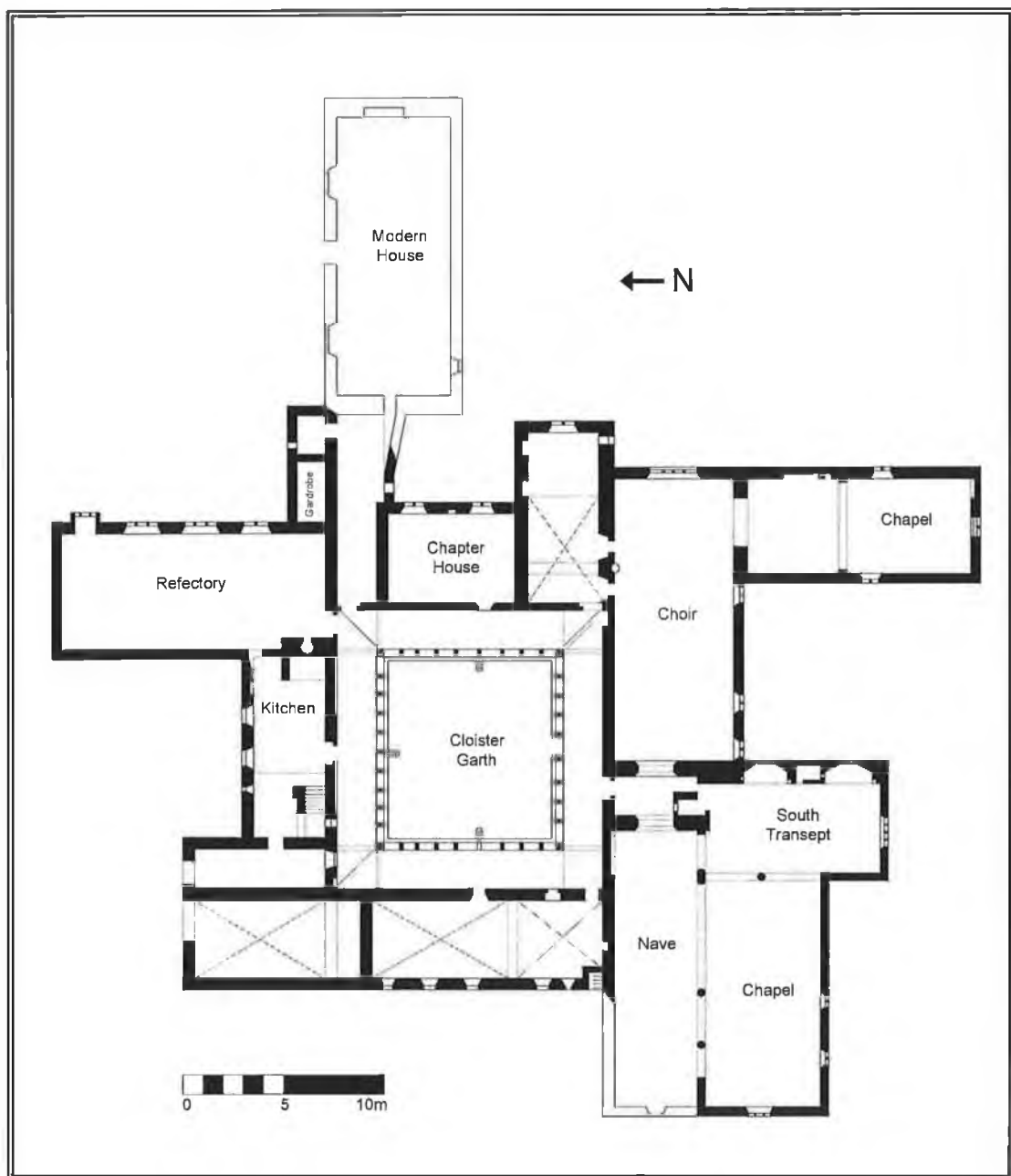


Figure 5.4: Plan of Moyne Friary (redrawn after Mooney, 1957b)

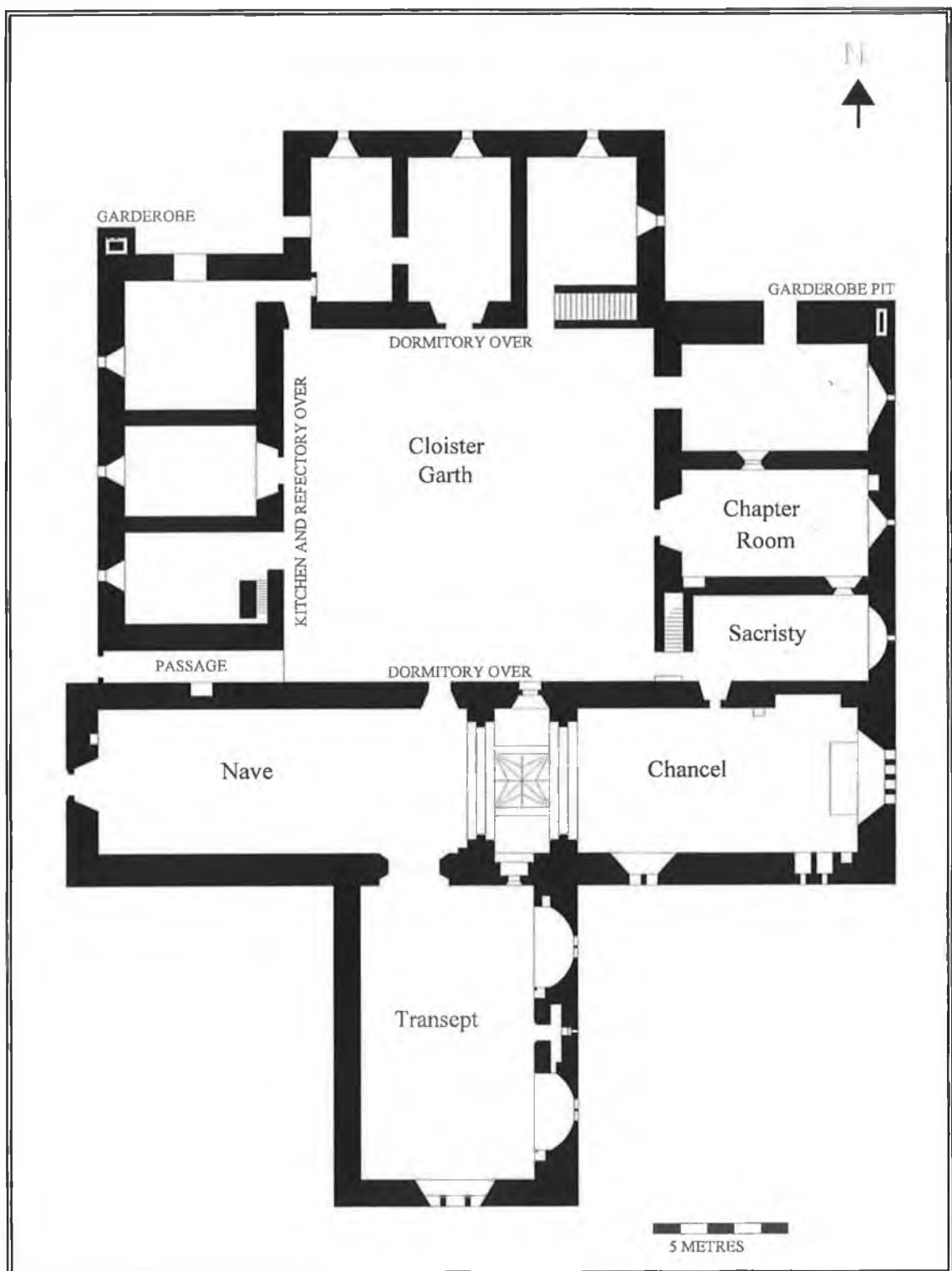


Figure 5.5: Plan of Rosserk Friary (redrawn after Mooney 1958-59)

church and was the area in friary churches in which the lay congregation was accommodated, in addition to the transepts being used for this purpose. The chancel or eastern portion accommodated the friars, who would have occupied choir stalls along its north and south walls. The main altar was situated beneath the east window. The nave and chancel were separated from each other by the chancel arch, which generally sat beneath the crossing of the tower. Screens called *cancelli* (derived from chancel) would have been drawn across the chancel arch in order to shield the ceremonies from the view of the congregation.

As the religious orders dedicated themselves to a life of prayer, the church was the most important part of their buildings and thus tended to receive the most elaborate architectural treatment of any structure in the monastic complex. Just how ornate these buildings might become was dependant on the regulation imposed by each order and also on the amount of patronage available to a particular religious house. Those with more patronage would be more likely to spend on such decoration, whereas those with less would be likely to use their funds for more practical purposes. Initially, the Cistercians were forbidden from including large amounts of decorative sculpture in their abbeys, although this tenet had clearly lost its impact even by the time such houses as Abbeyknockmoy and Boyle were built in the second half of the twelfth century. The vow of poverty is reflected in the simplicity of the buildings of the mendicant orders, yet even in these foundations there remains some ornamentation, especially in the churches.

The nave

Entering the friary churches of Moyne and Rosserk today, the visitor is confronted by an architectural shell, composed of stone and having no roof. The survival of stone furnishings such as *piscinae* gives an indication of how these churches may once have looked, but it can be difficult for the modern visitor to visualise how such buildings would have appeared when in use in the fifteenth century. The masonry walls now visible would have been covered in plaster, most of the windows would have been glazed, some perhaps with stained glass, wooden fittings such as oak panelling, wainscoting, choir stalls and screens would have been in place.

Friary churches, unlike those of the enclosed orders, were designed to accommodate a congregation of lay people from the local community. The entrance for the public to the friary churches was located at the traditional point of entry for the congregation to other churches (such as parish churches) in the centre of the western gable of the nave. This is also the case at Moyne and Rosserk. At Moyne, however, the west doorway (Plate 5.4) is not the original one and is in fact a seventeenth century insertion. This doorway, with its rounded arch topped by a heavy moulding below which sits a carving that is now damaged, is out of keeping with the rest of the friary in terms of style and ornamentation. With the exception of this carving over the doorway, Moyne contains no other medieval relief carvings. Macalister (1943) suggests that the original doorway was spanned by either a lintel or a low four-centred arch. The west doorway at Rosserk is much more in sympathy with the overall design of the friary, giving an indication of the type of ornamentation that is scattered around the friary church (Plate 5.5). It is topped by an ogee arch surrounded by a sculptured moulding with crockets along the extrados (upper or exterior curve of the arch). It has two pilasters, one on each side of the door, and a pinnacle over the centre. The doorway also features a foliate motif (Plate 5.6), repeated three times near ground level on the inner and outer orders of the south side of the door and on the outer order of the north side. The clarity of the carvings is varied; the example on the inner south side is clearest. The motif consists of two adjacent flower heads with stems emanating from them.

Having entered through the west doorway, it is not uncommon to find a stoup located at one side of the doorway which the congregation would have made use of. Overall, however, the naves of Moyne and Rosserk contain little in the way of church furniture and fittings that one might expect to find upon entering a church. In the early years, the congregation would not have been seated for the most part, with the exception of some benches placed around the perimeter of the nave. This may have been subject to change later on. It is likely that the walls of the nave may have been adorned with murals as such imagery would have been a vital way of bringing the friars' message to a largely illiterate populace. This can be compared to the way in which high crosses depicted biblical scenes in the Early Christian church. The dampness of Irish weather means that such paintings rarely survive, although an exception is the example in the Cistercian Abbey on Clare Island. Above the west doorway, most friary churches



Plate 5.4: West doorway of Moyne Friary



Plate 5.5: West doorway of Rosserk Friary



Plate 5.6: Motif on the south side of the west doorway of Rosserk Friary

have a window to admit light to the nave. At Moyne, this is a switchline tracery window with three lights and a hood moulding with label stops (Plate 5.7). At Rosserk, the west window is similarly a switchline tracery window, but with only two lights in this instance (Plate 5.8).

Stalley (1987) documents the practice the using red paint to mark out false masonry joints on the interior walls of Cistercian churches. Evidence survives for this practice in Grey and Graigueamanagh and it was widespread in France and England, he states. This technique could be used to give the impression of ashlar masonry without the expense involved in constructing it. In her study of the fragmentary remains of Irish medieval wall paintings, McGrath (1987, p. 96) cites Thompson who once argued:

“It is hard for us to realise how brilliant the colours of medieval wall painting must have been...we prefer not to believe in the stark brilliance, the garish gaudy sunshine that the middle ages revelled in”.

In Rosserk, the nave is separated from the transept by a single round-headed arch resting on half-octagonal columns (Plate 5.9). The columns have simple bases and capitals ornamented with roll mouldings. An arcade runs along the south side of the nave in Moyne Friary, dividing the nave from the transept and chapel. This consists of four arches resting on octagonal columns and half octagonal responds (Plate 5.10). The use of octagonal columns may not be a simple matter of aesthetics. Eight is considered the number of resurrection and rebirth, as it was eight days after his entry into Jerusalem that Jesus rose from the dead. Also, as the eighth day followed the seventh and final day of creation, it signified eternal life (Fawcett, 2002). These columns rise to almost one metre higher than those at Rosserk and the arches themselves also have a greater rise. The capitals at Moyne are less elaborate than even the simple versions in Rosserk, the bases are slightly more so as each one rests on a plinth.

Patronage was clearly of value to the mendicant friars in late medieval Ireland and although few records survive detailing grants and bequests that were made to the friars, some evidence of patronage survives in the churches. Late medieval wills have been used by Rohrkasten (1996) to gauge the popularity of the orders of friars in London. While such a study provides us with an insight into the impact the friars had

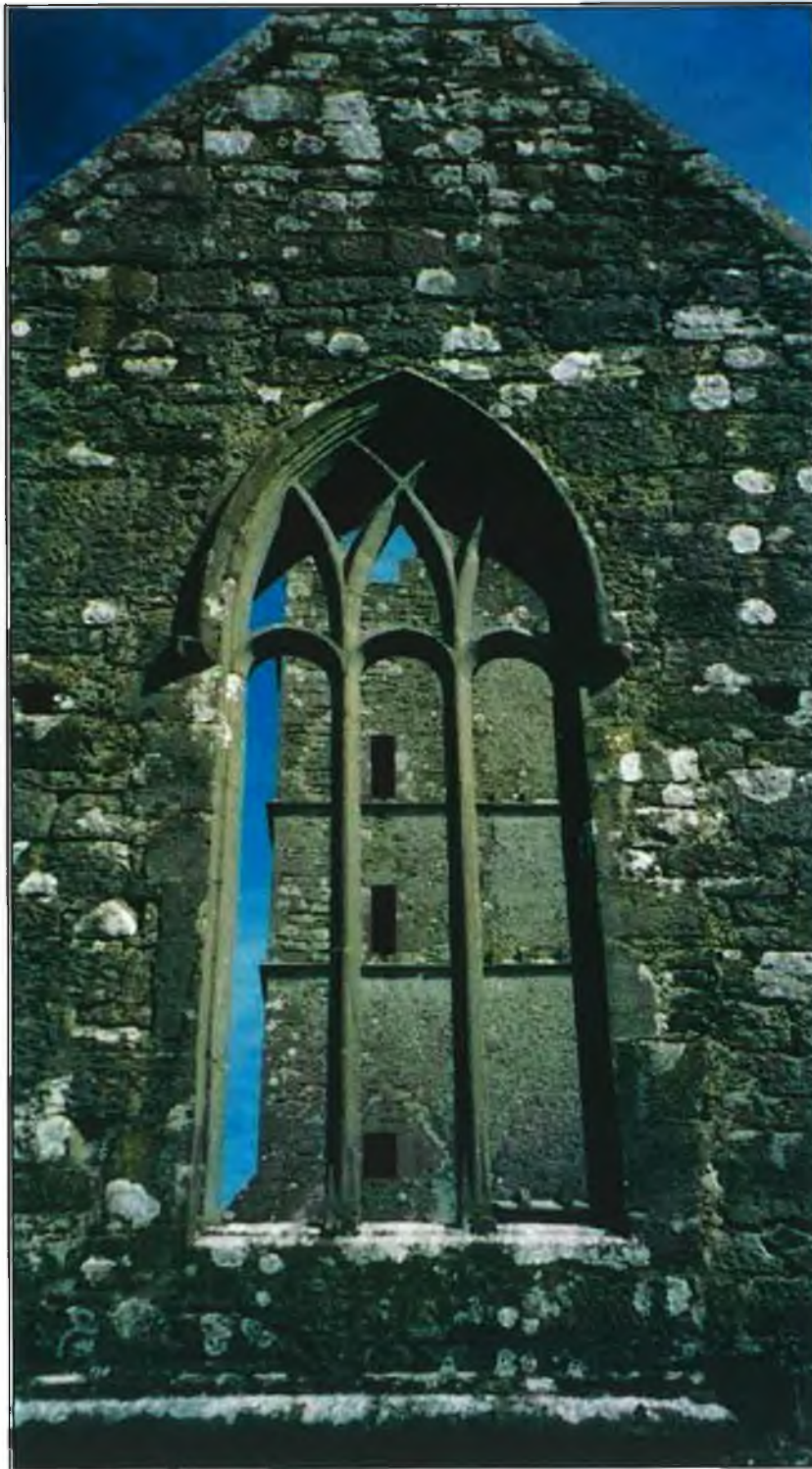


Plate 5. 7: West window of Moyne Friary



Plate 5.8: West window of Rosserk Friary



Plate 5.9: Archway leading into transept in Rosserk



Plate 5.10: Capital of octagonal pier in Moyne Friary

on their local community, the data it utilises are biased in favour of the more prosperous members of the congregation. These wills usually requested the intercessory services of the friars to say masses for the soul of the testator and his family. There were also requests made for the friars' participation in burial ceremonies and to be buried within the friaries' precincts. Evans (2000) documents excavations carried out on the Augustinian friary in Hull. He notes that burial within the parish churchyard was free. Those who were interred within the friary church secured this privilege by virtue of their patronage of the friary. Despite the lack of testamentary records for late medieval Ireland and specifically the case study sites, there is evidence that the friars enjoyed considerable popularity in the west of Ireland at this time. The architectural and archaeological evidence indicates that both people of means and the less prosperous felt an affinity for the mendicant friars.

The patronage of the prosperous is evidenced through the construction of memorial and chantry chapels and the endowment of altars where masses could be said for the soul of the deceased. Other evidence of patronage, such as church plate and wall hangings, is less likely to survive (Ní Ghabhláin, 1995). The De Burgo O'Malley Chalice is an exception to this and with its inscription provides clear, dateable evidence of patronage. The bulk of the friaries' congregation would not have had the resources to build a chapel, donate church plate or commission sculptures. That such people were drawn to pray in the friaries is evidenced by the construction of large naves and the subsequent addition of spacious transepts and aisles to accommodate a growing congregation.

Transepts and chapels

The addition of transepts to friary churches is an indication of the popularity of the friars in late medieval Ireland and is clearly exemplified in the churches of Moyne and Rosserk. These churches also indicate the way in which transepts were used to accommodate the additional altars that were required. Indeed, an identical formation is used at the two sites, reinforcing the notion that Rosserk acted as a model for the building of Moyne. On the east side of the transept of both churches, there are two recesses set beneath round arches with windows at the back. Between the two arches is situated a secretarium and on the south of each recess is a *piscina*. The altars would

have been placed beneath these arches, in the thickness of the wall, as was common practice (Plate 5.11 & 5.12).

In addition to the transepts, designed to accommodate a growing congregation, other additions were made to friary churches including various types of chapels, such as Chantry Chapels and Lady Chapels. A Chantry Chapel is a small chapel in or added to a church, endowed so that masses will be said for the souls of its patrons or other specified people (Archer and Smith, 1999). A Lady Chapel is a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, usually situated at the eastern end of a church as either an extension of the chancel or an aisle. Chantry endowments do not necessarily appear in the form of a building added to a friary church and may simply involve the introduction of an altar where masses can be said for the souls of its benefactors. Ní Ghabhláin (1995) states that patronage of medieval churches by powerful families is reflected in embellishment of sites through the addition of mortuaries or private chapels and that this can be taken as an indication of status. This can be seen at Ross Errilly where there is a Lady Chapel and the Jennings Chantry Chapel. In addition, however, she also notes that much of the evidence of powerful patronage, such as church plate and wall hangings does not survive. No chapels such as those described above were built at Rosserk, thus it is likely that patronage of this friary found different modes of expression. At Moyne, however, there are two chapels, one adjoining the south side of the nave and west side of the transept (Chapel 1) and the other which abuts the south wall of the choir (Chapel 2). No particular evidence survives to explain the exact nature of Chapel 1, although considering its size and location it seems very likely that it was needed to accommodate a section of the congregation as the friary's popularity among the lay populace grew. The location of Chapel 2 adjacent to the sanctuary has led Mooney (1956) to suggest that it would have been used by the community of friars or a section of it. This is backed up by the evidence of the piecemeal nature of construction of the domestic buildings, which are suggestive of additions made to facilitate a growing community of friars. As Moyne was a novitiate house used for the training of students or novices, Mooney's (1956) suggestion that Chapel 2 was for the use of novices appears very plausible. Directly opposite each other on the east and west walls of this chapel are two small blocks of stone, the eastern one inscribed with the letter 'B' in low relief (Plate 5.13), the western with the letter 'D'. The seventeenth century visitor Mooney stated that these indicate



Plate 5.11: Secretarium (on right of photo) and triple light window set within an arched recess in the transept of Moyne Friary



Plate 5.12: Secretarium in the transept of Rosserk Friary. There is a piscina to the left hand side of the secretarium door as in the case in Moyne Friary.



Plate 5.13: Letter 'B' on the eastern wall of chapel 2 in Moyne Friary

burials of members of the Bourke and O'Dowd families in this chapel. It is also likely that these families funded the construction of this chapel either as a resting place for family remains or simply as an endowment to the friary which could be used for the novices. Indeed, so devoted were the O'Dowd chiefs to the Franciscans that several of them spent their final years as friars in Moyne.

The windows in the chapels in Moyne are of three types. Most numerous are the twin-light round-headed windows that are a common feature of the late medieval mendicant houses. The west window of Chapel 1 is of a more unusual type, featuring three pointed lights, the central one being slightly taller than the two flanking lights. The same type of window is found in the transept. The south window of Chapel 2 is a two-light switchline tracery window.

Both the south-facing windows in the transepts of Moyne (Plate 5.14) and Rosserk are much more elaborate and larger than those which surround them. Perhaps this may be intended as a measure to direct the light of the passing sun into the transepts during the day. It may also be attributable to the fact that these windows are located in pointed gables, which rise to a greater height than the walls they adjoin. In Moyne, the south transept window is of the same design as the east window. It is a four-light switchline tracery window with a cusped motif at the apex. At Rosserk, the south transept window is similar in design to the east window but on a smaller scale. It is a three-light window, not of switchline form, but instead contains a number of cusped motifs. This window echoes the curvilinear tracery associated with the Decorated and Flamboyant styles.

Choir

If the church was the most important part of the friary overall, then the choir was the most important part of the church for it was here that the main altar where mass was celebrated was located. The significance of the choir is reflected in the fact that it was almost always the location of the largest and most elaborate window in the church, that is the east window. The eastward orientation of the most notable window in the friary is resonant with meaning. These windows were aligned to face Jerusalem in the east and also to face the rising sun. This permitted light to flood into the friary church during morning services but also evokes particular associations for those inclined to



Plate 5.14: Window in the south wall of the transept of Moyne Friary

think in biblical terms, as these friars would have been taught that salvation would come from the east. Moreover, it also served as a reminder of light as God's first creation. Another feature which one would expect to find in a friary church is an altar, however at Moyne the altar which would once have stood beneath the east window is no longer there. At Rosserk, the altar has survived, a basic box-like masonry structure with a simple moulding around the top. The simplicity of this altar contrasts with the use of sculpture on the altar *reredos* at Strade Friary, as will become apparent in the next chapter.

As the principal monastic services took place in the choir, it also tends to be the place in where stone church furnishings are most likely to remain. For example, *piscinae* and *sedilia* are usually located along the south wall of the chancel. A *piscina* is a stone basin with a drain hole contained in a recess, which was used for washing the Eucharistic vessels. *Sedilia* are seats for those officiating at mass, usually recessed into the south wall of the choir. *Piscinae* can also be found in other parts of friary churches; their presence indicates that an altar would once have been situated nearby. However, the most elaborate *piscina* is usually the one in the choir. This is clearly the case at Rosserk where the size, design and degree of elaboration of the *piscina* in the choir (Plate 5.15) stands in stark contrast with the simplicity of those elsewhere in the friary church. A miniature rib-vault is constructed inside each of this *piscina's* two sections. A similar example of micro-architecture occurs at Holy Cross where the *sedilia* has a rib-vaulted ceiling, as does the *piscina* at Elgin Cathedral in Scotland. Another feature found in friary churches are aumbries, small niches used for storage of the vessels required for the celebration of mass. These small square niches are found in many locations in the friary churches and also in the sacristy, usually there is one on the south wall of the choir.

Of the two friaries in question in this chapter, it is Moyne which has the simplest east window (Plate 5.16). This is very much what would be expected and is altogether in keeping with the simplicity and restraint in evidence in the friary's overall design. It is a four-light switchline tracery window with a cusped motif at the apex. Conlan (2002) comments on how similar this is to the fifteenth century west window in Cashel Dominican Friary, County Tipperary. At Rosserk, the east window (Plate 5.17) is also a four-light traceried window, but instead of switchline tracery, this



Plate 5.15: Piscina in the south wall of the chancel of Rosserk



Plate 5.16: East window of Moyne Friary



Plate 5.17: East window of Rosserk Friary

window boasts undulating or curvilinear tracery. This is a flowing form of tracery in which continuous curvilinear patterns dominate. Cusps are used to a much greater extent in this east window than that at Moyne where they occur only in one openwork section. At Rosserk, almost all of these sections are cusped. The use of many curved lines running in different directions creates the impression of flowing tracery, even within the confines of a symmetrical design.

The Tower

Late medieval Franciscan houses in Ireland are noted for their tall, slender belfry towers which arise from amongst gabled ruins. Indeed their elegant proportions are now enhanced by the fact that the roofs which once surrounded them are now gone, thus allowing us to appreciate the full extent of these towers in a way not originally intended by their builders. These towers are built at the meeting point of the nave and choir; they rise above the point known as the crossing. Franciscan towers contrast with those of other religious orders in Ireland, including the Cistercians. Cistercian towers were usually shorter and squatter than their Franciscan counterparts. This is because Cistercian towers occupy the full width of the nave and do not narrow appreciably as they increase in height. In contrast, Franciscan towers are battered at the bottom, giving an impression of the tower arising from a pair of sloping shoulders. Typically, Franciscan towers rise several floors above the former roof level and are divided by horizontal string coursing. Their parapets also tend to be battlemented, with different configurations of battlements at the various sites. Moyne (Plate 5.18) has four levels of string coursing, while Rosserk has three (Plate 5.19). Friary towers usually have a number of small windows to illuminate their internal staircases; often these are narrow rectangular windows. In addition, they may also have a slightly more substantial window, such as the twin-light ogee-headed window on the west face of the Rosserk tower, to allow the pealing bells to ring out in the surrounding countryside. On the north face of the tower is a single-light ogee-headed window and a particularly large pointed arched window with a hood moulding.

An 1157 edict forbade the Cistercians from building stone towers on their abbeys (Stalley, 1987) and similarly the early Franciscan houses did not have towers either. Most houses of these orders, however, subsequently came to have towers as these were often added in the fifteenth century, although some Cistercian houses added



Plate 5.18: West side of the tower of Moyne Friary

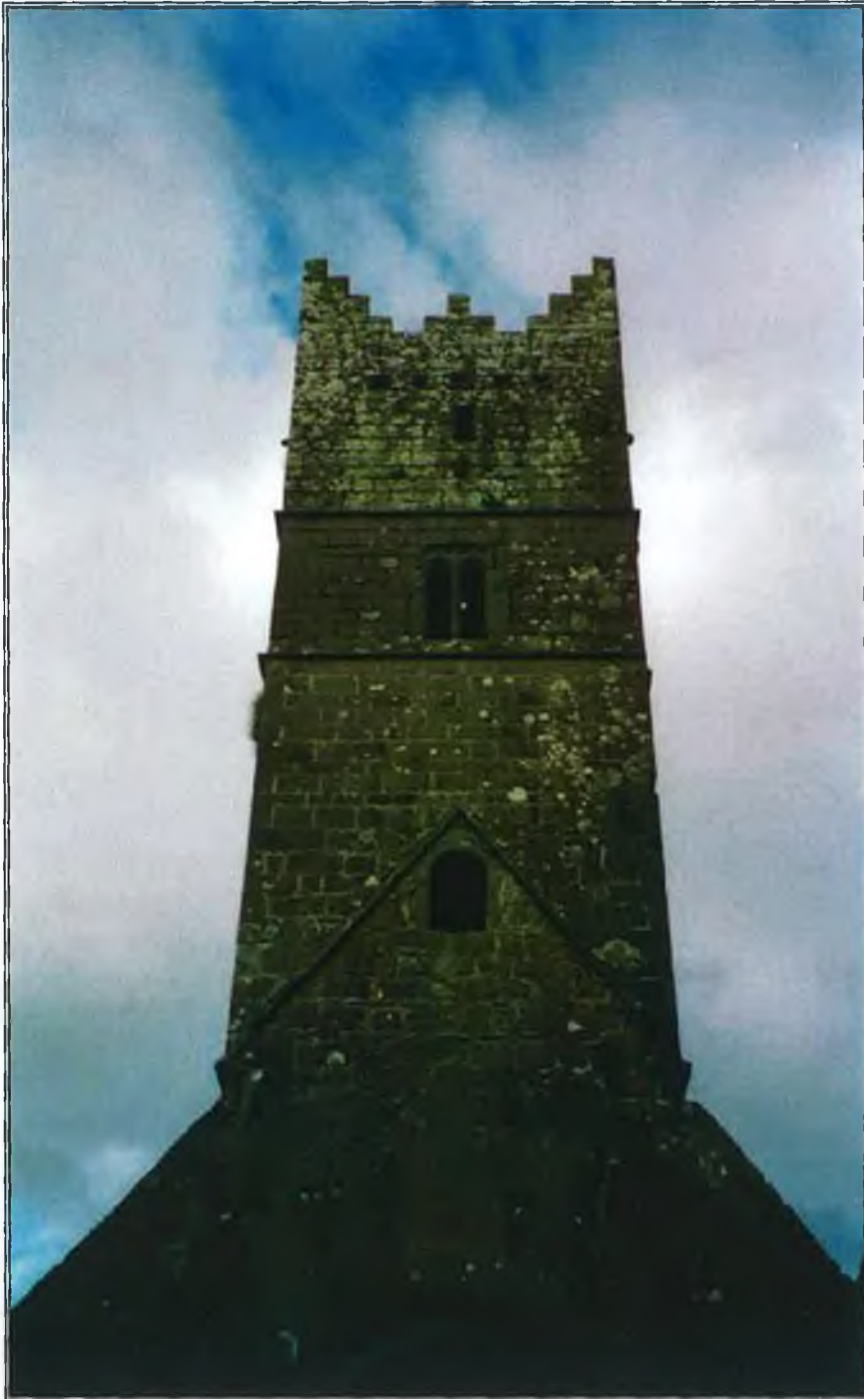


Plate 5.19: West side of the tower of Rosserk Friary

towers as early as the thirteenth century. For some mendicant foundations established early in the fifteenth century, the addition of the tower often occurred later in the century as resources became available for it. This is a reflection of the piecemeal construction that characterises mendicant houses, where the most essential parts were constructed first with others added as resources permitted. Some towers, such as the one in Ross Errilly Franciscan Friary near Headford, County Galway, have a feature known as a rood loft. This is a gallery located above the chancel arch and below the shoulders of the tower from whence the rood, a large crucifix, could be displayed to the congregation. At Ross Errilly, this feature is on the western face of the tower, however neither Moyne or Rosserk have a rood loft. The tower also served as a marker in the landscape, harkening back to an earlier phase of Irish ecclesiastical architecture in which a group of buildings were tied together by a vertical symbol; in the earlier instance this symbol was the round tower (McCullough and Mulvin, 1987).

Beneath the tower sits the chancel arch, allowing passage between nave and choir. At Moyne, there is a simple round-headed arch on either side of the crossing, with a barrel vault underneath the tower. At Rosserk, the arches are pointed with a low-relief carving at the bottom of each corbel. Again there is a stone vault beneath the tower, but this one is of a more complex type. It is a rib vault in which ribs of masonry are used to carry thrust. A carving of the same sort of vault may be seen on the mullion of a fifteenth century window in Islandeady church, near Castlebar, County Mayo in addition to a representation of a four-light switchline tracery window typical of fifteenth century friaries. The upper floors in the tower in Rosserk were made of wood and no longer survive. On each side are five water spouts, just below the battlements, designed to carry rain water away from the roof.

Use of sculpture and ornamentation

Gothic architecture in Ireland was characterised by its simplicity. Even at its most ornate, it did not approach the level of elaboration and complexity of iconography associated with the Gothic style in Britain or on the Continent. The Late Irish Gothic style is an example of the tendency in medieval Ireland, pointed out by Hourihane (2003, p. 1), to fuse “external ideas and concepts with the native to produce a uniquely expressive idiom”. This style, he believes, is an amalgamation of contemporary and antiquated, international and insular elements. Champneys (1910) refers to the

sparing and random way in which decorative carving was employed in Late Irish Gothic friaries. Certain features such as a tomb or *piscina* may bear carving, while there may be little ornamentation visible in the rest of the friary. Nor does the placing of the carvings necessarily reflect symmetry in any way, the *piscina* in the chancel in Rosserk being a case in point. It bears several unrelated pieces of carving on its structure that do not have symmetrical parallels. In fact, the only carvings which in some way reflects the kind of symmetry so beloved of medieval architects are the angels in the spandrels on the west side of the *piscina* (Plate 5.20). However, even this motif is not carried over to the left arch of the *piscina*. Indeed perhaps it is as well that this is so, Champneys (1910) singles out these angels as illustrating the common inferiority of Irish figure sculpture in this period. A further illustration of the eclecticism of Late Irish Gothic is the fact that this *piscina*, in contrast to the angels described above, also has a vine-leaf carving (Plate 5.21) which Champneys (1910) praises for its excellence. Another example of the irregular placing of carving is provided at Rosserk by the carved heads that appear in such places as the label stop and apex of window hood mouldings.

The carvings in Rosserk Friary may be of varying quality and irregular distribution, however there is at least clear evidence of a programme of decorative carving there. This is in contrast with Moyne Friary where decorative carving of this sort is almost entirely absent. Why this should be the case may be attributable to one of a number of reasons. Firstly, it may be an indication of the poverty of the order which may have neglected to include such carving due to lack of finance or because other areas may have been prioritised for spending purposes. It is also possible that Moyne, as an Observant foundation, was not considered an appropriate place for such ornamentation, although this seems somewhat unlikely in view of the fact that carvings in Late Irish Gothic houses were renowned for their simplicity and restraint.

Included among the bas-relief carvings on the chancel *piscina* in Rosserk is a subtly executed carving of a round-tower (Figure 5.6), measuring 31 centimetres in height. Bas-relief is a form of low relief carving or sculpture in which figures project slightly from their background, but never more than half their true depth. Lalor (1999) points to the execution of this carving over 200 years after the construction of the last round



Plate 5.20: Angel in the west spandrel of the west side of the *piscina* in the chancel of Rosserk



Plate 5.21: Foliate carving in the *piscina* in the chancel of Rosserk

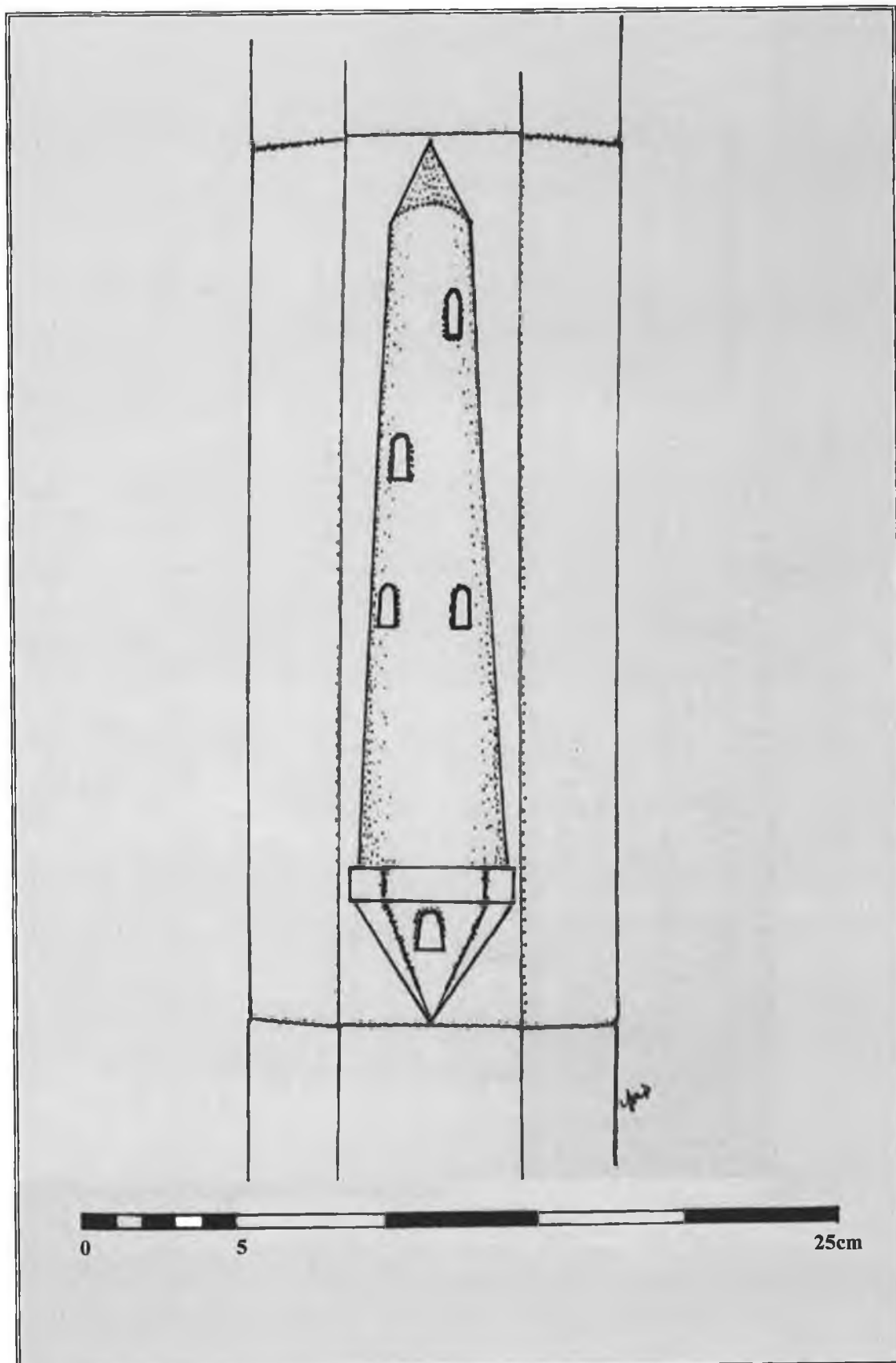


Figure 5.6: Round tower carving on the eastern column of the *piscina* in the chancel of Rosserk

tower as cogent evidence of the enduring power of the image. It has been suggested that this carving was a representation of the round tower nearby in Killala and although it does not reproduce directly the features of this tower, we should not rush to dismiss this possible link. It is likely that this carving constitutes Killala round tower as recalled from the mason's mind. This carving is not strictly of a round tower. The faces of the walls do not form a circle but rather an octagon, three faces of which are visible. Stylistic considerations would dictate that this arrangement compliments the form of the column of which it is part, as the column too is octagonal. Furthermore, Blick (2003) explains how artistic representations were often less precise in the Middle Ages than what one would expect today. Hence, architectural imitations did not copy the model *in toto*; instead they reproduced selected elements. These elements could be rearranged or added to at the artist's discretion. These considerations bolster the argument that Killala round tower was the inspiration for the carving on the Rosserk piscina.

Early Cistercian churches contrasted with the lavishly ornate edifices of the Cluniac brethren. Instead, they considered ornamentation superfluous and contrary to the ideal of poverty on which they based their lives. They regarded ostentation as a distraction from prayer. To counter this, such features as stained glass, wall hangings and paintings were restricted by the General Chapter of Citeaux. The mendicant orders in late medieval Mayo may not have lacked ornamentation in their churches for the same reasons. In some instances, it would have been an unnecessary expense which Observant brethren could not have countenanced. However, such elements as wall hangings and paintings, far from being a distraction, would have served a useful didactic purpose in visually illustrating for the congregation the scriptures which the friars preached. While they would have augmented and reinforced the friars' message, however, their nature has unfortunately not assisted their survival in the archaeological record.

Moyne is generally acknowledged to be lacking in sculpture in comparison with the other mendicant houses, especially Rosserk. Despite this, it is home to some of the more unusual examples of artistic endeavour to be found in medieval ecclesiastical buildings. On either side of the inside of the west doorway are incised into the plaster etchings of ships (Plate 5.22 & Figure 5.7). Ship etchings are much more common



Plate 5.22: Ship etching on the west wall of the nave of Moyne Friary, to the north of the entrance

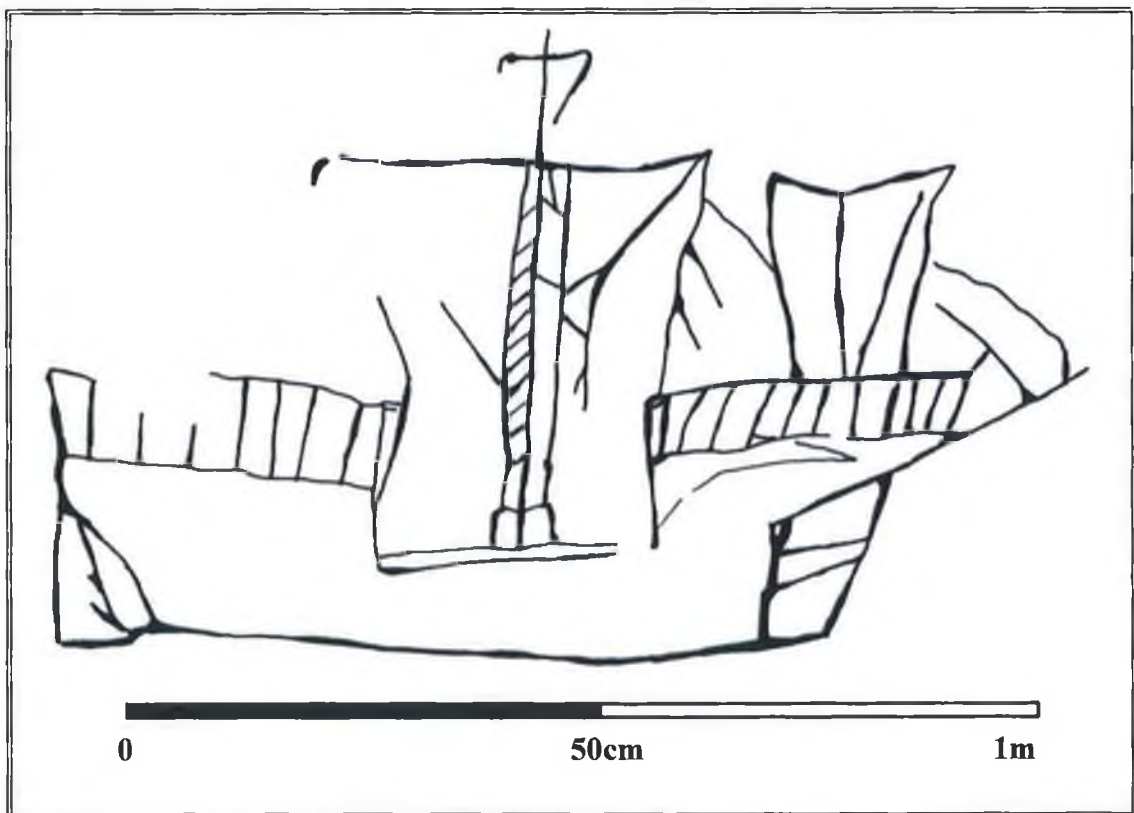


Figure 5.7: Ship etching on the west wall of the nave of Moyne Friary, to the north of the entrance

in Irish religious houses than in other ecclesiastical buildings, such as parish churches or cathedrals (Brady and Corlett, 2004). Their discovery in a friary such as Moyne should come as no surprise considering the friary's proximity to an important medieval shipping route. The etchings suggest an awareness of a number of different types of ship on the part of the person responsible for the incisions. Whether this person was simply recording what he had observed or was more deeply acquainted with these ships is unknown.

The motif of ship etchings on friary walls is not confined to Ireland. Uldum (2001) outlines some examples found in the Carmelite friary in Elsinore, one of only two surviving friaries in Denmark. The Friary of Our Lady in Elsinore was founded in 1430 but a fire in 1450 necessitated reconstruction lasting for most of the rest of the century. Instead of being etched on plaster as at Moyne, these etchings are on the inward-facing surface of bricks which were produced in a kiln in close proximity to the friary. Elsinore Friary is, similarly to Moyne, situated in a riparian zone. In Elsinore, the ships passing by would have formed an interesting subject matter for the workers with the drying bricks a tempting canvas. These ship carvings date from between 1450 and 1500, making them roughly contemporary with those at Moyne. Stylistically, the rendering of both ships is similar, although the type of ship depicted differs with carvel-built ships at Elsinore and clinker-built at Moyne. The ship, when depicted in a religious context, is on some occasions a symbol of Saint Jude in reference to his missionary journeys and the belief that he was a fisherman (Taylor, 2003). The ship is also a symbol of the church itself, the Ark of the Old Testament that saved all living creatures from the flood. This metaphor also extends to make the Church (the body of Christian believers rather than the structure) the ship that carries its believers to salvation.

MacAlister (1943) suggests that the markings in Moyne were intended as a guide and would have been covered with another fine coat of plaster, on which a fresco painting would have been executed. He believed that the ships are representations of ships from the Spanish Armada of 1588. One of the ships, he suggests, bears a striking resemblance to the *Arke Royall*, Queen Elizabeth's flagship. These interpretations have been disputed, as the etchings may never have been intended to be visible in the completed building.

Cloister and Conventual buildings

The claustral plan permitted the church and conventual buildings of a religious house to be arranged in an integrated fashion around the cloister. The excellent state of preservation of both Moyne and Rosserk allows us to fully appreciate how the Franciscans adopted the claustral plan and arranged their domestic buildings. Of the five case study sites that feature in this research, Moyne and Rosserk have by far the best-preserved domestic ranges. They have no doubt been assisted in this regard by the intact survival of their vaulted ceilings.

Centrally located within the claustral plan envisaged at Saint Gall was of course the cloister, and this was also the case at Moyne (Plate 5.23) and Rosserk (Plate 5.24). The term cloister is one which has narrowed in meaning, according to Mooney (1957a). Originally, it referred to a closed or shut-in place and the part of the monastery that was reserved for the community, hence the expression 'cloistered monks'. Now it is synonymous not merely with the cloister quadrangle, or court, but even with the walkway or arcade. In its architectural sense, the term cloister suggests the square or rectangular, partly open area around which monasteries and friaries were often based. In most cases, the cloister consists of three components: the covered walkway or ambulatory; the cloister arcade; and a central open area, the cloister garth, usually a grassy area. At Moyne, these three components are still intact, however at Rosserk, this is not the case. No cloister arcade now remains at Rosserk, yet this is not to say there never was one. Stalley (1994) states that the extent to which wood was used in medieval ecclesiastical buildings is frequently underestimated. He believes that the absence of a cloister arcade at Rosserk and also at Bonamargy, County Antrim, is due to the fact that they were constructed in wood and have not survived. He stresses the importance of archaeological investigation in establishing the design of these cloisters. When the friars occupied a new site, their first concern was the construction of the church; it was not uncommon for other buildings to be constructed in wood until time and resources would allow them to be rebuilt in stone. In some cases, this point was never reached, thus the absence of domestic buildings and cloister arcades at many sites is most likely a product of their fabrication in wood.



Plate 5.23: East side of the cloister of Moyne Friary



Plate 5.24: North side of the cloister of Rosserk Friary, now lacks a cloister garth

The size of the cloisters in religious houses can tell us much about the nature of the lives of those who lived there. In Cistercian houses, the cloisters tend to be large, a reflection of their status as an enclosed order which required all their activities to take place within the monastic complex. Indeed, the Rule of Saint Benedict included the vow of stability, a promise to spend one's life in a single monastery. For this reason, the cloister ambulatories did not serve simply as corridors to connect the four ranges of the building, but were used for prayer and reading. The Cistercians tended to adopt the norm of the hundred foot cloister exemplified in the Plan of Saint Gall. A number of their Irish houses have cloisters approximating this measurement, which was also common on the Continent (Stalley, 1987). In contrast, the Franciscans were a mendicant order and spent much of their time in the community; hence their cloisters tend to be smaller than those of the Cistercians.

Whitehead (1998) explores the notion that from the twelfth century onwards, the cloister was allegorised in order to make monastic architecture more meaningful by exploring its ability to act as a tangible manifestation of the various virtues. The allegory of the cloister as a human soul gained currency among a clergy using the symbolism of church buildings in order to elicit the meaning of the liturgy for their audiences. The Augustinian Canon Hugh of Fouilloy (c. 1100–1172) was author of an allegory which stated that the four cloister walls represented contempt of oneself, contempt of the world, love of God and love of one's neighbour. Each wall was set facing one of the cardinal points and was linked to a position in the sky (Whitehead, 1998). The four facets represented by the cloister ranges were considered prerequisites for the act of contemplation. The Augustinian Canons, like the Cistercians, undertook all their religious activities within the monastic walls; hence for both orders the cloister would have been used by the monks as a location of prayer and contemplation. Although the mendicant orders undertook much more of their activities outside the monastic precincts, the cloister could still have served the same allegorical purpose for them.

The small cloisters that are a characteristic of mendicant houses meant that there was limited space for expansion around these courtyards. The piecemeal construction employed saw the domestic ranges extend in a linear fashion, in some instances forming around a new courtyard. This was the case at Ross Errilly, one of only two

Irish examples to have a second courtyard. The process can be seen in development in Moyne, where it was halted by the Dissolution of the friary. English mendicant instances of the second cloister include Dominican Oxford and Augustinian Leicester.

The Cistercian houses may have had larger cloisters than their Franciscan counterparts, but they have not been nearly as fortunate in terms of preservation. Some of their cloisters were modified and reconstructed, and others now remain only in a fragmentary state. The Franciscans may have been assisted in the preservation of their cloisters by the method of construction that they adopted for their later cloisters. Instead of building a cloister arcade with a lean-to roof covering the ambulatory or passage, a popular method was to construct a cloister of the integrated type. As the name implies, the cloister was integrated into the walls of the floor above it, as the first floor walls lie directly on top of the cloister arcade. The arcade had to be particularly sturdy in order to support this weight, a measure which assisted the long-term survival of such arcades. At Moyne, the cloister is constructed in this way on three of the four sides, with each of these three sides having a vaulted ceiling (Plate 5.25). Only on its south side had this cloister a lean-to roof. The same combination of lean-to and integrated construction is also evident at Ross Errilly and Donegal friaries. Indeed, this is only one of a number of striking similarities between Moyne and Ross Errilly. Integrated cloisters can be observed in many English friaries, as they were more economical to construct than a free-standing cloister arcade with a lean-to roof. The spaciousness of the Cistercian cloister is contrasted with the cramped, almost urban spaces in the mendicant friaries by McCullough and Mulvin (1987).

The cloister at Moyne has the unusual feature of a ground-level entrance in its south side arcade (Plate 5.26), facilitating easier access to the cloister garth than was the case at other friaries. At other houses, entrance to the cloister garth would have been by means of climbing through one of the open arcades, which in the case of mendicant houses were often very small. Buttresses were employed to varying extents along the cloister arcades. Three of the ranges of the Moyne arcade each have a single centrally located buttress. At Ross Errilly, the north, west and south arcades each have a similarly placed example. Every pillar at Muckross is buttressed, while every second pillar at Quin sufficed.



Plate 5.25: Ambulatory on the east side of the cloister in Moyne



Plate 5.26: Entrance to the cloister in Moyne situated on its south side

As mentioned earlier, the Cistercians tended to follow strict rules when laying out the conventual complexes of their abbeys. The mendicant orders, however, were more flexible in their approach and the arrangement of conventual buildings around their cloisters was not standardised. This can make it difficult to identify the purpose for which a room was intended; indeed McCullough and Mulvin (1987) describe these vaulted rooms as unspecific and anonymous. The ranges that now survive are architectural stone shells and in only some instances features survive that elucidate the former function of a particular room. Other approaches such as assessing the size and relative location of a room can be helpful in this regard. Both Moyne and Rosserk have vaulted ceilings which in addition to contributing to the preservation of the ground floor, allow access to the first floor.

The conventual buildings at Moyne contain two distinct phases of building. Firstly, there are the bulk of the buildings constructed in a piecemeal fashion from its foundation until the Dissolution. There are also post-Dissolution additions made by the friary's grantee. This is indicative of the way in which some religious buildings in Ireland and Britain evolved from being the homes of religious communities to the residence of a secular grantee. Moyne illustrates this phenomenon on a much less elaborate scale than, for example, Newstead Abbey in Ravenshead in the English Midlands. Following the Dissolution, Newstead was granted to a secular owner, Sir John Byron of Colwick, who converted it into a house. It subsequently passed to the poet Lord Byron, amongst others.

In general, the sacristy adjoins the north wall of the choir and forms part of the eastern range of the friary. A doorway in the north wall of the choir connects the two. The vaulted sacristy at Rosserk lies flush with the east walls of the chancel and chapter room on either side. At Moyne, however, the sacristy extends beyond the east wall of the church; the portion towards the east is not vaulted. This section comprises approximately a third of the area of this long room and may have been partitioned off for use as a sacristan's workrooms or storeroom. Sacristies usually retain recesses in their walls which would once have served as aumbries.

The chapter room usually adjoined the sacristy in the east range, reflecting the tendency to position rooms with a religious function in this range. Daily meetings

were held in the chapter room, at which a section of the Rule was read and each of the friars would be assigned their task for the day. It was also used for various meetings when discipline had to be invoked and when notable personages of the order visited the friary. The chapter room adjoins the sacristy at both Moyne and Rosserk. The simplicity of the chapter rooms in the Irish mendicant houses is in stark contrast with the often elaborate examples found elsewhere, for example in English Cistercian houses. Still, this room played an important role in liturgical and administrative aspects of monastic life. Excavation at mendicant houses in England, including the Dominican Priory, Oxford, has found evidence for the burial of children in chapter houses. It has been suggested that these were the children of lay benefactors (Mellor and Pearce, 1981). At both Jedburgh and Melrose Abbey in Scotland, evidence exists for the burial of non-monastic community members in the chapter house. These are believed to be the burials of lay patrons (Lewis and Ewart, 1995).

It has already been remarked that the public entrance to friary churches was the west doorway. The western range of the conventual buildings tends also to reflect the friars' public and pastoral role, as it usually included rooms for receiving and accommodating guests. The rooms on the first floor of the west range often included a library, study room and guardian's room. The first floor of the east range was the usual location for the dormitory; however, in large houses, dormitories were also located on the first floor of the north and sometimes west ranges. Considering that Moyne housed a population of approximately fifty friars and novices, it is likely that the upper north and west ranges were used in this way. Rosserk had two dormitories, one in the usual location in the east range, the other on the first floor of the west.

The typical location of the refectory or dining room was in the north range on the ground floor. The refectory at Rosserk was in a more unusual location on the first floor of the north range. This was also the case at some other mendicant houses, where the use of integrated cloisters reduced the available space on the ground floor. The Austin friary in Leicester also has its refectory on the upper floor. In Moyne, the refectory is in the north range on the ground floor. It is one of the few ground floor rooms in the friary that lacks a vaulted ceiling. It bears a strong resemblance to the refectory in Ross Errilly, as both have a reader's bay or *sedile* in the north-east corner (Plate 5.27 and 5.28). Both are of similar design, a recess with a seat to one side



Plate 5.27: *Sedile* or reader's bay in the refectory of Moyne

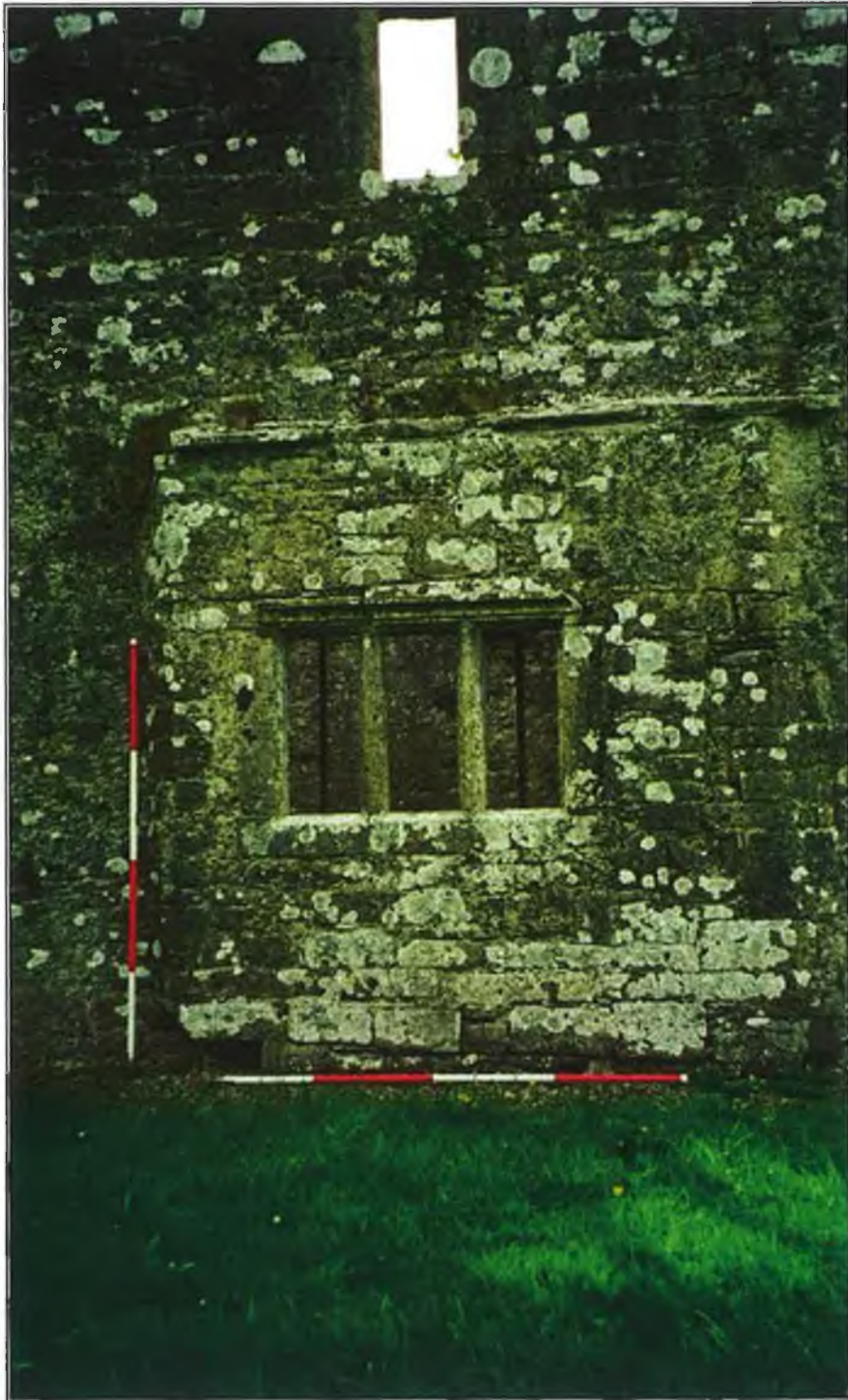


Plate 5.28: Exterior view showing the outshot of the *sedile* or reader's bay in the refectory of Moyne

and a window at the rear. The example at Ross Errilly sits beneath a flat-topped arch, while the example in Moyne has a well-executed round arch above it. Here, one of the friars would have read aloud while the others consumed their meals in silence. The job of reader at meals was one of the tasks that rotated amongst the friars on a weekly basis. A recess to accommodate the reader is also evident in Dromahaire, Timoleague and Askeaton friaries. In some Cistercian houses, the reader occupied a pulpit rather than a niche. This was also the case in Inchcolm Abbey, a Scottish house of the Augustinian Canons.

Mooney (1957a) states that the recreation room or community room was usually located either north of the east range or east of the north range. At Rosserk, the room in the former location has no clearly identifiable function and so may have filled this purpose. At Moyne, it is less clear where the community room was located.

Calefactories, or warming rooms, were a common feature of the houses of the Cistercians and Augustinian Canons. An example can be observed at Ballintubber Abbey, County Mayo, a house of the Augustinian Canons. The inclusion of calefactories does not appear to have been customary amongst the mendicant orders, who instead compensated by the construction of numerous fireplaces to heat their domestic quarters. Large fireplaces were especially common in friary kitchen as these would be required for cooking (Plate 5.29). An especially large example is found in the kitchen of Ross Errilly, which has an aperture in the back opening into the adjacent bake house (Plate 5.30 & 5.31). Fireplaces were less common in Cistercian houses and were usually only found in the abbot's quarters. Systems of conduits, gutters and spouts were employed in the friaries to prevent rainwater from collecting and causing damage. While the wooden examples did not survive, lead versions tended to be quarried during the Dissolution or by grantees. Stone examples often survive, for example stone spouts carry rainwater into the cloister garth at Ross Errilly. On a day of heavy rain, these waterspouts along western range of Rosserk were photographed channelling the rainwater away from the friary walls (Plate 5.32).

The Dissolution of the monasteries and their subsequent occupations has deprived us of much written material which would have been produced in these friaries. It also resulted in the loss of the majority of the libraries of medieval religious houses. Any



Plate 5.29: Fireplace in the kitchen of Moyne



Plate 5.30: Fireplace in the kitchen of Ross Errilly

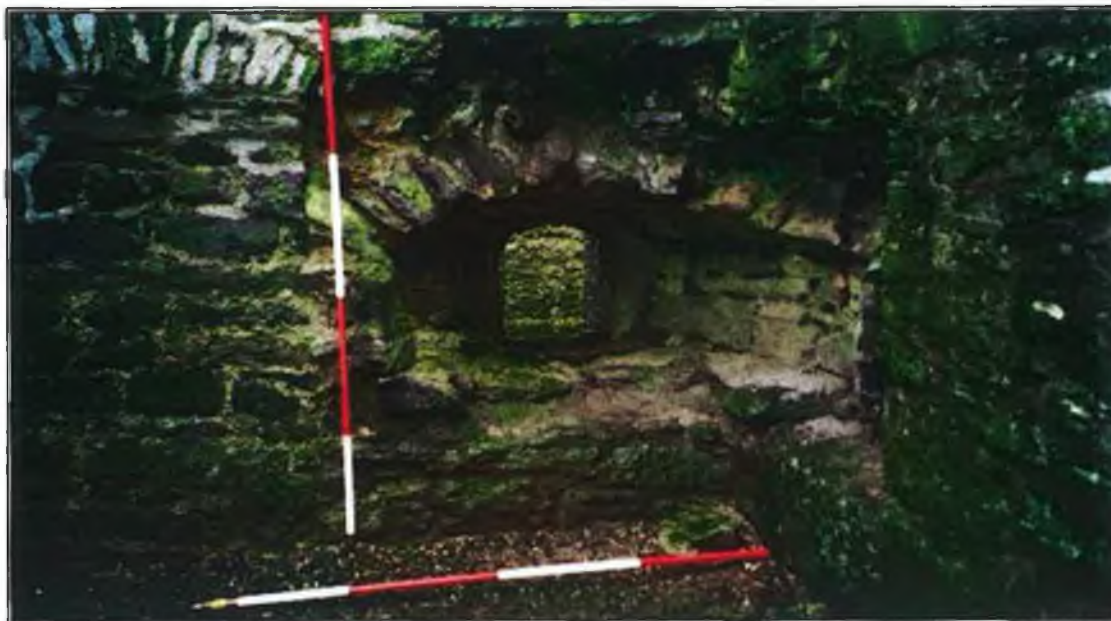


Plate 5.31: Aperture opening into the bakehouse of Ross Errilly



Plate 5.32: Rainwater being channelled away from the east range of domestic buildings at Rosserk

friary was apt to have a collection of books but Moyne, being a novitiate house, was said by the seventeenth century visitor Mooney to possess a valuable library in the years anterior to the Dissolution (Meehan, 1877). Lectors in theology were based in both Moyne and Ennis friaries, and provided a significant educational resource in the absence of a university in Ireland.

Associated archaeology

When researching the archaeology associated with these friaries, it is useful to review documentary accounts made by visitors to the friaries. These may describe features that are no longer visible in the landscape, as can be seen in the following quote. Donatus Mooney was a Franciscan friar who visited Moyne in the seventeenth century, making this observation:

“Mac William caused the entire to be enclosed with a strong stone wall, and he also endowed the friars with some acres of good pasturage, and empowered them to erect mills for grinding corn, and also sundry ponds in order that they might never want for fish. Nor should I omit to mention that there is within the said enclosure a never-failing spring of wholesome limpid water, which sweeps so impetuously to the sea, that the mills could never be idle when there was corn to ground”

(Meehan, 1877, p. 57).

Although falling outside the temporal scope of this study, documents pertaining to the Dissolution and redistribution of monastic lands, especially those relating to the Elizabethan Dissolution, have a particular relevance for this study. They can give an indication of the amount of land associated with these friaries for which earlier records do not survive. The rental value of these lands is also given. In 1578, the following lease was made:

“to James Garveye, gent.; of the site of the house of the friars of Roscirke, co. Maioe (Rosserk, County Mayo) and two quarters of land belonging to it, (rent 46s., 8d.)”

(Anon., 1994, iii, p. 461).

Also leased in the same Fiant to James Garveye were the friaries of Strade and Murrisk (which will be dealt with in the next chapter), Arnarye (Ardnaree) Venadae possibly Banada, County Sligo) and Ballahanassae (Ballyhaunis). These properties were rented for a term of 21 years at a rent of £7 14s and 2d. This lease was made



Plate 5.33: Remains associated with the mill which operated at Moyne



Plate 5.34: West wall of a post-Dissolution addition to the north of Moyne Friary

invoking the provisions of another earlier lease 3207 “provided that he shall not charge coyne or livery, or other unlawful impositions” (Anon., 1994, ii, p. 438).

James Garveye may not have kept to the terms of his lease; some reason caused it to be terminated before 21 years had expired. In 1588, it was again leased, this time to “Patrick Barnewell of Gratiadei, co. Dublin, knt.” He was granted “the site of the friary of Rossericke, co. Mayo, with 3 quarters of land...to hold for 40 years from the determination of the present interests” (Anon., 1994, iii, p. 67). The property was now valued at 46s. 8d.

In 1595, in consideration of injuries sustained in the queen’s service, Edmund Barret was granted:

“the site of the monastery of S. Francis, called Moyne in the country of Tyrawlye, co. Mayo, with appurtenances (5s.)//...the tithes of grain and hay of two quarters of land in co. Mayo, belonging to the abbey of Rossirke, co. Mayo...To hold forever, in fee farm, by fealty, in free and common socage”

(Anon., 1994, iii, p. 251–2).

In this instance, it appears not to have been the building or site of the friary of Rosserk which were granted but rather the rights to the tithes of grain and hay that were collected from two quarters of land associated with the friary. The tithes together with those of two quarters of land belonging to Strade Friary were valued at 2s. 4½d. The site of the friary of Moyne, in addition to its appurtenances or minor properties, were also granted. Archdall (1786) states that the grant relating to Moyne also included an orchard, four acres of pasture surrounded with a stone wall. In comparison with the valuations placed on these friaries and their properties, Mellifont was recorded as owing 5,000 acres, 300 messuages and cottages, granges, mills, fisheries and boats in 1540 (Ó Clabaigh, 2005b). It was valued at £352 3s. 10d, a figure believed to represent a significant under-valuation of its worth, but one which places it in the same category as some major English Cistercian houses. Clearly, the mendicant friaries were not in the same league as this, nor should they have been especially if they were Observant houses.

There is a dearth of artefacts associated with the friaries of Moyne and Rosserk, neither of which have been the subject of major excavation work. The National Museum of Ireland has a record of only one assemblage from Moyne Friary. In 1978, post-medieval potsherds and the base of a glass bottle were discovered in an area of disturbed soil to the north of the west entrance. The finds, which were not acquired by the National Museum, were described thus:

1. Handle of a tin glazed delft-ware vessel. Buff coloured fabric. C-shaped cross section.
2. Black-ware basesherd. Internally glazed. Large grits up to 0.7cm incorporated in fabric.
3. Thin potsherd of fine North Devon gravel-tempered ware. Glazed internally.

These post-medieval wares indicate settlement continuity at Moyne beyond the ostensible dissolution date of 1590. Further evidence for this continuity comes in documentary form in the observations of the Franciscan Donatus Mooney whose account is described above. No pottery of fifteenth century date has been found at either Moyne or Rosserk, but this is not to say that ceramic material was not in use at these sites. Ceramics were in widespread use from the thirteenth century onwards, with some religious houses even manufacturing their own pottery.

Conclusion

In terms of their architecture, Moyne and Rosserk have much in common. The fact that both are Franciscan houses that are roughly contemporary accounts for some, but not all of this similarity. Both were Franciscan houses, but both belonged to different branches of this order. Late medieval First Order houses, of which Moyne is one, generally tend to exhibit superior preservation to Third Order houses. Thus, Rosserk is an exception among Third Order houses in that it is so well preserved. However, this very fact that makes Rosserk unique has also deprived us of much comparative evidence for it. In order to assess the average size and layout of a Franciscan Third Order house, it is useful to look at some of the smaller Dominican and Augustinian houses, as these offer good parallels.

The arrangement of altars and secretarium in the transept of both these Franciscan houses is remarkably similar and suggests that Moyne was strongly influenced by Rosserk in terms of structure and layout. The similarity between both was lighted on by Richard Pococke in his 1752 visit to Ireland (McVeagh, 1995). Although there is

much less ornamentation at Moyne, this is probably a reflection of its adoption of the Observant rule. Rosserk, having been constructed first, must surely have influenced the builders of Moyne. Both friaries exhibit the spatial planning and architectural style that characterised late medieval Franciscan houses. Rosserk is stylistically the more elaborate of the two. Moyne is simpler with less ornamentation and very little decorated stonework of any kind. This may be a reflection of its adherence to the Observant rule; however, other Observant houses, such as Ross Errilly, exhibit a higher level of ornamentation than Moyne does. With their adherence to the claustral plan, tall, slender belfry towers and eclectic choice of windows and arches, both friaries exhibit the hallmarks of the Late Irish Gothic style. The contrast and comparisons between the Franciscan houses and those of the Augustinian and Dominican orders will become evident in the following chapter.

Even today, visible evidence of the popularity of the Franciscan friars and their churches is evident, despite the passage of time. These friaries were popular on two levels; firstly amongst the general populace, for whom large preaching naves and transepts were built, and also among wealthier sections of society who could afford to contribute towards the inclusion of decorative features. Further evidence of the patronage of the latter groups comes in the form of burials found in these churches.

Set within the context of architectural developments, the late medieval friaries represent the final phase of evolution of medieval monasticism in Ireland. From the hermitages of the eremitical monks of early medieval Ireland to the introduction of the claustral plan by the Cistercians and ultimately the adapted claustral layout of the coenobitical mendicant orders, each phase was illustrative of the quest for a suitable location in which to answer the monastic vocation. At the heart of each form of monastic layout stood the requirements of the various rules. For the Franciscans, the claustral plan facilitated an ordered arrangement of space in accordance with the needs and rules of the community. It also allowed them the flexibility to adapt the plan as was necessary. This is evident at both Moyne and Rosserk.

Chapter Six:
Architecture and
Archaeology of the Late
Medieval Dominican
and Augustinian
Houses

Introduction

The concerns of this chapter are the physical remains of the friaries of the Dominican and Augustinian orders in Mayo and their associated archaeology between 1400 and 1540. Specifically, it is the case study sites of Murrisk (an Augustinian house) and Burrishoole and Strade (both Dominican foundations) which form the focus of this chapter. These three sites share certain stylistic commonalities with Moyne and Rosserk, yet distinctions can be drawn between them, some of which are based on their association with different orders. The starkest contrast, however, is evident in the extent of their physical remains. Unlike the two Franciscan houses with their excellent preservation of church and domestic buildings (with the exception of a possible cloister arcade at Rosserk), remains of conventual buildings are much less complete at Strade, Murrisk and Burrishoole. Furthermore, even the churches of the Dominican and Augustinian friaries do not exhibit the same level of preservation in certain respects. The evidence presented in this chapter is drawn from material gathered during fieldwork which is contained in Appendix A at the end of this study.

In addition to recording the principal features of the Dominican and Augustinian houses and how the Late Irish Gothic style is exhibited in them, this chapter will also assess the amount and quantity of archaeological artefacts associated with these houses. Varying amounts of medieval artefacts survive for each of the case study sites in question in this chapter. These vary from objects with religious uses to those with domestic purposes. The works of antiquarians and travel writers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will also be assessed, while the depictions of the friaries in various drawings, etchings and watercolours that accompany the writers' commentaries will be examined. These provide an insight into how the friaries were perceived by eighteenth and nineteenth century writers and visually represented by contemporary artists according to the conventions of the time. The impact of nationalist thinking on the perceptions of the medieval period and the Gothic style will be considered. Nationalist views concerning the medieval period were fundamental to attempts to construct a national identity with the foundation of the Irish state. This was to have a lasting legacy which has only begun to be redressed in recent times.

Murrisk, Burrishoole and Strade are all smaller friaries than those at Moyne and Rosserk. Survival of the domestic buildings varies – there are no surviving domestic buildings at all in Strade, part of the east side of the cloister arcade stands at Burrishoole and only a single range of buildings exists at Murrisk. The importance of wood as a building material in medieval ecclesiastical buildings was discussed in Chapter Five and it is likely that some construction in wood was undertaken at these sites which no longer survives. Strade is the most likely candidate in this regard, considering the lack of any surviving domestic buildings. The results of excavations undertaken at Strade will be discussed later in this chapter. The use of wood in some of the friary buildings helps to explain how Strade Friary could have been “all burned” in 1254, as described in the *Annals of Loch Cé* (Hennessy, 1871, p. 405). A wooden structure would have burned easily, but it is more difficult to conceive how a stone structure could have been completely destroyed by fire in the manner suggested by the annalists. Indeed given that the friary was founded in 1252, it is quite possible that stone buildings were still only under construction at the time of the fire, if work had commenced at all. Stalley (1987) notes that it is possible that members of religious orders would have lived in wattle huts while waiting for stone buildings to be constructed.

The church of Murrisk Augustinian Friary is unusual amongst friary churches as it is undifferentiated, in the sense that it is not divided into a nave and chancel. Being quite a small church, it may have been considered unnecessary to divide it. Alternatively, Leask (1943) suggests that a rood screen may have been inserted to this end. The division between nave and choir in friary churches usually coincides with the location of belfry tower and the arches that supported it, approximately midway between the east and west walls of the church. In contrast, the tower in Murrisk, an insertion subsequent in date to the original phase of buildings, was erected at the west end of the church. This tower no longer stands and had fallen before the end of the eighteenth century on the basis of engravings by Beranger and Bigari. Another unusual feature of Murrisk is that the church does not have a transept, a feature that was very common in friary churches of this age. This may be because the size of the congregation did not warrant such an addition or perhaps there were not sufficient resources for such an expansion.

The churches of both Strade and Burrishoole are divided into a nave and chancel. Unusually amongst Irish friaries, Strade has a transept to the north rather than the south. The implication of this is that the domestic ranges and cloister would have been situated to the south of the church. This reversal of the standard mendicant layout is due to the topography of the site, which rises sharply to the north of the friary and would not therefore have been suited to accommodating the friary's conventual buildings. It was a standard practice among the Cistercians to locate the domestic ranges to the south of the church, but this was not the case amongst the mendicant orders. Another exception to this rule is Urlar Dominican Friary in east County Mayo. The transept in Strade Friary is a fifteenth century insertion, although it abuts from an aisle built in the thirteenth century. It is the only one of the case study sites in this research to have an aisle.

In terms of layout, the church of Burrishoole very closely resembles that at Rosserk, which adds weight to Conlan's (2002) assertion that many fifteenth century Dominican houses are more comparable to contemporary Franciscan Third Order houses than to earlier Dominican houses. As with Rosserk, the church is divided into nave and chancel with a transept to the south and no aisle. At both sites, the tower is located to the east of the arches leading to the transept. Unlike Rosserk, substantial changes were made to the fifteenth century fabric of the buildings at Burrishoole. What survives is an amalgam of three fifteenth century phases and alterations made when the friary was fortified and garrisoned by the forces of Sir Nicholas Malbie in 1580. Conlan (2002) notes that no large Dominican houses on the scale of Franciscan First Order establishments such as Moyne and Ardfert survive in Ireland from the years after the Black Death. Friaries of a more compact nature were built instead, which he classifies into two types. The first are 'mini-friaries', which follow the claustral plan but are smaller in size than friaries such as Moyne and Ross Errilly. Dominican examples of this type include Burrishoole and Cloonshanville, County Roscommon. The second group is composed of a church with a single domestic range at a right angle to it, of which Urlar is an example. Augustinian Murrisk also conforms to this second classification with its single range of conventual buildings at a right angle to the small church.

Murrisk

Otway (1839, p. 308) describes Murrisk friary as “not much worth seeing, a small nave and chancel, with few or none of the usual accompaniments of a monastery”. He attributes this sparseness to the austerity of the rule under which the Austin Friars lived. In terms of layout, the church of Murrisk Friary (Figure 6.1.) is by far the most basic of all the case study sites, as it is composed of a single chamber and has no aisle or transept. It boasts little to rival the standard of carving at Rosserk and is lent a chunky appearance by the nature of the roughly-coursed rubble masonry from which it is constructed. An atypical feature of this church is that it lacks a west window, presumably due to alterations made when the tower was inserted at the west end. The main entrance to the church is not now located in the western gable, but rather in the south wall.

The east window (Plate 6.1) is without doubt the crowning glory of this building. In keeping with architectural tradition, it is the largest and most elaborate window in the friary. It is a five-light switchline tracery window with its mullions or vertical members curving and intersecting on paths concentric with the arch of the window. Each of the lights is topped by a trefoiled arch. It is similar to Late Irish Gothic tracery windows in other religious houses. Most of the rest of the windows in this church are correspondingly in concert with what one would expect to find in many religious houses of this age in Ireland. There is a single-light ogee-headed window in the north wall of the church and a twin-light cusped ogee in the south wall. To the east of this is a particularly well executed example of a single-light ogee with a more intricately moulded dripstone or hood moulding than is found on the other windows in this friary. Towards the eastern end of the south wall are two windows which Leask (1943) believes were insertions that were designed to replace earlier, less elaborate windows. Both of these have pointed arches with heavy cusps and aesthetically are slightly incongruous in this setting. They appear weighty and awkward in comparison with the more slender mullioned and single-light windows which are also on this south wall.

The east range of buildings in this L-shaped friary has three rooms on its ground floor. The sacristy is a long narrow room in the familiar location to the north of the church. It is lit by a single narrow round-headed window with a chamfered intrados. North of

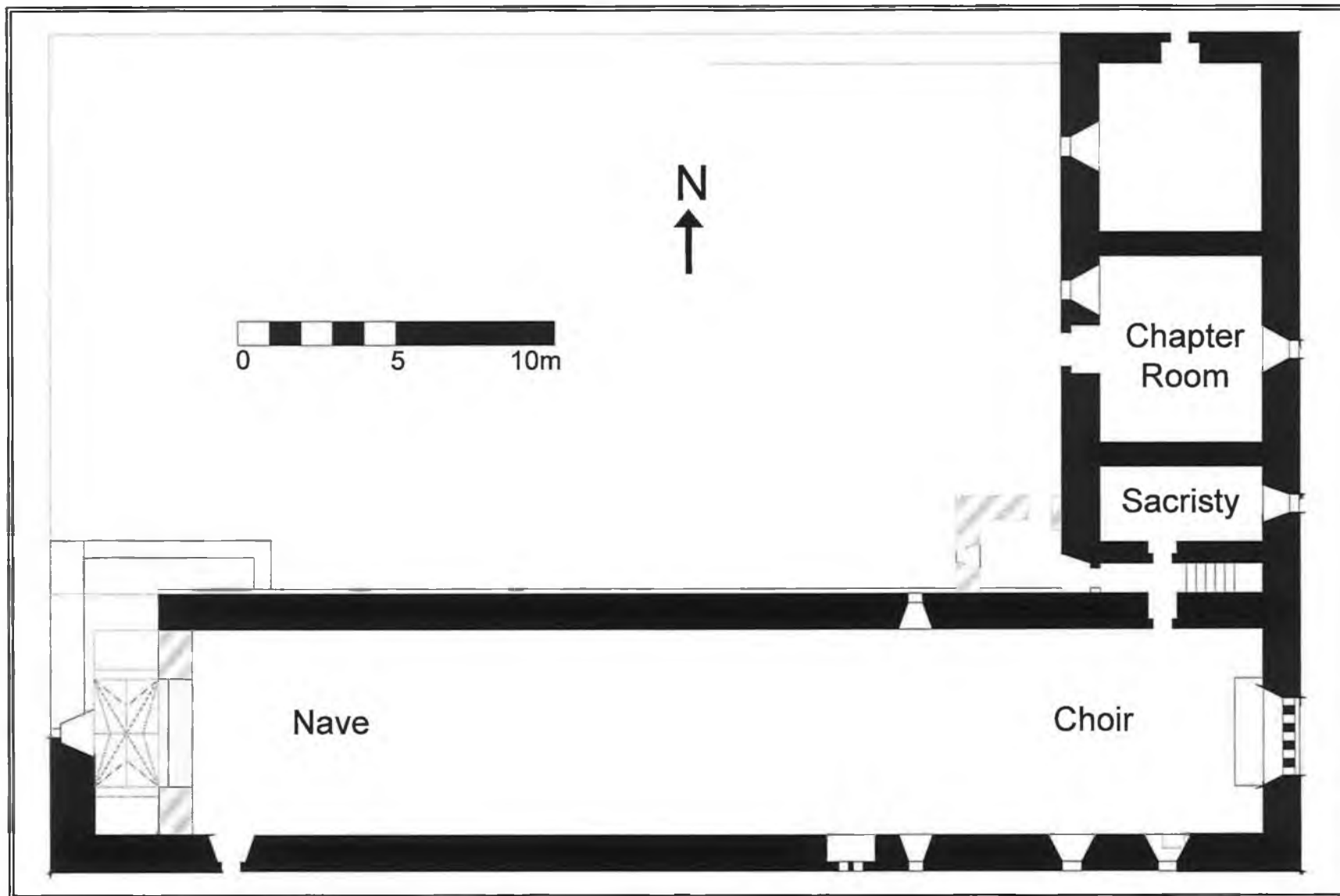


Figure 6.1: Plan of Murrisk Friary (redrawn after Leask, 1943)



Plate 6.1: East window of Murrisk Friary

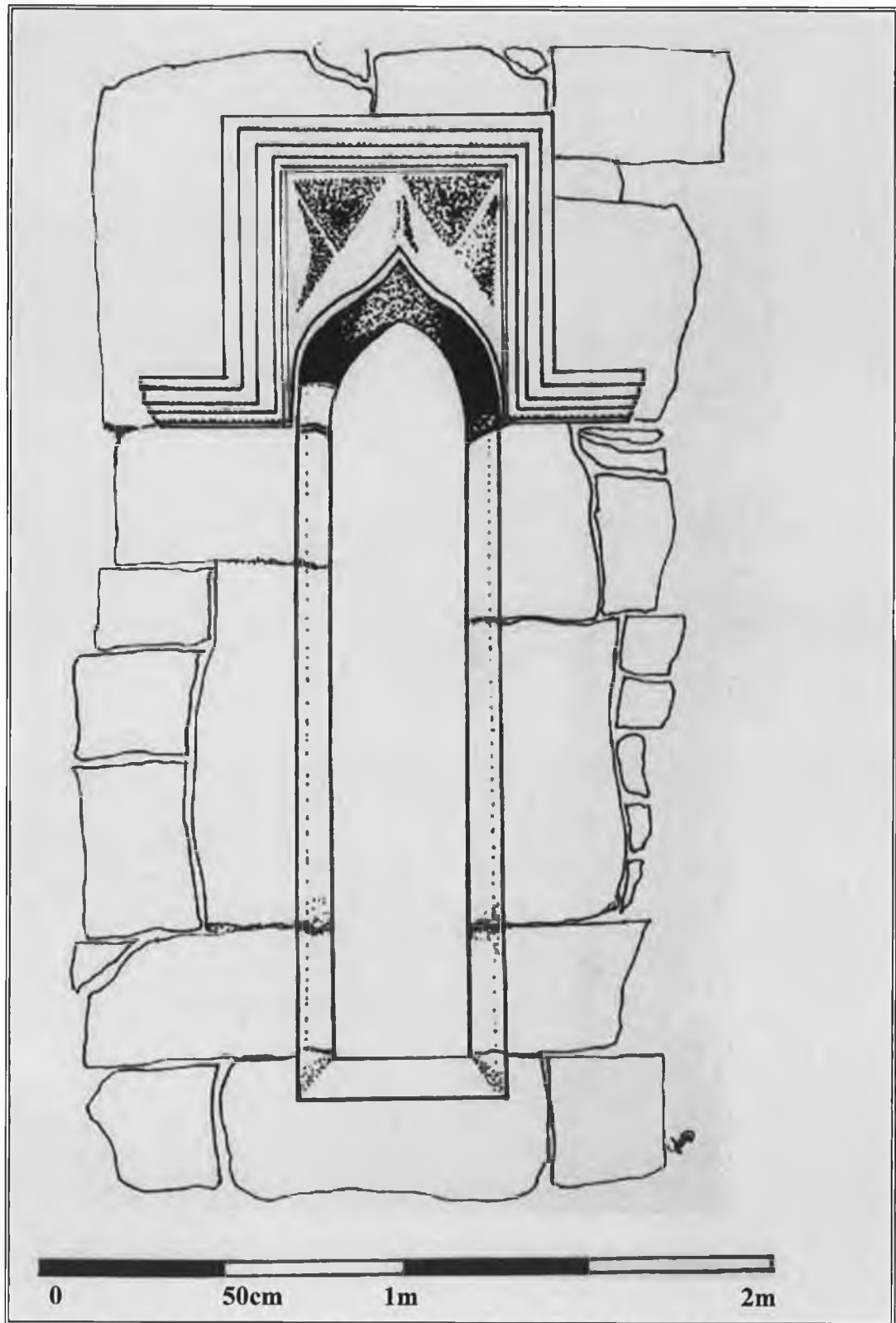


Figure 6.2: Single light ogee-headed window from the south side of Murrisk Church

this is the chapter room with its cusped ogee-headed window. The hood moulding on the north side of this window tapers off into a knot and then expands to form a foliate ornament (Plate 6.2). Typically for the Late Irish Gothic style, this motif has no counterpart on the south side of the window, where the hood moulding simply culminates in a point. A third room is located at the northern end of this range, although its purpose is unclear. It has a doorway in its north wall over which is located a two-light switchline tracery window. Leask (1943) states that the entire upper floor of this range was used as a dormitory. Therefore as this window is the largest on this level, it would have been the main source of light for the dormitory.

There is no indication of where the refectory or kitchen would have been located in this friary. One of these may have been in the northernmost room of the east range, but the location of the other and of the various other rooms that would have been required for any friary are unclear. This lends credence to the notion that there must once have been at least one more range in this friary. Leask (1943) suggests the possibility that there may have been a range projecting northwards from the western end of the church and another lying north of the cloister space, however no traces of these remain. The fact that the north room can only be entered by means of a doorway in its north wall supports the notion that there was a range of buildings to the north of the cloister site. Otherwise, it would have made more sense to place this doorway in the west wall for ease of access. Leask (1943) also contends that based on the evidence of flashing along the north wall of the church and west wall of the domestic range, a cloister walk was planned but it was probably never built.

Burrishoole

Described by McParlan (1802, p. 143) as “a large inelegant ruin”, Burrishoole (Figure 6.3) is the case study site which has suffered most alteration to its fifteenth century fabric. This is as a result of it being fortified and garrisoned in the late sixteenth century. However, much of the early structure of the church has remained intact as most of the changes occurred in the area where the domestic buildings would once have stood. The only notable changes in the church are the gun loops which were placed in the west wall of the south transept. This means that overall there is little to intrude on the harmonious mingling of the three fifteenth century phases of construction that were observed in the church. The first phase of construction



Plate 6.2: Chapter room window in Murrisk Friary

The Mendicant Friars in Late Medieval Mayo

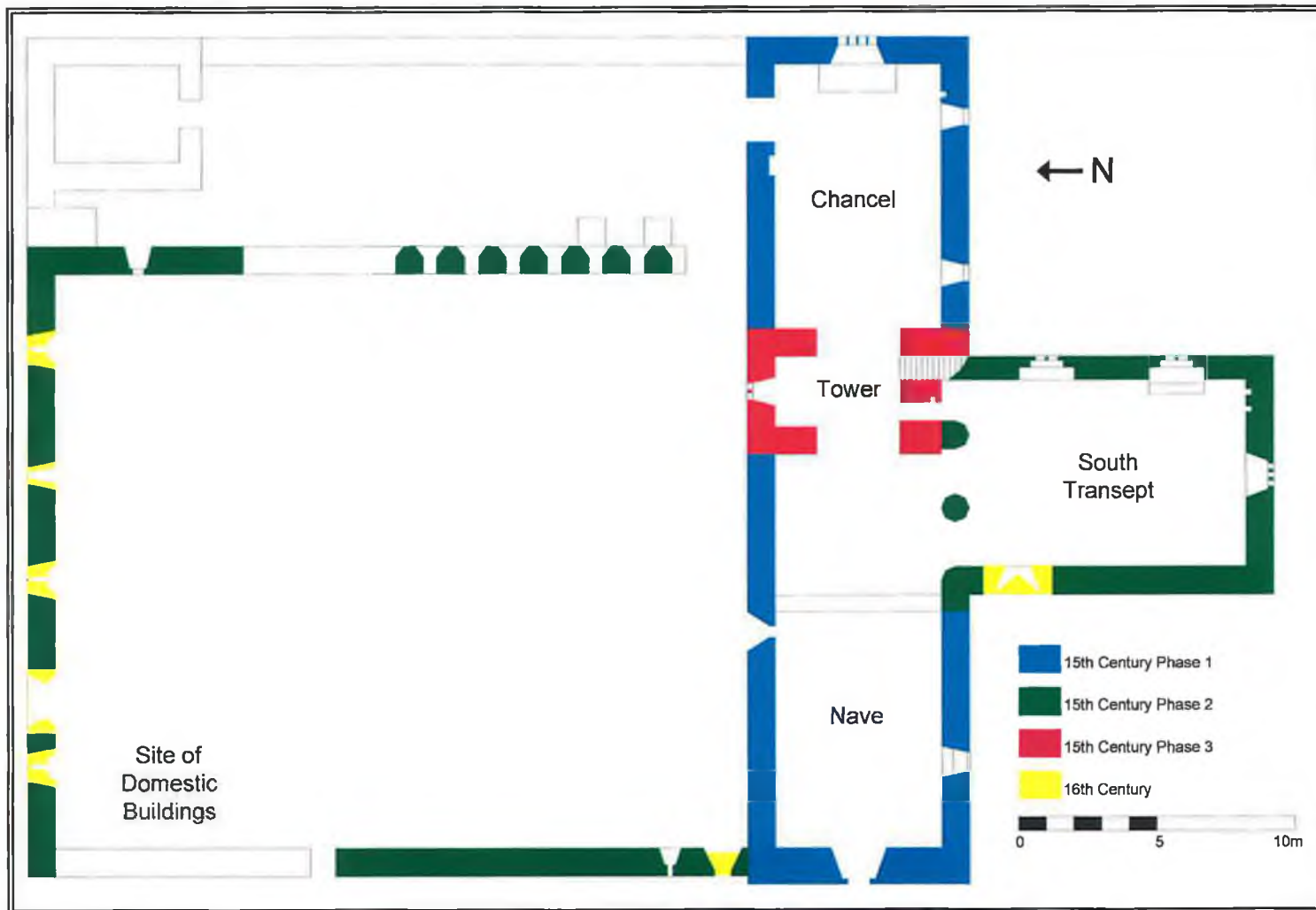


Figure 6.3: Plan of Burrishoole Friary (redrawn after on-site plan)

involved the building of the nave and chancel of the church. Subsequent to this, a transept was added to the south of the church and separated from it by means of an arcade composed of two arches. The third and final fifteenth century phase involved the construction of the tower (Plate 6.3) at the junction between nave and chancel. This follows a pattern observed in other friaries where the tower was added late in the fifteenth century when funds became available to finance its construction. The tower of Burrishoole is an unusual example of a tower in a mendicant friary. Unlike the shouldered Franciscan towers which are slender and rise gracefully above the roofline, this tower has a shorter and squatter appearance. It has, therefore, got more in common with the type of tower found in Cistercian sites in terms of size and shape.

The domestic buildings at Burrishoole do not survive and only one side of the cloister arcade now stands. However, walls dating from the fifteenth century (with some sixteenth century alterations) suggest the former extent of the monastery. The remaining section of cloister arcade gives an impression of what size the cloister would once have been. Therefore, the area between this and the walls mentioned above may have been the site of the domestic buildings. The conventual buildings here would not have been as sizeable as those of larger friaries, but according to Conlan's (2002) classification, Burrishoole is a 'mini-friary'. The small size of its church, particularly its chancel, suggests that it was home to a small community which would not have needed extensive domestic buildings. Indeed Flynn (1993) suggests that medium-sized foundations such as Burrishoole and Strade would have had in the region of six to nine members.

Strade

The thirteenth century phase of construction at Strade Friary was discussed as part of the development of the Gothic style in Ireland in Chapter Five. It is the fifteenth century phase which is the concern of this chapter. On examining the floor plan of Strade Friary (Figure 6.4), one can observe that the fifteenth century phase of construction did not involve a substantial remodelling of the friary. The east window was replaced, the chancel arch was inserted (Plate 6.4), the tower (no longer standing) was erected and the north transept was built at this time. It is not the structural additions (with the exception of the chancel arch and transept window) which have



Plate 6.3: The tower of Burrishoole Friary, seen from the north west

The Mendicant Friars in Late Medieval Mayo

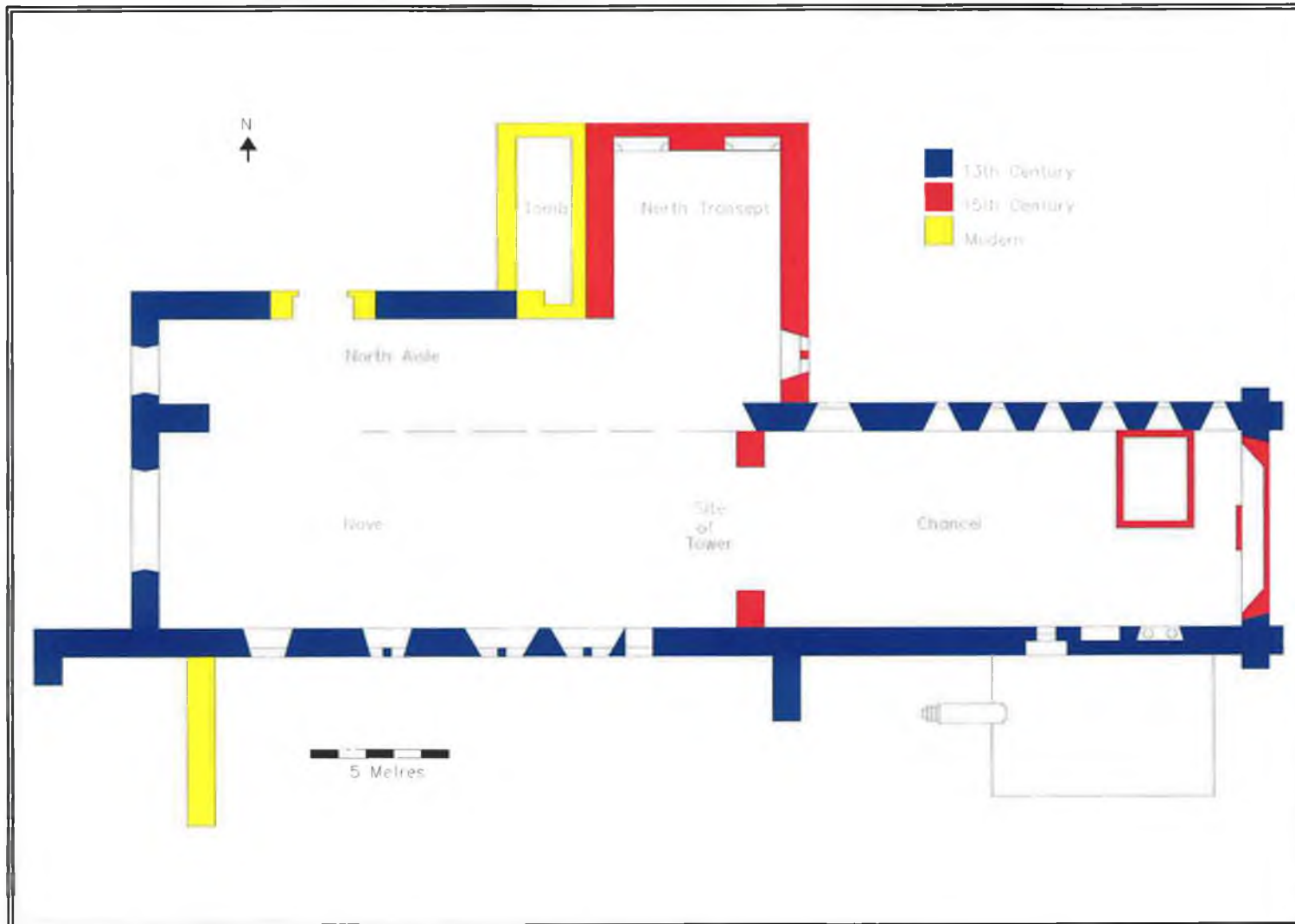


Figure 6.4: Plan of Strade Friary (redrawn after on-site plan)



Plate 6.4: Chancel arch in Strade Friary with the remains of the east window behind it

recommended Strade Friary for inclusion in this study, but rather the sculpture, which dates from this phase.

A number of significant pieces of sculpture dating from the fifteenth century can be found in Strade Friary. There are carvings on the corbels on either side of the chancel arch, the altar *reredos* beneath the east window featuring three carved panels, and the tomb on the north side of the chancel. The latter piece is especially significant in an Irish context, both for the quality of its execution and the iconography it portrays. These pieces of sculpture will be explored in depth in the section on sculpture and decorative motifs which follows.

The east window of Strade Friary was a fifteenth century insertion and, as mentioned in Chapter Five, traces of the grouped lancets originally built here in the thirteenth century still survive. The fifteenth century east window has not fared well in terms of survival. In keeping with other east windows of this date, it would have been a tracery window of four or even five lights. Of course, there are a variety of styles of tracery windows that have been observed in fifteenth century ecclesiastical buildings. In some instances, as noted at Moyne and Rosserk and also Ross Errilly, the east window tends to be a larger version of the principal window in the transept. Only one window now remains in the transept of Strade Friary and it faces towards the east. This is a two-light tracery window with a pointed head and set beneath a pointed arch (Plate 6.5). The mullion branches off delineating cusped open-work shapes. This is a particularly finely executed example of this type of tracery; all of the head of the window is intricately moulded. Although there is no evidence of what the head of the east window may have looked like, it is possible that it may have had some similarities with this window. Considering the prevalence of cusps in the fifteenth century elements of this friary, it would be surprising if the east window had not been adorned in this way.

The Irish Dominicans remained under the control of the English province well into the sixteenth century, unlike other orders such as the Franciscans. According to Conlan (2002), this may account for the richness of the window styles in the late medieval Dominican houses in comparison with other orders. He contends that the Dominicans were more imaginative in their use of cusps in window tracery than the



Plate 6.5: Tracery window in the north transept of Strade Friary

Franciscans and that this is reflective of the English influence on the Dominicans. The east window and traceried transept window at Franciscan Rosserk are an exception to Conlan's reasoning, as both are elaborately cusped. There is much less cusping in evidence in the windows in Moyne Friary, and both it and Ross Errilly demonstrate a greater simplicity in their window tracery than the typical late medieval Dominican house. Little remains of the tracery which once filled the east window in Urlar Dominican Friary in County Mayo, but of the vestiges that remain in what was once a three-light window, clear evidence of such cusping as might be expected of a Dominican house can be observed.

Propped against the south wall of the chancel in Strade friary are a series of five sculptured stones. Two are fully intact (Figure 6.5 & 6.6), while the other three remain only in part. The former are both approximately two metres long and narrow towards the base. Both are carved with an elongated *bottonée* cross or foliated cross. A curious addition found on each of these are two additional arms placed at a diagonal angle. These may be intended as a skeuomorph, designed to represent the arms of Jesus on the Cross. Some crosses have angled rather than horizontal arms to reflect this. The Strade crosses, however, have these angled arms in addition to the usual transom. O'Keeffe (2000) details a number of grave-slabs and sarcophagi from medieval Ireland. He includes an illustration of an Anglo-Norman sarcophagus from Bannow, County Wexford which bears a carving on its lid of the same form as that in the Dominican Friary in Kilkenny. Unlike the Strade examples, it does not feature the additional arms angled upwards. The shape of the lid is the same as the Strade tomb slabs, angled inwards towards the base. In the instance of Bannow, the box of the tomb also survives; these are not in evidence in Strade. A wayside cross in Cloonageeragh, County Westmeath bears a rudely carved crucifixion and is missing its head and most of the arms (Crawford, 1928). The arms of the cross extend at a 90-degree angle to the shaft. However, the arms of the figure are angled diagonally upwards, similar to the design executed on the additional arms of the Strade cross slabs.

Manning (2005) states that such coffin-shaped floor slabs, often with foliated crosses, marked the burial places of individuals of a lower status than bishops and lords, but higher than the majority who were interred in simple pits. Local folklore holds that

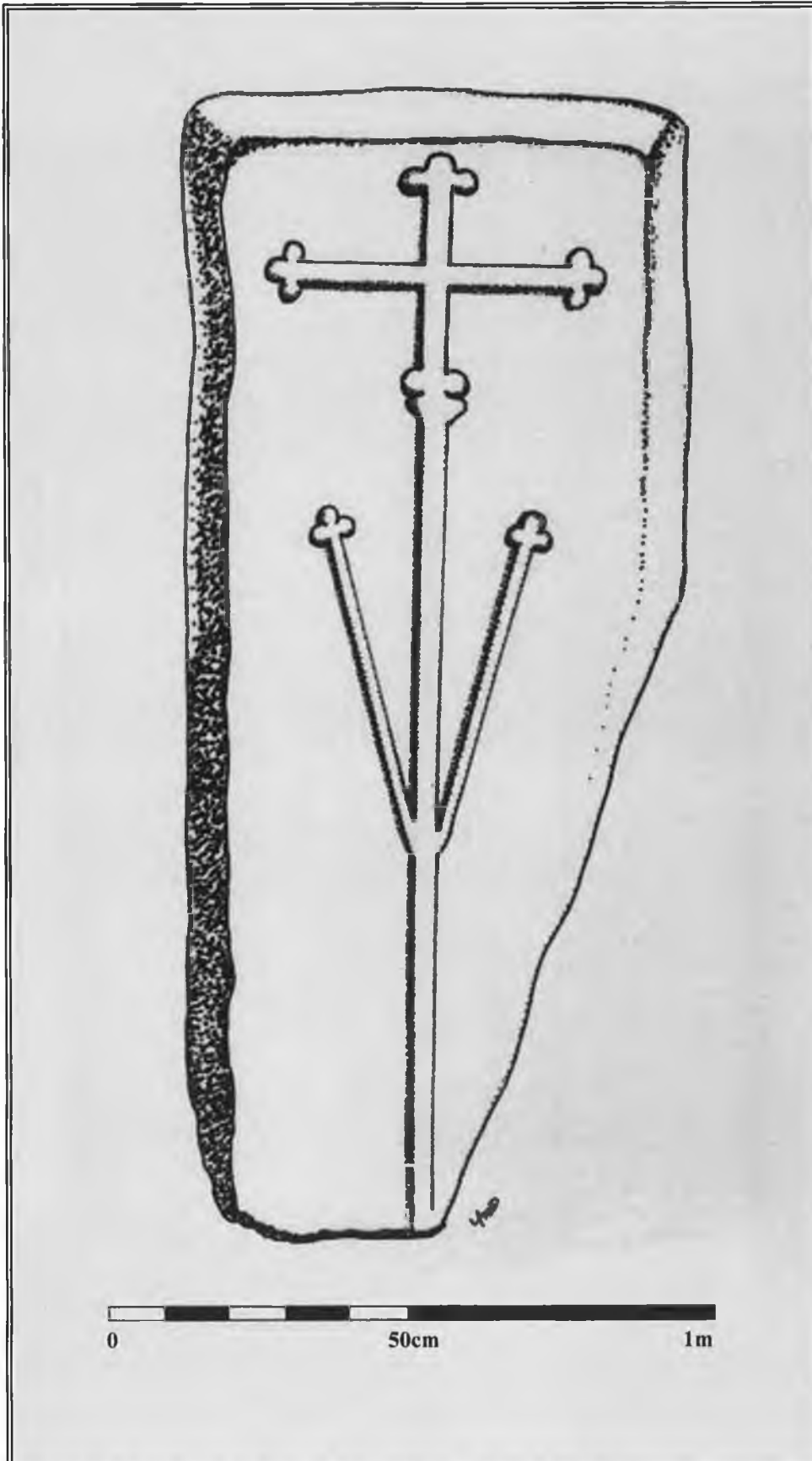


Figure 6.5: Cross slab now located in the chancel of Strade Friary

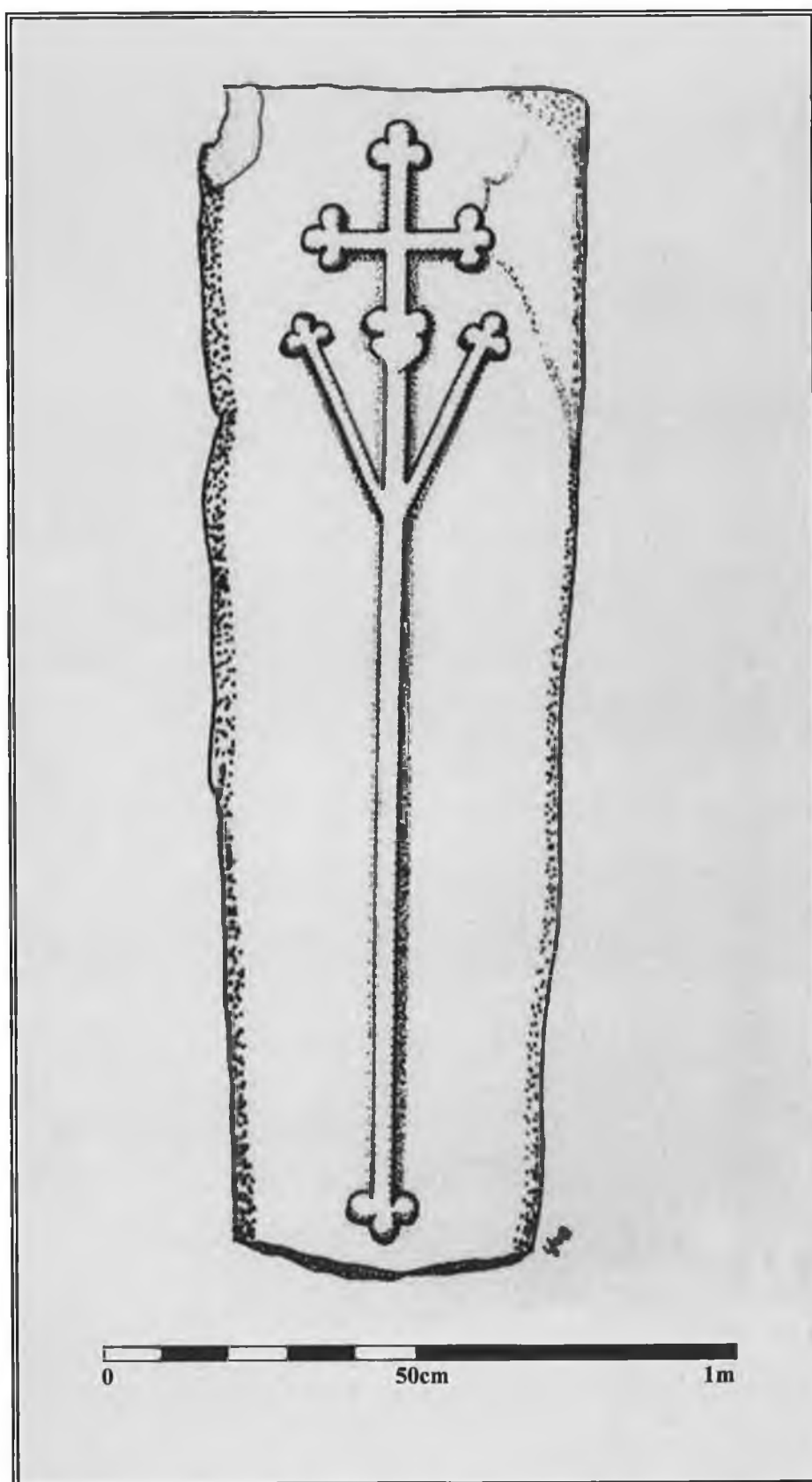


Figure 6.6: Cross slab now located in the chancel of Strade Friary

these slabs were used to mark the friars' burials. Given that these slabs have been moved from their original location, ascribing a date to them becomes more difficult. Prim (1849–51) recorded the discovery of a similar series of carved stonework in the Dominican friary in Kilkenny (Figure 6.7), which he dates to the thirteenth century by means of their inscriptions. They also bear foliated crosses. One bears an elongated *bottonée* cross that is almost identical to the Strade examples, but lacks the angled arms. Another has terminals that are more similar to a *fleur-de-lys* than to a *bottonée* cross. However, the angled arms are included on this example, but are stylised in a grass-like fashion.

Another feature of thirteenth century date of the south side of the chancel is the *piscina* (Plate 6.6). Enclosed beneath a single round-headed trefoliated arch are two drain holes in the form of six-lobed depressions. Thirteenth century *piscinae* tended to have two drains, after this time the ablution of the vessels was drunk by the celebrant and only one drain was needed (Greening Lamborn, 1993). *Piscinae* with two drains continued to be built into the fifteenth century, however, for example at Rosserk and Ross Errilly. These occur within the chancel with less elaborate examples with single drains elsewhere in Rosserk.

The tower of Strade Friary was a fifteenth century addition, reflective of the trend in the fifteenth century of making alterations to existing friary churches, especially through the addition of belfry towers. This tower no longer stands, but when it did it would have stood at the meeting point of nave and chancel. The chancel arch remains, although another similar arch would have been required to the west of this in order to hold the weight of the crossing tower. The remaining arch is constructed using ashlar masonry, which differentiates it from the rest of the building which is constructed using random rubble masonry. Ashlar construction would have been more expensive and where employed in medieval religious buildings, it was generally used sparingly in important locations or for features such as quoining.

Archaeological excavations were carried out in the vicinity of Strade Friary between January and March, 1998 and between February and March, 2000 under Licence No. 97E381 (Murphy, 2000). The intention was to discover the nature and extent of the archaeology which existed below ground level within the Penal church that adjoins

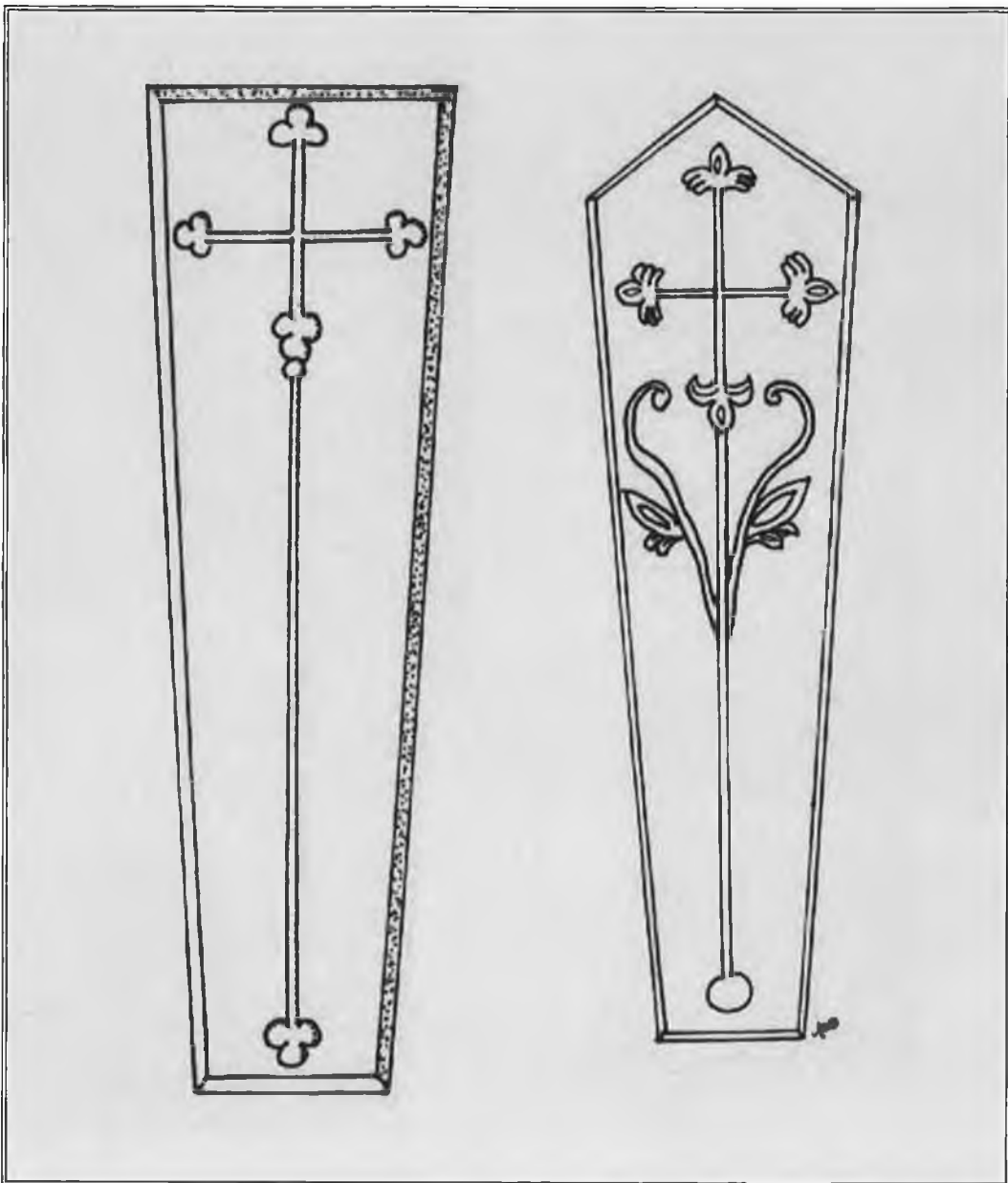


Figure 6.7: Carved stones in the Dominican friary in Kilkenny, (redrawn after Prim, 1849–51)



Plate 6.6: Thirteenth century *piscina* located on the south wall of the chancel of Strade Friary

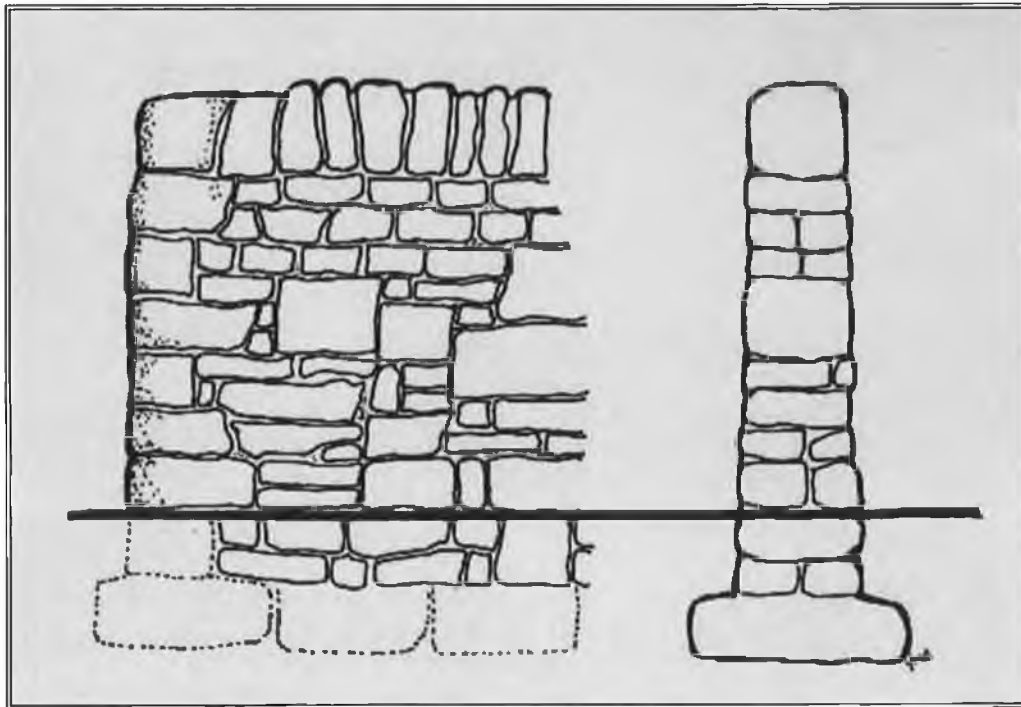


Figure 6.8: Random rubble masonry (after Stevens Curl, 1999)

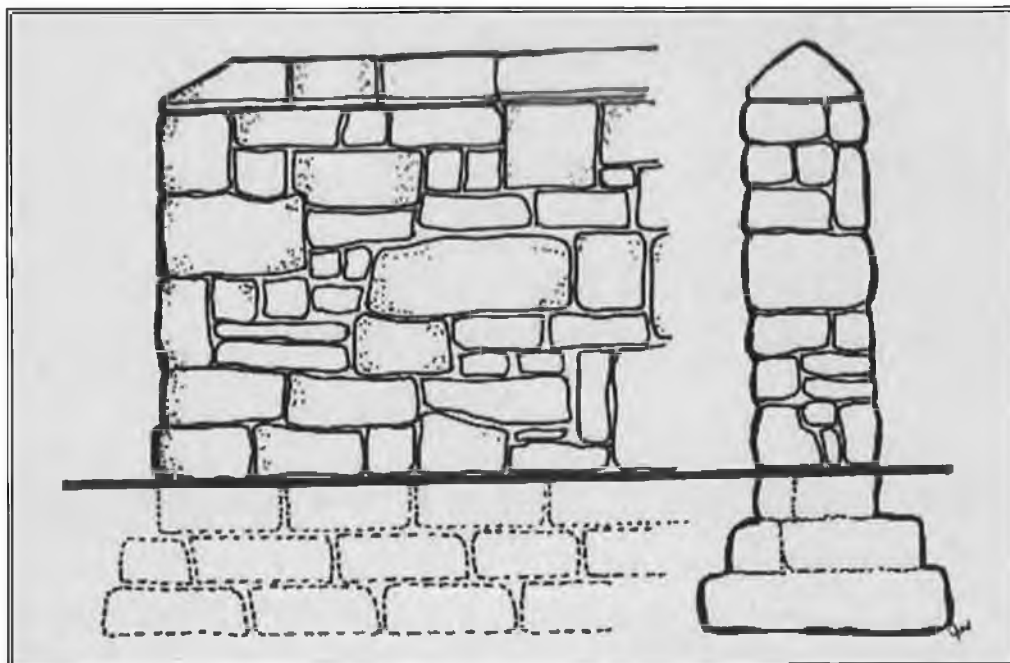


Figure 6.9: Random coursed rubble masonry (after Stevens Curl, 1999)

Strade Friary at its south west corner. The excavation was necessitated by plans to convert the Penal church into the new premises of the Michael Davitt Museum. The archaeological investigation illuminated the former extent of the friary, proving that the cloister and domestic ranges had been constructed to the south of the church as the archaeological evidence suggested. Features found beneath the floor of the Penal church included a pit, rough cobbling and a hearth. It was found that it had become necessary to raise the floor levels in the medieval period in the area that now coincides with the western end of the Penal church. This was due to repeated flooding of this area.

Part of the east and west ranges of the cloister arcade wall were discovered. Another section of masonry was discovered which appears to have been the south east corner of the wall running parallel to the south arcade of the cloister. A stone kiln was discovered, but this had been badly disturbed by the building of the Penal Church. A list of finds from the excavation were outlined by Murphy (2000). Included amongst these finds are two shreds of Saintonge pottery and a fragment of a rotary quern. Murphy (2000) considered the nature of the finds to be disappointing. This is indicative of the survival of only the lower levels of archaeological stratigraphy. The upper levels had been disturbed by the building of the Penal church.

Sculpture and decorative motifs

The variety and quality of sculptural forms and motifs found in the case study sites in this research vary between the different sites. For example, there is a clear contrast between Moyne, where there is very little in the way of sculpture or decorative motifs, and Rosserk, where small pieces of sculpture and decoration abound. This is also the case with Strade, Burrishoole and Murrisk. Both Burrishoole and Murrisk have more decorated stonework than Moyne does, but they still only have very small amounts of it. This may reflect the fact that these small houses were less well endowed financially than other foundations and so prioritised construction over ornamentation. Originally built in the thirteenth century, a phase of construction took place at Strade in the fifteenth century. While a number of alterations were made to the structure at this time, they were not so extensive as to prove financially prohibitive to the evolution of a sculptural and decorative programme in the friary.

Hourihane (2003) comments that the human head is the most commonly employed sculptural motif in both the early and late periods of Irish Gothic. It was often included in the form of a label stop, on a capital or embedded in walling. This motif occurs at each of the sites in question in this chapter and also at Rosserk. Moyne is the only case study site in this research where there is no evidence of the use of the human head represented in sculpture. An example remains at Strade, where a representation of a human head can be observed between two mouldings above the corbel on the north side of the chancel arch. At Burrishoole, human heads were employed for sculptural purposes at such locations as the apex of the east window and embedded high on the wall where the nave and transept meet. Such heads are also to be found in similar and seemingly random locations at Murrisk Friary. Hourihane (2003) suggests that the majority of these heads must represent people from the upper echelons of society, as many wear elaborate headdresses and jewellery around their necks. One of the heads at Rosserk is hooded, another appears to be a bishop and a third is female and wears an elaborate headdress, but otherwise there is little to elucidate the status of the figures that were observed at the case study sites, especially Burrishoole, Strade and Murrisk. The passage of time and the force of the elements have caused the detailing on some of the heads to fade, although a beard can still be discerned on one of the Murrisk examples. The use of human heads as a sculptural motif was also a feature of the Romanesque style, however the amount of heads used was very different. The doorways at Clonfert Cathedral or Dysert O Dea contain more examples of sculptural heads than many late medieval religious houses, where they are used in a more sparing way.

Some of the ornamentation in friaries is placed high up where it was not easily visible to the congregation, for example the carvings on the hood mouldings of the larger windows. The masons believed that they should strive for perfection in all areas of the buildings as God could see all. The churches were intended as a monument to the community's relationship with God. Although built to honour God, care had to be taken that the building itself and its beauty would not become consuming at the cost of religious devotion. The Observant friars aimed to eschew material possessions and concerns about personal and corporate property; hence they required simplicity in their buildings. A similar situation faced the early monasticism of the Coptic Church,

as its adherents attempted to balance ascetic ideals with the desire to construct “a suitable abode for Christ” (Schroeder, 2004, p. 72).

A characteristic of the Decorated style was to reduce large architectural motifs for use in small objects. This led to the development of micro-architecture, as forms such as arches and pinnacles were applied to such features as choir stalls and tombs. There is a paucity of surviving medieval ecclesiastical woodwork in Ireland. However, such micro-architecture survives on a number of tombs, such as the tomb niche in Strade Friary and the frontal panel of tomb of Feidlim Ua Conchobair in County Roscommon. Such tombs tend to incorporate weepers under arches; in the case of the latter, eight mail-clad warriors are featured. A further example of the use of micro-architecture can be seen in Rosserk, where the piscina in the chancel is roofed using rib vaulting. A more unusual deployment of micro-architecture is the diagrammatic representation of a rib-vault on the mullion of the east window of Islandeady church, which was described in Chapter Five.

Standing on the north side of the chancel in Strade Friary is the fifteenth century sculptured tomb (Plate 6.8) that has been described by Harbison (1992, p. 253) as “one of the most beautiful in Ireland”. It is composed of two main elements – the tomb front and the canopy. The tomb front is divided into two parts by a pilaster and has relief carvings of four figures on each side, described by Pococke (1891, p. 81) as “curious reliefs”. On the left side, there are four panels divided by light pilasters and surmounted by ogee arches. On the right, the panel is continuous with the arches terminated by carvings of angels. Each arch is flanked by pilasters and has crockets on the extrados. Each pilaster and arch is surmounted by a pinnacle. The overall grouping of figures seen on this tomb front is unique in Ireland. O’Brien and Harbison (1992) suggest the whole composition may illustrate pilgrimages undertaken by the donor.

Looking from left to right, the first three figures represent the Magi (Plate 6.8 & 6.9). The Bible does not mention how many wise men there were, simply that they came bearing three gifts. By the fifteenth century, it was standard practice to depict three Magi. They are also known as the Three Kings, but there is no evidence that they were actually kings, this comes from an interpretation of an Old Testament prediction.



Plate 6.8: Tomb niche on the north side of the choir in Strade Friary



Plate 6.9: Figures of two of the Magi depicted on the Strade tomb frontal



Plate 6.10: The third Magi depicted on the Strade tomb frontal

The Magi came to be known as Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar in the Middle Ages and were believed to represent the three continents known at the time, namely Europe, Asia and Africa. It was common to depict one of them as an old man, one middle aged and one having a youthful appearance. On the Strade tomb, the first figure on the left hand side is appreciably younger than the other two. The figures carry the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Taylor (2003) interprets gold as representing Jesus' kingship; frankincense was an incense and represented His divinity; and myrrh was used in embalming the dead and symbolises His death. The Magi had been depicted as a subject in Romanesque art, including a representation in Cormac's Chapel. A later depiction is the Magi Cope, a late fifteenth century Benediction Cope discovered in Waterford (McEaney, 2004). The Swansea Altarpiece, an alabaster feature, also includes a fifteenth century depiction of the Magi. Deevy (1994) outlines the importance of the Magi in medieval Ireland, especially for craftsmen. She describes a late medieval silver ring brooch from Trim, County Meath, which bears their names. The Magi, in the context of the Strade tomb frontal, may represent pilgrimage to Cologne (O'Brien and Harbison, 1992) as their relics are held in Cologne Cathedral. The Magi were regarded as the patrons of travellers (making a visit to their shrine an altogether suitable destination for a well-travelled pilgrim), until later being superseded by Saint Christopher. Deevy (1998) states that the Magi were believed to give protection from certain illnesses and could be invoked to protect from the dangers of the road, sudden death, sorcery and theft. The growth of their cult was assisted by the demand for relics associated with the earthly life of Jesus.

The fourth figure from the left on the tomb is that of Christ showing the five wounds (Plate 6.11). This figure is wearing a crown; hence it is a depiction of Christ the King and Judge. He may represent pilgrimage to Jerusalem according to O'Brien and Harbison (1992). Connolly (1999) outlines the pervasiveness of the desire to visit Jerusalem in medieval culture, due to its importance in Christian history and theology as the location of Christ's death and resurrection. The expense and hardship endured by those who wished to visit limited the pool of potential pilgrims, who might instead focus their spiritual contemplation on the Heavenly Jerusalem if it was not possible to visit the earthly one. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem appears to have been less common amongst the Irish than pilgrimage to Rome, on the basis of surviving documentary



Plate 6.11: Christ showing the five wounds depicted on the Strade tomb frontal

accounts. However, the visit of Aed, son of Conchobar Maenmaige O Conchobair, to Jerusalem in 1224 was recorded in the *Annals of Connacht* (Freeman, 1994).

The very fact that travelling to Jerusalem was the most arduous journey available to western pilgrims added to its attractiveness. Craig (2003) contrasts the miraculous healing sought by those visiting local shrines with the personal and intangible benefits offered by Jerusalem and Rome, including increased personal devotion and indulgences to speed their way to heaven. Undertaking such a pilgrimage was a penitential and sacrificial act. Had the Strade tomb donor undertaken the pilgrimages suggested, he undoubtedly faced a large-scale investment of time and money as well as significant risks to his personal wellbeing. These pilgrimages tended to be the preserve of the few. Because of the arduous nature of medieval pilgrimage, it was a viable form of self-denial for those who chose not to embark upon the conventual life. Pilgrimage could also be undertaken as penance or punishment for offences committed by laymen or clergy. It was also a means of winning indulgences, allowing the pilgrim to bypass Purgatory. The pilgrim could even secure a plenary indulgence, wiping out all penance incurred by him or her (Webb, 2000).

Very strong similarities may be observed between the depiction of Christ showing the five wounds in the Ormond group, for example the tomb of the Knight in Gowran, County Kilkenny, and that on the tomb in Strade Friary. The Ormond group and Strade tomb both represent this motif with the robe revealing the torso but covering the lower part of the body. Rae (1970) notes that the hands in some such depictions can appear disproportionately large in order to emphasise the wounds. This is certainly the case at Gowran, but is less so in Strade where the elbows have emerged fully from the clothing. Both figures are wearing crowns, although the Strade figure sports one with a *fleur-de-lys* in keeping with those around him. Both garments are fastened at the neck by similar ring brooches. The theme of Christ showing the five wounds is thought to be limited to the work of artists of the Ormond group and work associated with theirs (Rae, 1970). A rare example from outside this group may be seen on the Lynch tomb in the south transept of the Collegiate Church of Saint Nicholas in Galway. The fifteenth century witnessed a surge in popularity in devotion to the cult of the five wounds.

The Mendicant Friars in Late Medieval Mayo

	Strade	Ormond Artists	O'Tunney Atelier	Thurles Group	Rice Tomb, Waterford
Peter	Two medium-size keys Wearing hat	Two medium-size keys Not tonsured Gowran Kilkenny (2) Rathmore font	Two large keys Tonsured Kilkenny Kilkenny St. John (not tonsured) Kilcooley (2) Cashel (2) Jerpont	One Key Not tonsured Thurles Cashel Mothel	Two large keys Not tonsured
Paul	Sword held at waist height	Sword on shoulder Balding forehead Gowran Kilkenny (2) Rathmore font	Sword on shoulder (Other details lost) Kilkenny	Sword Not balding Mothel	Not present
Christ showing the five wounds	Present	Gowran Kilkenny (2) Rathmore font (Saint Nicholas' Galway)	Not present	Not present	Not present

Table 6.1: Comparative iconography of sepulchres including examples in Strade, south Leinster and east Munster c. 1450–1560. The latter two groups are based on Rae's (1970) study.

On the other side of the pilaster is a kneeling man (Plate 6.12), who is believed to be the deceased and donor of the tomb. He has variously been described as pulling off his hood (Harbison, 1992) and drawing back his beard as a sign of respect (Quinn, 1993). Leask (1960) described him as a lively looking layman, holding a conch-like ear trumpet. Only one clear representation of a patron was found in the case study sites in this research, namely the representation of the deceased on the tomb front at Strade Friary. At other locations, funerary effigies depicting the patrons were carved and placed on top of a box-shaped tomb, for example in Roscommon Friary. The deceased man represented on the front of the Strade tomb must surely have been a patron of the friary and a person of status to merit burial in such a prime location as the chancel and in such an elaborate tomb. People of such status as this would have had the resources to undertake pilgrimages to distant lands.

Beside him is a mitred person (Plate 6.13) carrying a cross-shaped crosier with his hand raised in blessing; the mitre implies that this figure represents a bishop. Certainly, it would not have been unusual for people of status in the community to be represented in ecclesiastical sculpture, although a more specific identity has been suggested for this figure (O'Brien and Harbison, 1992). This is believed to represent Saint Thomas à Becket, a bishop who was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral. Murdered in 1170, Becket was canonised little more than two years later. A cult had quickly built up around him and Canterbury Cathedral, the home of his relics, began to attract large numbers of pilgrims. Other pilgrimage sites in medieval England waxed and waned in popularity as new saints became popular (Webb, 2000). Becket, however, maintained his popularity beyond the fifteenth century when the donor of the Strade tomb would have visited his shrine. Its ultimate demise came with its destruction during the Dissolution, when it became a key target of the Crown forces. Rae (1970) states that the bishop figures in late Irish Gothic art are often identified as Saint Patrick, sometimes assisted by the presence of a serpent. No such distinguishing feature accompanies the bishop on the Strade tomb. Nor does he bear the traditional marking of Thomas à Becket, a wound in the head to evoke the manner of his death, as was popular in English representations. However, neither does the figure of the bishop on the tomb of the Knight in Gowran, which was tentatively identified as Becket by Rae (1970). 1470 was the Jubilee year in Canterbury, which would have had a special resonance for pilgrims. Saint Thomas à Becket enjoyed an enduring



Plate 6.12: Kneeling figure, believed to be the donor, depicted on the Strade tomb frontal



Plate 6.12: Mitred figure, believed to be Saint Thomas à Becket, depicted on the Strade tomb frontal

popularity paralleled by few saints of his time, and this fact and the Jubilee Year certainly help account for the appearance of his image in late medieval Irish sculpture.

The two remaining figures are Saint Peter (Plate 6.14), carrying a set of keys, and Saint Paul (Plate 6.15), bearing a sword; both also carry a book in reference to their epistles. These two saints appear more frequently in Christian art than the other apostles in their roles as founder of the Roman church and head of the universal church, and in this instance symbolise may pilgrimage to Rome (O'Brien and Harbison, 1992). The sword as the symbol of Saint Paul first made its appearance in Christian art in the tenth century, while Saint Peter is frequently depicted carrying the keys to heaven. Saint Peter was crucified upside down on an inverted cross in Rome during persecutions of Christians. Saint Paul was also put to death in Rome. Unlike Saint Peter, Saint Paul was entitled, by virtue of his Roman citizenship, to be executed by beheading with a sword. Hence the importance of the sword as his symbol in Christian art. The sword with which he is shown on the Strade tomb frontal is of fifteenth or sixteenth century type.

The traditional depiction of Saint Peter in Christian art has shown him having a square face with a curly beard that is either round or square. Generally, he is shown as having either short curly hair or is bald or tonsured. On the Strade tomb frontal, however, he has no beard and his hair is shown in much the same manner as the other figures. As he is regarded as being the first Pope, he is often depicted in the robes of a bishop or Pope (Taylor, 2003). Saint Paul, despite wearing a hat, appears to have the receding hairline that is traditionally part of his iconography. Both Saint Peter and Saint Paul are depicted on the Strade tomb frontal wearing hats and while Saint Peter's hairline is visible, this is not the case with Saint Paul, despite the high placement of the hat on his head. Tradition holds that both Saints were executed on 29 June in Rome, hence their shared feast day (Taylor, 2003). Saint Paul is known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, although he was not one of the original twelve disciples. However, due to his prominence in the early Church, he came to be regarded as one of its founders, together with Saint Peter with whom he is often iconographically linked. In addition to receding hair, he is usually depicted with a pointed beard. Rome is traditionally believed to be the site of both their tombs and subsequently became a site of pilgrimage, second only to Jerusalem in importance. The shrine of Saint James in



Plate 6.14: Saint Peter, carrying a book and keys from the Strade tomb frontal



Plate 6.15: Saint Paul, carrying a book and sword from the Strade tomb frontal

Santiago de Compostella in Northern Spain completes the three major sites of medieval Christian pilgrimage, but is not represented on this tomb, suggesting that the donor did not visit there.

The Irish Annals record a number of instances of Irish pilgrims visiting Rome. The *Annals of Loch Cé* (Hennessy, 1871, p. 523) record in 1300:

“A general invitation came from Rome in the time of Pope Boniface VIII., throughout all Christendom; and in each hundredth year this invitation was wont to be issued, and it was usually called a ‘year of grace’; and a countless multitude from all the countries in Christendom were wont to go in Pilgrimage to Rome at this invitation; and they would obtain forgiveness of all sins there through this grace”.

It would follow that 1400 and 1500 were similarly designated as years of grace. The promise of total forgiveness would surely have been a significant draw for those in a position to make this pilgrimage.

The *Annals of Connacht* (Freeman, 1944, p. 535) in 1467 record: “Donnchad son of Seoan, son of Maelsechlainn O Fergail went to Rome and died in the east”. The east would possibly be a reference to Jerusalem. In addition, the same source in 1510 records the visit of Aed O Domnaill to Rome and his return in 1512 “having completed his pilgrimage” (Freeman, 1944, p. 619). This is also recorded in the *Annals of Loch Cé*. Thomas Og Mag Uidhir in 1450 “went to Rome for the good of his soul” (Hennessy, 1871, p. 161) and returned in 1451.

Rae (1970) outlines a further connection between the Strade tomb and the Ormond group. A rarely violated custom held that Christ, John the Baptist and the apostles should be shown barefoot as this implied sanctity. Yet on the Strade tomb, Peter and Paul are both shown wearing shoes, while on the tomb front at Gowran, the feet of the apostles, where visible, are all covered by footwear. Similarly at Ennis, all but two of the twelve apostles are thus shod. Rae (1970) suggests that a local custom may have developed with regard to this matter. In keeping with most late medieval Irish figure sculpture, all bar one of the figures on the Strade tomb face outward towards the viewer, although their gazes all appear to be directed slightly downwards. This is especially noticeable in the case of the mitred figure. The only weeper not to face

straight outwards is that of the donor. The kneeling figure is angled at 45 degrees so that his feet are visible behind him.

On the west side of the tomb, below the springing of the arch and sitting on top of the tomb frontal, is a small high relief carving of a dog. Although in biblical times dogs were not viewed in a favourable light, they subsequently became symbols of faithfulness. The motif of a dog is often used to accompany the image of Saint Dominic in medieval art. Where used on a tomb, a dog is intended to represent the deceased person's fidelity.

The link between social status and burial was highlighted in the early seventeenth century by John Weaver:

“Sepulchres should be made according to the qualitie and degree of the person deceased, that by the Tombe everyone might bee discerned of what ranke hee was living: for monuments answerable to mens worth, states and places have alwayes beene allowed, and stately sepulchres for base fellowes have alwayes lien open to bitter iests”

(cited in Dinn, 1995, p. 250).

Dinn (1995) states that in the medieval period, the body was seen as a symbol for the soul, the place of burial was therefore related to the fate of the soul. Having a suitably elaborate tomb in a place of particular religious status (for example in a friary choir rather than a parish graveyard) would have spoken volumes about the perceived ultimate destination of the soul. At a time when the divine right of kings was unquestioned, the size and form of a memorial were directly correlated to the deceased's social standing. Weaver explains that the poor did not have memorials; flat horizontal gravestones were the preserve of the lesser gentry, the higher gentry had tombs “raised somewhat above the ground”. Kings and nobles had “their Tombes or sepulchres raised aloft above ground, to note the excellence of their state and dignitie” (cited in Dinn, 1995, p. 250).

Hanging from the donor's belt is a shuttle-like object suggesting that this man was a weaver (Dunleavy, 1989). Another figure on the altar *reredos* is similarly clad and also has such an object hanging from his belt. The deceased must have been either a weaver himself or perhaps made his money from weaving. The level of detail on this

tomb is evident in the detail of this man's hair and beard and the buttons that can be seen on both his sleeves. It has been suggested that the man is dressed in the fashion of a member of a religious house. It was not uncommon for founders or patrons to enter the religious house they had supported in the last years of their lives, as was the case with the founder of Burrishoole Friary, Richard Burke, who spent his last years in the friary he had founded. The uniform of the pilgrims, described by Craig (2003), comprised a long white robe, a floppy, broad-rimmed hat, a traveller's bag called a *scrip* and a staff. Clearly, these are not the garments in which the figure on the tomb frontal is depicted.

Intricate detailing is evident in the hair and clothing of the different figures on the tomb front. The folds of the clothing worn by the figures have been carefully executed. All the figures appear to be wearing footwear, with the exception of the figure of Christ who is barefoot in order to display his wounds. Each of the four figures on the left-hand side of the tomb frontal wears a crown with a *fleur-de-lys* upon it. The *fleur-de-lys* is a stylised lily and is used to represent the Virgin Mary. As it is composed of three petals, it has also been used to denote the Trinity. However, the principal importance of this emblem derives from its long association with the French royal arms.

The canopy of the tomb consists of twenty apertures, each fully cusped. There is a pilaster on each side of the canopy and both are topped by a finial, as is the canopy itself. The tracery has a flame-like appearance that is a feature of the Flamboyant style which developed in France in the fifteenth century as the amount of rebuilding necessary after the Hundred Years War gave a fresh impetus to architectural developments (Cruickshank, 1996). Stalley (1987) disputes the comparison between the style of this canopy and late Gothic tracery in France, and notes that England too had a Flamboyant interlude. Curvilinear designs, he states, were popular on English church furniture and a pattern similar to that at Strade was used on fourteenth century choir stalls at Lancaster. McDermott (1975), however, believes that Iberian influences manifest themselves in the tomb canopy.

In the nineteenth century, John Dillon, Member of Parliament for East Mayo, expressed his gratitude to his cousin Anne Deane by inserting a memorial to her in the

tomb niche, ignominiously ruining the tomb, according to De Breffny and Mott (1976). This memorial rests on top of the original tomb and beneath the canopy. It attempts to mirror the style of the fifteenth century tomb, but does not do so successfully.

Sitting beneath the east window is the altar *reredos* (Plate 6.16), an ornamental facing on the wall at the back of the altar. It consists of a *Pietà* flanked by two kneeling figures, a male on the left and a female on the right. More elaborate examples were composed of a tall ornate screen with statuary. The Strade *reredos* with its bas-relief carvings belongs to a stage antecedent to the emergence of fully detached statuary. Harbison (1989) speculates that the flanking figures may represent the donors. Each of the figures is set beneath a Gothic arch. Each arch is flanked by pilasters, similar to the tomb front, and the arches and pilasters are topped by pinnacles. Once again, the arches have crockets along their extradoses. These figures are in lower relief than those on the tomb front and there is less detailing here than on that piece. Overall, the two pieces are related stylistically, as can be seen from such details as the inclusion of a shuttle on the belt of the male figure and the buttons on the sleeve of the female in the right-hand panel.

Smaller examples of fifteenth century sculpture occur on the chancel arch. On the north side is carved the pious pelican (Plate 6.17), while on the south side is an eagle. Also on the north side, there is a human head carved between two mouldings on the corbel. On the east and west sides of the same corbel are carved flowers, each simply carved with four petals and four leaves (Figure 6.11). The pious or virtuous pelican was a common motif in Gothic art in Ireland and was used in painting, metalwork and sculpture. Ecclesiastical sites where this motif was employed in art include Clontuskert Priory, County Galway; Kilcooly Abbey, County Tipperary; and the Cistercian cell on Clare Island. Particular similarities exist between the birds with their lozenge-shaped plumage at Strade Friary and at Holy Cross Abbey, so much so that Hourihane (2003) suggests that they may have been the work of the same sculptor. The principal characteristic of the pious pelican is that it fed its young with its own blood. Its portrayal in art was intended to evoke the theme of resurrection through self-sacrifice. The metaphor of the pious pelican also occurs in the writings



Plate 6.16: Altar *reredos* beneath the east window in Strade Friary



Plate 6.17: Pious pelican beneath the corbel of the north side of the chancel arch in Strade Friary

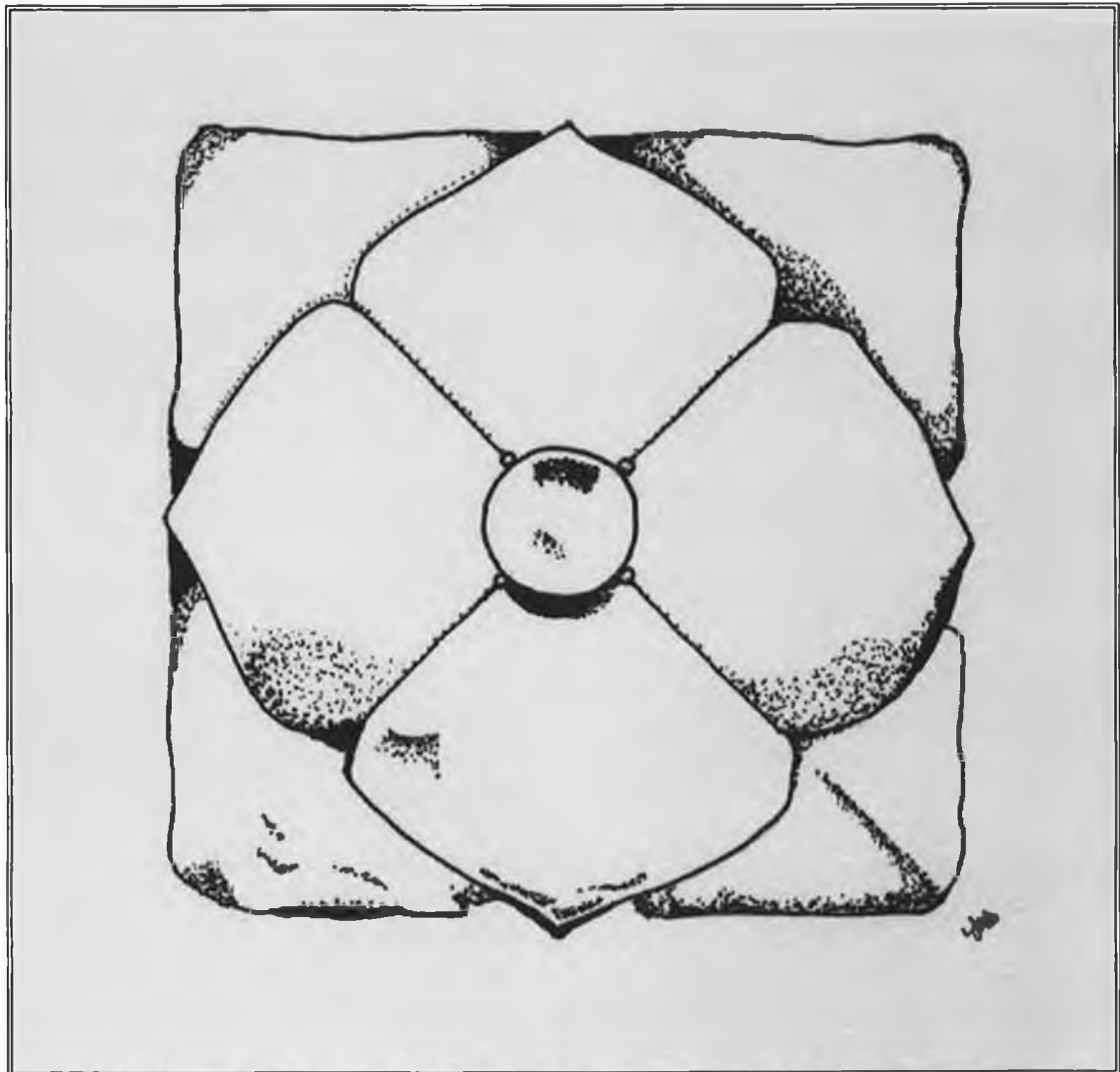


Figure 6.10: Carving of a flower on the moulding above the corbel of the north side of the chancel arch in Strade Friary

of Saint Thomas Aquinas “O Pious Pelican, Lord Jesu, cleanse me by thy blood...one drop of which can save the world” (cited in Roe, 1966, p. 107).

The carving of an eagle on the south corbel of the chancel arch has been taken to represent Saint John in his capacity as one of the Four Evangelists. Of the others, Saint Matthew was represented by a man; Saint Mark, a lion and Saint Luke, an ox. Usually, the four symbols are grouped together and it is rare to find one represented without the others, as is the case here. For example, a carpet page in the Book of Kells depicts each of the four evangelical symbols. The choice of the eagle to represent Saint John emphasises its position as the king of the birds and the mythological importance of the eagle as the only bird able to look directly into the light of the sun. This reflects how Saint John’s Gospel is considered the most soaring and spiritually revealing of the four Gospels (Taylor, 2003). Another interpretation of the eagle comes from medieval bestiaries, which claimed that the eagle annually rejuvenated its plumage by flying near the sun and then plunging into water. Similar to the rebirth of the Phoenix, this was then invoked as a symbol of the Resurrection and of Jesus. Considering the scarcity of parallels for the eagle of Saint John appearing in the absence of the other four evangelical symbols, it may be that the latter meaning was intended by the sculptor. It is also more fitting with the theme of the motif on the corbel opposite, the Pious Pelican which invokes the sacrifice of the Resurrection.

Cloister and conventual buildings

Considering that the Dominicans were the Order of Preachers, committed to study for the salvation of others, their houses such as Strade and Burrishoole must surely have had their own libraries, although these do not survive. Indeed the Dominican friar was never exempt from study; once he joined the order he became a student for life. The Cistercian Abbot Richard of Melrose stated “A cloister without literature is a grave for living men” (Williams, 1998, p. 100). Overall, however, the survival of domestic ranges at Burrishoole and Strade is poor, with many changes having been made to Burrishoole during its occupation by Elizabethan forces led by Nicholas Malbie.

The L-shaped remains now visible at Murrisk may in fact represent the entirety of these buildings in the medieval period. The size of the church here suggests that the community was small in size, perhaps about six friars lived there. There are three rooms on the ground floor. The sacristy lies to the north of the church and the chapter room to the north of this again. The function of the room at the northernmost end of this extremity is of unclear purpose, although it has a door in its north wall. Above this door at first floor level is a switchline tracery window with two lights. This is much larger than the other windows in the domestic range and suggests that this room was of some importance or required good light; perhaps it was a library or refectory.

Associated archaeology

The monastic seal was used for validating letters and legal transactions and was therefore highly prized as a key to official monastic authority. It was required to make documents official. Its loss or destruction, therefore, implied a reduction of conventual power; the monastic house was thus prevented from carrying out official monastic business. Hence the importance of breaking the monastic seal as part of the process of dissolving a monastic house.

A bronze seal matrix, a recessed mould from which a relief surface is cast, was found on a first floor window in Burrishoole in 1916 and is now in the possession of the National Museum of Ireland. It depicts a figure dressed in the ecclesiastical garb of a cope and alb and holding a cross-headed staff in the left hand, the right hand being raised in blessing. This seal matrix is classified as being of the effigial type, also used by many Cistercian abbeys upon which the abbot was depicted holding his crosier. On the Burrishoole seal matrix, the figure stands within a niche with foliage at each side and a trefoil at the base. It bears the inscription + SIGILIVM COMVENT CRI + RUM RPDICUTOR. Armstrong (1916) suggests that this was probably intended as + SIGILLVM CONVENT FRATRUM PREDICATOR. He suggests a date of at least late fifteenth century for the seal matrix. It bears no markings to definitively associate it with Burrishoole, although the circumstances of its discovery support this connection. Given the importance of the monastic seal, as outlined above, perhaps the Burrishoole seal matrix was hidden to avoid its destruction and the symbolic repercussions that accompanied this.

Another artefact associated with Burrishoole which is in the possession of the National Museum is the de Burgo O'Malley Chalice (Plate 6.18). Standing at 23 centimetres in height, it is considered one of the finest late medieval chalices in Ireland. Wyse Jackson (1972) suggests it may have been made in Galway, which had a good tradition of making Church silver at this time. It bears the following inscription:

*"Thomas de Burgo et Grania Ni Malle me fieri fecerunt Anno Domini
MCCCCLXXXIII"*

(Thomas de Burgo and Grania Ni Malle caused me to be made AD1494).

Thomas de Burgo or Burke was a grandson of Richard Burke, who founded the friary and entered it before his death. Grania Ní Malle or Gráinne O'Malley is believed to have been a great-grandaunt of the woman of the same name also known as Grace O'Malley or Granuaile (Corlett, 2001). Blake (1928) suggests it was made in grateful recognition of the Papal Bull of 1486, which gave official sanction to the friary. Made of gilt silver, it consists of an out-splayed bowl and an octagonal pyramidal base linked with an octagonal stem with a knop, or swelling, halfway up the stem. This knop is surrounded by eight lozenge-shaped bosses enriched with blue and green enamel. The knop is so similar in style and execution to one found on the Ballylongford processional cross that the two are believed to have been made by the same craftsman. The latter piece was made in 1479 in memory of John O'Connor, founder of Lislaghtin Franciscan friary (Wallace, 2000). The lettering used on both is also strikingly similar. Arnold (1977) states that this chalice follows no native tradition, but is stylistically close to five examples in Britain, including one in Corpus Christi College, Oxford and another in the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. It was originally accompanied by a paten, which is now lost. Chalices associated with Murrisk Friary are also in existence; these are dated to 1635 and 1724. A number of finds associated with Strade Friary were discovered during the course of excavations there. Many of them do not pertain to the late medieval period and were collectively considered disappointing by the excavators.

The Sites and Monuments Records for County Mayo record the presence of an ironworking site as part of the friary remains (National Monument Number MA067-



Plate 6.18: The de Burgo O'Malley Chalice (Photo reproduced courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland)

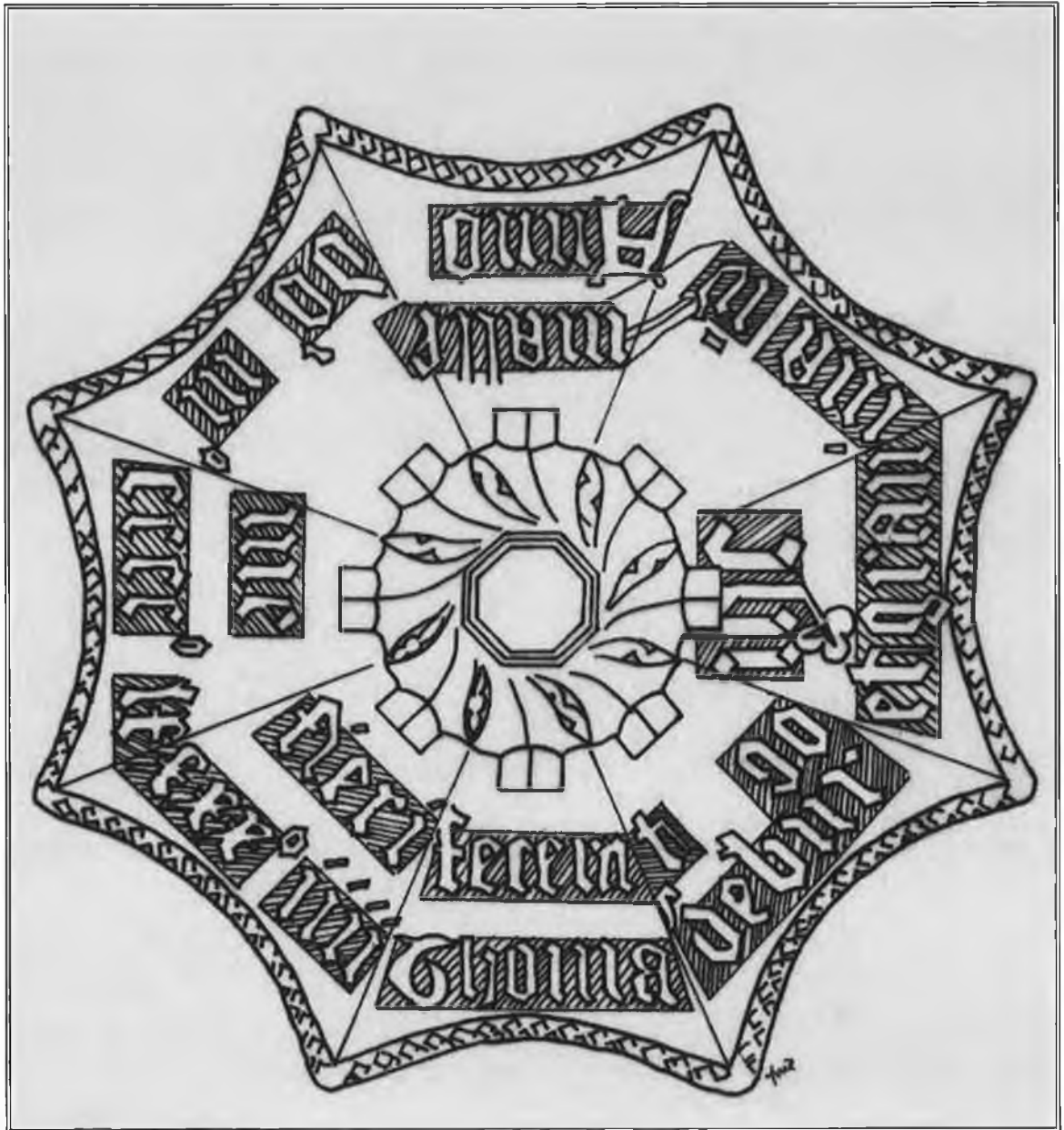


Figure 6.11: Base of the de Burgo O'Malley chalice (after Blake, 1928)

01404). Nicholas Malbie, Lord Deputy, garrisoned Burrishoole Friary in 1569, resulting in some changes to the buildings. He also noted that the friary was “not without great store of good land, both arable and pasture. Specifically it hath a very plentiful iron mine and abundance of wood in every way” (cited in Knox, 1908, p. 108). The association of metalworking with a medieval religious house is not without parallel. Excavations at Bordesley Abbey, a Cistercian house in Worcestershire have produced evidence for ironworking there (Astil, 1993). The iron produced there was utilised in the manufacture of carts and ploughs, in addition to smaller items such as knives.

Ó Móráin (1957) discusses two relics, *Fiacail Phádraig* (Figure 6.19), the Shrine of Saint Patrick's Tooth, and the Black Bell of Saint Patrick, which he suggests may have been venerated at Murrisk Friary in the late medieval period. Pilgrimage was discussed above in relation to the Strade tomb, which is believed to chronicle a patron's travels to well-known pilgrimage sites around Europe. Moyne Friary represents pilgrimage on a smaller, more local level. March 4th was designated as its annual day of pilgrimage when pilgrims would flock to the site. Murrisk too represents pilgrimage on a local level. The Friary is the traditional starting point for the pilgrimage to the top of Croagh Patrick and this would certainly have been a suitable viewing point for relics associated with the saint. Books, bells and crosiers were, as Lucas (1986) points out, the standard accessories of a saint and were often preserved as relics. A significant amount of corporeal relics were also produced. These are human body parts, believed to be those of a particular saint, that are encased in a reliquary and used as objects of devotion. Teeth were, of course, the only corporeal relics that could usually be obtained from a saint during life, hence the value of tooth shrines such as *Fiacail Phádraig*. The *Fiacail Phádraig* is horseshoe shaped and has a crucifixion scene on the front. An inscription names the saints depicted as 'Benen, Brigida, Patric, Columcille and Brendan', although only four of the original five gilt figures now remain. Thomas de Bermingham of Athenry commissioned alterations to the shrine in the fourteenth century (Ó Floinn, 1994), although it dates from before this time (incidentally Thomas was a member of the same family as Basilia de Bermingham, wife of Jordan de Exeter who demanded that the Dominicans replace the Franciscans at Strade Friary, as explained in Chapter Four).



Plate 6.19: The *Fiacaíl Phádraig* or Shrine of Saint Patrick's Tooth (Photo reproduced courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland)

Bells of iron and bronze are associated with the early Christian church in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany. They were principally used as hand-bells to call the faithful to prayer. The Black Bell of Saint Patrick was also said to have been used by the Saint to banish demons from Croagh Patrick and has been dated to the period 600–900AD. It is made of iron with a coating of bronze, although this coating is now only partial. The Black Bell or *Cloch Dubh* was acquired by Sir William Wilde in 1840 for the collection of the Royal Irish Academy. He stated that if “wear and tear is a sign of age, this antique should claim our highest veneration” (Wilde, 1955, p. 102). At an earlier stage, the bell had belonged to the parish of Killoower, near Headford in County Galway, where it was believed to have been given to Saint Patrick by an angel. Folklore held that it was made of silver originally, but “by its contact with the demons on Croagh Patrick, when the apostle was expelling them thence it had turned black and become corroded” (O’Flaherty, 1846, p. 370).

The manufacture of pottery was a burgeoning industry in medieval Ireland with large amounts also being imported from abroad, especially England and France. Ceramic material is particularly durable and thus survives very well in the archaeological record. It is therefore a common find on excavations of medieval sites from the thirteenth century onwards. Two sherds of Saintonge pottery were discovered during the excavations in Strade Friary. The Saintonge area in south west France had strong trade links with Ireland in the thirteenth century. Indeed O’Keeffe (2000) comments that excavations of thirteenth century levels of Irish sites invariably yield Saintonge pottery. This ware was off-white or buff coloured and was often covered with a green glaze.

Cathedrals and monastic houses often featured tiled floors and by the fourteenth century in Britain, commercial tileries were producing large amounts of this material. Early examples of tiled floors in ecclesiastical settings in Ireland include Christchurch Cathedral and Graiguenamanagh Abbey. This fashion then spread to the mendicant friaries and parish churches of the Pale. Fanning (1989) outlines evidence of tile wasters and kilns from Kells Priory and Drogheda Dominican Friary. Graiguenamanagh is one of the few Irish locations where tiles survived *in situ*. Such survival is more widespread in England and France (Fanning, 1989).

A number of the artefacts associated with the friaries in this study are made of metal. Iron was most commonly used by medieval metalworkers and was used, for example, in the Black Bell of Saint Patrick. A variety of objects in late medieval Ireland were made from iron. O'Keeffe (2000) includes amongst these axes, knives, scissors, keys and locks. Although iron artefacts of a domestic nature have only been found at one case study site, namely Strade, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Furthermore, some of the finds from Strade may be of post-medieval date. Axes would inevitably have been used for carpentry purposes in the construction and furnishing of the friaries. Knives would have been used by the friars at mealtimes. Indeed the cook would have required a knife to gut the fish that the friars consumed and in the preparation of the meals generally. The friars would have used knives and spoons at table; forks were not in common usage in the fifteenth century. Keys and locks would inevitably have had their place in the friary, being necessary, among other things, to secure the friary buildings at night.

Wooden artefacts from late medieval ecclesiastical contexts have a poor rate of survival in Ireland. Friary churches would have had a number of wooden features including rood screens, doors (including those on aumbries), choir stalls and misericords. The choir stalls where the monks were accommodated during services were placed along the north and south walls of the chancel with one or more rows on each side, depending on the size of the community.

In addition to the late medieval artefacts associated with the friaries dealt with in this chapter, there are also artefacts which date to after the 1540 termination date of this study. As with the post-medieval pottery associated with Moyne Friary, these artefacts indicate continuity of settlement and use of these sites into the seventeenth century. The Viscount Mayo Chalice, for example, bears the following inscription:

*“Ora pro animab (us) Dni Theobaldi Vicecomitis Mayo et uxoris ejus Meow
ny Cnochoure qui me fieri fecerunt pro monasterio de Mureske. Ani Dni
1635”*

(Pray for the souls of Theobald Lord Viscount Mayo and his wife, Maud O'Conor, who caused me to be made for the monastery of Murrisk 1635).

The chalice was in fact commissioned in 1635 by Maud O'Conor in honour of her late husband, Theobald Burke (also known as Tibbott-ne-Long), a son of Granuaile. It

continued to be used by the friars at Murrisk into the eighteenth century (Chambers, 1983). A slightly later fabrication is the Murrisk Chalice, manufactured in Galway by Richard Joyce (Blake, 1928). Its inscription states that it was commissioned by an Augustinian named John de Burgo for the convent of Murrisk in 1648.

Antiquarianism and Romanticism

The eighteenth and nineteenth century taste for gothic ruins brought visitors back to the ruined monastic sites. Instead of churchgoers and pilgrims, the monasteries now attracted artists and antiquarians. Indeed the factors which had originally attracted the religious orders to rural sites once again became the major draw, namely the tranquillity and peace and isolation from the bustle of the world they offered. Poets such as William Wordsworth and artists such as J.M.W. Turner drew inspiration from such sites in their work, particularly the iconic ruins of Tintern Abbey in the Wye Valley. The Romantics were concerned by notions of the sublime and the picturesque, influenced by Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise *An Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. The large 'mouldering ruins' of sites such as Tintern Abbey, set in spacious landscapes, constituted the sublime element. The image might feature a person in the foreground, giving perspective and thus instilling the appropriate feelings of awe in the viewer.

The ruins themselves were not viewed as simply decaying, they were also considered to possess a life of their own. Many of these spaces were being reclaimed by trees, ivy had staked its claim on the walls. The buildings were thus being recolonised by nature, a concept that appealed to Romantic sensibilities. They were standing testaments to mutability and transience. This being the case, depictions of ruined monasteries did not always show the exterior of the building. Sometimes an interior view was depicted, for example Turner's 1794 *Interior of Tintern Abbey* and *The Dormitory and Transept of Fountains Abbey – Evening* painted c. 1798. Lacking a surrounding landscape to give scale, human figures and bushes are included in the former which is painted from a ground-level viewpoint, drawing the eye upwards and adding scale and grandeur to the ruins. Depicting a visitor or traveller amongst the ruins was a common feature at this time. For example, the depiction of Murrisk includes a human figure.

The study of Gothic ruins by antiquarians was indicative of a new acceptance and revival of the Gothic style in Europe. However, the antiquarians and travellers who undertook such studies were often of upper class English extraction or otherwise sufficiently non-Gaelic so as to further embed the association of the Gothic style with 'outsiders'. A glimpse at the backgrounds of the two foremost figures involved in Ireland's antiquarian studies, invariably those of the Gothic variety, is illustrative of origins that would do little to endear the Gothic style to Irish nationalists. Gabriel Beranger was a French Huguenot, while Grose's *Antiquities of Ireland* (1791) was compiled in the main by Francis Ledwich, vicar of Aghaboe, County Laois. Hourihane (2003) states that the Irish Gothic was considered to be in opposition to the nationalist movement in nineteenth century Ireland, which found its avenue of artistic expression in a revival of Celtic art. Naturally, this choice hearkened back to an era before Irish culture had been subject to the influence of invaders, as was the nationalist perception. Of course, the Celts themselves were not indigenous to Ireland and their art did have outside influences, but they were not English. Hence the term 'Celtic' was used by nationalists to embody that which was authentically Irish. The negative connotations of Gothic in the nationalist mind had been firmly cemented and no rehabilitation of it was in sight until well beyond the foundation of the state in 1922.

The antiquarians may have had quite an interest in the friary ruins, but the same was not necessarily true of those employed by the Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century. One officer complained, "I am constantly at my men about these matters...but many of them are Presbyterians from the north who care not for 'eremites and friars, white, black and grey with all their trumpery'" (cited in Andrews, 2001, p. 127).

The nature of travel writing about Ireland in the nineteenth century in addition to problems that can be associated with the use of such material were discussed in the Literature Review. A number of observations made by such writers about the case study sites have been integrated into the discussions about these site in the text above. These authors often tend to focus on the peaceful settings of the larger houses of Moyne and Rosserk and were often very taken with the standard of sculpture in Strade Friary. Murrisk and Burrishoole tended to receive less favourable reports, with some writers only viewing them in the distance, but not actually visiting.

Those travel writers who did visit Burrishoole include Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall in 1840, who were among the best known of all nineteenth century travel writers who visited Ireland. Like many late medieval friaries, Burrishoole had a large amount of bones scattered about it. The Halls recorded the tradition that the skull of Grace O'Malley, Granuaile, the Pirate Queen, was among those once preserved in Burrishoole Friary. According to legend, her bones, along with thousands of others, were shipped in secret and by night to Scotland to be ground into manure. The same fate was said to have been in store for the collection of bones that were formerly strewn about Moyne Abbey, but the schooner on which they were being transported sunk (Greer, 1918). One particular recess in Burrishoole Friary was drawn to the attention of the Halls, in which the assembled bones were believed to be those of the friars. The skulls therein were accorded special veneration and borrowed by the locals when a family member was sick. Milk was boiled in the skull "in which it is given to the sufferer, as an infallible cure; the skull, when the object is answered is carefully restored to the heap" (Hall and Hall, 1843, p. 390). As Mr and Mrs Hall examined the skulls, they noticed that several bore marks of fire and then observed a woman carrying a fragment of one away in her apron. She assured them that a draught prepared therein would "cure 'her poor babby'" (Hall and Hall, 1843, p. 390).

A photograph from the Wynne collection (Plate 6.20) shows a family seated in the south transept of Burrishoole where they are surrounded by a number of human bones, including skulls. Furthermore, *The Island of Saints* (Howard, 1855) shows the 1623 tomb in the transept of Burrishoole piled high with assorted human bones and others strewn about on the ground surrounding it (Figure 6.12). The use of human skulls for such medicinal purposes is not without parallel. For example, the skull of the blind harpist and composer Turlough O'Carolan (1670–1738) was believed to possess curative powers.

Beranger and Bigari's visit to Connacht in 1779 is explored by Harbison (2002). During the course of their visit, they stopped at each of the case study sites included

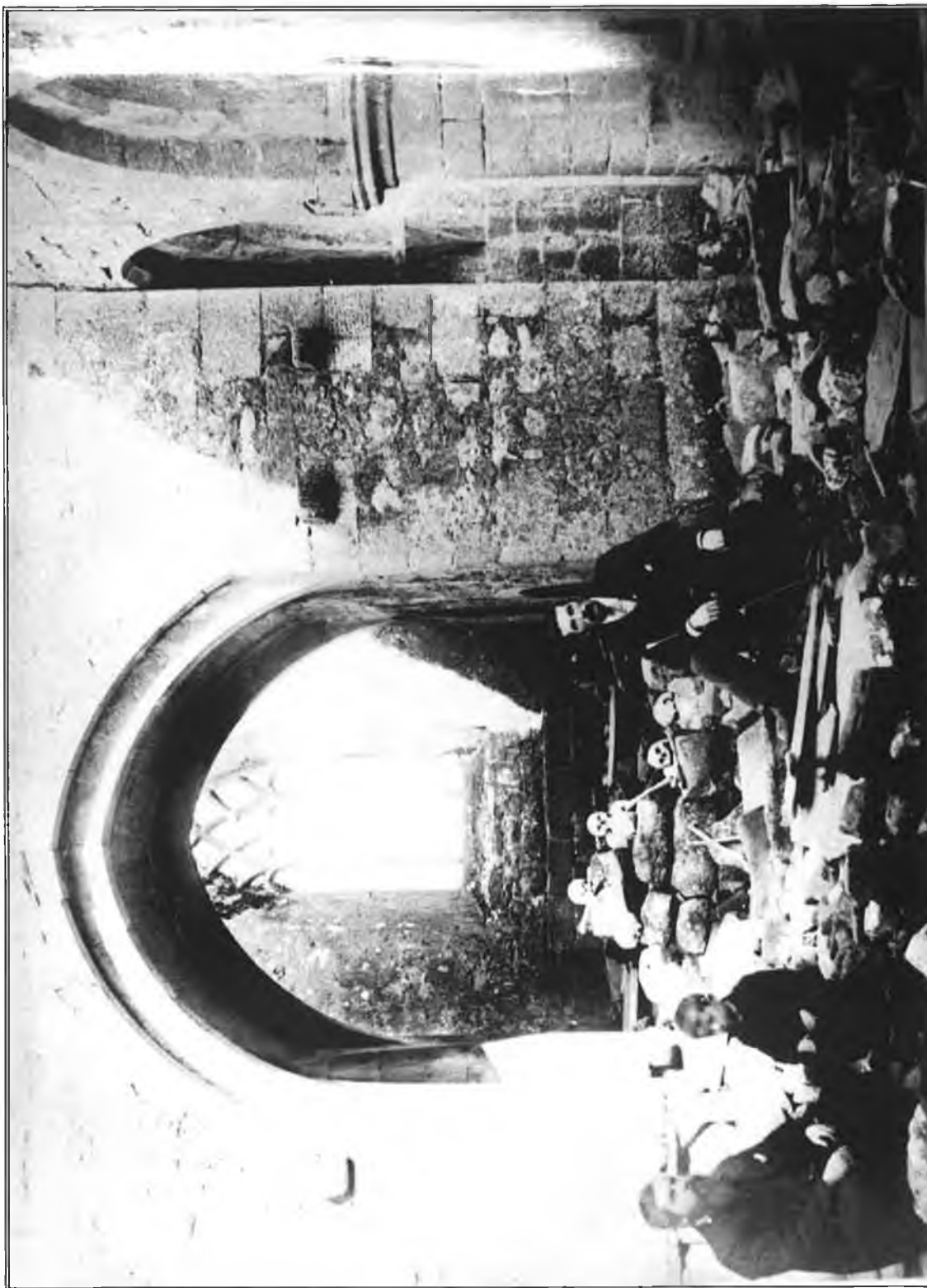


Plate 6.20: Photograph from the Wynne Collection showing bones collected in the south transept of Burrishoole Friary (reproduced with permission)

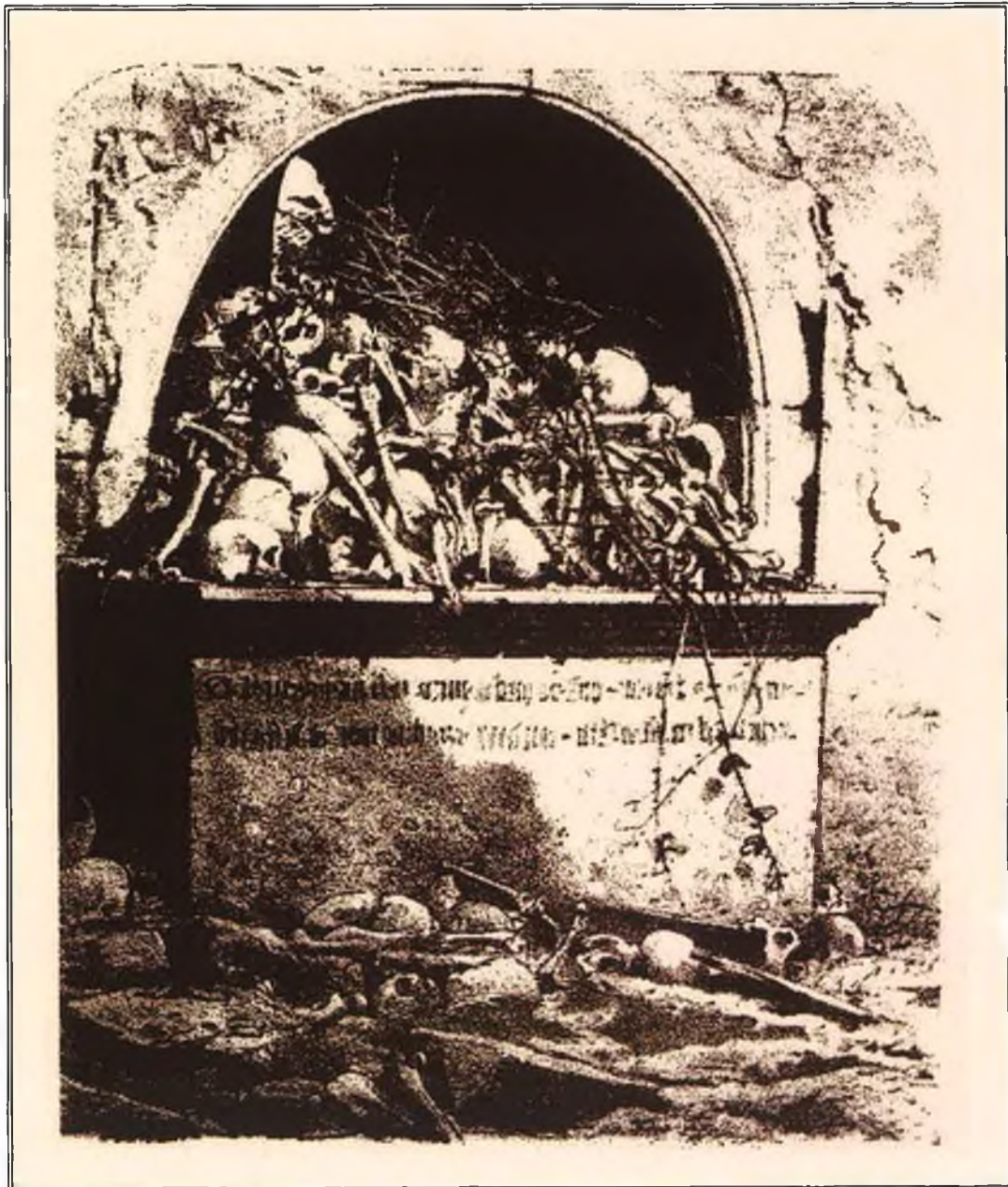


Figure 6.12: Nineteenth-century depiction of a collection of skulls around the 1623 tomb in the transept of Burrishoole Friary (Howard, 1855)

in this research. Sketches or engravings survive for each of these visits, with the exception of Moyne Friary of which no visual study has thus far come to light. Harbison uses Bigari's original engravings and Beranger's commentary and assesses these with reference to modern photographs. These photographs are taken from the same viewpoints as those from which the engravings and sketches were made. Murrisk friary featured in both an engraving and a watercolour, the former showing two men in discussion, standing amongst the ruins, in keeping with popular convention. Both views show the western aspect of the friary from the outside. The studies of the other friaries deal with interior areas. A plan of Murrisk was also drawn. Bigari's engraving of Rosserk was a view from the south end of the chapel, looking out towards the nave. The ruins are presented in a more advanced state of decay than is now the case with a large irregular gap in the masonry where now stands a doorway in the north wall of the nave. The tower is lacking its battlemented parapet and the west wall of the chapel stops short. Studies were also made of the west doorway and the south chapel window.

The engraving of Strade friary shows few of the actual friary features accurately, although it makes a reasonable record of the plan. The chancel arch appears the same, but few of the other features are recognisable as those there today. The tracery window is missing from near the chancel arch; instead an ogee-headed window is shown there. Similarly, the long lancet windows are not shown on the north side of the chancel, but rather a series of smaller windows. Part of the tower remains as well as a projection of the east wall of the north transept, which would once have been the north aisle arcade. A sketch was made of the left-hand side of the canopied tomb. The plan of the friary bears a mark showing the point from which it was drawn.

Melrose Abbey

For comparative purposes, it is worthwhile to look not only at stylistic evidence from Irish buildings but also those from further afield. This makes it possible to compare and contrast these buildings and assess the presence of common influences. By taking a building considered to represent the standard attributes of the time, it is possible to discern to what extent they were integrated into case study sites. This gives an insight into whether these sites were in tune with the main thrust of contemporary architecture.

Melrose Abbey was founded by Cistercian monks in the Borders area of southern Scotland. Originally built in the twelfth century, it was substantially renovated in the fifteenth century. Although larger and more opulent overall than the case study sites with which this research is concerned, many comparisons are evident on looking at the smaller details of the abbey. Its size and splendour are in keeping with those of other ecclesiastical sites in Britain at the time. Thus on the micro level, it shows how similar influences prevailed in the late medieval religious buildings in Ireland and Britain, yet on the macro level it emphasises how the two paths diverged. By comparing and contrasting this abbey with the case study sites, it becomes apparent how the late medieval Irish houses adopted small scale stylistic influences on features such as stoups and *piscinae* without adopting the expensive structural fashions. Most of the church is well preserved, with the exception of the nave, although partly roofless. As for the nave and domestic ranges, these remain only as the foundations; no cloister arcade is now in evidence.

Micro architecture, discussed in relation to Strade friary, is also evident in Melrose Abbey, for example in two *piscinae* in the south aisle. One has a canopy which is adorned with several lancet windows and a battlemented top. The other is flanked by small cluster columns, reflecting the architecture of the abbey itself on a micro-scale. It also features a low-relief carving of a reticulated tracery window, very similar in style to the east window in Rosserk. Conversely, the size of the abbey church is beyond anything seen at the case study sites. Not only does the former cover a greater area, but it also rises to a greater height than the mendicant friary churches. The same emphasises on verticality is not in evidence in the west of Ireland sites. It also features a greater use of the structural elements of the Gothic style, which are often lacking in the late medieval mendicant houses, large-scale rib vaults and flying buttress for example.

Conclusion

The three case study sites in question in this chapter are a diverse group, although they share many elements in common. While the churches survive reasonably well, only Burrishoole retains its tower, with those at Strade and Murrisk both having fallen. Survival of the domestic ranges is patchy. A small section exists at

Burrishoole, none at all now stand in Strade and a single range now stands in Murrisk. Whether this range constituted the entirety of Murrisk's conventual buildings is not clear, although logic dictates that a small community would only have needed a small domestic range. All three of these sites would have housed small communities, far less than in either Moyne or Rosserk where the conventual ranges are more extensive.

Architecturally, these friaries share features in common, although of course only a portion of Strade Friary dates from the late medieval period, thus not all of it is applicable for comparative purposes. Overall, Strade appears to be in tune with stylistic developments outside of the west of Ireland to a greater extent than either Murrisk or Burrishoole. This is evidenced in the iconographic and stylistic parallels between the Strade tomb and others in the south Leinster/east Munster region. The simplicity of design and sparseness of ornamentation in Burrishoole compare well with other similar late medieval mendicant houses of a small size in the west of Ireland. Other ornamentation may, however, have existed at all the case study sites which was either of a more ephemeral nature or was destroyed.

The case study sites discussed in this chapter are small in size, but in this are representative of the majority of later medieval Dominican and Augustinian houses in Ireland. While the Franciscans built large houses (by Irish standards) such as Moyne and Ross Errilly to accommodate in the region of 50 occupants, the Dominicans and Augustinians built smaller houses which may only have been intended to house between six and perhaps fifteen friars. Large domestic complexes of buildings were therefore not necessary. Strade is the oldest of the three sites considered in this chapter. Additions and renovations took place at Strade in the fifteenth century, whereas new buildings were constructed at Burrishoole and Murrisk at this time. No doubt, the latter ventures were more costly than the former, which could explain the paucity of ornamentation at them. Alternatively, this may be attributable to the fact that the ornamentation at the sites was not in the form of decorated stone but was of wood and has not survived. The fifteenth century tomb in Strade may, in fact, be but a taste of what was once there. The wooden choir stalls, for example, may well have borne carved decoration in keeping with the overall iconography of the friary.

Murrisk, Burrishoole and Strade illustrate the different ways in which a small friary can utilise the claustral plan, using elements of it while not perhaps embracing it in the wholehearted way evident in the larger houses. In the case of the smaller houses, a single range of domestic buildings may suffice rather than the three ranges of a larger house. Rooms in a smaller house may serve a number of functions rather than just one. Similarly, the friars themselves would each have filled a number of roles, as opposed to larger houses where the obedientaries were charged with a single role. The case study sites that form the focus of this chapter represent a foil to the houses discussed in Chapter Five in terms of size, but they also have share similarities. Carved heads, for example, occur at Burrishoole, Murrisk and Strade as well as Rosserk, but not at Moyne. At both Burrishoole and Murrisk, ornamentation, for example in terms of stone carving, is sparsely distributed and on a small scale. At Strade and Rosserk, stone carving, which is still mostly on a small scale, is more widespread and more intricate. Moyne is devoid of such figurative and foliate sculpture as occurs at Strade and Rosserk.

Across all five case study sites, and indeed fifteenth century mendicant houses generally, some features are widespread and indicative of the late Irish Gothic style. Switchline tracery windows often occur, especially at sites where ornamentation is simple or absent. Those sites with more elaborate decorative programmes, such as Strade and Rosserk, have cusped tracery windows with reticulated tracery windows featuring at the latter. Smaller windows tend to be of single or twin-light ogee-headed form, often with an external hood moulding, although some small tracery windows also occur. The Late Irish Gothic style is not one which exhibits a high degree of uniformity and this is evident at the case study sites, which each display a selection of features of this eclectic style. Thus while there are elements of difference between them, there are also common strands which link back to the larger thread of the Late Irish Gothic.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

The case study sites chosen for this research are illustrative of the architectural and archaeological diversity that exists among late medieval friaries in the west of Ireland. There are the two larger houses, showcasing the claustral plan with its central cloister, church and three ranges of domestic buildings. These houses accommodated large communities and fulfilled an educational role – Moyne as a novitiate house to train new friars and Rosserk as the home to friars who educated the local youths. Murrisk, Burrishoole and Strade are smaller foundations, designed to house fewer friars. Rosserk and Strade are the better ornamented of the five sites in terms of stone sculpture and have examples that compare well with those from other areas. Murrisk and Burrishoole have less such material, in common with many other sites at the time. The simplicity of style evident in Moyne Friary may well be a reflection of the austerity of the Observant rule. Conversely, these friaries have a number of features that distinguish them and contribute to their value as objects of study. The tomb frontal at Strade Friary, for example, includes a grouping of figures that is unique in an Irish context. Rosserk is the only Franciscan Third Order house to survive intact.

That such friaries as Moyne and Rosserk were built following (with some variation) a standard plan, helps refute the popularly held notion that medieval society was one lacking order and rules. Such stereotypical views of medieval society are explored by Harvey (2003). It may be less a case that rules were absent from medieval society and more that medieval people lived to a different set of standards than the modern authors who criticise them. In any case, the medieval religious orders could hardly be said to be lacking in rules. Each order followed a particular rule, sometimes formulated by the founder. In some instances, the observance of these rules lapsed, however the Observant reform in the mendicant orders witnessed the adherence to these rules being approached with renewed vigour and austerity.

Henry VIII and his officials realised that the tactics they had employed in England to propagate the Reformation would not be efficacious in Ireland. The justification for the supremacy was set out in political rather than religious terms, for example. The ultimate failure of the Reformation to take a firm grip in Ireland cannot be attributed to the choice of tactics adopted. Nor can it be blamed, as some would have us believe, on the inherent propensity of the majority in Ireland to resist Protestantism or in the words of Dudley Edwards (cited in Jeffries, 2001, p. 217), the ‘fundamentally

Catholic disposition of the Irish people'. A number of factors were ultimately responsible for the failure of the Henrician Reformation. The lack of an effective mechanism of enforcement meant that many areas of the country remained untouched by its effects, indeed much of the country existed with little deference to the Crown in any instance. The lack of success of the Reformation is also due in part to the influence of the mendicant friars, especially the Observants. Their zeal reformed many practices within the Irish church, leaving it revived and strengthened and better able to face the onslaught of Henry VIII's brand of Protestantism.

Hourihane (2003, p. 31) notes that "In the battle between British colonialism and Irish nationalism that was fought on many levels in Ireland from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, one of the casualties was an interest in and appreciation of the Gothic period". Conversely, the study of the art of the so-called pre-invasion thrived, becoming a staple of the Celtic Revival. Of course, all fledgling states and groups desirous of creating such states attempt to forge a national identity and often use art as a means to do this. In any country, this process involves focusing on those elements thought to embody national identity and jettisoning those associated with the outsider. This was the case in Ireland where the collection of elements selected to constitute a national identity did not include Gothic art or later medieval history, perceived as being representative of the invader. This illustrates how, in the words of Shanks (1995, p. 170) "history is both the past and its retelling". That which we now know as the history of Ireland is the product of this history itself but also its retelling and its reconstruction to suit political ends.

As outlined in this study, the neglect of the late medieval period and Gothic art in Ireland is gradually being redressed by scholars. Another significant step was the opening in 2001 of a permanent exhibition, *Medieval Ireland 1150–1550: Power Work Prayer*, in the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street. Together with *Viking Ireland*, this exhibition sits alongside those elements thought traditionally to represent Irishness – the fine metalwork of the *Treasury*, the various products of Celtic influence and an exhibition chronicling the struggle for Irish independence. This is indicative of a growing trend towards recognition of pluralist senses of Irish identity described by McCarthy (2005).

Champneys (1910) outlines the impression of reticence created in the Late Irish Gothic with its sparing use of ornamentation, which then becomes striking when set against plain work. He contrasts this with a tendency evident in some late English work to crowd all available space with ornament, sometimes of dubious quality. Sparing and often random and unsymmetrical usage of ornamentation characterises late Irish Gothic art and was in evidence in the case study sites examined as part of the fieldwork and survey associated with this research. The placement and iconography of stone sculpture were found to be uneven and unpredictable. The only exception to this was the more concerted fifteenth century artistic programme in evidence in Strade Friary. The eclectic range of ornamentation encountered in this study seems to exemplify the eclecticism that characterises all aspects of the architecture of Late Irish Gothic houses in the west of Ireland. It is this assortment of influences that make it difficult to date buildings or parts thereof with precision in the absence of documentary evidence. However, this variety rarely goes so far as to produce “a mere hotch-potch without artistic harmony” (Mooney, 1957b, p. 104).

It is surely ironic that while the English powers of the later medieval period viewed the Irish with contempt for their inferiority and not fitting with the perceived ideal of Englishness, some Irish nationalists of the nineteenth century should shroud this part of the past for being too tainted by Englishness. Bloch (1993) notes that much that is written about the Middle Ages is as historically determined by the perceptions of the nineteenth century as it is by the artefacts of the medievalist’s study. This remark, which was made in reference to the medieval period in general, has particular resonance with regard to the Irish situation where nineteenth century notions continue to influence popular perceptions of the medieval period. Indeed in 2003 in Britain the Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke, dismissed the study of the medieval period as unworthy of state funding and tolerable merely “for ornamental purposes” (McKeon, 2003, p. 16).

The very notion of a distinction between Gaelic and non-Gaelic society in medieval Ireland has been dismissed as “a bit of inherited old rope which has nothing to contribute to Irish medieval studies, methodologically or otherwise” (Mac Niocaill, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 163). Certainly, the dichotomy that had once been apparent had become less divergent as the Middle Ages wore on. The area over which the

English exercised effective control shrank, as those who had once been Anglo-Normans became Anglo-Irish. The processes of acculturation and assimilation worked both ways as the Anglo-Normans also culturally influenced the Gaelic Irish. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that there also existed in late medieval Ireland an area in which the English still held authority and exercised considerable influence. Hence the Pale was politically and culturally linked to England, a situation manifest in the different forms of religious patronage adopted there and in Gaelicised Ireland. Both were also subject to different artistic influences. Rather than ascribing dominance to either side, MacNeill (2005) instead refers to a process of cultural fusion between the English and Irish, a process he believes is exemplified in the Late Irish Gothic style. The archaeological evidence for this fusion has, he believes, been obscured by documentary evidence suggesting conflict.

Kineally (2004) states that in the late fifteenth century, Ireland was too poor and culturally remote to participate in the artistic and architectural changes evident in Europe, namely the Renaissance. This comment overlooks the nature of artistic and architectural endeavour in Ireland in the fifteenth century. Although stylistically fifteenth century Ireland was not following the route of European developments, there was a considerable degree of involvement in patronage of religious art and architecture amongst those with the means to do so, both in Gaelicised Ireland and the Pale. Furthermore, in the late fifteenth century Ireland was strongly influenced by the Observant reform of the mendicant orders, a reform emanating from continental sources. Whilst Gaelic Ireland was not in the main participating in the Renaissance then beginning on the continent, it was, however, experiencing what Richter (1985) terms a 'Gaelic Renaissance'.

The medieval period has traditionally suffered from being sandwiched between two periods considered by archaeologists and historians as more worthy of study. This is a phenomenon experienced both in Ireland and abroad. In Ireland, the later Middle Ages have been designated as a hinge, which in MacNeill's (1997) view, has not received the attention afforded to either the early historic period or post-medieval. On the broader European scale, Briggs (2000) acknowledges a similar phenomenon whereby he believes the Middle Ages have a minor role as either prehistory or postscript. While progress has been made with regard to the advancement of medieval

studies, as outlined in the literature review, the task is not yet complete. The fifteenth century is still in need of attention having developed into a hinge (to use MacNeill's terminology) within the medieval period.

Rowley (1988) comments on the uneasy attitude many historians have towards the fifteenth century. In Ireland, it is often viewed as an awkward interval between the fourteenth century with the Black Death and Bruce Invasion on one hand and the sixteenth century with the Henrician and Elizabethan reigns on the other. The documentary evidence for the fifteenth century in Britain is less satisfactory than that for the century on either side, hence it is portrayed as a century of decline. To support this view Rowley (1988, p. 30) cites J.R. Lander's assessment:

“The waning of the Middle Ages is a mesmeric concept which has for long dominated the probes of historians so fascinated by an imagined morphology of decay that one of them has even endowed the century with a collective death wish. At best amid its supposed violent chaos, feeble institutions, economic decline and the macabre details of its *memento mori*, some few hopeful signs can be detected of transition to the modern world and the modern state”.

The rural location of the late medieval mendicant friaries assisted in their survival. Not only did it allow them to evade the gaze of the Henrician Dissolution by virtue of being outside the English government's locus of control, it also meant that they remained largely undisturbed once they were finally abandoned. They did not experience the same pressures that came to bear on urban friaries, which could be demolished in whole or in part, or rebuilt in a new style. Yarwood (1976) discusses the fate of the Cistercian houses in Britain, which due to their remoteness fell into ruin but escaped substantial rebuilding. Hence the importance of the late medieval friaries is two-fold. Firstly, they provide some comparative evidence for the earlier urban friaries, whose survival has been hindered in the archaeological record. They are also unusual by virtue of their rural situation, a choice that was out of line with the mainstream of European friaries.

This study has drawn upon the disciplines of history, archaeology and architectural history in order to present an investigation of the role and impact of the mendicant friaries in County Mayo in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The adoption of such a multi-disciplinary perspective facilitates the creation of a more detailed and

coherent account than might otherwise be possible by virtue of the broad range of evidence that can be marshalled in this way. Simply calling on one of these disciplines in isolation would not be sufficient to probe the multifaceted nature of the evidence concerning these friaries. The fieldwork carried out as part of this research found that these friaries exemplified many of the features of the later Irish Gothic style, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six. They also display the other more unusual features. By virtue of its multidisciplinary approach and choice of the five case-study sites, this study has broken new ground in Irish medieval studies. The comparative dimension contained herein is particularly valuable as an indication of how these friaries fit with the main thrust of developments in late medieval Ireland and Europe. In the course of this study, the importance of the late medieval mendicant friaries in terms of their spiritual and social roles and the buildings they left behind has been highlighted. These friaries also represent a positive counterbalance to the declining standards of some religious orders in Ireland at the time and illustrate that later medieval Ireland should not be characterised wholly in terms of decline. The mendicant friaries of late medieval Mayo are exemplars of a movement that is of significance in Ireland and beyond.

Appendix A: **Architectural Surveys**

Burrishoole Architectural Survey

Name of building	Burrishoole Friary/Saint Mary's Priory
Townland	Carrowkeel
Barony	Burrishoole
National Grid Reference	9669/29545
OS 1:50,000 Map Number	31
Six Inch Sheet Number	67
Date Surveyed	7 September 2004
Order	Dominican
Construction materials	Limestone
Approximate date of construction	c.1469
National Monument Number	MA067-014---
Name by which the building is commonly known	Burrishoole Abbey

Classification	Doorway 1
Motif	None
Height	1.97m
Width	1.03m
Depth	1.35m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	West doorway

Classification	Stoup
Motif	None
Height	0.86m
Width	0.42m
Depth	0.19m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Tall free-standing stoup situated to the left of the inside of the west doorway

Classification	Recess
Motif	None
Height	0.76m
Width	0.42m
Depth	0.19m

Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Recess in south wall of the nave

Classification	Stoup
Motif	None
Height	0.36m
Width	0.34m
Depth	0.29m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Wall-mounted stoup on south wall of transept

Classification	Arch 1
Motif	None
Height	3.56m
Width	2.21m
Depth	0.88m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Arch is part of arcade separating the nave from the transept. Is topped by a pointed arch

Classification	Arch 2
Motif	None
Height	3.56m
Width	2.29m
Depth	0.88m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Arch is part of arcade separating the nave from the transept. Is topped by a pointed arch

Classification	Gun loops
Motif	None
Height	0.42m
Width	1.27m
Depth	0.96m
Date	16 th Century alteration to a wall originally built in the 15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Recess containing two openings that appear to be gun loops added to the west wall of the transept in 1580 when the friary was garrisoned by the forces of Sir Nicholas Malbie.

Classification	Window 1
Motif	None
Height	4.09m

Width	2.02m
Depth	0.70m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Tracery window in the south wall of the transept

Classification	Aumbry
Motif	None
Height	0.51m
Width	0.45m
Depth	0.70m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Aumbry to the left of the tracery window in the south wall of the transept

Classification	Piscina
Motif	None
Height	0.78m
Width	0.52m
Depth	0.49m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Piscina to the aumbry on the south wall of the transept

Classification	Window 2
Motif	None
Height	1.14m
Width	1.01m
Depth	0.38m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Window set in an arch that extends to floor level, partly obscured by the 1623 tomb below it

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	1.14m
Width	1.98m
Depth	1.13m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Round-headed archway that accommodates a twin-light window and a tomb dating from 1623. Originally housed Window 2.

Classification	Window 3
Motif	None
Height	1.55m

Width	1.01m
Depth	0.31m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Window set in an arch that extends to floor level

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	2.91m
Width	2.41m
Depth	1.04m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 2)
Condition	Good
Description	Round-headed archway that accommodates a twin-light window

Classification	Doorway 2
Motif	None
Height	1.69m
Width	0.64m
Depth	0.24m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 3)
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed arch leading into passage connecting crossing with transept

Classification	Doorway3
Motif	None
Height	1.55m
Width	0.95m
Depth	0.95m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 3)
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed arch leading to belfry staircase

Classification	Window 4
Motif	None
Height	1.98m
Width	0.95m
Depth	0.69m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light ogee-headed window

Classification	Window 5
Motif	None
Height	1.82m
Width	0.93m
Depth	0.72m

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light ogee-headed window with piscina underneath in south wall of chancel

Classification	Piscina
Motif	None
Height	0.76m
Width	0.62m
Depth	0.37m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Piscina situated under single-light ogee-headed window in south wall of chancel

Classification	Aumbry
Motif	None
Height	0.36m
Width	0.42m
Depth	0.35m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Square aumbry located in south wall of chancel

Classification	Window 6
Motif	Head carving on outside
Height	–
Width	2.08m
Depth	0.84m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	East window with switchline tracery

Classification	Altar
Motif	None
Height	0.97m
Width	2.80m
Depth	1.05m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Box-shaped cut-stone altar

Classification	Doorway 4
Motif	None
Height	2.40m
Width	1.82m
Depth	0.81m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)

The Mendicant Friaries in Late Medieval Mayo

Condition	Good
Description	Round-headed door in north wall of chancel

Classification	Doorway 5
Motif	None
Height	1.58m
Width	0.74m
Depth	0.22m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1) (blocked up at a later date possibly during fortification of the friary)
Condition	Poor
Description	Doorway in the north wall of the chancel, now blocked up

Classification	Window 7
Motif	None
Height	2.20m
Width	1.35m
Depth	0.70m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 3)
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light ogee-headed window on the north wall of the crossing

Classification	Doorway 6
Motif	None
Height	1.57m
Width	0.64m
Depth	0.22m
Date	15 th Century (Phase 1)
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed head in the north wall of the nave

Inventory of Sculpture in Burrishoole Friary

Exterior

Chancel

1. Carved face at apex of east window

Transept

2. Carved face on west wall of south transept

Moyne Architectural Survey

Name of building	Moyne Friary
Townland	Abbeylands
Barony	Tirawley
National Grid Reference	12324/32873
OS 1:50,000 Map Number	24
Six Inch Sheet Number	22
Date Surveyed	20 August 2004, 9 September 2004
Order	Franciscan First Order
Construction materials	Limestone
Approximate date of construction	1455
National Monument Number	MA022-024---
Name by which the building is commonly known	Moyne Abbey

Classification	Doorway 1
Motif	Obscured during to weather damage
Height	1.79m
Width	1.31m
Depth	0.27m
Date	16 th Century
Condition	Good, some damage to feature over centre of door, mainly due to weathering
Description	West doorway is a Renaissance insertion into the building

Classification	Window 1
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	–
Depth	–
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Switchline tracery window with three lights and a hood moulding with label stops.

Classification	Window 2
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.10m
Depth	–
Date	15 th Century

Condition	Appears not to have a hood moulding, although a weathered-looking lintel extends from the wall a short distance above the window.
Description	Triple-light window with pointed lights, the central light being slightly higher than the ones on either side, located on the west side of the western chapel.

Classification	Window 3
Motif	None
Height	1.92m
Width	1.43m
Depth	0.65m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window in the south wall of the western chapel

Classification	Window 4
Motif	None
Height	1.89m
Width	1.36m
Depth	0.59m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window in the south wall of the western chapel

Classification	Window 5
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.92m
Depth	0.75m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Tracery window in south wall of transept. Switchline tracery with four lights and a cusped section at the apex

Classification	Piscina 1
Motif	None
Height	0.74m
Width	0.50m
Depth	0.46m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to the vertical column
Description	Twin-arched piscina on east side of transept. Has a chamfered intrados with chamfer.

Classification	Arch
Motif	None

Height	3.59m
Width	3.21m
Depth	1.37m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Round-headed arch encompassing twin-light window with a piscina on its left side, located to the south of the secretarium on the east wall of the transept

Classification	Window 6
Motif	None
Height	1.73m
Width	0.93m
Depth	0.22m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light window with pointed lights on east side of transept

Classification	Window 7
Motif	None
Height	0.30m
Width	0.37m
Depth	0.37m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Small square window on south side of secretarium

Classification	Doorway 2
Motif	None
Height	1.36m
Width	0.55m
Depth	0.26m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Door with pointed Gothic arch leading in to secretarium

Classification	Piscina 2
Motif	None
Height	0.74m
Width	0.51m
Depth	0.46m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-arched piscina on east side of transept to the north of the secretarium

Classification	Arch
Motif	None

Height	3.58m
Width	3.19m
Depth	1.36m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Round-headed arch encompassing triple-light window with a piscina on its left side, located to the north of the secretarium on the east wall of the transept

Classification	Window 8
Motif	None
Height	2.29m
Width	1.64m
Depth	0.19m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Triple-light window with pointed lights, the central light being slightly higher than the ones on either side, located on the east side of the transept

Classification	Aumbry
Motif	None
Height	0.55m
Width	0.44m
Depth	0.43m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Square recess to the left of the archway on the north side of the secretarium

Classification	Doorway 3
Motif	None
Height	1.72m
Width	0.70m
Depth	0.23m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Damage to the intrados on the west side of the door
Description	Doorway with pointed arch leading to passageway which formerly opened into the crossing below the belfry. Chamfered intrados with chamfer stops. The passage it leads into is now a dead-end as the other end of it has been blocked up by a headstone

Classification	Doorway 4
Motif	None
Height	1.92m
Width	0.89m
Depth	—
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Doorway now blocked up

Description	Doorway formerly served as a link between the crossing and the transept, the two being connected by a short passage. Now blocked up by a headstone
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Classification	Doorway 5
Motif	None
Height	2.08m
Width	0.77m
Depth	0.33m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway to staircase leading up the belfry tower. Has a pointed Gothic arch and is chamfered.

Classification	Window 9
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.92m
Depth	0.72m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window on south wall of chancel

Classification	Window 10
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.87m
Depth	0.79m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window on south wall of chancel

Classification	Window 11
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.00m
Depth	0.70m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light switchline tracery window on south wall of chancel. Set beneath a flat arch.

Classification	Niche
Motif	None
Height	1.10m
Width	1.55m
Depth	0.40m
Date	15 th Century

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Condition	Good
Description	Niche under twin-light round-headed window on south wall of chancel

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	4.02m
Width	2.15m
Depth	0.90m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Flat-topped arch connecting the chancel with the eastern chapel

Classification	Carved Stone 1
Reuse	None
Motif	Carved letter 'D'
Height	0.21m
Width	0.24m
Depth	0.03m
Date	15 th /16 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Stone set into the west wall of the eastern chapel, has the letter 'D' carved on it. Believed to signify the presence of O'Dowd family burials in the chapel.

Classification	Window 12
Motif	None
Height	1.89m
Width	1.51m
Depth	0.49m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window in the west wall of the eastern chapel

Classification	Window 13
Motif	None
Height	3.52m
Width	1.52m
Depth	0.57m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Switchline tracery window with two lights in the south wall of the eastern chapel.

Classification	Recess
Motif	None
Height	0.92m

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Width	0.94m
Depth	0.33m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Square recess to the left of the tracery window in the south wall of the eastern chapel

Classification	Window 14
Motif	None
Height	1.95m
Width	1.55m
Depth	0.54m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window on the east wall of the eastern chapel

Classification	Carved Stone 2
Reuse	None
Motif	Carved letter 'B'
Height	0.22m
Width	0.24m
Depth	0.03m
Date	15 th /16 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Stone set into the east wall of the eastern chapel, has the letter 'B' carved on it. Lies directly opposite Carved Stone 1. Believed to signify the presence of Barret family burials in the chapel.

Classification	Piscina 3
Motif	None
Height	0.42m
Width	0.43m
Depth	0.30m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Square piscina with drain hole situated in east wall of the eastern chapel

Classification	Recess
Motif	None
Height	0.52m
Width	1.29m
Depth	0.34m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Low rectangular recess at floor-level in east wall of the eastern chapel

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Classification	Piscina 4
Motif	None
Height	0.45m
Width	0.44m
Depth	0.69m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Piscina located on the east side of the arch leading to the eastern chapel.

Classification	East window – Window 15
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	3.12m
Depth	0.49m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	East window with switchline tracery. With its four lights and cusped ornament at the apex, it is of the same design as the south-facing window in the transept.

Classification	Doorway 6
Motif	None
Height	1.77m
Width	0.89m
Depth	0.28m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed gothic arch leading into the sacristy from the north wall of the chancel. Has a chamfered intrados with chamfer stops. On right side of stoup.

Classification	Stoup
Motif	None
Height	0.43m
Width	0.38m
Depth	0.35m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Wall-mounted stoup between two doorways on north wall of chancel. The bowl is circular in shape on the inside but is octagonal on the outside at the top and narrows to a point at the base. Has a slight recess directly above it.

Classification	Doorway 7
Motif	None
Height	1.71m
Width	1.02m
Depth	0.25m

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Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed gothic arch leading into the sacristy from the north wall of the chancel. Has a chamfered intrados with chamfer stops. On left side of stoup.

Classification	Doorway 8
Motif	None
Height	1.72m
Width	0.79m
Depth	0.24m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed Gothic arch leading from crossing into south side of cloister ambulatory

Classification	Recess
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.33m (at widest point)
Depth	0.35m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Wide and shallow recess on the north wall of the nave. Its function is unclear

Classification	Niche
Motif	None
Height	1.52m
Width	0.81m
Depth	0.26m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Semi-cylindrical recess in north wall of the nave. It is likely that this niche once held a statue.

Inventory of Sculpture in Moyne Friary

Interior

Nave

1. Ship incised in plaster on north side of west doorway
2. Ship incised in plaster on south side of west doorway
3. Ship incised in plaster on south side of west doorway
4. Ship incised in plaster on south side of west doorway

Eastern Chapel

5. Stone set into the east wall of the eastern chapel; has the letter 'B' carved on it.
6. Stone set into the west wall of the eastern chapel; has the letter 'D' carved on it.

Murrisk Architectural Survey

Name of building	Murrisk Friary
Townland	Carrowkeel
Barony	Murrisk
National Grid Reference	9195/28263
OS 1:50,000 Map Number	30 & 31
Six Inch Sheet Number	87
Date Surveyed	10 August 2004
Order	Augustinian Friars
Construction materials	Limestone
Approximate date of construction	1456
National Monument Number	MA087-031---
Name by which the building is commonly known	Murrisk Abbey

Classification	Doorway 1
Motif	None
Height	1.63m
Width	0.70m
Depth	0.65m
Date	Insertion, probably post-medieval
Condition	Good
Description	Flat-topped doorway

Classification	Doorway 2
Motif	None
Height	1.67m
Width	0.72m
Depth	0.26m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Doorway with pointed arch and chamfered edges in south wall of church.

Classification	Window 1
Motif	None
Height	1.74m
Width	1.49m
Depth	0.83m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good

Description	Twin-light ogee-headed window under a flat arch in south wall of church. Has a simple hood moulding on the outside which ends in points rather than a label stop.
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Classification	Window 2
Motif	None
Height	2.04m
Width	1.85m
Depth	0.75m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light ogee window under a round arch in south wall of church. The hood-moulding on exterior of this window is the most elaborate on any window in the friary

Classification	Window 3
Motif	None
Height	2.34m
Width	2.00m
Depth	0.89m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light cusped ogee-headed window under a round arch in south wall of church. Has a hood moulding on the outside, which finishes in a point on each side

Classification	Niche
Motif	None
Height	1.22m
Width	0.83m
Depth	0.67m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Niche below Window 3 on south wall of church

Classification	Window 4
Motif	None
Height	2.29m
Width	1.95m
Depth	0.92m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light cusped ogee-headed window under a round arch in south wall of church. Has a hood moulding on the outside, which finishes in a point on each side.

Classification	Niche
Motif	None
Height	0.43m

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Width	0.50m
Depth	0.36m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Square niche on south wall of church, below Window 4.

Classification	East Window – Window 5
Motif	None
Height	--
Width	2.44m
Depth	0.71m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Switchline tracery east window with five lights

Classification	Altar
Reuse	None
Height	1.07m
Width	3.13m
Depth	1.08m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to moulding around the upper edge of the altar
Description	Box-shaped altar with chamfered mensa, located under the east window

Classification	Door 3
Motif	None
Height	1.65m
Width	0.13m
Depth	0.25m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to intrados of arch
Description	Doorway with pointed Gothic arch leading from north side of church to passage connecting to sacristy. Has chamfered edges.

Classification	Stoup
Motif	Possible foliate motif, now unclear on wall just above stoup
Height	0.60m
Width	0.31m
Depth	0.34m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to intrados of arch above stoup in addition to damage to its bowl.
Description	Stoup on north wall of church to left of doorway leading to sacristy

Classification	Window 6
Motif	None

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Height	1.93m
Width	1.19m
Depth	0.70m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Single-light ogee-headed window on north wall of church.

Inventory of Sculpture in Murrisk Friary

Interior

Church

1. Stoup on north side, near east window has faded foliate ornament on the wall above it

Exterior

Church

2. Window No.3 has a carved head to the left of it
3. Carved head to left-hand side of east window
4. Possible carved head to right-hand side of east window

Conventual buildings

5. Motif on right-hand side of Chapter room window No.1, label stop appears to have a knot in the end of it which finishes in a foliate motif

Architectural Survey of Rosserk Friary

Name of building	Rosserk Friary
Townland	Rosserk
Barony	Tirawley
National Grid Reference	12532/32592
OS 1:50,000 Map Number	24
Six Inch Sheet Number	22
Date Surveyed	9 July 2004, 8 August 2004, 9 August 2004
Order	Franciscan Third Order
Construction materials	Limestone
Approximate date of construction	1441
National Monument Number	MA022-082---
Name by which the building is commonly known	Rosserk Abbey

Classification	Doorway 1
Motif	Foliate motifs low down on both side of the entrance
Height	2.10m
Width	1.21m
Depth	0.97m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good, although some of the motifs have faded over time
Description	West doorway with pointed arch; has pinnacles on each side with crockets along the arch. Has two motifs on the south side at ground level on the inner and outer order, same also on north side but much fainter. The clearest example is on the south side on the other order, which consists of a pair of flowers with stems trailing away from them.

Classification	Window 1
Motif	None
Height	-
Width	-
Depth	-
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	West window, two-light switchline tracery window with hood-moulding.

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	-
Width	3.31m
Depth	1.54m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Arch separating nave and transept, has half octagonal columns and is round headed

Classification	Window 2
Motif	Internal: Angel on LHS at bottom of moulding, Interlace motif on RHS at bottom of moulding. External: Carving of a hooded head, possibly that of a friar at apex of hood moulding
Height	2.00m
Width	-
Depth	-
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	South facing transept window. Triple light tracery with cusps, featuring dagger and mouchette forms. Has a hood moulding with pointed ends.

Classification	Piscina 1
Motif	None
Height	0.70m
Width	0.90m
Depth	0.62m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin arched piscina with drain hole located to the south of the secretarium. Arches are chamfered.

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	3.39m
Width	3.01m
Depth	1.54m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Round-headed arch encompassing cusped window with twin-arched piscina to its right on east wall of transept. Located to the south of the secretarium.

Classification	Window 3
Motif	None
Height	2.09m

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Width	1.20m
Depth	0.41m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Cusped tracery window with two-lights. On the exterior has a hood moulding with label stops.

Classification	Window 4
Motif	None
Height	0.36m
Width	0.28m
Depth	0.37m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Small square window of secretarium

Classification	Doorway 2
Motif	None
Height	1.60m
Width	0.66m
Depth	0.38m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Door with pointed arch leading into secretarium, has chamfered edges with a chamfer stop on each side

Classification	Piscina 2
Motif	None
Height	0.83m
Width	0.63m
Depth	0.41m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Twin arched piscina with drain hole to the north of the secretarium. Arches are chamfered.

Classification	Arch
Motif	None
Height	3.64m
Width	3.16m
Depth	1.54m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Round-headed arch encompassing twin-light window with twin-arched piscina to its right on east wall of transept, also has a niche on its left side. Situated to the north of the secretarium.

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Classification	Window 5
Motif	None
Height	2.01m
Width	1.90m
Depth	0.40m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window with hood moulding externally, which has no label, stops but ends in a point on each side.

Classification	Niche
Motif	None
Height	0.35m
Width	0.39m
Depth	0.29m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Small niche located on LHS of arch encompassing window

Classification	Doorway 3
Motif	Has a motif in place of a chamfer stop on both sides of its south face, the one on the western side of it is clearer than that on the east which is barely visible.
Height	1.77m
Width	0.75m
Depth	0.49m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Doorway leading from transept to crossing. Pointed Gothic arch with chamfered intrados.

Classification	Window 6
Motif	None
Height	--
Width	1.66m
Depth	--
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Twin-light round-headed window in south wall of chancel

Classification	Window 7
Motif	None
Height	2.40m
Width	1.65m
Depth	--
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Twin-light ogee-headed window with cusps and hood moulding

	located over piscina on south wall of chancel
Classification	Piscina 3
Motif	None
Height	2.05m
Width	1.35m
Depth	0.88m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to the mouldings around the top and sides of the piscina. There is evidence of repairs to the vaulting.
Description	Piscina with two adjacent Gothic arches. The right arch has an angel carved in each spandrel and there is a griffin-like animal carved on the exterior of the west side. The angle on the west side has a herringbone pattern on his wings, with circular details on his collar and cuffs. He carries nails in his hand. The angel on the east side has circular details on the neck of his garment and at the edges of his cloak. He carries a hammer. Both the hammer and nails are two of the symbols of the Passion. Inside on the west side there are two foliate carvings. On the eastern capital there is a carving of a round-tower. Each arch has an oculus opening in the back of it. The two sections of the piscina are roofed using the same rib-vaulting technique employed under the tower crossing but on a much smaller scale.

Classification	East window – Window 8
Motif	Carved head at label stop on either side of hood moulding. The example on the east appears to be dressed in ecclesiastical garb, while the example on the right appears to be female. She wears an elaborate headdress with a veil descending on both sides of her head. The carving has a circular detail to represent a brooch, just below the neckline of her garment.
Height	--
Width	3.07m
Depth	--
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some of the cusps are damaged.
Description	East window with four lights and cusped tracery featuring dagger and mouchette forms. Externally it has a carved head at the label stop at each end of the hood moulding.

Classification	Altar
Motif	None
Height	1.04m
Width	2.83m
Depth	0.94m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to mounding around the upper edge, broken in several places.
Description	Main altar of the church, placed under East window, is of a box-

	like shape
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Classification	Arched recess
Motif	None
Height	2.27m
Width	2.25m
Depth	0.54m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Horizontal ledge is broken, also the stonework beneath it on either end gives the appearance that this feature was altered or never quite finished.
Description	Recess with a rounded arch situated on north wall of chancel, has what appears to be a ledge running horizontally across the back of it. May have been used as an Easter sepulchre.

Classification	Stoup
Motif	None
Height	0.33m
Width	0.25m
Depth	0.20m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to the front of the 'bowl' section.
Description	Stoup located on north wall of chancel. Com posed of two parts, the lower 'bowl' section which narrows to a pointed end and a small shelf-like rectangular recess above this.

Classification	Doorway 4
Motif	None
Height	1.61m
Width	0.68m
Depth	0.21m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Chamfer at bottom of arch on west side is broken
Description	Doorway with pointed Gothic arch leading from chancel into sacristy

Classification	Window 9
Motif	None
Height	0.32m
Width	0.31m
Depth	0.80m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Small, square window situated above doorway in north wall of chancel

Classification	Window 10
Motif	None
Height	1.86m

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Width	0.85m
Depth	0.49m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some damage to hood moulding on exterior (cloister) side of window
Description	Twin-light round-headed window on north side of crossing, looks out onto the cloister garth

Classification	Doorway 5
Motif	None
Height	1.78m
Width	0.79m
Depth	0.97m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Simple Gothic doorway leading from north side of nave to cloister

Inventory of Sculpture in Rosserk Friary

Interior

Chancel

1. Angel in right spandrel of right niche of piscina
2. Angel in left spandrel of right niche of piscina
3. Round tower on left column of piscina
4. Foliate carvings on back and side walls of right half of piscina
5. Griffin-like animal on outer right hand side of hood moulding over piscine

Transept

6. Angel on left side of south facing transept window
7. Interlace on right side of south facing transept window
8. Motif on right side of door from transept to crossing (barely visible)
9. Motif on left side of door from transept to crossing

Crossing

10. Carving on north-west corbel of a large multi-leaved vine with fruit
11. Carving on south-west corbel of an angel, holding the apex of the corbel
12. Carving on south-east corbel of a quadruped animal, possibly a lion, although weathering has obscured this
13. Carving on north-east corbel of a vine with two leaves and fruit

Exterior

Chancel

14. Carved head on label stop of east window (north side)
15. Carved head on label stop of east window (south side)

Transept

16. Head at top of south facing transept window (looks like a hooded friar)
17. Angel carved on south wall of transept, to the right of the south transept window

Nave

18. West Doorway

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- a. Crockets
- b. Pinnacles
- c. Carving over door
- d. Floral Motif featuring two adjacent flowers with stems on south side of door, outer order
- e. Floral Motif featuring two adjacent flowers with stems on south side of door, inner order (much fainter than above)
- f. Foliate motif featuring two adjacent flowers with stems on north outer order (barely visible)



Plate A.1: Carving of an angel on the east side of south facing transept window



Plate A.2: Carving on north-west corbel of a large multi-leaved vine with fruit



Plate A.3: Carving on south-west corbel of an angel, holding the apex of the corbel



Plate A.4: Carving on north-east corbel of a vine with two leaves and fruit



Plate A.5: Angel carved on south wall of transept, to the right of the south transept window

Architectural Survey of Strade Friary

Name of building	Strade Friary/Priory of the Holy Cross
Townland	Strade
Barony	Gallen
National Grid Reference	12589/29750
OS 1:50,000 Map Number	31
Six Inch Sheet Number	70
Date Surveyed	11 August 2004
Order	Initially Franciscan, later Dominican
Construction materials	Limestone
Approximate date of construction	1252
National Monument Number	MA070-067---
Name by which the building is commonly known	Strade Abbey

Classification	Doorway 1
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.40m
Depth	0.97m
Date	Modern
Condition	Good
Description	Modern addition, has no horizontal member

Classification	Niche 1
Motif	None
Height	1.91m
Width	2.52m
Depth	0.69m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some evidence of decay
Description	Niche in north wall of transept, has a short column on each side

Classification	Niche 2
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.54m
Depth	0.69m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Some evidence of decay

Description	Niche in north wall of transept, has a short column on each side
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Classification	Window 1
Motif	None
Height	2.72m
Width	1.55m
Depth	0.74m
Date	15 th Century
Condition	Very good
Description	Twin-light cusped tracery window on east wall of north transept. Has a half-octagonal column on its south side, with a moulded capital and base yet there is no such capital on the north side and no evidence of there having been one.

Classification	Window 2
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.92m
Depth	0.82m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	No longer has its pointed head
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel, the top part of which is no longer in situ

Classification	Window 3
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.18m
Depth	0.91m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Missing its pointed head
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel, the top part of which is no longer in situ

Classification	Window 4
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.01m
Depth	0.81m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Window 5
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.99m
Depth	0.95m

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Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Recess 1
Height	1.85m
Width	2.37m
Depth	0.70m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Recess located between lancet windows No.4 and 5. Has a pointed arched top.

Classification	Window 6
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	1.8cm (excludes the portion covered by the tomb)
Depth	0.80m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Window 7
Motif	None
Height	– (Dimensions could not be taken due to the position of the tomb)
Width	–
Depth	–
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Tomb
Motif	Several, see description below for details
Height	4.11m (Base: 1.03m)
Width	2.62m
Depth	–
Date	15 th Century/early 16 th Century with 19 th Century insertion
Condition	Very Good
Description	Wall tomb of a type popular in the west of Ireland in the fifteenth century. Consists of a base on which are depicted eight weepers beneath Gothic arches and a Flamboyant or flame-like canopy. There is a pinnacle on each side of the canopy and crockets along the extrados of the arch. On top of the base on the left hand side is a carving of a dog. Burial inserted in the nineteenth century of Anne Deane, cousin of John Dillon, M.P.

Classification	Window 8
Motif	None
Height	–

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Width	2.02m
Depth	–
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Recess 2
Motif	None
Height	2.21m
Width	2.13m
Depth	0.72m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Recess with pointed arch under lancet window in north wall of chancel

Classification	Window 9: East window
Reuse	Originally consisted of a group of possibly five lancets, was subsequently replaced by a tracery window in the fifteenth century. Some traces of the lancet windows remain.
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	4.08m
Depth	–
Date	15 th Century (with some traces of thirteenth century lancets)
Condition	Only the base and sides remain of this window. There is no trace of the pointed head it once had or of the mullions which would have divided it into tracery lights.
Description	Would formerly have been the largest window in the church, most likely a tracery window with four or five lights. On the outside there are traces of hood mouldings such as would be found over a pointed arch, with a label stop on each side of the window.

Classification	Altar
Reuse	None, although it has been moved to different locations in the friary itself and in the neighbouring church
Motif	See description below for details
Height	1.01m
Width	2.48m
Depth	0.28m
Date	15 th Century/early 16 th Century
Condition	Appears to be only a partial representation of what was originally planned for this altar. Has an unfinished appearance due to the fact that some of the sections do not bear any carving.
Description	Consists of three main panels, framed by Gothic arches. There is a <i>Pietà</i> in the centre beneath two arches with an angel on each side. The two flanking panels each depict one figure, the one on the LHS depicts a man with his hands raised and a shuttle-like object hanging from his belt. A woman is depicted on the RHS,

	both figures are kneeling.
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Classification	Piscina
Motif	None
Height	1.93m
Width	1.50m
Depth	0.53m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Piscina with two drain holes, topped by a trifoliated arch. Has a column on each side, the base of the column on the left hand side is octagonal, that on the right hand side is circular.

Classification	Niche 3
Motif	None
Height	3.22m
Width	2.26m
Depth	0.39m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Ogee arch surrounding a shallow recess.

Classification	Doorway 2
Motif	None
Height	1.70m
Width	0.77m
Depth	0.24m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Doorway with a pointed Gothic head at the bottom of steps leading into the vaulted chamber to the south of the chancel which most likely served as the sacristy. Has a chamfered intrados.

Classification	Cross slab No.1
Motif	Cross
Height	1.90m
Width	0.82m
Depth	0.19m
Date	Possibly 13 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Grave slab with cross carved upon it, having addition angled arms in addition to the usual transom. Moved from its original location. Now propped up against the south wall of the chancel.

Classification	Cross slab No.2
Reuse	None
Motif	Cross
Height	1.50m

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Width	0.53m
Depth	0.15m
Date	Possibly 13 th Century
Condition	Partial remains
Description	Grave slab with cross carved upon it, having addition angled arms in addition to the usual transom. Moved from its original location. Now propped up against the south wall of the chancel.

Classification	Cross slab No.3
Reuse	None
Motif	Cross
Height	0.95m
Width	0.52m
Depth	0.70m
Date	Possibly 13 th Century
Condition	Partial remains
Description	Grave slab with cross carved upon it, having addition angled arms in addition to the usual transom. Moved from its original location. Now propped up against the south wall of the chancel.

Classification	Cross slab No.4
Reuse	None
Motif	Cross
Height	1.19m
Width	0.39m
Depth	0.11m
Date	Possibly 13 th Century
Condition	Partial remains
Description	Grave slab with cross carved upon it, having addition angled arms in addition to the usual transom. Moved from its original location. Now propped up against the south wall of the chancel.

Classification	Cross slab No.5
Reuse	None
Motif	Cross
Height	1.90m
Width	0.60m
Depth	0.13m
Date	Possibly 13 th Century
Condition	Good
Description	Grave slab with cross carved upon it, having addition angled arms in addition to the usual transom. Moved from its original location. Now propped up against the south wall of the chancel.

Classification	Doorway 3
Reuse	None
Motif	None
Height	1.70m
Width	1.31m

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Depth	0.76m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Low doorway with pointed arch leading from nave to the south

Classification	Niche 4
Reuse	None
Motif	None
Height	0.99m
Width	2.50m
Depth	0.66m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Niche with a pointed arch of low height

Classification	Doorway 4
Reuse	None
Motif	None
Height	2.13m
Width	1.89m
Depth	1.09m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Very Good
Description	Doorway from nave to south side of friary

Classification	Window 10
Reuse	None
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	4.06m
Depth	–
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Poor
Description	The west window is in a similar state of disrepair as the east window, it too only has a base and part of the jamb on each side remaining

Classification	Window 11
Reuse	None
Motif	None
Height	–
Width	2.15m
Depth	0.94m
Date	13 th Century
Condition	Poor
Description	Was a short lancet window, is now missing its arched top

Inventory of Sculpture in Strade Friary

Interior

Chancel

6. Carved 15th Century tomb with Flamboyant canopy
 - a. Magi No.1
 - b. Magi No.2
 - c. Magi No.3
 - d. Christ displaying the five wounds
 - e. Kneeling figure withdrawing his hood, wears woollen gown with a shuttle-like object hanging from his belt.
 - f. Bishop with hand raised in blessing, carries what appears to be a cross-shaped crosier in his left hand. Wears a mitred hat. May be Saint Thomas à Beckett, murdered in Canterbury.
 - g. Saint Peter holding a book and the keys to the kingdom of heaven
 - h. Saint Peter depicted with the symbols traditionally associated with him the book and the sword.
 - i. Three carvings of angles separate the four figures on the right hand side of the tomb.
 - j. Foliate carvings above each of the arches dividing the tomb base.
 - k. Crockets
 - l. Pinnacle
 - m. On the left hand side sitting on top of the base, just below the springing of the arch is a carving of a dog as was often depicted beside Saint Dominic.
7. Altar *revedos*, features three arches with figures beneath them
 - n. Male figure on left hand side, wearing a shuttle-like object hanging from his belt.
 - o. Central carving is a *Pietà*
 - p. Female figure on right hand side
 - q. Angels on either side of the *Pietà*
8. Carved cross slab No.1
9. Carved cross slab No.2
10. Carved cross slab No.3
11. Carved cross slab No.4
12. Carved cross slab No.5

Chancel arch

13. Carving on north side of chancel arch
14. Carving on LHS of north corbel of chancel arch
15. Carving on the centre of the north corbel of chancel arch
16. Carving on east side of north corbel of chancel arch
17. Carving on south side of chancel arch

Penal Church

18. A carving of a bishop's head of medieval date was incorporated into the south wall of the Penal Church that adjoins Strade Friary. Presumably this carving once formed part of the fabric of the friary itself.

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