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## **Chapter 11: Arklow and the Cistercians: A Medieval Borough and Manor Reconsidered**

Stephen H. Harrison

In 1993, just under thirty years ago, the author submitted a BA dissertation to the then Department of Medieval History at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). Entitled “The Lordship of Arklow c.AD800-c.1461,” it was an attempt to draw together the evidence for both “Viking” and “Anglo-Norman” settlement in the modern Barony of Arklow, County Wicklow, and its environs, including the medieval borough.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, it was supervised by T. B. Barry, who was eventually to supervise my Ph.D. as well.<sup>2</sup> At the time, he encouraged me to publish my results, but to my shame, I ignored his advice. A year as an Erasmus student at the then *Afdeling for Middelalderarkæologi* at the University of Aarhus (Denmark) – an opportunity strongly encouraged by him – had convinced me that Viking archaeology was far more exciting than Anglo-Norman settlement, and the move to University College Cork, where I read for an MA, led me to focus my research on this earlier period.<sup>3</sup>

This festschrift provides an opportunity, finally, to publish part of my BA dissertation, focusing on what, with hindsight, seems the most significant discovery – a hitherto under-researched charter granting Arklow and its appurtenances to the Cistercian Abbey of Furness, Cumbria (see appendix). This charter provides important information on early Anglo-Norman settlement in the area, and forms the basis for discussion of both Viking-age and high medieval settlement there, by providing a “snapshot” of the area around 1200. Given the intervening quarter-century, it also provides an opportunity to critique some of the ideas that underlay my research, to reconsider some of its conclusions, and to assess some key developments of the interim period. In addition, it provides an occasion to acknowledge the role of Terry Barry in the development of Irish medieval archaeology, as well as the support of James [237/8] Lydon

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<sup>1</sup> S. H. Harrison, “The Lordship of Arklow, c.900-c.1461” (BA thesis, Trinity College, University of Dublin, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> S. H. Harrison, “Furnished Insular Scandinavian Burial: Artefact and Landscape in the Early Viking Age” (Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity College, University of Dublin, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> S. H. Harrison, “Viking-Age Shield Bosses in Dublin and the Irish Sea Area” (MA thesis, University College Cork, 1995).

and Katherine Simms, who advised on Anglo-Norman and Gaelic matters respectively; Bernadette Williams and Philomena Connolly, who struggled to teach me the rudiments of medieval Latin and paleography, and Paul Ferguson, the TCD map librarian, in those far-off days when Ordnance Survey maps had not yet been scanned, and all maps were still hand-drawn.

In 1993, very little was known about the medieval lordship of Arklow, centered on the coastal settlement of the same name, situated close to the mouth of the Avoca River, and c. 60km south of Dublin. Despite being part of the extensive landholdings of the Earls of Ormond, the manor of Arklow does not feature prominently in the published *Red Book of Ormond* or the *Ormond Deeds*, and the only partial manorial extent for “Arklow” is actually an extent of the rather better documented manor of Gowran, County Kilkenny.<sup>4</sup> The only written evidence for the medieval lordship was a single surviving grant, a few references scattered through various governmental records, a handful of entries in the annals, and a number of church records, notably the relevant section of the Archbishop of Dublin’s *Crede Mihi* register of c. 1275.<sup>5</sup> Archaeological evidence was also thin on the ground. In Arklow itself, only a small section of the Anglo-Norman masonry castle survived above the ground.<sup>6</sup> Of the high medieval Dominican Friary there, only a disused graveyard still existed,<sup>7</sup> and the site of the medieval parish church of St Mary was a small park containing a few post-medieval grave-slabs.<sup>8</sup> Today, information on these sites is available online, using the Historic Environment Viewer maintained by the National Monuments Service. In 1992, the *Archaeological Inventory of Wicklow*, the source of much of this online information, had not yet been published,<sup>9</sup> and researchers had to consult records at the Office of Public Works on St Stephen’s Green, at those few times when it was open to the public.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Red Book of Ormond*, ed. N. B. White (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932), 10-2. The extent was correctly associated with Castledermot, County Kildare, by Canon Dr C.A. Empey (pers. comm. 17 November 1992)

<sup>5</sup> *Crede Mihi – The Most Ancient Register Book of the Archbishops of Dublin before the Reformation, now for the first time printed from the Original Manuscript*, ed. J. T. Gilbert (Dublin: Joseph Dollard, 1897). For a discussion of those sections of the list relevant to Arklow, see M. V. Ronan, “The Ancient Churches of the Deanery of Arklow,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 17 (1927): 100-16.

<sup>6</sup> WI040-029002, Archaeological Survey of Ireland, available through the Historic Environment Viewer, <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>7</sup> WI040-029009, <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>8</sup> WI040-029007, <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022)

<sup>9</sup> Eoin Grogan, ed., *Archaeological Survey of County Wicklow* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1997).

The town of Arklow was accessible by bus and train, but in the absence of a car, I visited just one rural site – the very substantial moated site at Ballyraine [238/9] Middle, approximately 2km west of the town.<sup>10</sup> This site had been “destroyed” in 1971, but the backfilled ditches were clearly visible at ground level in 1993 – indeed, they can still be seen on aerial photographs dating from 2018.<sup>11</sup> Digital technology of this kind was inconceivable at the time, and I did not have access to any aerial photographs in 1992. Discouraged by my first foray into rural field work, and with dawning awareness of the word and time limitations, I confined my remaining “rural” research to the aforementioned Sites and Monuments Record, carefully noting all possible mottes, ringworks, moated sites, and manorial villages, and adding them to a map based on the “half-inch” (1:126,720) Ordnance Survey sheets 16 and 19, to which I occasionally added a tentative “manorial center,” based on the aforementioned administrative and legal records rather than archaeological research. Inspired by the work of others, particularly Adrian Empey, whose work on settlement developed and expanded that of Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven at a more local level,<sup>12</sup> I also added the boundaries of those modern civil parishes I believed to lie within the Lordship, as well as those that lay immediately outside this territory. As the half-inch sheet on which I based my map did not show these units, they had to be transferred, painstakingly, from the six-inch series, a process that took several long afternoons in the map library. The extrapolation of 200m contours for the map (the half-inch sheets used feet) was done at home and took almost as long, but the addition of the modern coastline and major rivers was a little more straightforward. The resulting map, drawn on an A2 sheet, is too large for easy scanning, but that section of it most relevant to the present discussion is reproduced here at a slightly smaller scale than the original (Figure 1). At the time, it seemed to be a reasonably accurate representation of Anglo-Norman settlement in the

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<sup>10</sup> WI040-028--- (moated site) and WI010-028001 (moated site),

<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Google Earth, image 27.1.2019, 52°48'09.74"N, 6°11'04.72"E (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>12</sup> Adrian Empey, “Medieval Knocktopher: A Study in Manorial Settlement – Part 1,” *Old Kilkenny Review* 2/4 (1982): 329-42; and Adrian Empey, “Medieval Knocktopher: A Study in Manorial Settlement – Part 2,” *Old Kilkenny Review* 2/5 (1983): 441-52 at 441-2, were particularly influential, because they operate at a comparable scale. For A. J. Otway-Ruthven’s crucial contribution to the reconstruction of Anglo-Norman settlement, see “The Character of Norman Settlement in Ireland,” first published in *Historical Studies V: Papers Read before the Sixth Conference of Irish Historians*, ed. J. L. McCracken (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1965), 75-84. It, and several other key papers on subinfeudation and settlement have been republished in Peter Crooks, ed., *Government, War and Society in Medieval Ireland: Essays by Edmund Curtis, A.J. Otway-Ruthven and James Lydon* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008).

area, and formed the core of my analysis of Anglo-Norman settlement. The editors of the present volume arranged for the production of an equivalent [239/41] map using GIS technology (Fig. 11.2). This modern map presents more data, but could equally be said to be less selective in data capture. Of course, current technology makes the generation of topic-specific maps far easier than was hitherto the case. In contrast, all (Anglo-Norman) topographical discussion in the original dissertation was based on the hand-drawn general map reproduced here as Fig. 11.1.

I was also keen to examine the evidence for Scandinavian settlement in Arklow, but this was far more problematic. I was heavily influenced by what were then two relatively recent publications – A. P. Smyth’s *Celtic Leinster*<sup>13</sup> and John Bradley’s “The Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement in Ireland.”<sup>14</sup> Both emphasized the importance of what Smyth identified as the *Ascaill Gaill*, or “Angle of the Foreigners,” a strip of territory extending south from Dublin along the coast of what is now County Wicklow, which incorporated Arklow at its southern end.<sup>15</sup> I was completely convinced by their arguments and set out to gather all the evidence I could for a pre-Norman, Viking presence in the Arklow area.

Inevitably, the archaeological evidence was disappointing, comprising a single Viking grave, represented by a pair of double-shelled oval brooches and a silver chain with needle-case, which was sometimes provenanced to Arklow. However, cursory research demonstrated that this find was actually found at an uncertain date, somewhere “between Three Mile Water and Arklow,” and purchased by the Dublin Museum of Science and Art (now the National Museum of Ireland) in 1902.<sup>16</sup> Three Mile Water is some 16km north of Arklow, and other than noting that the mid-point between it and Arklow was somewhere near Ennereilly, where the Redcross River flowed into the Irish Sea (Figure 1), I was unable to provenance the grave more securely.<sup>17</sup> In 1998, Ragnall Ó Floinn addressed the issue of provenance again, and argued for a location in the same area, possibly at or near the small church at Ennereilly, on the north side of the Redcross estuary.<sup>18</sup> Working with Ó Floinn on *Irish Viking Graves and Grave-*

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<sup>13</sup> A. P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> John Bradley, “The Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement in Ireland,” in *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland*, ed. F. X. Martin and John Bradley (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), 49-78.

<sup>15</sup> Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, 44; Bradley, “Scandinavian Settlement,” 56-7.

<sup>16</sup> George Coffey, “A Pair of Oval Brooches and Chains of the Viking Period Recently Found in Ireland,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 32 (1902): 71-3 at 71.

<sup>17</sup> Harrison, “Lordship,” 18

<sup>18</sup> Ragnall Ó Floinn, “Two Viking Burials from County Wicklow,” *Wicklow Archaeology and*

*Goods* about a decade later, we found no new evidence, but [241/3] demonstrated that a grave at the edge of an ecclesiastical site like Ennereilly would be fully in keeping with broader patterns of Viking burial in Ireland and England.<sup>19</sup> Even in 1992, when I could not provenance the grave so precisely, it seemed clear that this grave had little direct association with Arklow itself, although it does provide evidence for a significant, if perhaps brief, Scandinavian presence at or near the mouth of the Redcross River, probably in the early tenth century.

The only other evidence for Scandinavian rural settlement in the area around Wicklow comes from placenames. In 1992, I drew very heavily on the work of the mid-twentieth century Wicklow placename expert, Liam Price.<sup>20</sup> He identified four names with potential Scandinavian associations in the Arklow area. All have Irish place-name elements (“generics”), combined with what he believed to be personal names of Scandinavian origin, which he linked to Norse settlement in the area. I am very grateful to Liam Ó hAisibéil, National University of Ireland, Galway, for assistance with the present reappraisal.

Of the four “Norse” names, that closest to Arklow was Killahurler, which Price rendered *Cill Achaidh Orlair*, “the church of the field of Orlair,” a name which he linked to the Old Norse *Þóraldr*.<sup>21</sup> At the time, this seemed plausible, but more recent scholarship renders the name *Cill Achaidh Úrlair*, the Church of the Field of the “Floor” (i.e. valley bottom or flat land).<sup>22</sup> Further to the west, Price identified Ballymanus as *Baile Maghnusa*, the townland of Magnus.<sup>23</sup> More recently the name has been rendered *Baile Mhánais*, the modern genitive form of the Irish personal name Mánas or Mánus.<sup>24</sup> The problem in this case, as Price himself admitted,<sup>25</sup> is that the “Norse” (technically Latin) personal name *Magnus* was “later” adopted by a number of Irish families. However, the popularity of this name, particularly in Ireland, is almost certainly related to the cult of St Magnus (martyred in 1115),<sup>26</sup> and the combination of

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*History* 1 (1998): 29-35 at 33-4.

<sup>19</sup> S. H. Harrison and Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in Ireland. Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81* Ser. B, vol. 11 (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 2014), 585-6.

<sup>20</sup> Of his seven volumes on this subject, *The Place-names of Co. Wicklow*, it is volume 7 (*Newcastle and Arklow*) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967) which is relevant to the present study.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>22</sup> Killahurler, County Wicklow. [www.Logainm.ie](http://www.Logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>23</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 438.

<sup>24</sup> Ballymanus, Co. Wicklow. [www.Logainm.ie](http://www.Logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>25</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 438.

<sup>26</sup> The alternative possibility that the name was popularized following the campaigns of Magnus Barelegs in Ireland does not change this approximate date, as he was killed in 1103.

this personal [243/4] name with the generic *baile*, which is rare if not unknown before the twelfth century,<sup>27</sup> further reduces the chances that it represents a “Norse” site in any meaningful sense. Further to the north of Arklow are two place names with even more tenuous associations. Price rejected the obvious *Ráth Áird* (“the high rath”) for Raherd, on the grounds it was not on a hill, but his argument that the final element may be derived from an Old Norse name, Siward, seems to stretch credibility.<sup>28</sup> More recent research renders the name *Ráth Eird*, possibly a corrupted form of the genitive of a personal name such as Suart or Saobhar, but again, this could be a borrowing into Irish nomenclature.<sup>29</sup> Finally there is Ballycapple, “the townland of the horse,” which Price argued was a direct translation of the “common” Old Norse personal name, *hestr*, “horse.”<sup>30</sup> Ballycapple remains *Baile Capall*, in the plural form,<sup>31</sup> but Ó hAisibéil points out that the medieval forms of this name include the element “mac” (it is, for example, Balimacapil in the *Credi Mihi* list of 1280), which further reduces any direct connection to an otherwise unattested Hiberno-Norse name, particularly as the “baile” element again points to a date in the twelfth century at the earliest.

Lacking this more recent research (and Ó hAisibéil’s assistance!), and with even more limited knowledge of Irish placenames than than now, I took Price more or less at his word and used these names to suggest that there could have been some Hiberno-Norse rural settlement in the hinterland of Arklow. As this appraisal makes clear, however, there is no reason to believe that any of these names represent “Viking” settlement, or (sadly!) that there was any Hiberno-Norse rural settlement in the area. This agrees with research carried out by Colmán Etchingham, who argues that the scale of Hiberno-Norse settlement in Wicklow has been exaggerated,<sup>32</sup> and with Bradley’s review of his earlier work on Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland, which highlights the difficulties of classifying material culture and the importance of distinguishing between political control and ethnicity.<sup>33</sup> Ethnic and political boundaries in

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<sup>27</sup> Liam Price, “A Note on the Use of the Word Baile in Place-names,” *Celtica* 4 (1963): 119-26 at 119.

<sup>28</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 459.

<sup>29</sup> Raherd, Co. Wicklow. [www.Logainm.ie](http://www.Logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>30</sup> Price, *Place-names*.

<sup>31</sup> Ballycapple, Co. Wicklow. [www.Logainm.ie](http://www.Logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>32</sup> Colmán Etchingham, “Evidence of Scandinavian Settlement in Wicklow,” in *Wicklow: History and Society, Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Ken Hannigan and William Nolan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1994), 113-38 at 119-21.

<sup>33</sup> John Bradley, “Some Reflections on the Problem of Scandinavian Settlement in the Hinterland of Dublin During the Ninth Century,” in *Dublin in the Medieval World: Studies in Honour of Howard B. Clarke*, ed. John Bradley, Alan J. Fletcher, and Anngret Simms (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009),

[244/5] this period were clearly fluid, and if there was any Scandinavian control of the Arklow hinterland, it must have been transient and the result of political dominance, or accommodation with local power groups, rather than systematic settlement.

Turning to Arklow itself, the strongest evidence that the site was significant to the Hiberno-Norse population of Ireland is its name. The second, generic, element *ló*, is uncontroversial, and seems to mean “marsh,” “water-meadow,” or “grassy meadow.”<sup>34</sup> The first element is usually interpreted as a Norse personal name, such as Arnkell, Arnketill, or even Arkil.<sup>35</sup> Magne Oftedahl argued that the element *ló* was rarely combined with a personal name, and preferred a translation similar to *Aðal-ló* (“main meadow”). More recently, however, Gillian Fellows-Jensen has returned to the idea of the first element being a personal name, probably Arnketil, known elsewhere in these islands in the Viking Age.<sup>36</sup> In the present context, what is important is that this is one of only a handful of entirely Norse placenames that have survived to the present day in Ireland. It must reflect the perceived importance of the Avoca estuary as one of the only safe harbors for large boats and small ships on the coast between Wexford and Dublin.

In 1992, I argued very strongly that the head of this estuary was the site of a more or less continuously occupied nucleated settlement, corresponding to the modern Arklow, from the mid-ninth to the late twelfth century, when Anglo-Norman records begin. The mid-ninth century date is based on an entry in the *Annals of Ulster* for 836:

“Cell Dara was plundered by heathens from Inber Dea and half of the church was burned.”<sup>37</sup>

Cell Dara is definitely Kildare, and the assumption that Inber Dea (or *Inber Dée*) represents Arklow rests on the fact that a (rare) name for Glendalough is Gleann Dea, and the Glendalough River is a key tributary of the Avoca River, at [245/6] the mouth of which Arklow sits.<sup>38</sup> The

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39-62.

<sup>34</sup> Magne Oftedahl, “Scandinavian Place-names in Ireland,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress*, ed. Bo Almqvist and David Greene (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1986), 125-33 at 130; Gillian Fellows-Jensen, “Nordic Names and Loanwords in Ireland,” in *The Vikings in Ireland*, ed. A. C. Larsen (Roskilde: The Viking Ship Museum, 2001), 107-14 at 109.

<sup>35</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 477; Harrison, “Lordship,” 23.

<sup>36</sup> Fellows-Jensen, “Nordic Names,” 109.

<sup>37</sup> *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. Seán Mac Airt and Gearoid Mac Niocaill (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 2004), 294-5.

<sup>38</sup> Liam Price, “The Place-names of the Barony of Arklow, County of Wicklow. Their Early Forms Collected,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 46C (1940/1): 237-86 at 274-5. For more recent discussions of the evidence, see Etchingam, “Scandinavian Settlement,” 114, and Edel Bhreathnach,



modern Irish name for the town - *An tInbhear Mór* – is much more frequently recorded, and dates back at least as far as the eleventh century.<sup>39</sup> The 836 entry is one of the first occasions where Irish annalists link a Viking group to a location in Ireland, and I suggested that this probably indicated that there was a raiding base or *longphort* at the site. More recent work by Emer Purcell has supported the suggestion that Viking bases in Ireland were established earlier than is usually believed, and this core idea remains valid.<sup>40</sup> However, my idea that this 836 *longphort* at Arklow lasted for more than a year or two is far more problematic. In 1992, interpretations of *longphuirt* (the plural form of *longphort*) were dominated by Dublin, which despite the absence of ninth-century archaeological evidence at Wood Quay, was assumed to have been a more or less permanent settlement from the establishment of a base there in 841, with the exception of the 902-917 expulsion event.<sup>41</sup> More recent publications have stressed the variety of sites occupied by Viking groups in the ninth and tenth centuries, and the fact that many of these were short-lived.<sup>42</sup> Excavations at Woodstown, County Waterford, have demonstrated that even important *longphuirt* could be occupied for relatively short periods of time,<sup>43</sup> and this interpretation is being confirmed by research in England on sites such as Torksey.<sup>44</sup> In 1992, I thought that the *longphort* at Arklow, like that at Dublin, might have survived for an extended period, but there is effectively no evidence to support this. Etchingam has argued that a series of unattributed raids in south Leinster carried out in the 830s could have [247/8] been launched from a base such as Arklow,<sup>45</sup> but even if this were the case, it seems very likely to have been abandoned relatively soon afterwards.

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“St Patrick, Vikings and Inber Dée – Longphort in the Early Irish Literary Tradition,” *Wicklow Archaeology and History* 1 (1998): 36-40.

<sup>39</sup> [www.Logainm.ie](http://www.Logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Emer Purcell, “The First Generation in Ireland, 795-812: Viking raids and Viking bases?,” in *The Vikings in Ireland and Beyond: Before and after the Battle of Clontarf*, ed. H. B. Clarke and Ruth Johnson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), 41-54.

<sup>41</sup> P. F. Wallace, “The Archaeology of Viking Dublin,” in *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe*, ed. H. B. Clarke and Anngret Simms (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 255, 1985), 103-46.

<sup>42</sup> See, in particular, Ragnall Ó Floinn, “The Archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland,” in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. H. B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 131-65 at 161.

<sup>43</sup> M. F. Hurley, “Discussion and Conclusions,” in *Woodstown: A Viking-Age Settlement in Co. Waterford*, ed. Ian Russell and M. F. Hurley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 347-57 at 347.

<sup>44</sup> D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards, “The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872-3, Torksey, Lincolnshire,” *The Antiquaries Journal* 96 (2016): 23-67.

<sup>45</sup> Etchingam, “Scandinavian Settlement,” 114-6.

There is no secure evidence for Scandinavian activity at Arklow in the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth centuries either, and certainly no evidence for the “proto-town” I proposed in 1992. If there was a Hiberno-Norse presence at the site, it is more likely to have been something akin to the “way stations” that have been proposed for west Cork and Kerry, most of which have been identified using Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse topographical place-names similar to that of Arklow itself.<sup>46</sup> Like these proposed way stations on the route to and from Limerick, around the south-west coast, Arklow’s importance may have been as a safe harbor for ships travelling between Dublin and Wexford, pausing between tides or due to unfavorable winds, rather than as a trading site in its own right. However, there is one piece of evidence to suggest that there was a settlement of some kind, and that it was perceived to be of relatively high importance, at least in the late twelfth century. Following the Anglo-Norman Invasion, Arklow was one of handful of sites that was taken directly into the hands of Henry II.<sup>47</sup> Of the other sites, Dublin and Waterford were definitely urban, and there is now evidence for comparable urban settlement at Wexford too.<sup>48</sup> Only Wicklow had a similar, ambiguous, status to Arklow, situated at a relatively important harbor but lacking clear evidence for nucleated settlement. Henry’s retention of both sites suggests that they had a strategic or economic importance that other locations lacked, and this may suggest an existing, permanent Hiberno-Norse presence at these sites, of unknown form and presumably small size.

It certainly seems clear that the Crown had limited interest in Wicklow and Arklow, and within two decades, both had been granted to Irish magnates. Technically, it was John, as Lord of Ireland, who gave the “castle of Arklow with the vill of Arklow” (*castellum de Arcloh cum villa de Arcloh*) to his loyal follower, Theobald Walter, first Butler of Ireland, at some point between 1185 and 1189.<sup>49</sup> Ending with the words *apud Winton* (Winchester?), the grant presumably dates [247/8] to some point after John’s humiliating return from Ireland in December 1185. While Theobald himself did not witness this charter, his interests were well

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<sup>46</sup> John Sheehan, Steffen Stummann Hansen, and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, “A Viking Age Maritime Haven: A Reassessment of the Island Settlement at Beginish, Co. Kerry,” *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* 10 (2001): 93-119, at 111-5.

<sup>47</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 477.

<sup>48</sup> Edward Bourke, “Life in the Sunny South-East: Housing and Domestic Economy in Viking and Medieval Wexford,” *Archaeology Ireland* 9/3 (1995): 33-6.

<sup>49</sup> This charter is preserved in the National Library of Ireland (MS D19). A reproduction can be found in P. J. Power, *The Arklow Calendar* (Arklow: Elizabeth Press, 1981), fig.2. It is summarized in *Calendar of Ormond Deeds 1, 1172-1350*, ed. Edmund Curtis (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932), no.17.

supported by his relative by marriage, Ranulf Glanville, and his brother, Hubert Walter, then Dean of York, but subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. The charter's language is formulaic, but grants Theobald and his heirs after him

...the aforesaid castle and vill with lands and all things pertaining to them, in woodlands and open land, meadows and pastures and water and mills, in seaports, ponds and fishponds, in roads and lanes and all places and all things with all liberties and free customs to them belonging for the feudal service of one knight.<sup>50</sup>

There are no details of the extent of these "lands," but the fact that Theobald was to hold the manor for a knight's fee suggests that a considerable quantity of land was being granted, extending well beyond the limits of the castle and vill. On the other hand, it would seem that Arklow was relatively small when compared to other Butler holdings. Gowran and Tullow, the two Butler manors closest to Arklow, were held for four knights' fees apiece, and the family's single largest contiguous holding, in north Tipperary, was held for twenty-two fees.<sup>51</sup> Arklow had the additional disadvantage of isolation. Tullow, the closest manor, was some 40km away, on the other side of the Wicklow Mountains, and Nenagh, which was to become the main center of Butler power in the thirteenth century, was 140km away. There is some evidence that Theobald I invested time in developing his manor at Arklow (below), but it cannot have been a priority for him, or indeed his successors. Perhaps as little as ten years after John's grant, and certainly no more than twenty years later, Theobald made the decision to grant Arklow to the Cistercian order.

The presence (or absence) of the Cistercian order at Arklow had been the subject of some discussion, with several commentators arguing that the monastery was short-lived,<sup>52</sup> while others believed that it endured at least long enough for Theobald's son and grandson to be buried there.<sup>53</sup> In 1993, I discovered that a Latin transcript of Theobald's grant was preserved in William Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, a three volume work published between 1655 and 1673, which I consulted in a six-volume Victorian edition in Trinity [248/9] College Library.<sup>54</sup> While some historians were aware of this document, notably Eric Brooks,<sup>55</sup> it is still not widely known, and this publication provides an opportunity to publish both a

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<sup>50</sup> Curtis, *Ormond Deeds 1, 1172-1350*, 8 (translation by author).

<sup>51</sup> Edmund Curtis, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Methuen, 1938), 90-1.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Power, *Arklow*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Dunboyne, *The Butler Family History* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Kilkenny: Wellbrook Press, 1972), 6.

<sup>54</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. William Dugdale (6 vols, London: James Bohn, 1846).

<sup>55</sup> *Knights Fees in Counties Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny*, ed. Eric St. John Brooks (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1950).

transcription and a translation (see appendix). It confirms that the Cistercians acquired land at Arklow, at least for a short period of time, provides important evidence for the manor and its neighbors at the turn of the thirteenth century, and contains clues as to why the Cistercians failed to establish a permanent monastery there.

As an archaeologist, with a primary concern for material culture, I find it odd that my twenty-one-year-old self showed no interest in how this manuscript survived, where Dugdale saw it, and whether it survived to the present day. A note in the 1846 edition of this text, completely ignored by me at the time, states that Dugdale found it among the Cotton manuscripts.<sup>56</sup> Sir William Cotton's collection definitely included some material from the Cistercian monastery at Furness, notably a *Chronicle of Furness Abbey*,<sup>57</sup> and it is certainly possible that he acquired this charter at the same time. As the Arklow charter was witnessed at Furness (below), it seems reasonable to suggest that a copy survived there, in some form. However, it has not been possible to locate an extant manuscript copy today, and it may be that it was lost in the 1731 fire at Ashburnham House, when parts of the Cotton collection were destroyed. It is not in the published version of the fifteenth-century *Coucher Book of Furness*, which concerns itself with the holdings of the abbey itself – indeed, there is no reference to Arklow in a list of daughter houses in that volume.<sup>58</sup>

The Arklow charter can be dated using two pieces of internal evidence. As it calls John King of England, it must postdate the death of Richard I on 6 April 1199. However, the presence of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, among the witnesses, means that the document must predate the latter's death on 13 July 1205. Unfortunately, it cannot be dated more precisely.

The charter follows a standard format, beginning with an extensive list of those who are to benefit spiritually from the grant. It begins with Kings Henry (II; d.1189); Richard (I; d.1199) and, as has already been noted, John (d.1216). The charter then names two of Theobald's political allies, who shared his Irish connections. The first named is Ranulf Glanville, who, like Theobald himself, had been part of John's entourage on his 1185 visit to Ireland. The second is [249/50] Earl William Marshall, who married Aoife, the heiress of Richard de Clare ("Strongbow") in 1189 and was granted the title Earl of Pembroke in 1199.

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<sup>56</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*, 6:2, p. 1052.

<sup>57</sup> Cotton MS Cleopatra A1, ff4-213 (now in the British Library).

<sup>58</sup> *The Coucher Book of Furness*, ed. J. C. Atkinson (3 vols, Manchester: Chetham Society, 1886-1919). The list of daughter houses is in vol. 1, pp 11-2.

The remaining spiritual beneficiaries are members of Theobald's family, living and dead, beginning with his brother Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury (also a witness, above), and moving on to Hervey Walter, his father, Matilda of Valognes, his mother (who was also Ranulf Glanville's sister-in-law), Theobald himself, Matilda, his wife, and all his ancestors and successors.

Other than the Archbishop, the charter was witnessed by the "Lord R. Abbot of Furness," presumably Ralph of Fletham, who was abbot from c. 1198-1208.<sup>59</sup> His presence, and particularly that of "the convent of the same place" is clear evidence that the charter was written at the Cistercian house of Furness, in Lancaster. Despite this, Theobald seems to have been careful to ensure that a number of landholders from Arklow were present to act as witnesses, specifically John de Pencott and Maurice fitzMaurice, whose lands bordered the area granted (below), and Almaric de Bellafugo, who held land nearby. Two members of the Cantwell family, Gilbert and Walter, also acted as witnesses. The remaining four witnesses, two of them clerics, seem to have been local to Furness, or perhaps part of the archbishop's retinue – certainly they have no obvious connections to Arklow.

Theobald granted the monks "all his demesne on the south side of the water:" that is to say, on the south side of the Avoca River, including "a moiety of the aforesaid water," as well as "all the sea-coast." Thus, the northern and eastern extent of the grant is clear (Fig. 11.2). Its southern boundary, certainly at the coast, was the land of Maurice fitzMaurice, who was, as already noted, a witness to the charter, and who seems to have had extensive landholdings in the area. His son, also called Maurice, was to be given a speculative grant of five knight's fees "in the manor of Morice Castell" in 1247.<sup>60</sup> His father's holdings were likely to have been coastal, and less extensive, and presumably centered on this Morice Castell. There are very few sites to the south of Arklow which might represent manorial centers on a similar scale to Arklow itself. The most likely candidate is at Castletown, in the Civil Parish of Kilgorman, close to the site of a medieval church at Templesillagh (Fig. 11.2).<sup>61</sup> It is entirely possible [250/1] that the FitzMaurice holdings extended into what is now the neighboring civil parish to the west, Inch, from an early date as well.

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<sup>59</sup> "Houses of Cistercian Monks; The Abbey of Furness," in *A History of the Country of Lancaster 2*, ed. William Farrer and J. Brownbill (London: Victoria County History, 1908), 131.

<sup>60</sup> Brooks, *Knights' Fees*, 167-8.

<sup>61</sup> Billy Colfer, "Anglo-Norman Settlement in County Wexford," in *Wexford: History and Society*, ed. Kevin Whelan and William Nolan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1987), 65-101, at 76.

The western boundary of Theobald's grant is more difficult to reconstruct. According to the charter, the boundary went west along the Avoca to the land of Adam Anglicus "and thus by ascending that water which comes from the south between the land which Adam Anglicus had up to the land of John de Pencott." A number of small streams flow into the Avoca from the south. The western boundary of the modern civil parish corresponds to one of these, at least at the point where it leaves the Avoca. This, the Goldmines River, forms the eastern and southern boundary of the neighboring civil parish to the west, Ballintemple. There is no evidence for a motte within the parish of Ballintemple, but immediately to the north of the Avoca at this point is the civil parish of Castlemacadam. Given the tendency for Christian names to be inherited by eldest sons, it is possible that this parish derives its name (*Caisleán Mhic Ádaim*: the castle of the son of Adam) either from a son of the Adam named in this charter or a later descendent – one was certainly active in the Arklow area in 1247.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Price proposed this place-name link in 1967, noting the presence of a masonry castle at Castlemacadam, the site from which the civil parish derives its name. While this castle is probably much later than the charter, it seems to occupy an earlier site beside a medieval church, and therefore is probably a *caput* site.<sup>63</sup> As already noted, Castlemacadam is on the north side of the Avoca, but it is possible that the Anglicus lands originally extended south into what is now the civil parish of Ballintemple. The charter does not specify why, or to whom Adam Anglicus lost this territory, but it may be significant that Adam seems to be the only landowner with territory adjoining the Cistercian grant who is not a witness to the charter.

If an area broadly corresponding to Ballintemple corresponds to the land that Adam Anglicus held, then the land of John de Pencott, which according to the charter lay further up the boundary river, probably corresponded to the civil parish of Killahurler (Fig. 11.2). A potential motte has been identified at Mooreshill, in the eastern part of the parish, again reasonably close to a medieval church site, which could have been a small manorial center.<sup>64</sup> Several [251/2] thirteenth-century records associate the Pencotts with this area, but as their name suggests their main landholdings were at Pencott, in County Kildare. By 1247,

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<sup>62</sup> Brooks, *Knights' Fees*, 167-8.

<sup>63</sup> Liam Price, "The Byrne's Country in Co. Wicklow in the Sixteenth Century: And the Manor of Arklow (Continued)," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 66 (1936): 41-66 at 51-2. The castle is identified as WI040-005 on the Historic Environment Viewer, <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>64</sup> The latest archaeological survey identifies this feature as a burial mound, but it has never been excavated. It is 16m in diameter and up to 4m high, and so could potentially be a small motte. Plans to visit this site had to be abandoned due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Killahurler seems to have to have been acquired by an Adam Anglicus, presumably a descendent of the Adam in the present charter.<sup>65</sup>

In the past, it has often been assumed that civil parishes are a direct reflection of the Anglo-Norman manors which shaped their origin and development across much of Ireland.<sup>66</sup> More recent scholarship has called the direct link between the two units into question, at least in some areas, and it seems clear that in the northern part of what is now the barony of Arklow, the medieval churches named in the Archbishop of Dublin's *Crede Mihi* list of the late thirteenth century do not have a close correspondence with the modern civil parishes. In the area to the south of the Avoca, however, it seems that the boundaries of Theobald's charter correspond very closely with those of the modern civil parish of Arklow, and that the three landholders named in this charter can also be associated with civil parishes, and with potential mottes close to ecclesiastical sites. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that Theobald's grant to the Cistercians corresponded closely, if not precisely with the civil parish, and as such, represented a grant of some 3270 hectares.<sup>67</sup>

Within this territory, the Cistercians were effectively given complete control, with some of the admittedly formulaic rights echoing those which John had granted to Theobald a decade or so earlier (see appendix). An important addition is that the grant specifically includes "all the Irish" (*hibernici*) of the land-holding, confirming that Theobald, like many other Anglo-Norman landholders, had not expelled all the Gaelic population from his newly granted lands. Their inclusion in the grant presumably indicates that these individuals were considered unfree, and of "betagh" status.<sup>68</sup> While the landholdings of betaghs can be identified on some better-recorded Anglo-Norman manors, and it is believed that they worked their lands in common,<sup>69</sup> little is known of the kinds of settlements they occupied: their dwellings seem to have left no physical trace in the modern landscape.<sup>70</sup> [252/3]

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<sup>65</sup> Brooks, *Knights' Fees*, 167-8.

<sup>66</sup> For a recent reiteration of this, see Brian Shanahan, "The Manor in East County Wicklow," in *The Manor in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland*, ed. James Lyttleton and Tadhg O'Keeffe (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 132-59 at 132.

<sup>67</sup> This figure is derived from *Irish Townlands*, [www.townlands.ie](http://www.townlands.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>68</sup> For discussion, see A. J. Otway-Ruthven, "The Native Irish and English Law in Medieval Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 7/25 (1950): 1-16, reprinted in Crooks, *Government, War and Society in Medieval Ireland*, particularly 145-7.

<sup>69</sup> See Empey, "Medieval Knocktopher: A Study in Manorial Settlement – Part 1," 339-42.

<sup>70</sup> K. D. O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland. Discovery Programme Monographs* 3 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1998), 44, 55-7, raises the possibility that

Technically, the granting of unfree tenants to the Cistercian order should have been seen as problematic, particularly by the Cistercian witnesses to the charter. In its pure form, their rule required monks to farm their own land, and many early houses expelled peasants from their landholdings to fulfil this requirement.<sup>71</sup> However, it seems clear that adherence to this rule went into decline across Europe relatively rapidly following the death of Bernard of Clairvaux in 1153, and Roger Stalley has noted the steady acquisition of “feudal rights and privileges” by Irish Cistercian monasteries during the thirteenth century, including tenants and (unfree) laborers.<sup>72</sup> The present grant is, therefore, an early example of this process, embedding a reliance on unfree tenants as a source of income in the foundation charter of a new monastic house.

Equally problematic for the Cistercian rule in its purest form was Theobald’s grant of “the burgage plots on that side of the water” (i.e. on the south bank of the Avoca River). While it is possible that the grant indicates that these had been laid out speculatively, and were not yet occupied, it seems more likely that the grant of the plots, rather than the burgesses who held them, is a reflection of the free status of the latter group, who paid an annual cash rent.<sup>73</sup> While it is technically the land, rather than the tenants, which is being transferred, this seems to be another contravention of the Cistercian rule.

Another issue which this clause raises is the potential urban status of this settlement. As a contemplative order, the Cistercians should not build houses next to towns. The willingness of Irish houses of the Order to do this, and indeed to benefit from an association with substantial boroughs is part of the same process noted by Stalley (above), and was almost certainly influenced by the example of St Mary’s Abbey at Dublin, situated on the north bank of the Liffey, next to the largest medieval town in Ireland. St Mary’s had been founded as a Savignac house in 1139, but was subsumed into the Cistercian order eight years later, in 1147.<sup>74</sup> The Cistercians do not seem to have any major issue with its location, and the house continued

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Ballynamona, County Limerick, could have been a small, nucleated betagh settlement.

<sup>71</sup> R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1970), xx.

<sup>72</sup> Roger Stalley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland: An Account of the History, Art and Architecture of the White Monks in Ireland from 1142-1540* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), xx.

<sup>73</sup> Tadhg O’Keeffe, *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), 90-1.

<sup>74</sup> Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* (London: Longman, 1970), 130-1.



to thrive throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>75</sup> [253/4] Furness and Dublin had no direct affiliation, but it seems entirely possible that Theobald's willingness to grant his borough, and Furness' willingness to accept it, were influenced by an awareness of St Mary's status. In 1993, the potential "urban" status of Arklow at this early date, implied by the burgess status of its inhabitants, seemed important, demonstrating continuity with a pre-existing Hiberno-Norse settlement. There is, however, no secure evidence for nucleated settlement at Arklow in the pre-Norman period (above), and John's earlier grant to Theobald uses the legally (and morphologically) ambiguous term "vill" (*villa*) to refer to the settlement beside the castle. This, in turn, suggests that it was Theobald who gave it its new legal status, and arranged for the laying out of the burgage plots which he subsequently granted to the Cistercians. However, this activity must be seen as speculative, and it is unlikely that the resulting settlement was more than a "rural borough" at the time of the grant.<sup>76</sup> Bradley includes Arklow in his list of Anglo-Norman towns, but it only fulfils his criteria as a result of developments in the late thirteenth century, and even then barely produces enough evidence for inclusion in this group.<sup>77</sup>

There can be little doubt that the street pattern at the core of the modern town reflects its medieval, planned origins, and its core probably dates from this period. The first edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map of the area, published in 1840,<sup>78</sup> shows a townland of Arklow that is almost entirely built up, and which stretches in a broad arc for just over 1km along either side of what is now Upper Main Street, Main Street, and Lower Main Street. Of these three streets, it seems likely that Main Street itself, which extends east from the castle, parallel to the river, represents the core of the medieval borough. On the 1909 twenty-five inch Ordnance Survey sheet for the area, there are still some surviving long, narrow property plots, on each side of Main Street, which are strongly reminiscent of medieval burgage plots elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Immediately in front of the castle, Main Street, then and now, widened to form a triangular

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<sup>75</sup> For a recent discussion of the layout of St Mary's, and the estates on which its wealth was based, see Geraldine Stout, "The Topography of St Mary's Cistercian Abbey and Precinct, Dublin," in *Medieval Dublin XII*, ed. Seán Duffy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 138-60; and "St Mary's Abbey, Dublin, and its Medieval Farm Suppliers," in *Medieval Dublin XIV*, ed. Seán Duffy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015), 146-62.

<sup>76</sup> For a recent summary of some of the issues associated with term, see O'Keefe, *Medieval Ireland*, 91-2.

<sup>77</sup> John Bradley, "Planned Anglo-Norman Towns in Ireland," in Clarke and Simms, *The Comparative history of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe*, 411-67, at 447.

<sup>78</sup> Ordnance Survey six-inch sheet 40 (Wicklow), published in 1840.

<sup>79</sup> Ordnance Survey twenty-five inch sheet 40.XIX (Wicklow), published 1909.

area, which can be compared to market squares at other Irish boroughs with linear layouts.<sup>80</sup> To the south and west of the Castle, along Upper Main [254/5] Street, the properties are much shorter than those on Main Street itself, suggesting later, and probably post-medieval development. Although McAlister and Immich (this volume) have noted the lateral subdivision of medieval plots, the (shorter) length of this group of property plots is consistent, suggesting a single laying out event, at a different, presumably later, time to those on Main Street. At the east end of Main Street, the changes in property boundaries are much less clear-cut, and so, too, is the eastern limit of the potential burgage plots. Comparison with other medieval towns suggests that the Dominican Friary would have been immediately outside the town when it was founded,<sup>81</sup> and so its site probably marks the maximum extent of Main Street in 1264. The graveyard which is the only surviving section of the Friary is accessed by Abbey Lane (*sic*), which joins with Main Street at a point 300m from the Castle. If this represents the maximum planned extent of the town, and the repetition of plot widths of *c.* 7.5m in the 1909 streetscape reflects the original burgage plots, then the borough may have had approximately seventy-five plots – it is certainly difficult to argue that any more were ever planned (see also McAlister and Immich, this volume).

Arklow Castle is not mentioned in the Cistercian grant, but there must have been a castle of some kind, as it is a key feature of John's grant of 1185-9. Given John's willingness to part with this *castellum*, it was presumably an earthwork rather than a stone structure, and its juxtaposition in that charter with the "vill of Arklow" provides some corroborating evidence that the two were next to each other. Thus, it was probably on the same site as the later stone castle, to the west of the market square.<sup>82</sup> This area is *c.* 20m above sea level, and overlooks the river, which must still have been tidal at this point. To the east, the land drops gently along Main Street, but to the west and north, the ground drops sharply to a small, unnamed stream and to the Avoca River respectively, the latter at a point which Price identifies as *Poll a' Chalaith*, "the Harbour Pool."<sup>83</sup> Although there is higher land to the south and west, it is a well-defended location. Of the later stone castle, only one short section of the curtain wall is accessible and visible. This is approximately 11m long, and extends east-south-east from the

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<sup>80</sup> John Bradley, "Planned Anglo-Norman towns in Ireland," 440 cites Fethard, Naas, and Thurles as examples of this pattern.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>82</sup> WI040-029002. Historic Environment Viewer <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>, (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>83</sup> Price, *Place-names*, 478.

only surviving tower, which stands at what must have been the northern corner of the castle. Some commentators have argued that the line of the wall can be followed further to the east, but there is a clear break in masonry at the 11m point. It is also possible that further elements of the castle wall survive [255/6] on the castle's western side, but this is not accessible for survey. The tower is circular, and c. 6.4m in diameter. It was originally higher, and a description of Arklow from 1828 calls it "a fine old tower, which, with six others, form(ed) a castle at this position."<sup>84</sup> These other towers presumably marked the corners of a sub-rectangular or triangular enclosure, and perhaps a gatehouse on the east or south side. Using parallels with other "keepless" castles with circular mural towers, I argued for a construction date in the first half of the thirteenth century in 1992,<sup>85</sup> and the few worked sandstone features that remain continue to support this interpretation. Brian Shanahan has argued that some of the surviving architectural features are of sixteenth century date, but agrees that the core structure is thirteenth century.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, it clearly postdates Theobald's grant to the Cistercians, and was almost certainly built after the lands concerned were returned to his family (below).

As there is no evidence that the medieval borough of Arklow was ever walled, this castle, and its earthwork predecessor must have formed the town's only defense during the Middle Ages.<sup>87</sup> Its omission from the 1199-1205 grant suggests that Theobald intended to maintain some presence in Arklow, despite giving away what must have been the lion's share, if not the entirety, of his demesne "on the south side of the river." Indeed, this phrase suggests that Theobald may always have intended to retain some demesne land, on the river's north bank. The grant specifies that the Order are to have "a moiety of the aforesaid water" (i.e. the Avoca), which may indicate that Theobald had a right to divide it, and was retaining the north bank of the river, and its rights, in his own hands. As we have linked Castlemacadam to Adam Anglicus, this cannot have been part of Theobald's demesne land, but it is possible that territory roughly corresponding to the civil parish of Kilbride, east of Castlemacadam, and immediately north of the borough, was demesne, and retained by the Butlers in order to supply the castle (see map 1). The charter's reference to "the burgage plots on [the south] side of the water"

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas Cromwell, "A New Description of Arklow," reproduced in *Arklow Historical Society Journal* 1 (1982): 12.

<sup>85</sup> Harrison, "Lordship," 63-4.

<sup>86</sup> Shanahan, "Manor," 144.

<sup>87</sup> The Archaeological Survey of Ireland entry states that the town had earthwork ramparts, but this may be a misreading of a sixteenth-century document. WI040-029--- Historic Environment Viewer, <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

already discussed, further raises the possibility that there may have been equivalent plots somewhere in Kilbride, but if this was the case, no other evidence is forthcoming, either archaeological or documentary. We cannot even be entirely certain that [256/7] Theobald retained Kilbride in his own hands, and it is equally possible that his plan was to surrender all his interests in the area to the Cistercians, the (earthwork) castle no longer being of interest to him, or, for different reasons, the Cistercian beneficiaries.

The omission of a castle from a grant to a religious house may not be particularly surprising, but the fact that the charter makes no reference to the medieval parish church of Arklow is striking. Today, the site is marked by a small public park and former graveyard on the north side of Main Street,<sup>88</sup> close to the center of the borough, c. 100m from the castle and c. 200m from Abbey Lane, its proposed eastern boundary. There are no structural remains or surviving description which might allow it to be dated. The earliest documentary reference is from 1275, but the church must have been well-established at that time.<sup>89</sup> Technically, the Cistercians, as a contemplative Order, should have had no interest in acquiring a “secular” church, but even by 1200, this rule was more honored in the breach than in the observance. The 1199-1205 grant almost certainly corresponded to the entire medieval parish, and the omission of the parish church from it must be regarded as unusual. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that the church and parish had not yet been established, and this raises the intriguing possibility that the parish church could have been founded by the Cistercians themselves. A dedication to St Mary would certainly be in keeping with Cistercian practice,<sup>90</sup> but her cult was also popular with many Anglo-Norman secular lords. The idea that the Cistercians may have founded the church, or that Theobald Walter founded it in the brief period when the Order maintained an active interest in Arklow, rests on a single piece of evidence. The Cistercian monastery at Abingdon, County Limerick, was the final home of the monks who were granted Arklow (below). When it was dissolved in the mid-sixteenth century, it still controlled the rectory of Arklow.<sup>91</sup> Abingdon is some 180km from Arklow, and it seems very unlikely that this link would have been established at any point after the Order surrendered their rights there

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<sup>88</sup> WI40-029007 – code refers to both the graveyard and the church. Historic Environment Viewer <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>89</sup> Ronan, “Arklow,” 103-4.

<sup>90</sup> Gwynn and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*, 116.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

– ultimately, control of the rectory may have been the only long-term benefit of Theobald’s grant.

The relatively quick migration of the monks of Arklow to Abingdon has been established by a number of scholars (below), but it is by no means clear why they failed to take advantage of their grant. Across Europe, many [257/8] Cistercian foundations failed shortly after their establishment, for various reasons, and there are records of monks slowly migrating from site to site, often owned by the same patron, before finally settling down to create a house that was to endure throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Theobald’s grant was specifically made to “the monks of the Cistercian Order who have gone out of the Abbey of Furness.” This is usually interpreted as referring to a group of monks who had attempted to found a monastery at Wyresdale, Amounderness (Lancashire), on land granted by Theobald’s father, Hervey. This also proved unsuitable for long-term settlement, and it would seem that these monks had returned to Furness shortly before Theobald made his Arklow grant. The account of the foundation of Abingdon preserved in the *Coucher Book of Furness* preserves a memory of the failed Wyresdale foundation, but omits any reference to Arklow, even though the relevant charter was almost certainly preserved at Furness (above).<sup>93</sup>

One possible reason why the Cistercians failed to settle at Arklow relates to the proposed site of their monastery – “the island of Arklow” was specifically granted “for the founding there of one abbey (*abbitia*) of the Cistercian Order.” Today, there is no “island” of Arklow, but the only possible location is at the mouth of the Avoca River, where late eighteenth and early nineteenth century maps show a series of sandy islands through which the river threaded its way to the sea.<sup>94</sup> Here, longshore drift continuously altered the course of the river, gradually pushing its mouth further north until the bar collapsed and the process started again – islands were created by this process, but these were not stable locations.<sup>95</sup> Quite apart from the very real threat of erosion, it would have been very difficult to find firm foundations for the substantial structures that constituted even a small Cistercian monastery on these sandy

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<sup>92</sup> In 1993, I used the example of the monks of *Cara Insula*, Denmark, who moved five times in the course of fourteen years, before finally settling at Øm Kloster in 1172. H. N. Garner, *Øm Kloster Museum* (Århus: Scriptorium, 1984), 10.

<sup>93</sup> Atkinson, *Coucher Book*, 12.

<sup>94</sup> A map showing the “islands of Arklow” as they were in 1796 is reproduced in Power, *Arklow Calendar*, fig. 13.

<sup>95</sup> This process is summarized in Frank Forde, *Maritime Arklow* (Dun Laoghaire: Glendale Press, 1988), 275.

estuarine deposits. In the past, it has been suggested that a small group of graves in Ferrybank, on the north side of the Avoca River, close to the potential sites of the “islands,” might represent the remains of a short-lived monastery, but the evidence for this is tenuous. In 1839, O’Curry noted the discovery of what seem to have been stone-lined graves, together with what may have been a single, possibly high [258/9] medieval recumbent grave-slab.<sup>96</sup> There is no particular reason to associate any of these burials with the Cistercians. The site could potentially be of early rather than high medieval origin, and perhaps associated with a ferry crossing, whatever its date. It is far more likely that the Cistercians rapidly rejected the possibility of building in this area, but this need not have led to their abandonment of Arklow. In fact, Theobald’s grant specified that they were free to build their abbey “elsewhere that they may have seen that might be more useful and consistent with their work within the same land.” That they chose not to do so points to a more fundamental problem with the grant.

At a local scale, Theobald’s grant of c. 3270 hectares (above) was exceptionally generous, encompassing at the very least two thirds of his demesne, and hence of a knight’s fee, but the high ideals of the Cistercians required substantial land grants to support them. It seems likely that the fundamental problem with Theobald’s grant was that it did not include enough land. If the monks of Wyresdale followed the letter of the Cistercian rule, at least twelve monks should have moved to Arklow,<sup>97</sup> and as their monastery grew, the rising numbers of monks and lay brethren would have required very extensive lands to sustain themselves, let alone to prosper. Having already abandoned Wyresdale, the monks may have realized the limitations of the Arklow grant relatively quickly, and turned to their patron for a solution. Theobald’s solution was another grant, this time of land at Abingdon, County Limerick.

Abingdon seems to have been in existence by 1205, when a grant to the abbot and monks of what are possibly additional lands survives. The precise filiation of this monastery is confused, as monks from the north French Cistercian house of Savigny were clearly present.<sup>98</sup> However, Savigny was also the mother house of Furness, and by the fifteenth century, Furness was claiming Abingdon (or Woney, as it was better known) as a daughter house.<sup>99</sup> As noted earlier, the Arklow grant dates from 1199-1205, so these monks could theoretically have been

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<sup>96</sup> Cited in Ronan, “Arklow,” 103-4, fn. This corresponds to WI040-029008. Historic Environment Viewer <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>97</sup> Southern, *Western Society and the Church*, x.

<sup>98</sup> Gwynn and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*, 126.

<sup>99</sup> Atkinson, *Coucher Book* 1, 12.

part of the founding group at Abingdon, or have joined the monks from Savigny a very short time after its foundation. The dates also suggest that the monks are very unlikely to have spent more than five years in Arklow, and their time there could have been much shorter. It also seems clear that a condition of their move to Abingdon must have been the surrender of the Arklow grant to Theobald. To the Order, the logistics of managing a large and distant estate [259/60] during the foundation of the new monastery at Abingdon must have seemed enormous, and it can, perhaps, be assumed that they were well-compensated with equivalent lands closer to their new home. Theobald and his successors were in a far better position to administer, manage and defend Arklow, and they were to invest considerable resources there in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Control of the manor was occasionally wrested from them, but they were to retain an interest in this isolated manor for the rest of the Middle Ages.<sup>100</sup>

To the small group of monks who travelled to Arklow, some of whom may already have struggled to establish a monastery at Wyresdale, Abingdon represented a final home, as it grew and developed as an important and long-lasting presence in the landscape. For Theobald, the successful establishment of Abingdon ensured that he had fulfilled his obligations to a community whose associations with his family had begun with his father, as well as demonstrating a long-standing commitment to the Cistercian Order. He was buried at Abingdon following his death in 1206.<sup>101</sup>

It was Theobald Walter's descendent, Theobald IV, who established a successful religious house at Arklow. He founded the Dominican Priory of the Holy Cross at Arklow in 1263, at a site which probably corresponded to the eastern edge of the borough (above).<sup>102</sup> As a mendicant order, the Dominicans did not require the extensive tracts of land, with or without tenants, on which the contemplative Cistercians relied, and as a preaching order, a location on the edge of a nucleated settlement, close to the heart of a large parish, must have suited them very well, as a location from which they could preach to the general population.<sup>103</sup> The church they built at Arklow was substantial enough to hold the remains of their founder, when he died at Arklow Castle in 1285. There are local stories that his marble tomb survived at the site until

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<sup>100</sup> Harrison, "Lordship," 44-54, 66-77.

<sup>101</sup> Stalley, *Cistercian Monasteries*, 241-2.

<sup>102</sup> Gwynn and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*, 221.

<sup>103</sup> Southern, *Western Society and the Church*, 273.

the late 1930s, but unfortunately these cannot be substantiated.<sup>104</sup> In the early fifteenth century, papal indulgences were promised to pilgrims who visited the site, presumably to view a relic of the cross after which the house was named. At least one donation of this period survives – a small portable *biblia*, heavily abbreviated, but with red and blue illumination, which is now in Lambeth Palace Library.<sup>105</sup> It was written in the thirteenth century and given to the Dominicans of Arklow not by the Butlers, but by one Robert Dowdall, a member of a well-connected [260/1] merchant family, at an unknown date in the fifteenth century, based on the dedication.<sup>106</sup> When the house was suppressed in 1539-41, the last resident prior was relieved of

the church and belfry, chapter house, dormitory, hall, three chambers, a store, a kitchen, cemetery and garden containing two acres, with two parks and three acres of land in the great measure of Arklow, and four messuages in the said town.<sup>107</sup>

Today, the graveyard that is assumed to mark the only surviving element of the Priory, the “cemetery” referred to in 1541, lies just outside the townland of Arklow, in the north-eastern corner of Abbeylands, a name first recorded in the Down Survey, more than a hundred years after the Priory’s suppression.<sup>108</sup> To the north and northwest of this graveyard the otherwise regular boundary between the two townlands makes a number of sharp turns,<sup>109</sup> and it seems very likely that these irregularities represent the last remnants of some of these buildings, and possibly even the church. As with so much of the evidence associated with medieval Arklow, this evidence is ephemeral. The Cistercian charter which lies at the core of this study is a rare exception, and sheds new light on a little studied area in a well-studied phase of development.

Reflecting on changes within the discipline in the twenty-five years since last I worked with this material, the most obvious is the sheer quantity of material which can now be accessed digitally, from Ordnance Survey maps to the contents of Lambeth Palace Library. The research trips to libraries and institutions which would have been essential to this project at the time are largely a thing of the past, although I have to confess to a reawakened desire to view the Arklow *biblia*. Digital resources have also made some elements of field work easier, even if the

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<sup>104</sup> M. Greene, “Summer Outings,” *Arklow Historical and Archaeological Journal* (1982): 16.

<sup>105</sup> W. Hawkes, “The Liturgy in Dublin 1200-1500: Manuscript Sources,” *Reportorium Novum* 2 (1958): 33-68 at 64, 66.

<sup>106</sup> “Lambeth Palace Library MS534,” <https://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/> (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>107</sup> Gwynn and Hadcock, *Religious Houses*, 221.

<sup>108</sup> [www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie) (accessed 12 April 2022).

<sup>109</sup> Ordnance Survey twenty-five inch sheet 40.XIX (Wicklow), published 1909.



necessity for site visits remains self-evident, if unfulfilled in this time of Covid-19. At a personal level, I am at once impressed by my ability to engage with Latin documents, and irritated by my lack of curiosity as to their origins and survival. My confidence in placenames, on the other hand, has diminished more or less proportionately to my increasing awareness of the complexity of the linguistic and historical issues involved in their interpretation. Intellectually, I am struck by my determination to demonstrate that Arklow was at the very least proto-urban in both the Viking and Anglo-Norman [261/2] periods, and issues of settlement classification relating to urbanism which seemed very important at the time have now faded.

What can this study contribute to contemporary scholarship? For the Viking Age, it is essentially new research elsewhere that has led to a complete reappraisal of the exceptionally flimsy evidence from Arklow and I think that we are less certain of a Hiberno-Norse presence in the area than we were in 1993. For the High Middle Ages, the legalistic, political history which was a feature of 1990s revisionism has moved on, and archaeological processualism was already dying when I became aware of it as a postgraduate. Tadhg O’Keeffe’s *Medieval Ireland – an Archaeology*, now nearly twenty years old, has provided a counterpoint to Barry’s *Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, which has been in print for more than thirty.<sup>110</sup> Contemporary research on medieval settlement has moved on too, with excellent new work on “Gaelic” Irish sites in particular, spearheaded by the Discovery Programme.<sup>111</sup> Major excavations at castles such as Trim,<sup>112</sup> and monastic sites such as Kells Priory<sup>113</sup> have brought vital new data into the public arena, as have various publications in the *Irish Historic Towns Atlas* series. There has been new documentary research on some of the better recorded manors, notably the royal manors of Dublin,<sup>114</sup> and a more wide-ranging interdisciplinary publication on manors in the medieval and early modern periods.<sup>115</sup> There has also been a major interdisciplinary study of the relationship between Dublin and its hinterland which seeks to

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<sup>110</sup> T. B. Barry, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1987).

<sup>111</sup> See, in particular, O’Conor, *Rural Settlement*, 73-108; and the Discovery Programme excavations at Tusk, County Roscommon, e.g. Niall Brady, “Personifying the Gael: Something of a Challenge for Archaeologists,” *Eolas* 1 (2006): 18-26.

<sup>112</sup> Alan Hayden, *Trim Castle, Co. Meath: Excavations 1995-8* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2011).

<sup>113</sup> Thomas Fanning and Miriam Clyne, *Kells Priory: Archaeological Excavations* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> Áine Foley, *The Royal Manors of County Dublin: Crown and Community* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Lyttleton and O’Keeffe, *The Manor in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland*.

draw together urban and rural evidence.<sup>116</sup> However, we still know relatively little about the small boroughs of Ireland. The explosion in excavation which marked the 1990s and early 2000s largely passed these sites by, and we know little more about their layout and function than in 1993. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of work on manors has, understandably, focused on the best-documented examples. These also tend to be those with the best archaeological evidence for extensive “Anglo-Norman” rural settlement – manors where there is less visible evidence for population movement and/or landscape transformation have been similarly neglected. As a poorly documented [262/3] region with limited surviving archaeological evidence, Arklow is typical of the overwhelming majority of Anglo-Norman settlements across the country, and the evidence presented here provides a context for similar studies elsewhere. My interpretation is not radical, but should contribute to broader debates on similar manors.

Just as Arklow may be considered important because it was a relatively small and poorly recorded settlement, so too Theobald’s charter to the Cistercians may be of wider interest because it records a monastery that “failed.” It also illustrates the kinds of gifts which the Order was willing to accept c. 1200, and this, in turn, may shed light on the extent to which they were abandoning the extreme austerity which St Bernard had promoted. As such it may contribute to debates generated by the recent publication of excavations at large, successful Cistercian houses such as Tintern<sup>117</sup> and Bective.<sup>118</sup>

More generally, it may also shed light on the process of manor and parish formation in the thirteenth century, providing relatively clear evidence that at least one parish established in the early thirteenth century followed the boundaries of an already extant territory, and that the later civil parish closely reflects these early thirteenth century boundaries.

A return to Anglo-Norman Ireland and its settlements has also convinced me that the field still has much to offer, twenty-five years after cutting my teeth at what was then the only institution in the Republic of Ireland to offer medieval history as a subject, and under the supervision of a pioneer in that field. Long may this research continue.

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<sup>116</sup> Margaret Murphy and Michael Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages: Settlement, Land-use and Economy* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010).

<sup>117</sup> Ann Lynch and M. G. L. Baillie, *Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford: Cistercians and Colcloughs: excavations 1982-2007* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> Geraldine Stout and Matthew Stout, *The Bective Abbey Project, Co. Meath: Excavations 2009-12* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2016).

## **Acknowledgements**

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Shortly before publication, I became aware of a new Medieval Arklow Project, which is gathering evidence for this period of the settlement's history. Its results are awaited with great interest. [263/4]

## Appendix

### **Charter of Theobald Walter of lands in Arklow to the monks of Furness Abbey**

*Omnibus sanctae matris ecclesiae filiis, tam presentibus quam futuris, Theobaldus Walteri, pincerna Hiberniae, salute in Domino. Sciatis me pro amore Dei, et beatae Dei genitricis virginis Mariae, et pro salute animae H. regis Angl. et pro salute animae regis Ricardi, et pro salute animae Johannes regis Angliae, et pro Ranulphi de Glainvil, et pro salute animae comites Willielmi Marescalli et pro salute animae domini H. Cantuariensis archiepiscopi fratris mei et pro animabus Hervei Walteri patris mei, et Matildis de Valuniis matris mei et pro salute animae meae et Matildis sponsae meae, et pro animabus omnium antecessorum et successorum meorum, dedissi, et hac praesenti carta mea confirmasse, Deo et beatae Mariae, et monachis Cisterciensis ordinis, qui exierunt de abbacia de Furnesio, omnes dominicos meos in Arkelo, versus austrum aquae, cum burgagiis ex illa parte aquae, cum omnibus suis pertinentiis; ita quod neque stagna, neque piscario in transverso aquae ibi fieri possit, et sic ascendendo usque ad terram Adae Anglici; et sic ascendendo illam aquam quae venit de austro, inter terram quae fuit Adae Anglici, usque ad terram Johannes de Pencott. Dedi etiam eis totam marina, cum omnibus salinis praedictae terrae, usque ad terram Maricii filii Moricii, cum wrecca maris, excepta terra et salina abbatis et monachorum de Balkinglas. Praeterea dedi eis insulam de Arkelo ad fundandam ibi unam abbatiam de ordine Cistercienci, vel alibi ubi viderint, quod fuerit utilius et conventius ad opus eorum infra eandem terram, et medietatem aquae praedictae, cum piscatione, et cum tota venatione, in quantum terra eorum se extendit; et cum omnibus Hibernibus ad praedictam terram pertinentibus, et cum tota sequela eorum, et cum omnibus catallis sis. Haec omnia dedi eis in liberam, et puram et perpetuam elemosinam; habenda et tenenda sicut ulla elemosina liberius, et quietus, dare et tenere poterint, in bosco, in plano, in pratis, pascuis, et pasturis, in moris, muscis et mariscis, in aquis et molendis, in madio et sicco, et in omnibus aisiamentis, quae infra praedictam sunt et esse possit. Et ego et heredes mei illos praedictos monachos de omni seculari servitis et demanda aquietabimus, nostrum, warantizabimus. Hiis testibus, H. Cantuariensi archiepiscopo, Domino R. abate de Furnensio, et convent ejusdem loci, R. cleric de Thireton, Gilberto de Kantewall, Halmaric de Bellifaco, Morico filio Maricii, Waltero de Cantewall, Johanne de Pencott, Galfrido de Stantone Johanne Wascelin, Gilberto cleric, qui caram scripsit, et multis aliis.*

To all sons of holy mother church both present and future, Theobald Walter, Butler of Ireland (sends) greetings in the Lord. Know that I, for the love of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary

the mother of God, and for the salvation of the soul of Henry King of England, and for the salvation of the soul of King Richard, and for the salvation of the soul of John, King of England, and for the soul of Ranulf Glanville, and for [264/5] the salvation of the soul of Earl William Marshall, and for the salvation of the soul of my brother Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for the souls of Hervey Walter my father and Matilda of Valognes my mother, and for the salvation of Matilda my wife, and for the souls of all my ancestors and successors have given and by this my present charter have confirmed, to God and to the blessed Mary and the monks of the Cistercian order who have gone out of the abbey of Furness, all my demesne in Arklow on the south side of the water, with the burgage plots on that side of the water with all their appurtenances, so that neither ponds nor fishponds might be able to cross the water (without their consent), and thus by ascending to the land of Adam Anglicus: and thus by ascending that water which comes from the south between the land which Adam Anglicus had up to the land of John de Pencott. I have also given them all the sea coast, with all the salt-pans of the aforesaid land up to the land of Maurice fitzMaurice, with all sea-wrecks, excluding the land and salt-pans of the abbot and monks of Baltinglass. Moreover, I have given to them the island of Arklow for the founding there of one abbey of the Cistercian Order, or elsewhere that they have seen that might be more useful and consistent to their work within the same land, and a moiety of the aforesaid water, with fishponds, and with all hunting rights in as much as their land extends; and with all the Irish to the aforesaid land pertaining, and with them all their households, and withal their cattle (or chattels). All this I have given to them in free, pure and perpetual alms; having and holding that they will be able to give and to hold (as) any free gift, in woods, in plains, in meadows and pastures and pasture rights, in moors, marshes and morasses, in water and mills, in wet and dry, and in all easements which are possible under the aforesaid and is able to be. And I and my heirs will guarantee (and) will acquit these aforesaid monks of every secular service and demand of us. These witness: Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord R. Abbot of Furness, and the convent of the same place, R. the Cleric of Thireton, Gilbert de Kantewall, Almaric de Bellafugo, Maurice FitzMaurice, Walter de Kantewall, John de Pencott, Galfrid de Stanton, John Wascelin, Gilbert the Cleric, who wrote this script, and many others.



[240] Figure 11.1. Medieval Settlement around Arklow, County Wicklow. This is an excerpt from a larger map prepared in 1993. It shows the major rivers and uplands of the area (200m contours), as well as the civil parishes (names in italics). Boroughs are represented by black dots, castles by semicircles, moated sites by diamonds, and manorial centres by the letter “M”. Note that Ballintemple, the parish immediately west of Arklow, between Killahurler and Castlemacadam, is not named.

**NB. For copyright reasons, Figure 11.2 is not reproduced here.**

[242] Figure 11.2. Medieval settlement around Arklow, County Wicklow. GIS-generated map, prepared for this publication, with features directly comparable to those in Figure 11.1