

# Where was Ráith Breasail?

By Diarmuid Ó Murchadha

The synod of Ráith Breasail has long been regarded as one of the most important medieval synods held in Ireland, since it was there that the first significant attempt was made to fix diocesan boundaries. But the actual location of this synod has never been satisfactorily established, firstly because the name has long since fallen into disuse, and secondly because in the annals it was otherwise named.

The following is the relevant entry from *The annals of Ulster* (AD 1131), whose account seems to be the most original and complete one.

*Senadh do tinol i Fiadh m. Aenghusa la maithibh Erenn im Chellach comarba Patraic 7 im Maelmuire H. nDunan im uasalshenoir Erenn co coecait n-espoc uel paulo plus co tri cetaibh sacart 7 co tri milibh mc. n-ecalsa im Muircertach imorro H. Briain co maithibh Leth Mogha im erail riaghla 7 sobesa for cach eter tuaith 7 eclais.*

("A synod was held in Fiadh mic Aenghusa by the nobles of Ireland, including Cellach, successor of Patrick, and Mael Muire ua Dúnán, noble elder of Ireland, with fifty bishops or a little more, three hundred priests and three thousand clerics, [and] also with Muirchertach ua Briain, with the nobles of Leth Moga, to enjoin uprightness and good conduct on everyone, both laity and church").<sup>1</sup>

In the other major compilations of annals, the name appears as follows:

AI 1111: *Mórdál fer nÉrenn hi Fíad Mac nAengussa.*<sup>2</sup>

A.Tig. [1111]: *Mordal fer nÉrenn etir laechaib 7 cleirchib i Fiadh Aengusa.*<sup>3</sup>

CS 1107: *Senad mor i Fiad mic nAongusa.*<sup>4</sup>

ALC 1111: *Senadh chléirech nErenn a bFiadh mic nÓenghusa.*<sup>5</sup>

AFM 1111: *Senadh do thionól hi Fiadh mic nAenguis.*<sup>6</sup>

This surprising unanimity in regard to the name of the venue misled some later commentators, in particular Geoffrey Keating who, as it happens, is our sole authority for details of the diocesan boundaries as decided there. These, he informs us, he found in the old book of annals of Clonenagh (Co. Laois) – *do réir sheinleabhair annála eaglaise Chluana hEidhneach.*<sup>7</sup> But Keating's treatment of Fiadh mic Aonghusa (or mac nAonghusa)<sup>8</sup> and Ráith Breasail as two separate synod locations is not attested in any of the various collections of annals, none of which makes separate references to them.

Keating, while he gives precedence to Giolla Easpuig (Gilbertus of Limerick, papal legate) at the synod, is in agreement with the annals in noting the presence of Cellach (or Gilla Cellaig) of Armagh, while his reference to *Crosa na n-uile easpog is na n-uile laoch is cléireach* ("the crosses of all the bishops and of all the laity and clergy") echoes the *eter clerchu 7 laechu* of AI and A.Tig. Historians in general, with the exception of Lanigan<sup>9</sup> and Mac Erlean,<sup>10</sup> did not accept Keating's divergent treatment, but the hypothesis has recently been revived by Professor David Dumville (see below).

There is annalistic evidence which links the two names. In AI – a Munster compilation, the extant original MS of which has contemporaneous entries from 1092 on – *hi fiad mac nAengussa* is glossed (interlined and in the margin): *.i. i Raith Bressail*. Furthermore, a mnemonic quatrain recalling the number of clergy present *i Senud Rátha Bressail* is inscribed along the upper margin of the same folio, where the numbers of bishops (50) and priests (300) correspond exactly to those given in AU for the synod of Fiad mac nAengusa. The hand which entered the annal for 1111 differs from the “loose angular hand” responsible for that of the following year,<sup>11</sup> and a comparison of the two annals in the facsimile indicates that the marginalia of 1111 were put in by the scribe of 1112,<sup>12</sup> in which case we have almost contemporaneous evidence that the two names refer to the same place.

## Uisneach

A further complication arose from the holding of another synod later in the year, at Uisneach (Ushnagh Hill, Co. Westmeath). Three separate synods in one year (as postulated by Lanigan and Mac Erlean) would be exceptional. It was unusual even to hold two, but the *raison d'être* for this second one at Uisneach was to establish the right of Clonmacnoise to have its own diocese, something that was not recognized at Ráith Breasail, where the claims of Clonmacnoise were disregarded in favour of Clonard, the boundaries of which, as noted by Keating, were extended to reach the Shannon.

The synod of Uisneach was, in the main, ignored by the annalists, but in what are known as the Cottonian annals it is the only one recorded for AD 1111.<sup>13</sup> Robin Flower believed that these annals were written in the monastery of the Holy Trinity on Loch Cé, and that the manuscript “remained in Holy Trinity till the secularization of that house, being used by the writers of the *Annals of Loch Cé*, who worked for the MacDermots”.<sup>14</sup> This would explain why the compiler of ALC 1111, in what is otherwise an almost exact copy of the AU entry, made an insertion: “a *bfhiadh mac noenghusa a nuisnech*”.<sup>15</sup>

This mistaken identification led to a great deal of scholarly confusion subsequently. The “Four Masters” for their compilation used both *Leabhar Shenaidh mec Maghnussa* (our AU) and *Leabhar muintire Duibgendáin Chille Rónáin* (of which our ALC is a transcript).<sup>16</sup> Again, their entry regarding the synod of 1111 was practically word for word that of AU. However (although this is not in O’Donovan’s edition), both of the original autograph MSS of the early part of AFM have the words “*senadh uisnigh*” added in the margin of the page, in the same hand as that of the main entry.<sup>17</sup>

Geoffrey Keating did not refer to Uisneach at all. Neither did his contemporary, Sir James Ware, who in 1639 with reference to Cellach of Armagh commented: “*Statuta intelligit fortasse celeberrimae illius synodi in loco dicto Aengusii terra coactae, anno MCXI, vel MCXII, cui interfuisse dicuntur episcopi 50, praeter presbyteros 318*”.<sup>18</sup> (“The decree refers perhaps to the celebrated assembly of that synod in the place called the land of Áengus, in the year 1111 or 1112, in which 50 bishops are said to have taken part, along with 318 priests”). In the margin he names his source as “*Annal[es] Ulton[iae]*”, though these cannot be our AU which number the priests at 300. His details must have come from A.Tig. (or a cognate source) since these are the only existing annals to reckon 318 priests – and are also alone in naming the site “*Fiadh Aengusa*” (= *Aengusii terra*).

A few years later, John Colgan made good use of the Franciscan MS of AFM, brought by Míchéal Ó Cléirigh to Louvain, and wrote a marginal comment on it (relative to the numbers of clergy) at AD 1111. In his own work, regarding the *Synodus indicta in hoc loco Fiadh-mac-*

*Aengussu* he added the somewhat erratically-printed comment: *Haec Synodus in margine Synodus de Ananlium [sic] vocatur Vsneach qui mons speciosus est Mediae.* ("This synod in the margin of the annals is called Usneach, which is a notable mountain in Midhe"). Further on in the same paragraph he quoted from Ware, but between "illius synodi" and "in loco" he inserted the words: *iuxta Annales Vltonienses (ut habent in Margine)*, the use of the plural "habent" again making it appear (wrongly) that the margin of the annals was the one in question.<sup>19</sup> The Bollandists accepted Colgan's view.<sup>20</sup> So, in the nineteenth century, did John Lanigan<sup>21</sup> and John O'Donovan.<sup>22</sup>

John Lynch was the first commentator to realize that Fiad mac nÁengusa and Ráith Breasail referred to the same place, while *Uisneach* was the site of a separate synod. He named his sources for *Uisneach* as *vetusti annales Hibernici, quorum apographum habeo*<sup>23</sup> ("old Irish annals, of which I have a copy"). These unnamed annals obviously were not those of Loch Cé but probably belonged to the group associated with Clonmacnoise, where there would have been a keen interest in the acts of the synod of *Uisneach*. Of this group, A.Tig. were content to record the two synods separately in the one year, but the compiler of *Chronicum Scotorum*, having entered the standard account of the synod of Fiad mac nÁengusa, followed with a full description of the division of the churches of Midhe between the dioceses of Clonmacnoise and Clonard, as decided at the synod of *Uisneach*.<sup>24</sup>

Lynch's conclusion was generally accepted by twentieth-century historians — Curtis,<sup>25</sup> Kenney,<sup>26</sup> Hughes,<sup>27</sup> Otway-Ruthven,<sup>28</sup> Watt,<sup>29</sup> Aubrey Gwynn<sup>30</sup> and Ó Cróinín<sup>31</sup> among others. Recently, however, Prof. Dumville<sup>32</sup> has reverted to Keating's position. But Keating's research into synods, it has to be said, was not very wide-ranging. He stated, for example, that prior to the coming of the Normans, only three synods, or *comhdhála coithceanna* (Fiad mac nÁengusa, Ráith Breasail and Kells — in reality only two), had been convened in Ireland.<sup>33</sup>



The church and graveyard site, Glankeen, near Borrisoleigh, viewed from the north-east, showing the ivy-mantled ruins of the medieval parish church, built on the site of Cill Chuileán, the monastery founded by St Cuileán in the seventh century. — Photo copyright William J. Hayes.

This is in strong contrast to Dumville's list of 16 synods between 1096 and 1167 – without reckoning earlier ones from the fifth century on.<sup>34</sup> Keating's dating is also somewhat arbitrary, his sources probably being undated. His account of Fiad mac nÁengusa – which he variously dated 1106 and 1105<sup>35</sup> – appears to derive from the undated A.Tig. or from an analogous source. He does not seem to have come across the name Ráith Breasail until he read the account in the Book of Clonenagh – also, it would seem, undated, since he again supplied two conflicting dates, 1100 and 1110.<sup>36</sup> Dumville's suggested dating, 1118, seems improbable in view of the fact that the synod of Uisneach was convened (in 1111) specifically to redress the Ráith Breasail decision to exclude Clonmacnoise as a diocese.

There is further evidence as to the dating of Ráith Breasail – and its equivalence with Fiad mac nÁengusa – in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster. An annalistic tract therein, *Do fhlaithesaib Hérend iar creitim*, appears to have been written after the defeat and slaying of Muirchertach mac Néill in 1166 (AU) and during the reign of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair (d.1198). The entries are undated but in chronological order. The brief entry "Senad Rátha Bresail"<sup>37</sup> comes after the battle of Mag Coba and the killing of Magnus, king of the Vikings (AU 1103) and before a victory gained by Donnchad mac Murchada (slain in 1115, AU) and the battle of Dublin (AU 1115). Accordingly, it is consistent with the main body of annals in naming only one synod in this period (1103-1115) which it calls the synod of Ráith Breasail.

There is a similar later tract known as *Réim Rígraide*, which is generally found attached to *Lebor Gabála*. The version in the early fifteenth-century Book of Lecan contains many of the same entries as are in the Book of Leinster's *Do fhlaithesaib Hérend*, including "Cath Maigi Coba", followed by a reference to the synod, which here reads: *In seanadh mor fri da mac nOengusa*. (The MS (Lec. facs. 311 r a 8) has the contracted form "f" with suprascript "i", followed by "da" – obviously, as the editor of *Lebor Gabála* points out, a corrupt reading of *fiada*).<sup>38</sup> This is another clear indication that Ráith Breasail and Fiad mac nÁengusa refer to the same synod.

## Ráith Breasail

The confusion of names militated against a valid identification of the site. Lanigan (1822) was first in the field with a vague conjecture: "Raith-Breasail may have been in Hy-Breasail, now Clanbrassil, Co. Armagh, or in the other Hy-Bressail, that formed part of Hy-Falgia in Leinster".<sup>39</sup> This was disregarded by John O'Donovan who opted for Mountrath, Co. Laois.<sup>40</sup> W.D. Killen thought it likely that the synod was held in the monastery of Clonenagh, Co. Laois, presumably because of Keating's references to its annals.<sup>41</sup>

In 1984 a new orientation was given to the debate by Anthony Candon, who directed attention to the townland of Fortgrady in the parish of Dromtarriff, barony of Duhallow, Co. Cork.<sup>42</sup> He cited evidence to show that the old name of this townland in the seventeenth century was "Rathbrassill" – a name which, he tells us, was still in use locally as an alternative to Fortgrady. The remains of the name-giving ringfort are still visible in the western corner of the townland.

Candon's identification has been accepted by Dumville,<sup>43</sup> but despite its congruent name the site must be considered an unlikely one. In the first place, Duhallow then formed part of the hegemony of the MacCarthys, none of whom is mentioned in connexion with the synod. Rather is its instigation assigned to Muirchertach Ua Briain whose interests lay in north and east Munster. Apart from Muirchertach "with the nobles of Leth Moga", the synod was attended by Cellach, archbishop of Armagh, Maolmuire Ua Dúnáin, chief bishop of Munster, 50 or so other

bishops, 300 priests and 3,000 clerical students. It would have been an arduous task to convey all of these to the distant and little-known region of Duhallow.

From the list of 23 twelfth-century synods as noted by Dumville,<sup>44</sup> we can see that, apart from Roscommon (not recorded in existing annals) and Clonfert and Tuam in the plains of east Galway, they were all held in the well-trodden plains of Leinster and east Munster, three of them being held in Cashel (1101, 1134, 1172). Dromtarriff does not fit into this pattern. There was, however, another Ráith Breasail in Co. Tipperary (referred to by Anthony Candon in his last paragraph), one in a much more accessible situation.

## Mag Mossaid

The first to call attention to this location was Eugene O'Curry, in a footnote to his edition of a poem from the Book of Leinster detailing the exploits of Crimthann, a fifth-century king of Laigin.<sup>45</sup> A slightly earlier version (c.1132) is to be found in the MS Rawlinson B. 502, where the quatrain in question reads:

*Crech na Samaire iar sodain / sé rochosain  
robriú in maidm híc Ráith Bresail / i mMaig Mossaid.*<sup>46</sup>

("The plunder of Samair after that, it was he who gained it; he inflicted the battle-rout at Ráith Bressail, in Mag Mossaid").

O'Curry then quoted from two manuscript sources which indicated where the plain lay. One contained a legendary account of the "finding" of the Rock of Cashel, in the course of which Conall, king of Éile, ordered his people to travel southwards across Mag Mossaid to Aircetal, in the direction of Cashel.<sup>47</sup> This indication that Mag Mossaid was the name of the large central plain of Co. Tipperary is confirmed by a quoted incident from the Life of Mocháemóc.<sup>48</sup> The king of Cashel, following an encounter with the saint, in a vision was led by an old man to the ramparts of the Rock of Cashel, from whence looking southwards he could see Campus Femyn (*Mag Feimin*, the plain between Cashel and Clonmel) filled with white-robed saints, and looking northwards beheld a similar host in Campus Mossadh (*Mag Mossaid*). In case any doubt remained, the compiler added: *Arx enim Cassel in confinio duorum speciorum camporum constat, Femyn scilicet et Mossadh.* ("For the fortress of Cashel stands on the borders of two spacious plains, namely, Feimen and Mossadh").

As with similar extensive plains elsewhere — Aí, Brega, Feimen, Lorg, Muirtheimne — Mossad was the original name of this central plain of Tipperary before the generic *mag* was prefixed. In an account of the 100 battles which Tuathal Techtmar inflicted on the four provinces *Cath Mossadh fri Lossad mac Liachtai* is numbered among the Munster ones.<sup>49</sup> "Tri mane mossud" are among the triads listed in Táin Bó Cuailnge,<sup>50</sup> and "Tri mordai mosoth" in the Yellow Book of Lecan.<sup>51</sup> Another tract in YBL tells us that Mag Mossaid derives its name from one "Mosad Mogilla".<sup>52</sup> This dinnsenchas-type derivation is not of any significance, except that it confirms, along with the other references, that early chroniclers were familiar with the name Mag Mossaid.

Although the title did not survive into more recent times, there is a vestige of it to be found in a sixteenth-century document. When one looks, as Fáilbe Flann did, northwards from the ramparts of Cashel, the level expanse is broken by the conspicuous hill-ridge of Killough, described in 1611 as "(Sall's land in) Knockiloghoe otherwise Slievemosse"<sup>53</sup> — probably \**Sliaibh*

*Mossaidh*. The plain continues northwards from there to the slopes of Bearnán Éile, the well-known "Devil's Bit" mountain. This *campus speciosus*, reaching from Cashel to beyond Templemore, embraces the baronies of Eliogarty, Kilnamanagh (Upper and Lower) and the northern part of Middlethird, and O'Curry could not provide an exact location for Ráith Breasail within it.

Neither could those who followed his lead, Edmund Hogan, for example.<sup>54</sup> John Mac Erlean placed it "in the neighbourhood of Thurles or Templemore";<sup>55</sup> Aubrey Gwynn would only venture "in the great central plain of Tipperary";<sup>56</sup> while J.A. Watt situated it near Cashel.<sup>57</sup> Nearest the mark, in my opinion, was John Ryan, who thought that it was probably in Éile (Eliogarty).<sup>58</sup>

I believe that the site in question was on the western side of the barony of Eliogarty, not far from Borrissleigh. This is very much a border area, between Uí Luigdech and Éile in the early period, a place where in the present day the baronies of Eliogarty, Kilnamanagh (Upper) and Upper Ormond meet, and — most significantly of all, in view of the proceedings of the synod — it is the region where the dioceses of Cashel, Killaloe and Emly come together. Furthermore, ready access to the area was provided by nearby *Slige Dála*, the great highway from the midlands to the Limerick region, which was also used as a boundary mark for Dál Cais territory and for the new diocese of Killaloe.<sup>59</sup>

The parishes I wish to direct attention to are Glenkeen, Drom and Kilfithmone. The first is now in the barony of Kilnamanagh Upper, and on three sides forms the boundary with the baronies of Upper Ormond, Ikerrin and Eliogarty. Drom is slightly to the east of it, in Eliogarty and bounded on one side by the barony of Ikerrin, while the small parish of Kilfithmone is placed midway between the other two, on the eastern border of Eliogarty; so much of a border parish is it that a small part of Kilfithmone townland is actually in the parish of Glenkeen and therefore in a different barony. The three parishes are all in Cashel diocese, but Glenkeen old parish church is so close to the border that it served as a boundary mark for the diocese of Killaloe in Keating's account: *ó Shliabh Uidhe an Ríogh* [Cratloe mt., Co. Clare] *go Sliabh Caoin nó Gleann Caoin*.<sup>60</sup>

Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain has more than once drawn attention to the significance of border sites, from military, social and religious standpoints. In his 1972 article he quotes European scholars to the effect that boundary settlements (*oppida*), notably those in Celtic Gaul, were places where assemblies were held regularly, and concludes with a section on the original religious significance of boundary areas in Ireland.<sup>61</sup> (In this context, Uisneach, the synod of which has been referred to above, provides a perfect example. Traditionally the point where the five fifths of Ireland meet, it was the venue for an annual Bealtaine assembly and fair in honour of the pagan deity, Béal).<sup>62</sup>

In his 1974 article on boundary battle-sites, Ó Riain refers to the fact that "assemblies to elect a king were normally held at a limit of the lands over which he was entitled to reign".<sup>63</sup> This is consonant with the holding in a similar border region of an assembly to designate areas over which diocesan bishops were to preside, particularly as one of those dioceses (Killaloe) was to be coterminous with the recently-expanded territory of Dál Cais, whose ruler, Muirchertach Ua Briain, was the convenor of the synod. Furthermore, an assembly on the borders of Éile would retain the connexion with Cashel, Munster's chief ecclesiastical site since its handing over to the church by Muirchertach ten years earlier.<sup>64</sup>

## Éile

This new arrangement allotted Deiscert Éile or Éile Uí Fhócarta (Eliogarty) to Cashel diocese

and Éile Tuaiscirt (which stretched northwards almost as far as Birr in Co.Offaly) to Killaloe. In the opinion of Prof. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, the Éile, Araid and others “may represent the detritus of a widespread upheaval amongst the peoples of the Munster and Leinster borders which seems to have been in progress in the sixth and seventh centuries. Over all these peoples the Eóganacht kings of Munster exercised a loose and general hegemony”.<sup>65</sup>

Prof. F.J. Byrne believes that the Éile fell into Munster hands in the fifth century from the Laigin who were then hard pressed by the Uí Néill.<sup>66</sup> T.F. O’Rahilly has pointed out that names such as Brí Éile, Móin Éile and Magh Éile in Leinster suggest that the Éile were pushed southwards in the sixth century, and then had a Munster pedigree invented for them by the genealogists.<sup>67</sup> According to this, they were descended from Tadc mac Céin, sometimes described as of Cashel, and purported to be a nephew of Eógan Már, *a quo* Eóganacht.<sup>68</sup>

As it happened, there was at this time a marriage relationship between the reigning families of Dál Cais and Deiscert Éile; Muirchertach Ua Briain’s mother was Gormlaith, daughter of Ua Fócarta.<sup>69</sup> In the eleventh century (and later) the lords of Deiscert Éile were the Uí Fhócarta or Uí Fhógartaigh, who were the leading family of a segment known as Ceinél Fiangaile, Fógartach being fifth in descent from Fiangal, according to Mac Fhir Bhisigh’s genealogy.<sup>70</sup>

This population name is used in the early thirteenth century, in a grant made to Gilbert de Kentwell of the theodum (*tuath*) of Kenelfenelgille,<sup>71</sup> identified by Dr C.A. Empey as the modern parish of Drom.<sup>72</sup> But the boundaries given in the Cantwell grant indicate that the *tuath* was more than just one parish; it probably extended to include the parishes of Loughmoe (E/W) as well as southwards to the parish of Inch, formerly known as Inchiofогurty (*\*Inse Ua bhFógartaigh*).<sup>73</sup>

### Fiadh Mughain

The small parish of Kilfithmone (written “Fethmohan” in the early fourteenth century)<sup>74</sup> between Drom and Glenkeen may not have formed part of the *tuath* because of its special status. In the *Senchus Mór* its name is used as an illustration of one of the rights not recoverable by distraint, namely, cattle found upon the land of a king the day he assumes sovereignty.<sup>75</sup> The example given was: *amail ata tir mhumhain a neilibh do rig caisil ... do reir na sen anall: a dilsi do righ caisil cach nech dogebad ar fiadh mumun an la dogebad righi, no comad do gres, uair righ caisil romarbsad* (“such as the land of Mumu<sup>76</sup> in Éile for the king of Cashel ... according to the ancients, everything which is found on Fiadh Mumun on the day he assumes the kingship is forfeit to the king of Cashel, to be observed always, because they killed the king of Cashel”).

Kilfithmone today is the name of both a parish and a townland – the latter being where the parish church stood – but there was also a townland called simply Fithmone.<sup>77</sup> This latter name was changed to the more fashionable “Fishmoynne” when it became a gentleman’s seat, complete with fishponds.

### Uí Luighdheach

Adjoining Kilfithmone to the west is Glenkeen parish. Now in the barony of Kilnamanagh Upper, at the time of the Civil Survey<sup>78</sup> it formed (along with Barracurra in Ballycahill parish) the “territory of Ileagh”, i.e. Uí Luigdech or Uí Luighdheach, whose name is still commemorated in Buirgheas Ua Luighdheach (Borrisoleigh). As with the Éile, the genealogists (who often referred to them as “Uí Luigdech Éile”) attached the Uí Luigdech to the Eóganacht by making their eponymous ancestor, Lugaid (grandson of Fiachra, king of Éile), a half-brother of Corc mac Luigdech who was a descendant of Eógan Már and reputed ancestor of several Eóganacht families.<sup>79</sup>

In the Books of Lecan and Ballymote there is an account of four saintly brothers of Eóganacht origin.<sup>80</sup> One, Cúlán, settled in Glenkeen (*i nGlind Chain a nIb Luigdeach itir sil Eogain*). An Irish life of Barra of Cork assigned Gleann Caoin to a fifth brother, Báetán, who, by the same account, was a pupil of Barra to whom he placed his church under perpetual obligation.<sup>81</sup> This life was originally compiled between 1215 and 1230.<sup>82</sup> The phrase *itir sil Eogain* indicates at least one Eóganacht family living close by, perhaps acting as stewards of Fiadh Mughain. These may have been the segment known as Uí Muiredaig, whom we know of only from their genealogy which gives them a descent from Daig (or Dedad), grandfather of Muiredach and sixth son of Corc mac Luigdeach mentioned above.<sup>83</sup>

At the time the Uí Muiredaig genealogy was compiled, there were two main branches, one headed by Fogartach (mac Fiannamla), the other by one Máel Corguis (mac Óengusa). This latter is an unusual name; in fact this is the only example to be found in M.A. O'Brien's *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae*. Accordingly, the townland-name Kilvilcorris in Drom parish could well be named after him. The earliest form of the place-name that I can locate is Killvoilchorisse in 1602.<sup>84</sup> There is no record of a church there; the Irish form, according to John O'Donovan, was *Coill Mhaoil Córais*.<sup>85</sup>

At the time of the Civil Survey, this townland adjoined Fithmone (now Fishmoynes). The word *fiad* (mod. *fiadh*), a comparatively rare one in place-names, had several connotations, mainly centred around the idea of "wild", e.g. a wild animal (particularly deer), wild game, wild woodland;<sup>86</sup> the adjective *fiadhain* / *fiain* which derives from it is still used in the same sense. While *fid* (mod. *fiodh*, a wood) is a different word, *fiad* may derive from it, according to Pedersen.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps we need not seek further than this for Fiad mac nÁengusa, if we equate *fiad* with *coill*, bearing in mind that Máel Corguis was a "mac Áengusa".<sup>88</sup>

A final important piece of evidence is that Kilvilcorris is now separated from Fishmoynes by a small townland of 50 acres named Clonbrassil (\**Cluain Breasail*). It is hardly necessary to stress the significance of the use here – and nowhere else in Co. Tipperary – of the personal name, Breasal.<sup>89</sup> The northern and southern boundaries of Kilvilcorris and Clonbrassil are in alignment, but although the Civil Survey overlooked the latter completely, it was in existence at an earlier period; a document of 1619 made Cloynbressell (with Clonysmollyn) a separate area from Kilvolcorris.<sup>90</sup>

As the precise parish and townland boundaries of the present day were scarcely in use in the early twelfth century, it is quite likely that Fishmoynes, Clonbrassil and Kilvilcorris all formed part of the same *fiad* originally. The eastern part may then have been renamed for the sons of Áengus (one of them being Máel Corguis), with the rath of Breasal situated somewhere within it. Whether this was in Clonbrassil, which has a pleasant grassy knoll suitable for an assembly, or at the eastern side of Kilvilcorris where there are remains of a small ringfort, only an archaeological excavation could possibly determine.<sup>91</sup>

So in one sense the old names have not entirely disappeared. The one-time glory of ecclesiastical assembling and disputing may still linger around the place-names commemorating Breasal and a son of Áengus in this quiet corner of Éile Uí Fhógartaigh.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Seán Mac Airt, Gearóid Mac Niocaill eds., *The annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin 1983). (AU).
2. Seán Mac Airt, ed., *The annals of Inisfallen* (Dublin 1951). (AI).
3. Whitley Stokes, ed., *The annals of Tigernach (Revue Celtique, xvi-xviii (1895-7); reprint, Llanerch Publishers, 1993)*. (A.Tig.).



4. W.M. Hennessy, *Chronicum Scotorum* (London 1866). (CS).
5. W.M. Hennessy, *Annals of Loch Cé* (London 1871). (ALC).
6. John O'Donovan, ed., *Annala Rioghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin 1856). (AFM).
7. P.S. Dinneen, ed., *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: The history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.* (Irish Texts Society, vol. ix, London 1908) iii, 298-306. Keating twice lists this book among his sources (ITS vol. iv, 78; vol. ix, 32) and extracted from it his accounts of the synod of Kells (ITS vol. ix, 32, 314) and of the battle of Bealach Mughna (ITS vol. ix, 212).
8. Despite the authority of AU, the annals generally seem to favour the plural form, *Fiad mac nAonghusa*. In the printed versions of ALC and AFM 'mc' is wrongly extended to 'mic'.
9. John Lanigan, *An ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (Dublin 1822) iv, 38.
10. John Mac Erlean, 'Synod of Raith Breasail' *Archivium Hibernicum* iii (1914) 1-33.
11. See intro. by R.I. Best to *Annals of Inisfallen, reproduced in Facsimile...* (Dublin 1933) 12.
12. For bringing this possibility to my attention I wish to thank Prof. Tomás O Concheanainn, whose interest I greatly appreciate.
13. A.M. Freeman, ed., 'The annals in Cotton MS Titus A.xxv', *Revue Celtique* xli-xliv (1924-7).
14. *Revue Celtique* xlv, 344.
15. I have taken this reading from a microfilm of the original MS, TCD H.1.19.
16. AFM i, lxiv-lxv; see also Eugene O'Curry, *Lectures on the manuscript materials of ancient Irish history* (Dublin 1861) 95, and Paul Walsh, 'The annals of Loch Cé', *Irish ecclesiastical record* vol. 56 (July-Dec. 1940) 113-122 (121).
17. I wish to thank Fr Ignatius Fennessy, OFM, Librarian, Dun Mhuire, Killiney, for examining MS A13 for me; for the RIA manuscript (1085) I checked a microfilm copy.
18. James Ware, *De scriptoribus Hiberniae* (Dublin 1639 p. 54); the words 'at Fiad-Mac-Aengusa [by some called Usneah]' found in Harris's translation (*The whole works of Sir James Ware concerning Ireland* (Dublin 1745) vol.iii, bk.ii, p.69) are not in the original.
19. John Colgan, *Trias Thaumaturga* (Louvain 1647) 299-300.
20. *Acta SS Aprilis* Tom. 1 (Antwerp 1675) p. 619.
21. Op. cit., iv, 37.
22. AFM, ii, 991.
23. John Lynch, *Cambrensis eversus* (1662) cap.ix; Matthew Kelly, ed. (Dublin 1850) ii, 52.
24. S.a. 1107; the correct date was 1111, as noted by the editor, p.xlvi.
25. Edmund Curtis, *A history of medieval Ireland* (2nd ed., London 1938) 17.
26. J.F.Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical* (2nd ed., Columbia U.P. 1966) 768.
27. Kathleen Hughes, *The church in early Irish society* (London 1966) 267.
28. A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A history of medieval Ireland* (2nd ed., London 1980) 39.
29. J.A. Watt, *The church and the two nations in medieval Ireland* (Cambridge U.P. 1970) 15.
30. Aubrey Gwynn, "The synod of Rath Breasail 1111" in Gerard O'Brien, ed., *The Irish church in the 11th and 12th centuries* (Dublin 1992) 180-192 (although in a previous article published in *Studies* (Sept. 1940, pp.409-430) he appeared to think that they were separate synods).
31. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland 400 -1200* (London & New York 1995) 281.
32. D.N. Dumville, *Councils and synods of the Gaelic early and central Middle Ages* (Quiggin pamphlets no.3, Cambridge 1997) pp. 38, 44 (n. 166).
33. *Foras feasa* iii, 356.
34. Op. cit., 38-9.
35. *Foras feasa* iii, 296, 356.
36. *Ibid.*, iii, 298, 356.
37. R.I. Best, Osborn Bergin, M.A. O'Brien, eds., *The Book of Leinster* vol.i (Dublin 1954) l. 3179.
38. R.A.S. Macalister, ed., *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* vol.5 (ITS vol.44, London 1956) 412; see note, p.413.
39. Op. cit., i, 175.
40. In Matthew Kelly's ed. of *Cambrensis eversus* (Dublin 1848-50) p.783.

41. W.D. Killen, *The ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (London 1875) i, 175.
42. *Peritia* 3 (1984) 326-9.
43. *Op.cit.*, 38.
44. *Op. cit.*, 38-9.
45. *MSS materials* 485.
46. Ed. A.G. Van Hamel, *Revue Celtique* xxxvii (1919) 335-44 (revised version of that in *RC* xxxvi (1916) 262-72). The LL version is as follows (ll. 6458-9): *Cath na Samaire ar samain / is é ros fossaig / da tuc in maidm ac Raith Bresail / ar Maig Mossaid.*
47. TCD MS H.3.17, ed. Myles Dillon, "The story of the finding of Cashel", *Ériu* xvi (1952) 61 -73; see also F.J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (London 1973) 185-9.
48. Carolus Plummer, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford 1910) ii, 174.
49. Book of Lecan, facs. 9b19; see also T. Ó Raithbheartaigh, *Genealogical tracts 1* (Dublin 1932) p.67.
50. LL I. 12191.
51. YBL facs. 51 a 24.
52. YBL facs. 329 a 58-9.
53. *Irish patent rolls of James I* (facs., Dublin 1966) 197.
54. Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (Dublin 1910) 568.
55. *Archivium Hibernicum* iii (1914) 29.
56. Aubrey Gwynn, D.F. Gleeson, *A history of the diocese of Killaloe* (Dublin 1962) 117.
57. *Op. cit.*, 15.
58. *North Munster archaeological journal* iii (1942) 31; see also map (by F.J. Byrne) in *A new history of Ireland*, vol. 9 (Oxford 1984) which places RB near the SE limit of Killaloe diocese (Gleann Caoin).
59. *Foras feasa* iii, 196, 304.
60. *Foras feasa* iii, 304. Sliabh Caoin (the Ballyhoura mts. between Cos. Cork and Limerick) has no connexion with Killaloe diocese, but rather than casting doubt on Keating's account, this appears to confirm that he was copying from an old MS and was unsure whether the abbreviated form there was Sl~ or Gl~.
61. 'Boundary associations in early Irish society', *Studia Celtica* vii, 12-29 (13, 28).
62. *Foras feasa* i, 110; ii, 246-8.
63. "Battle-site and territorial extent in early Ireland", *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 33, 67-79 (67).
64. A.Fig. 1101; AFM 1101.
65. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin 1972) 8.
66. *Op. cit.*, 181.
67. T.F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish history and mythology* (Dublin 1964) 21.
68. M.A. O'Brien ed., *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae i* (Dublin 1962) 145dl7; 157, 28.
69. AU 1076.
70. Book of genealogies (O'Curry's transcript, RIA MS 583) 199.
71. Edmund Curtis ed., *Calendar of Ormond deeds* vol.1 (1932) no. 34.
72. C.A. Empey in W. Nolan and T. McGrath eds., *Tipperary: history and society* (Dublin 1985) 78.
73. R.C. Simington, ed., *The Civil Survey, A.D. 1654-1656: Co. Tipperary* (1931) i, 74-5.
74. *Calendar of documents, Ireland 1302-1307*, p. 284.
75. D.A. Binchy, ed., *Corpus iuris Hibernici* (Dublin 1978) 1844. 34 -7.
76. Cf "Tir Mugain" in *CIH* 207. 15. On the question of confusing Mugain with Muma(in) see Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the theme of king and goddess in Irish literature', *Études Celtiques* 7 (1955-6) 76-114 (98). In two fifteenth-century sources the name is written 'Fiadh Moghain' (Standish O'Grady, ed., *Caithréim Thoirdhealbháigh* (ITS vol. 26 (1929) i, 26); Anne O'Sullivan, Pádraig Ó Riain, eds., *Poems on marcher lords* (ITS vol.53 (1987) 1.396).
77. *Civ. Surv. Tipp.* i, 73.
78. *Ibid.*, i, 75-90.
79. O'Brien, *CGH* p. 195.
80. J. Fraser, P. Grosjean, J.G. O'Keefe, eds., *Irish texts* fasc. iii (1931) p. 1.

81. Pádraig Ó Riain, ed., *Beatha Bharra* ITS vol. 57 (1994) 68.
82. *Ibid.*, 39. Prof. Ó Riain (pers. comm.) is of the opinion that the interest in Glenn Caín expressed by the compiler of the Life may derive from its siting in the vicinity of Ráith Breasail where diocesan boundaries favourable to Cork had been fixed over a century earlier.
83. O'Brien, *CCH* p. 219. The choice of Daig as ancestor may have been influenced by the existence of a Laigin family whose ancestor was Daig Bec, and who were known both as Uí Dega Bec and as Uí Muiredaig (*CGH* 119b41 (p. 33)).
84. *The Irish fiants of the Tudor sovereigns* (reprint, Dublin 1994) iii, no. 6628.
85. Ordnance Survey Name Books, Co. Tipperary, iii, 212.
86. In this context, it is of interest that Ó Riain ('Boundary assoc.' 26) makes reference to boundary zones often being wilderness areas.
87. Holger Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen* (Göttingen 1909) i, 112.
88. O'Brien, *CGH* p. 219.
89. There was a Breasal in the Deiscert Éile genealogy (LL 42392 / *CGH* 325c45) but as Breasal was a name in frequent use, we cannot be sure that he was the eponym.
90. *Calendar of patent rolls, James I*, p. 197.
91. In the parish of Drom there is a strong belief - though perhaps of fairly recent origin - that Ráith Breasail was in the locality. The chosen site is a ringfort just north of Clonbrasil in the townland of Drom. (See e.g., article by Sr Áine, Hon. Sec., Templemore Historical Society, in the *Tipperary Star* 12 Feb. 1990).

## BUÍOCHAS

Is mian liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis an Ollamh Pádraig Ó Riain agus an Dr Caoimhin Ó Muirigh, Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh, agus leis an Ollamh Tomás Ó Concheanainn, triúr a léigh an chéad dréacht den aiste seo agus a thug comhairle mo leasa dom. Táim fíorbhuíoch leis de Marcus de Búrca, Liam Ó Duibhir agus Liam Ó hAodha a threoraigh go hÉile Uí Fhógartaigh mé, agus don Ath. Pádraig Ó Floinn, S.P., agus Muintir Fhearghail a chabhraigh go fial liom i bparóiste an Droma.