

ULSTER PLACE-NAME SOCIETY

The current periodical of the Society, under its new name Ainm: The Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society, and with its new editor, Mr Ruairí Ó hUiginn, is now available. The old Bulletin, Series 2, under its editor, the late Mrs Deirdre Flanagan, ended with Vol. 4 (1981-82); the projected Vol. 5/6 (1982-84) has not been published. Ainm Vol. 1 (1986) is being sent to all members who have paid their subscriptions of £4.00 for the period 1982-84, in lieu of the Bulletin, Series 2, Vol. 5/6. The Council of the Society wishes to thank all members for their continuing support and patience during the delay in publication.

Members are advised that subscriptions for the year 1987 are now due. Please forward payment of £4.00 stg/IR £5.00 to:

The Treasurer
 Ulster Place-Name Society
 Department of Celtic
 Queen's University
 BELFAST BT7 1NN

Cheques, money orders, etc. should be made payable to the Ulster Place-Name Society.

BREANDÁN S. MAC AODHA

CHILDREN'S BURIAL GROUNDS IN IRELAND,
 WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CO. GALWAY*

Among the most curious, yet most neglected, cultural features of the Irish countryside are the Children's Burial Grounds, variously designated killeen (Irish cillín), calluragh (Ir. ceallúrach), caldragh (Ir. cealdrach), caltra(gh) (Ir. cealltrach), killaghaun (Ir. ceallachán), and lisheen (Ir. lisín), all meaning '(little) cemetery (especially for unbaptized children)'. These small cemeteries, each containing between a few dozen and a few hundred miniature graves, reflect the former severity of the infant and child mortality rates, coupled with the scarcity of priests in the Penal Times.¹ Some killeens lie alongside ancient monasteries. The bodies of unbaptized children were denied burial in contemporary consecrated ground, and so were excluded from the ordinary cemeteries, but their mourning parents sometimes found a way around this difficulty by locating the tiny graves in former monastery sites or beside holy wells or ancient crosses. The vast majority, however, occupy corners of fields in remote locations, usually close to townland boundaries. A great number are located within various sorts of prehistoric fort or farmstead - raths, lisses, forts, cashels - probably because such sites were isolated, and unused, but the association of such archaeological features with the slua sí 'fairy folk' may not be entirely fortuitous: in fact, a tiny proportion of the killeens are linked with billews (Ir. bile 'a sacred tree, in pre-Christian times'). The distribution pattern of these burial grounds is extremely uneven: the irregularities probably reflect imperfect recording, rather than much spatial variation in mortality or baptism rates.

By far the best account of killeens is to be found in a paper published in 1939 by Dr Seán Ó Súilleabháin of the Irish Folklore Commission.² Dr Ó Súilleabháin drew parallels with the practices of classical times and summarized much of the folklore associated with such burial places. A much slighter account, relating only to Co. Mayo, was compiled by R. B. Aldridge.³

The incidence of these burial grounds is recorded very imperfectly on the Ordnance Survey six-inch maps. In some counties, such as Sligo, very few are marked whereas in others, such as Mayo, large numbers are recorded. Even within individual counties marked variations occur from district to district, some O.S. sheets containing no examples while neighbouring sheets contain a half-dozen or more. This uneven pattern is unlikely to reflect

regional differences in burial practice: rather it is a symptom of incomplete recording, possibly due in part to the reluctance of country people to speak about a topic which held sad memories for many of them. It is also worth observing that the tiny graves were marked by flagstones only in those parts of the country where such materials were readily available: elsewhere many of these burial plots would have been difficult to recognize. In so far as real regional variations do occur, they are probably attributable to a certain amount of spatial variation in infant and child mortality, to variations in the incidence of miscarriages, and possibly in the extent of infanticide. Obviously they also reflect the general distribution of settlement and population, as well as the religious affiliation of the people.

By far the commonest designation employed on the maps is Children's Burial Ground. Typical instances occur in Drumfea, Co. Carlow (20);⁴ in Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo (2); in Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry (5); in Cloonfad, Co. Roscommon (56); and in Kilbarron, Co. Donegal (103). Another English designation, Infants' Burial Ground, is quite widespread, as in Drumbrick, Co. Donegal (44) or in West Quarter (Inishbofin), Co. Galway (9). The term killeen is frequently used to describe these features, and it occurs often in the names of townlands within which they are located, but surprisingly it is seldom linked on the O.S. maps with the specific sites.

The Irish term most commonly employed on the maps is calluragh: examples are to be found in Kilvickadownig, Co. Kerry (52), and in Balloor, Co. Donegal (8). Caldragh is of rare occurrence: instances lie in Aghaglassan, Co. Donegal (12) and Urney, Co. Cavan (25). An even rarer variant is caltra(gh), as in Creeharmore, Co. Roscommon (47). Killaghaun is rarer still: one example is Killaghaunapasty (Ir. Ceallachán na bPáistí 'the little graveyard of the children') in Callow, Co. Galway (73). Lisheen is quite common, but of course not all lisheens are children's burial grounds: the term is used to describe any small rath (i.e., an Iron-Age farm-stead).

Hybrid combinations are of frequent occurrence: examples include Lisheennabilla Children's Burial Ground (Ir. Lisín na mBilí 'the little lios of the sacred trees'), Ballywinna, Co. Galway (96); Calluragh Infants' Burial Ground, Barnes Lower, Co. Donegal (35); Caltragh Fort Children's Burial Ground, Lismanny, Co. Galway (100); Lisheencaltragh Burial Ground, Coolagh, Co. Galway (68); and Killaghaun Children's Burial Ground, Carra, Co. Galway (98). Other elements occasionally, but not exclusively, associated with these sites are

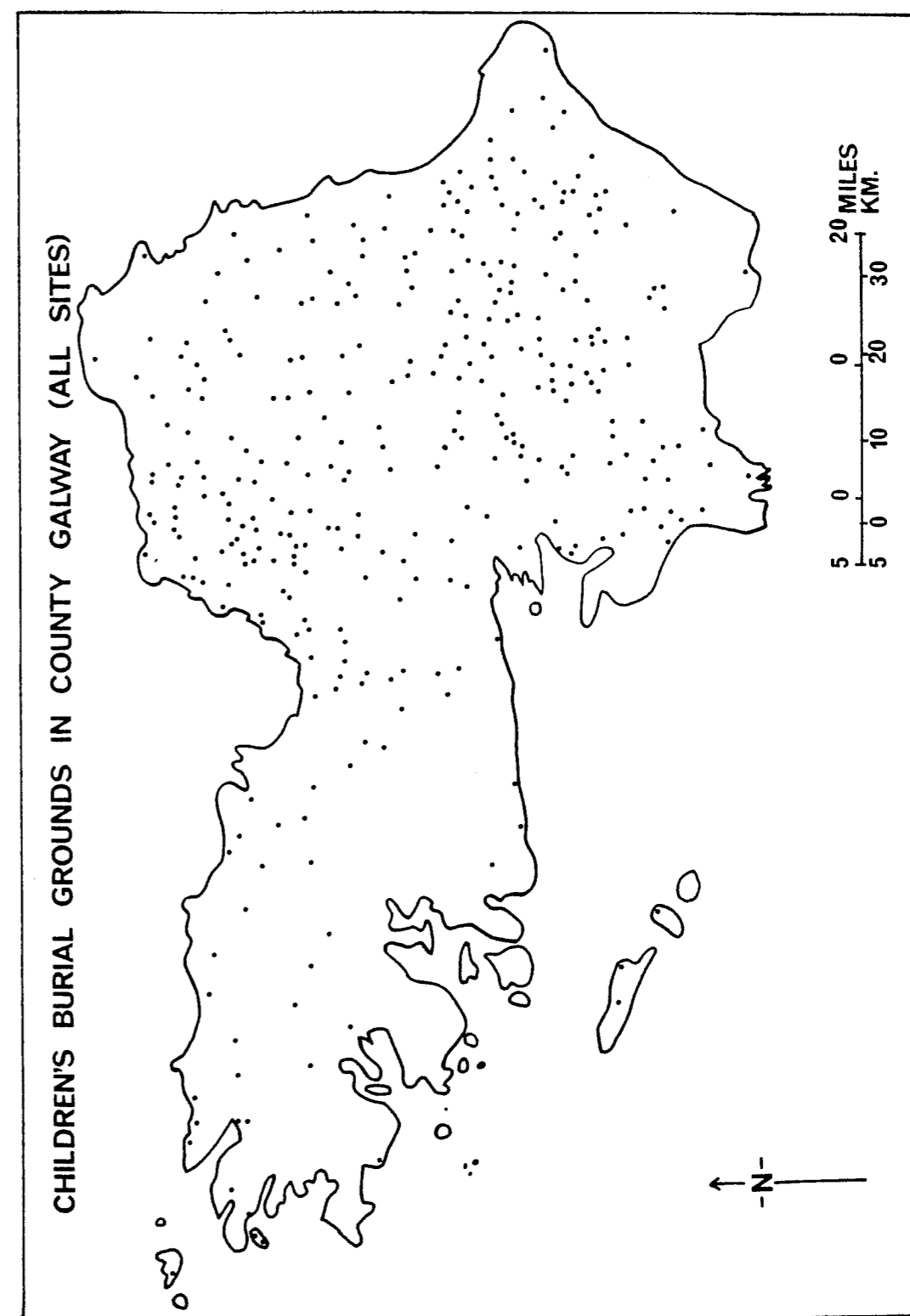


Fig. 1

CHILDREN'S BURIAL GROUNDS : CO. GALWAY

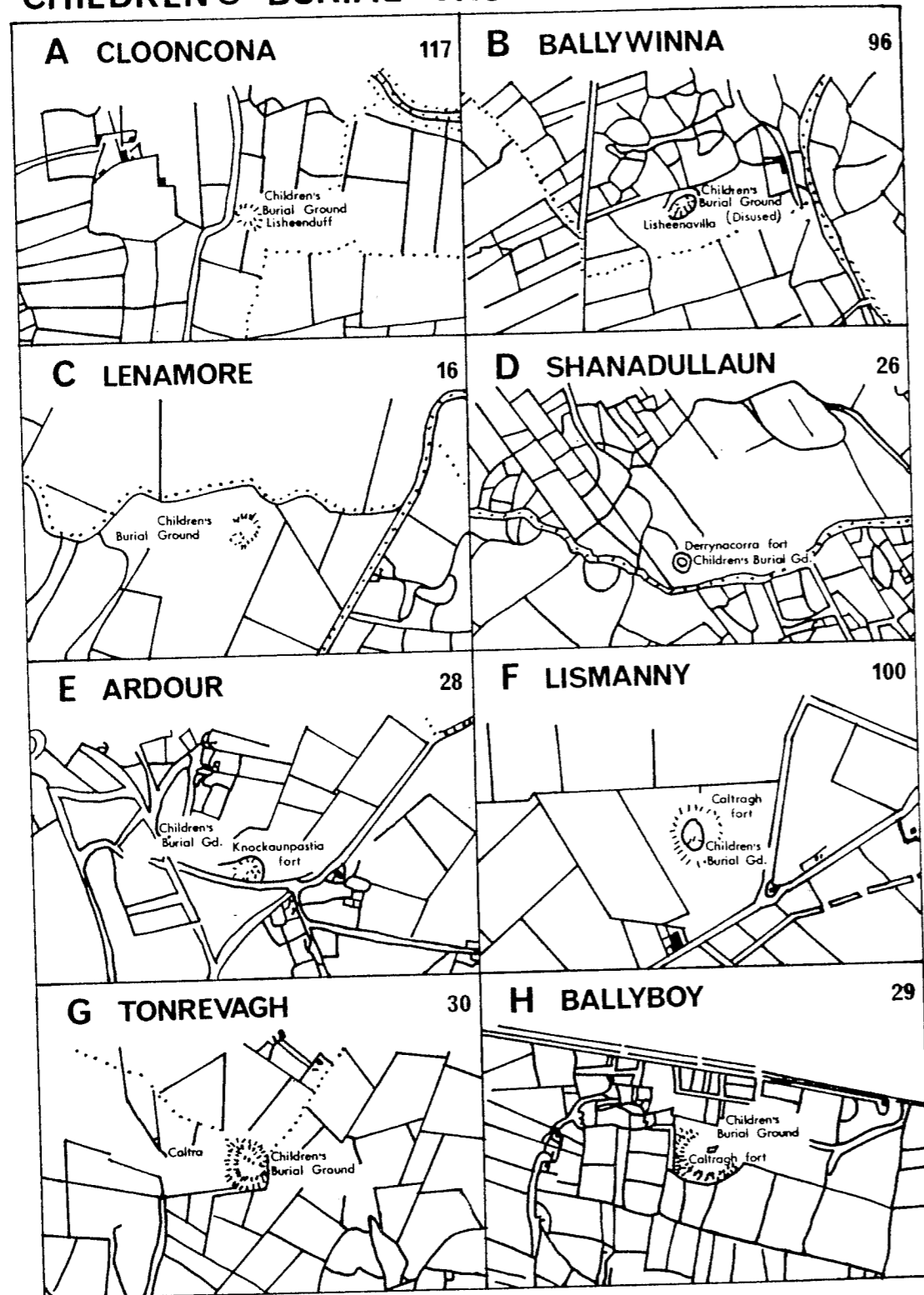


Fig. 2

laght (Ir. *leacht* 'a grave, a grave-mound'), as in Knockalaghta Children's Burial Ground (Ir. *Cnoc a' Leachta* 'the hill of the grave-mound'), Bohaboy, Co. Galway (115); and kil(1) (Ir. *cill* 'a church, a cemetery'), as in Kilnabasty Children's Burial Ground (Ir. *Cill na bPáistí* 'the children's cemetery'), St Laurence's Fields, Co. Galway (105). A single instance is known of the form Burial Ground for Children: it is located in Milford, Co. Donegal (36). In many instances the qualification 'disused' was appended to the designation;⁵ but in fact many of these grounds were still in use at the beginning of this century, and in remote areas until very recent times.

In Co. Galway alone some 247 of these miniature cemeteries have been identified on the Ordnance Survey six-inch maps. A further 59 burial places which are probably of this nature have also been located: corroborative place-name evidence exists for some of these sites.⁶ Strong place-name evidence supports a further 17,⁷ making a total for the county of 323 sites [Fig. 1]. Another thirteen townland names contain elements suggestive of this feature, but no indication of site is available.⁸

The area covered by the actual site is shown in only 184 instances out of the 247 mentioned above. About one-fourth of these might be described as circular, one-fourth as square, one-eighth as rectangular, and one-eighth as oval. The remaining one-fourth consist of a pot-pourri of trapezoidal, triangular, hexagonal, ovoid and irregular shapes. At least two-thirds of the mapped sites might be described as small; the remainder as tiny.

In the vast majority of cases, 230 in all, the designation Children's Burial Ground was used. In 144 instances this designation stood alone; in a further 24 instances it was qualified by the term 'disused'. In 40 examples it was linked with a place-name. References to caltragh numbered 6; to caltra, 1; to calluragh, 1; to killeen, 1; to páistí 'children', 9; and to lisín or lisheen 'small lios or rath', 4. Infants' Burial Ground was employed in only 13 instances: 8 times standing alone, twice linked with a place-name, and three times tied to a reference to páistí 'children'.

Of the 247 cemeteries mentioned above, 93 were located within raths or rath-like features; 55 of these raths might be described as small, 28 as medium-sized and 7 as large. The other three locations consisted of two cashels 'fort' and a caher 'stone-built rath'. In addition 14 others were surrounded, at least in part, by earth-works of some kind. In total, then, 107 (or about 43%) lay within the boundaries of former settlement features.

Only 16 were located beside a former church or monastery. Other 'sanctified' sites included 12 beside a holy well, and 4 beside an ancient cross.

Much more numerous were the sites located in remote places far from any ecclesiastical, or even human, association. These included 30 graveyards located on rough land (moorland, bogland, rough grazing), 45 alongside the ditch in a corner of a field, and 5 beside the shore. Very few of the 247 sites - only 16 in all - were approached by a well-defined path: most of these adjoined former monastic or ecclesiastical centres. It is noteworthy that no less than 119 sites were chosen alongside, or very close to, townland boundaries.

Examples of children's burial grounds located within raths or similar features are illustrated in Fig. 2. A few were placed in the corners of fields or close to field boundaries. Some of the burial grounds situated close to holy wells are mapped in Fig. 3, and those near monastic sites in Fig. 4.

Dr Ó Súilleabháin outlined numerous customs which used to be observed in connection with the burial of young children. Most of his comments were confirmed by the Galway evidence. 'Waking' a child was unusual: if a wake was held it lasted one night only. In many cases the infant's body was merely wrapped in a white cloth. If a coffin was provided, it was left open at the foot so as not to restrict the child's growth; nails were not used in its construction. Burials always took place by night. Many of those buried in the killeens were illegitimate children. In a few instances, e.g. in the Tuam area, it was noted that people who committed suicide were also interred in these sites. It was admitted in a few instances, e.g. around Lisheenavilla in Ballywinna townland (96), that burials had taken place as recently as 1940. It is probable that the custom is still observed, though most interments are now made in the ordinary cemetery. Certainly the vast majority of the killeens are now overgrown with brambles and bracken. Only in mid-winter are they accessible: then they emerge as a jumble of tiny hillocks and hollows, often littered with small broken flagstones or limestone boulders, and in some cases clustered around one or more ancient thornbushes. Cattle and sheep trample them underfoot. 'Progressive' farmers bulldoze them out of the way: such was the fate of one of the finest specimens - that at Ballydonnellan East (98) - some time between 1969 and 1984. Soon their very raison d'être will be forgotten and their names will pass into oblivion.

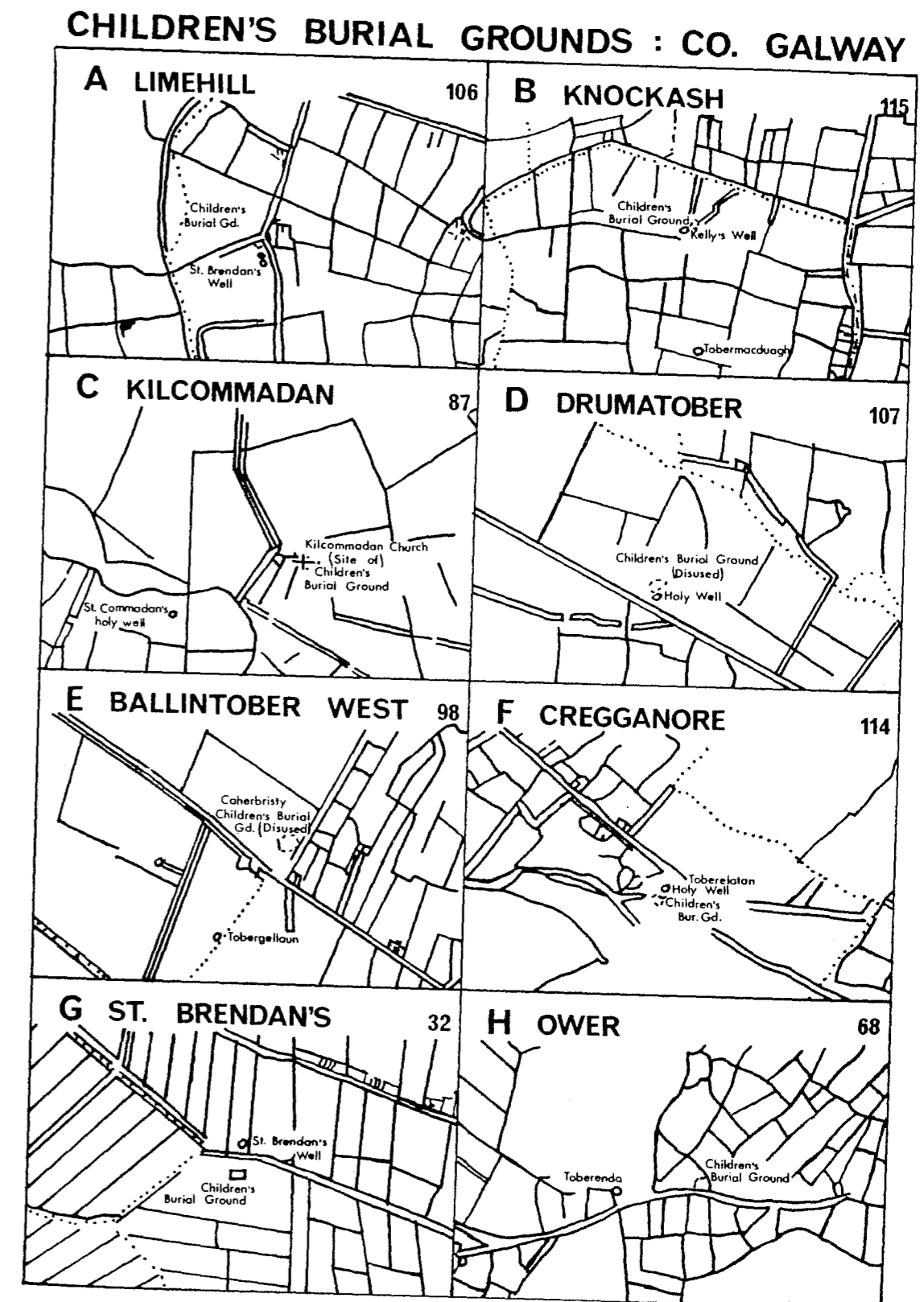


Fig. 3

CHILDREN'S BURIAL GROUNDS : CO. GALWAY

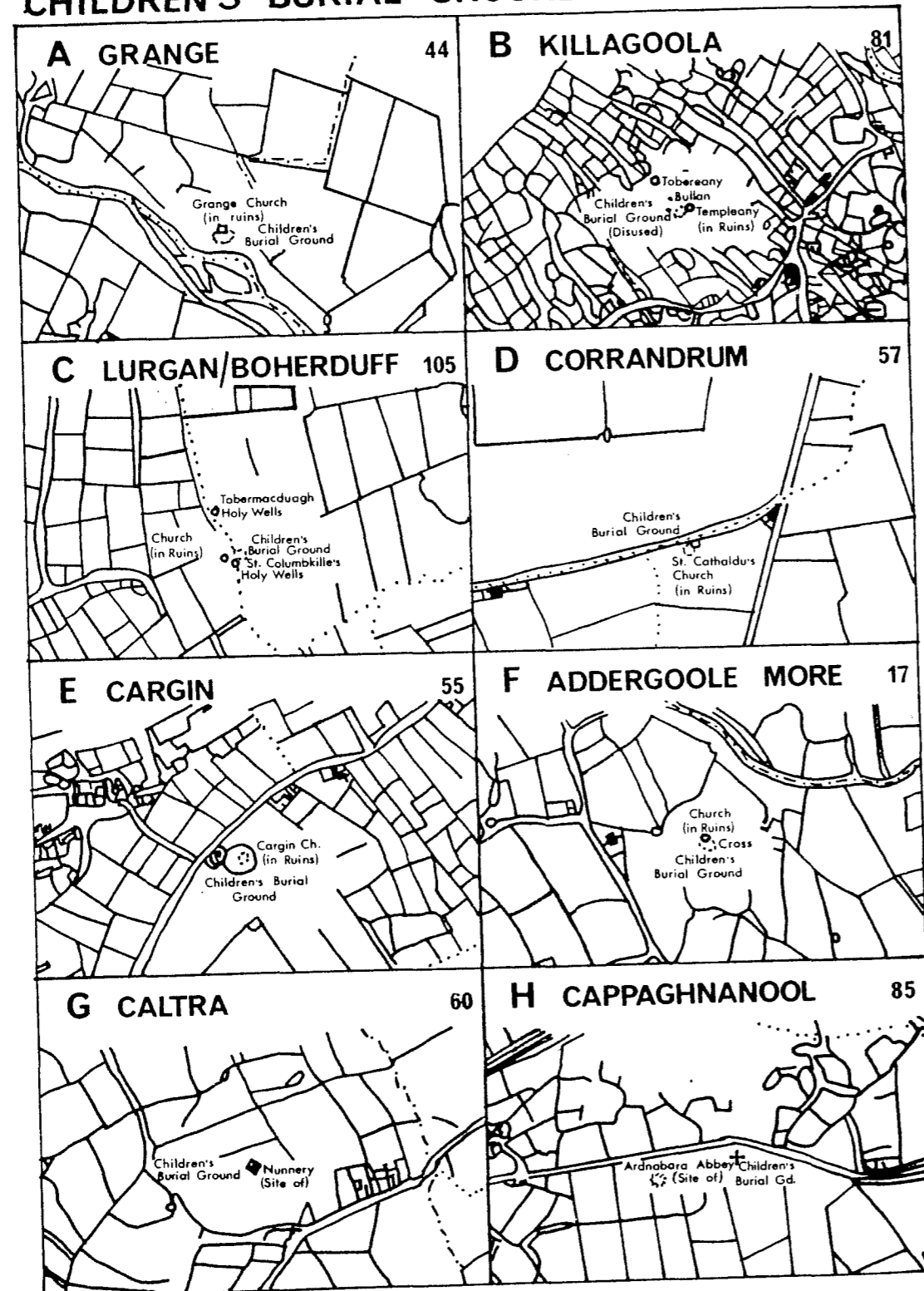


Fig. 4

NOTES

*This paper is a revised version of a lecture given at the Conference of Irish Geographers in Carysford Teacher Training College, Dublin, on 16 February 1985. It is based on extensive fieldwork carried out between 1962 and 1984.

1. After the Treaty of Limerick (1691) various discriminatory laws were enacted by the parliament in Dublin, the effect of which was to proscribe the practice of the Catholic religion in Ireland. The Banishment Act of 1697 drove most bishops and hundreds of regular clergy out of the country: the penalty for returning was death. Thereafter priests could be trained only on the Continent at colleges established especially for the purpose. At great personal risk, many young men returned to Ireland to minister to the people. The main features of the Penal Laws are well outlined in Maureen Wall, *The Penal Laws, 1691-1760*, Dublin Historical Association (Dublin, 1961).
2. 'Adhlacadh Leanbhai' (The burial of children), *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland [JRSAI]*, LXIX, Part 3 (1939) [7th ser., IX], 143-51.
3. 'Notes on children's burial grounds in Mayo', *JRSAI*, XCIX (1969), 83-7.
4. This, like all succeeding numbers in brackets, refers to the relevant O.S. six-inch sheet for the county in question.
5. For example, Children's Burial Ground (Disused), Ballymagroarty Scotch, Co. Donegal (103); Caltragh Children's Burial Ground (Disused), Beech Hill, Co. Galway (85); Lismaghera Infants' Burial Ground (Disused), Kilglass, Co. Galway (61); Old Pound Infants' Burial Gd. (Disused), Clonkilly More, Co. Donegal (44).
6. This includes the following: Gortnakilla Graveyard (Gort na Cille 'the field of the graveyard'), Doohta t[ownlan]d (26); Coldwell Lisheen Graveyard, Muckloon td (47); Lisheen Graveyard, Killeen td (82); Lisheen Graveyard, Ballybrit td (82); Soleen Burial Ground (disused) (local name: *Dumhach na Leanbh* 'the sandhill of the infants'), Kilroe East td (92); Killeen Graveyard (Site of), Killeenaran td (103); Knockaunnakilleen Burial Ground ('the hillock of the killeen') (disused), Killeenmunterlane North td (103); Killeenacross Burial Ground (Cillín na Croise 'the killeen of the Cross'), Connet td (117); Billew Burial Ground (Bile 'sacred tree') (disused), Lecarrow td (117); and Calluragh Burial Ground (disused), Newtown td (122).
7. This evidence is as follows: Caltra (Cealltrach), Clooncunny td (7); Knockaunnakella (Cnocán na Cille 'the hillock of the graveyard'), Carrowkeel td (27); Killeen Fort, Tonacoolen td (28); Lisnatumoga or Lisheennakilla (Site of) (Lisín na Cille 'the little rath of the graveyard'), Poolnamal td (29); Lisheennabasty (Lisín na bPáistí 'the little rath of the children'), Bunanraun td (42); Killaghaun (Cilleachán 'the little graveyard'), Cloonascragh (45); Pollakilleen Turlough (Poll a' Chillín 'the hollow of the little graveyard'), Corbally South (57); Caltraghpasty Fort (Cealtrach na bPáistí 'the little graveyard of the children'), Clonbrock Demesne td (60); Caltragh Danane Clump, Clonbrock Demesne td (61); Killaghaun (Cilleachán 'the little graveyard'), Trust (73), Killaghaunapasty (Cilleachán na bPáistí 'the little graveyard of

the children'), Callan td (73); Caltragh (Cealltrach), Lowville td (74); Lisheenkyle (Lisín Caol 'the narrow rath') (Site of), Lisheenkyle West td (83); Killeeneenmore (Cillínín Mór 'the tiny little graveyard - great', the latter epithet referring to a territorial division), Killeeneen More td (96); Caherakilleen (Cathair a' Chillín 'the caher [stone-built rath] of the little graveyard'), Doon td (98); Knockaunnabasty (Cnocán na bPáistí 'the hillock of the children'), Moyower td (108); and Lisheencreena (Lisín a' Chríonaigh? 'the little rath of the decayed wood'), Cloonnacusha td (117).

8. These are Lisheennaheltia (Lisín na hEilite 'the little rath of the doe') (18); Lisheenanoran (Lisín an Amhráin 'the little rath of the song') (69); Caltragh (Cealltrach 'the little graveyard') (72); Caltraghbreedy (Cealltrach Bhríde? 'St Bridget's little graveyard') (72); Lisheenavalla (Lisín a' Bhealaigh 'the little rath of the road') (83); Caltragh (87); Killeen (Cillín 'the little graveyard') (87); Lisheennavannoge (Lisín na bhFeannóg 'the little rath of the hooded crows') (99); Lisheeneynaun? (114); Killeenadeema East and West (Cillín Díoma 'St Dympna's little graveyard') (115); Lisheenaléen (Lisín a' Leín 'the little rath of the sorrow') (116); Killeen North (117); and Graigueakilleen (Gráig a' Chillín 'the hamlet of the little graveyard') (117).

COUNCIL FOR NAME STUDIES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE - 1986

The XVIIIth Annual Conference of the Council for Name Studies in Great Britain and Ireland was held at the Crossmead Conference Centre, Exeter, from 4 to 7 April 1986. The programme of papers was arranged by Mr Oliver Padel.

Proceedings opened at 8.15 p.m. on Friday 4 April with a paper by Frances Griffith on 'Place-names, archaeology and aerial photography in Devon': an apt welcome to the county. The Saturday morning was devoted to surname studies, beginning with a paper by Dr Prys Morgan (Swansea) on the rise of hereditary surnames in Wales, continuing with one by Dr Margaret Camsell (Leicester) on some fourteenth-century surnames from Devon, and concluding with a presentation by Dr Patrick Hanks (Birmingham) and Dr Flavia Hodges (Colchester) of their project for a dictionary of European surnames.

Both this last-mentioned session and the one on Sunday morning that was devoted to an exposition by Mr Victor Watts (Durham) of the proposed Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names were remarkable for the lively responses evoked from the audience. Lexicography (or perhaps one should say, onomastography) is not the passionless subject that it might seem; and the great divide proved to fall, not between toponymists and anthroponymists, nor yet between philologists and archaeo-geographers, but between modernists and laudatores temporis acti. All differences soon dissolved, however, in the good-fellowship of the bar.

Saturday afternoon saw a visit to Exeter Cathedral Library, to view a fine exhibition of Anglo-Saxon charters and manuscripts set out by Mrs Audrey Erskine. Commentaries on the material were given by Mrs Erskine, Mr Padel and Dr Alexander Rumble (Manchester). After our return to base and dinner, a paper on Breton field-names was given by M. Bernard Tanguy (Brest).

Sunday's programme opened with a lively account by Miss Jennifer Scherr (Bristol) of some Somerset names for wells and springs. Then, after Mr Watts's presentation of the projected place-name dictionary and the vigorous discussion that this provoked (see above), the morning session concluded with a paper by Mr John Freeman (London) on place-name forms in the Balliol Herefordshire Domesday.

Our Sunday-afternoon excursion took us, under the expert guidance of Frances Griffith, high into Dartmoor to inspect, through a veiling of snow, the enigmatic remains of an understandably-deserted medieval settlement, and then to race up and round Houndtor, before repairing to Widdicombe-in-the-Moor (where sotto-voce chanting fell upon the ear) in order to enjoy a clotted-cream tea and the local 'cathedral', in that order. Back to an excellent buffet supper. Gastronomic delight had throughout been a keynote of the weekend, so much so that one replete gourmet proposed making Crossmead our permanent venue. Supper over, proceedings concluded with a further paper on Domesday Book, in which Dr Frank Thorn discussed some techniques of place-name identification.