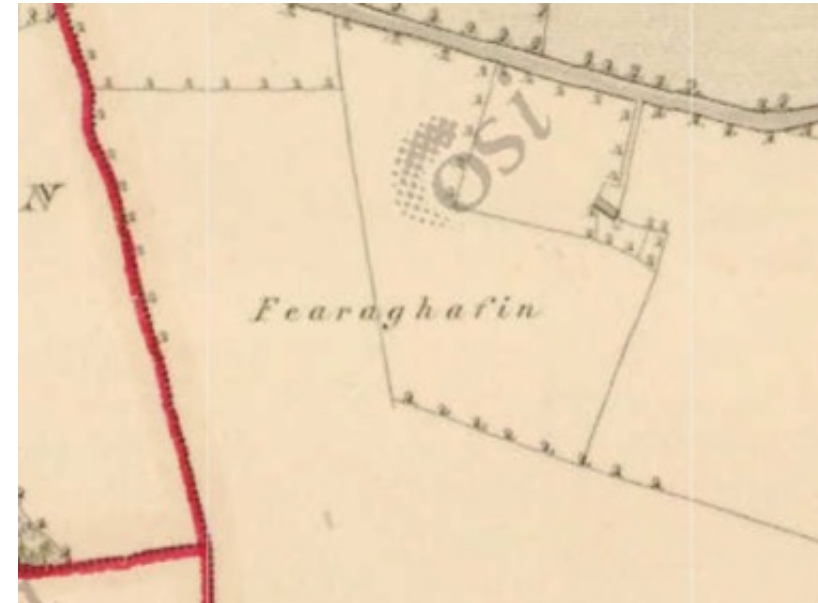# Community-led collection of minor place-names and the Westmeath Field Names Project 2018–21

Dr Aengus Ó Fionnagáin
University of Limerick

1

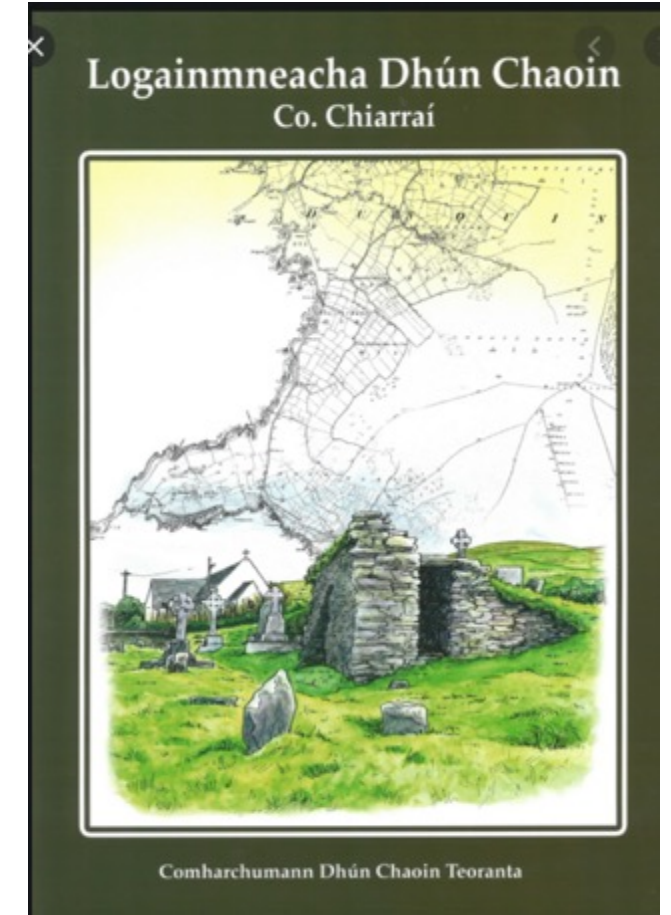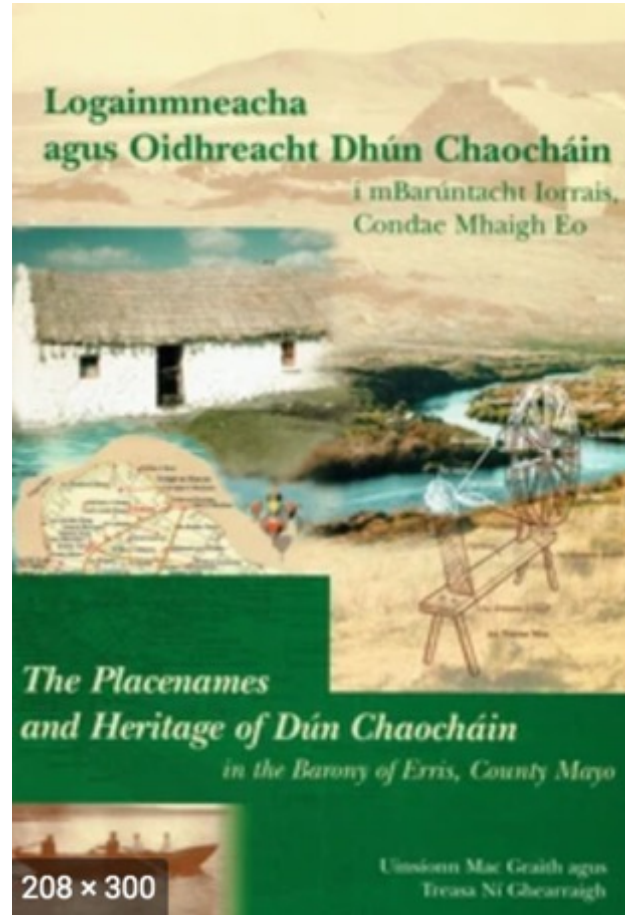# Some research on minor placenames in Ireland

- P. Ó Siochfhradha
  - *Triocha-Céad Chorca Dhuibhne** (1939)

- Canon P. Power
  - *The Place-Names of Decies** (1907, 1951)

- The Placenames Branch:
  - *Logainmneacha as Paróiste na Rinne* (1975)

- Séamas Ó Catháin & P. Flanagan
  - *The Living Landscape: Kilgalligan, Erris, Co Mayo*
    - 805 placenames from one townland

- Breandán Ó Cíobháin
  - *Toponimia Hiberniae* (1978-85)
    - Iveragh, Co. Kerry

- The Placenames Branch
  - *Gaeltacht Placenames Order* (2011)
    - Irish forms of 6071 minor placenames in the Gaeltacht

- 'Small names' sporadically collected by the OS
  - *Colby issued no orders as to what features, other than townlands and demesnes, should be individually named on the plans ... [in Ireland] many farms, shops, and hotels are called after their owners rather than by distinctive place-names; this is also true of small lakes and bays ... on the other hand, the country is well provided with truly topographical names for small areas— portions of townlands, or slopes and folds of land in tracts of mountain pasture—for which the average surveyor, unprompted, would probably not think of asking the name.* (J.H. Andrews on (1975, 2002, 120-1)
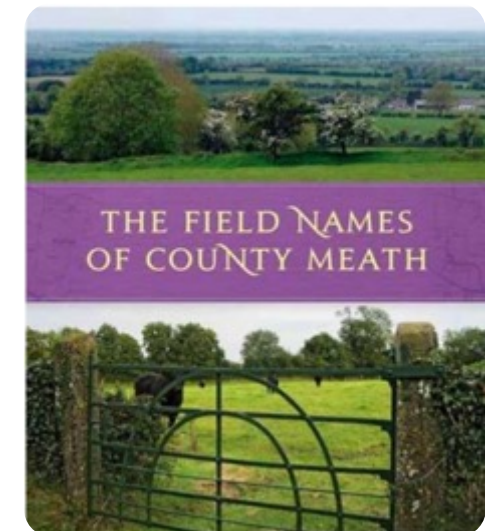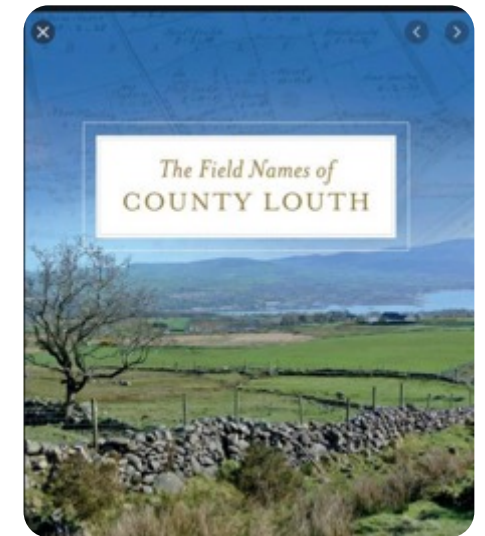
Many other collections…

- *Logainmneacha Dhún Chaoin* (2017)
  - Dún Chaoin, Co. Kerry: 800 names including field names

- P. Ó Cearbhaill (2013), Tamhnaigh an Lín, Joyce Country, Co. Galway
  - 200/300 placenames from one townland

- Minor placenames are very numerous

- Individual scholars can only ever cover a small area

- Focus tends to be on Irish-speaking areas due the richness of the tradition there

Some community-led projects:

- Meath Field Names Project: 25,000 names (2008-13)
  - 10% of names of Irish origin
  - Many interesting English dialect words

- Louth Field Names Project
  - 20% of names of Irish origin

- Kilkenny Field Names Project
  - many Irish names

- Pobal Loch an Aortha, Cill Chiaráin, Co. Galway
  - http://www.oidhreachtlca.ie/mapa.php

- Westmeath Field Names Project (2018-)

About the project (2018-2021)

- 2200 names have been collected to date
- 120 volunteers
- 13 community groups + individuals from other areas

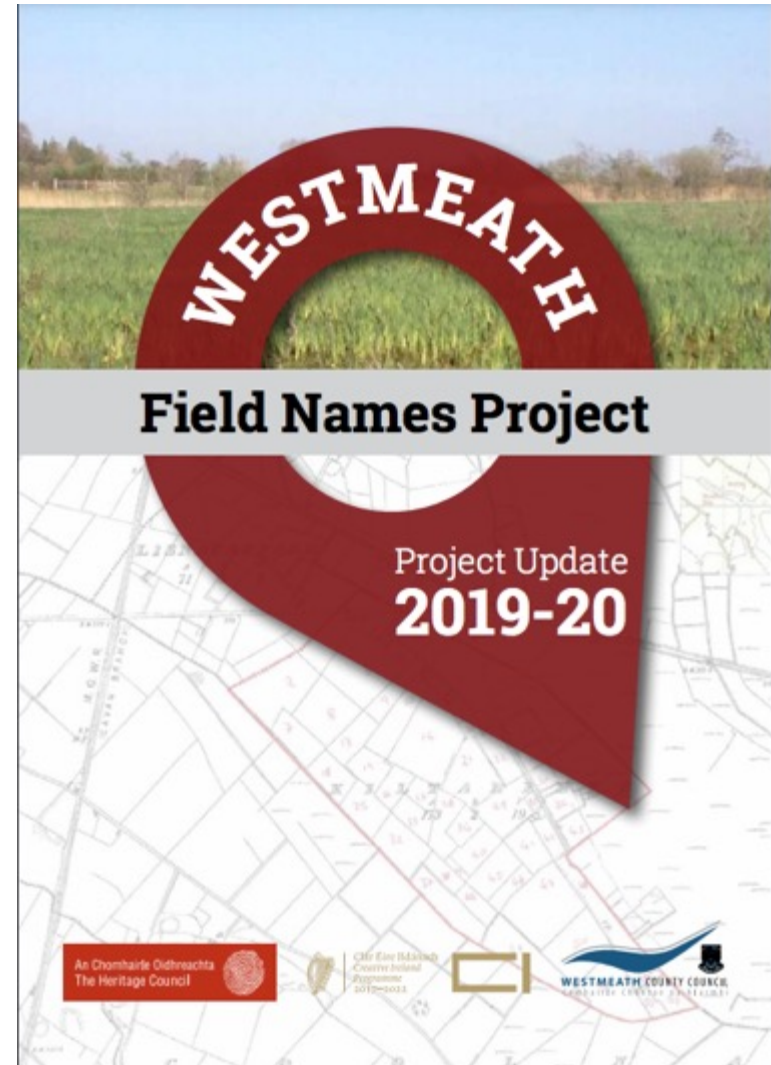- Funding: The Heritage Council, Creative Ireland & Westmeath Co. Co.

- Project coordinator: **Dr Aengus Ó Fionnagáin**
  - Lecturer in Irish at the University of Limerick
  - PhD (2012) on townland names in Co. Westmeath

- **Melanie McQuade** (Heritage Officer, WCC), **Michelle Dunne** (DCU), **Justin Ó Gliasáin** (DCU)

Westmeath Field Names Recording Project

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Where do we archive and publish the field names?

- Completed record sheets and maps are held by Westmeath Co. Co.

- The names are uploaded to Meitheal Logainm.ie
    - (national database of minor placenames – developed by Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge, DCU)

- https://meitheal.logainm.ie/westmeath-field-names/

- Westmeath Co. Co. have also published 2 booklets on the results of the project to date.

- These can be downloaded here: https://aengusfinnegan.ie/field-names/

- Hard copies available from Westmeath Co. Co.

© Aengus Ó Fionnagáin 2021

Rosemount names on Meitheal Logainm.ie

How do volunteers contribute?

Numbered map (townland outlined in red)

Record Sheet

Civil Parish	Tang		
Townland	Lisdossan ①		

Field or feature names			
Field no. (on map)	Field or feature name (spell names as pronounced)	Landowner/source of information	Address of landowner/source of information (townland)
10.	Tureen /turːn/		Lisdossan, The Pigeons athlone Westmeath
17, 18, 19 31, 33, 34	} 1 Large field = Clonārn ↴ } prond. Clan Ardan (*)		The Pigeons
20.	Malach's Island /maliks/		The Pigeons
27, 40	Bawn, /baːn/		The Pigeons
28.	Middle field		The Pigeons
29, 30, 32, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45	⇒ 1 Large field known as Seerys (2) (*)		The Pigeons

Handling the names we collect

- We try and make sound recordings/phonetic transcriptions of
  - Irish names
  - surnames and other words with a particular local pronunciation
  - names whose meaning is not obvious

- The community-approach has limitations
  - Ó Muraíle (2013) 'Irish Minor Place-names – especially field names'. In *The Field Names of Co. Meath*, 151-158
  - Forms of Irish names in English spelling/mix of English/Irish spelling can be difficult to interpret

- – some input from someone with linguistic/placenames expertise is important:
  - to ensure accuracy of the forms collected
  - to analyse and interpret the names to a high standard.

Multyfarnham January 2020

The process – meetings with groups

- Identify existing community group interested in participating
    - County Heritage Office, Local Media, social media, word of mouth

- Set up meeting between project co-ordinator and local group (usually in a community hall)
    - establish key contact person in each group

- Explain project methods and aims, identify maps required

- Supply maps and record sheets.
    - Get volunteers around a table working together and talking!
    - Sociable atmosphere

- Second (& subsequent) meeting(s): talk volunteers through what they have collected, make additional notes as necessary, collect completed record sheets.
    - Participatory approach

Ballymore – September 2019
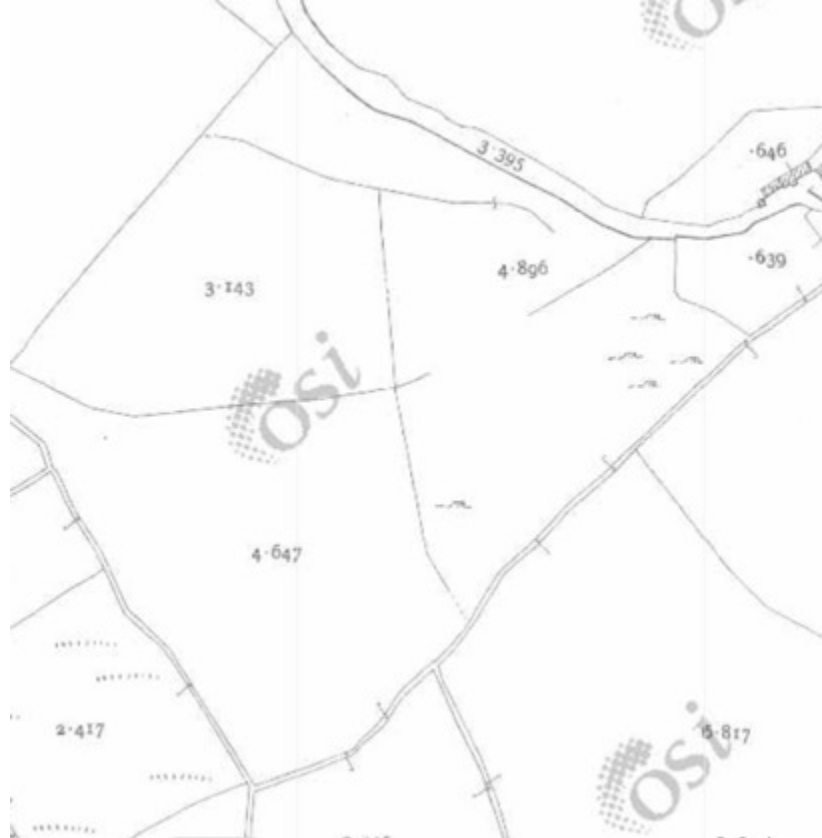
Continuity & Covid

- No community meetings since February 2020

- One Zoom meeting in 2021

- Some follow-up phone interviews

- 5 one-to-one interviews with farmers
  - Prompt interviewees to say the names in natural speech

- Continue to send out maps to individuals by post

Lismeelick, Clonkeen (Tang)

- Lios Mílic 'ringfort of *míleac*'

- A previously unrecorded subdivision of the tld. of Clonkeen.

- *míleac* 'low-lying land bordering a stream' [logainm.ie]

  - 30 examples around the country

  - Anglicised *Meelick*

Field or feature names

Field or feature name (spell names as pronounced)	Source of information
98 Garrhia.	
99,100 Bog field.	
Back of yard.	
The Garden.	
The hill field.	
The Calf paddock.	
Hiney's Near field.	

Additional details

Garrhia < Garraí na hÁithe?

Tld.: Suntown or Ballynagrenia

- Phone follow-up essential
  - 'The cows are up in [garəˈhaiə]'

- Analysis – limestone outcropping on OS 25", adjacent to large bog
  - suitable site for a kiln?

© Aengus Ó Fionnagáin 2021

Westmeath Field Names Project
@NamesField

'Slothán', Curragh, Rosemount, pronounced locally ['slo:hɑ:n], (something like 'Slóhán'). Prob. from 'slóchtán', the sowthistle, a tall striking plant common on wasteground or fallows. Similar field name in Cavan 'Slothan' tinyurl.com/3cu2pexf 1/2 @Wmeathheritge @duchas_ie

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

Westmeath Field Name Project - Recording Sheet

Recorder name	▆▆▆▆ IEGAN
Phone no.	▆▆▆▆ 2
Email	▆▆▆▆ hotmail.com
Date	7/8/20

Location details

| Civil Parish | ROSEMOUNT |
| Townland | CURRAGH |

Field or feature names

Field no. (on map)	Field or feature name (spell names as pronounced)	Source of information	Address of source of information (townland)
55	The Shlang Field	Paddy Norris RIP	
3	The Cross Road Field	Bill Geoghegan RIP	
16	Slothán	Sean Fagan RIP	
9	Dylan's Garden	Bill Geoghegan RIP	

Additional details

Note here any additional information or folklore supplied about particular fields or features (holy wells, old settlements, bur grounds, mass rocks etc.). Reference fields by number on map.
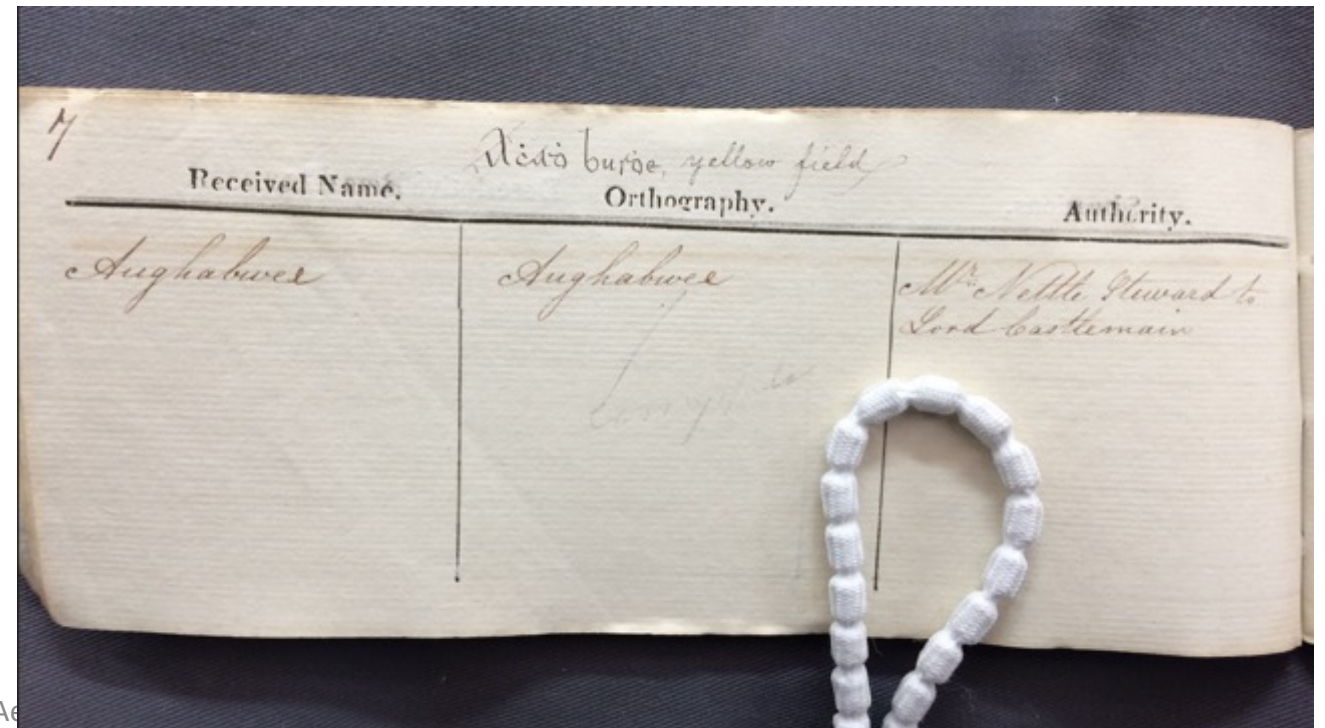
Follow-up by phone (to record pronunciation) essential

© Aengus Ó Fionnagáin 2021

15

Field names in Willbrook (Moydrum)

Moydrum Castle – burnt in 1921

- 17 field names recorded in the OS Name Books
  - Were not engraved on the OS Maps
  - *Carry Brynes Park* [< Páirc Chairbre Uí Bhraoin]
  - *Cross Field*
  - *Aughabwee* [< Achadh Buí]
  - *The Screen*

Field names on estate maps

- The Longfield Collection (NLI)
  - Date: 1770-1840
  - 17 Maps
  - *c.*90 field names

- At least 22 are of Irish language origin:
  - *Aughafoda* < Achadh Fada 'long field'
  - *Ratheiter* < Ráth Íochtair 'lower ringfort'

- Map of Castle Reynell 1761 (Mullingar Library)
  - 31 names (8 Irish)

- Maps in private possession
    Glenidan 1808 – 8 names (English)

- Many estate maps, list names of tenants only.
- PRONI – some estate maps
- Reg. of Deeds 'fields of Athlone'

A survey of Wardenstown and Brutonstown Little, 1804

© Aengus Ó Fionnagáin 2021

Maps in private possession – Glenidan, 1808

The Ordnance Survey (OS) in Co. Westmeath

- The first Ordnance Survey 6" maps date to 1837

- The 25" maps were surveyed in the period c.1888-1913

- About 1000 minor placenames recorded on the OS maps of Westmeath.

- Digitised & categorised by Justin Ó Gliasáin (2020)

OS 6" (1837)

OS 25" C. 1913, showing two named subdivisions of Togherstown, Loughnavalley

Categorisation:

- House names (272)
  - Many named after tld.
  - 'Fancy' names
  - Local names: *Rosana House* < Ros Eanaigh
- Subdivisions of townlands, house clusters [bailte] (170)
  - names similar in form to tld. names
- Small lakes (77)
  - streams, bays, points & shallows, islands.
- Hills (39), rocks/standing stones, woods, bogs, holes/caves, wells.
- Archaeological features:
  - ringforts, ecclesiastical sites, graveyards, roadside cairns, castles
- Bridges (40), roads & lanes, crossroads, canals, mills

*c.*50 names of fields and enclosures:

27 Fox coverts - many first recorded on OS 25"

9 fair greens

6 Deer parks

4 Sheep Walks

2 Race parks

2 Bleach greens – where linen (made from flax) was bleached white

2 Church Parks

Priests Park

Sam's Park

Town Parks

Horse Park

Castlefield

Leanankilla [< Léana na Cille 'the church meadow']

© Aengus Ó Fionnagáin 2021
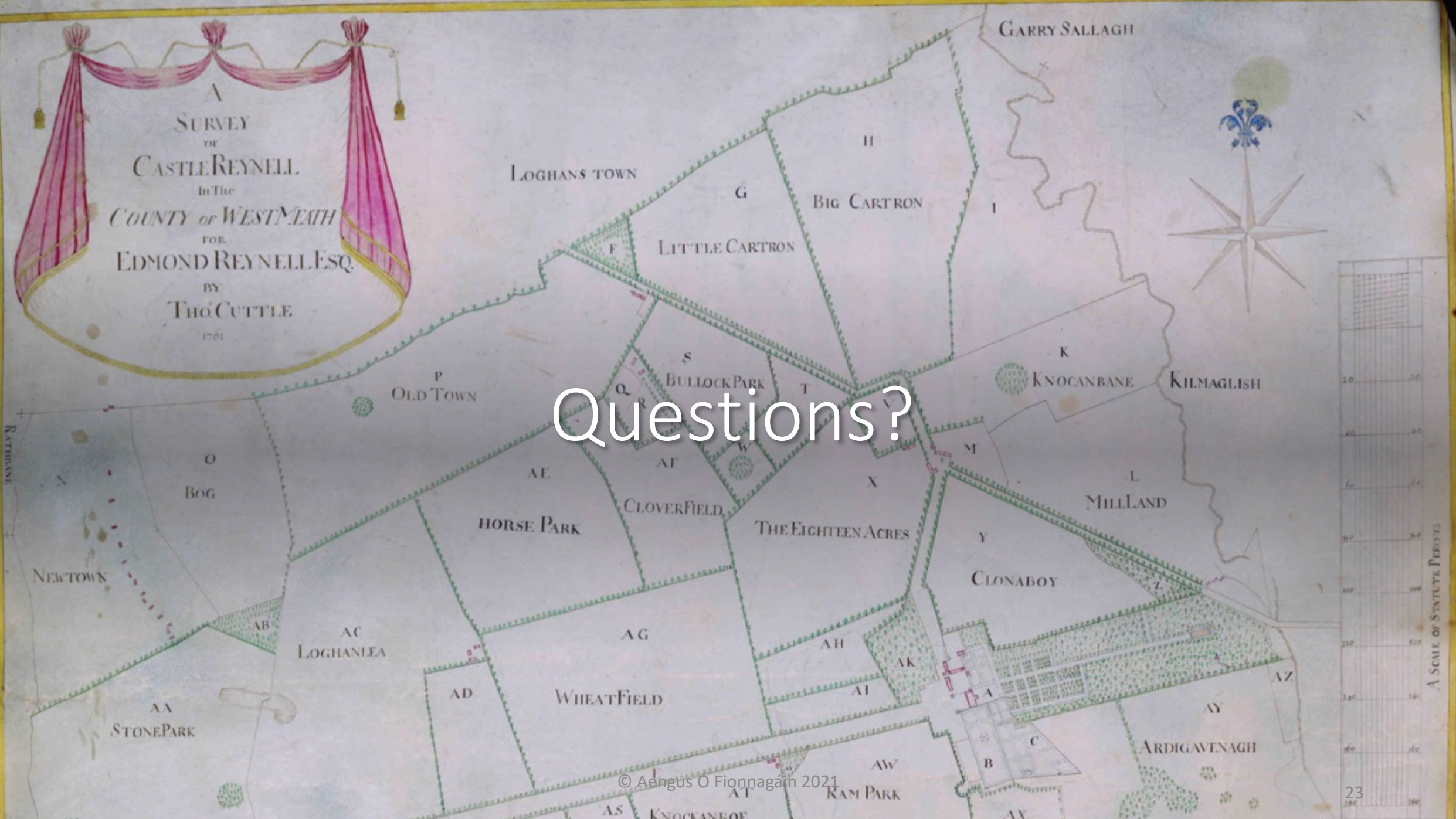
Limekiln park, Bunown, Glassan

The limekiln is marked by a circle with a dot in it, in the bottom centre of the map.

Publicity, analysis and project results

- Occasional tweets & media appearances
  - (RTÉ, TG4, Midlands Radio 3, Irish Times, Agriland.ie, *Westmeath Independent*/*Examiner*)

- 5 online presentations / recorded talks May – October 2021
  - Some available online

- Two published project reports/booklets (2018 & 2019-20)
  - available online and in hard copy.

- Draft project report for 2020-1 (Nov./December 21)

Questions?

23