

### Conaing — Died 1015

There is no mention of Liathmore after 1015 as far as I can discover so it really is open to guess work as to what really happened after this date. Did the monastery fade out of existence as a community of monks? If so there may be a reason for it. In 1180 the Cistercians founded an abbey at Kilcooley about five miles away and about 1200 a Cistercian abbey was founded at Holy Cross. These may have contributed to the decline at Liathmore-Mochoemog.

In the Festivals of Angus, an eight century Irish book, the 13th March is allotted to Leigh and in the same book is a prayer of which the following is a translation by Professor O'Looney.

“May Mocaenoc protect us,  
To the eternal protection to come  
Cuangus the chaste of perfect knowledge  
From Liath Moir, good the two men”.

## Excavations 1968-69

R. E. GLASSCOCK

Whatever we choose to believe of the above events it may be seen from Mr. Holmes' account that Liathmore-Mochoemog was an important centre of Christianity between the seventh and eleventh century. That it served most of south Tipperary and Kilkenny is evident from the da Paor's map of the principal monasteries (1). Like most monasteries the site is now marked by a church, the stone survivor of a community that mainly used wood and wattle-and-daub for its dwellings. The small rectangular church at Liathmore-Mochoemog is thought to be of eighth-century date and may be the work of Abbot Cuangus who died in 746. (2). But Liathmore-Mochoemog is unusual in having a second church on the site, one which began as a similar structure to the small church but which was greatly enlarged and rebuilt between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries long after the monastery had faded from existence. Both churches have been discussed by Leask. (3)

It was the taking of these two churches into state guardianship in 1926, and the subsequent repair and preservation of the fabric, which prompted Macalister to do some excavation both in the churches and on the complex earthworks of mounds and hollows which surround them. His report (4) shows that from his point of view, the excavations were disappointing. Apart from finding some small seventeenth-century houses he found very little material of the medieval and monastic periods. Moreover the mounds, wherever tested, "proved to be mere ridges of gravel, apparently of natural formation". (5).

Mainly because of the interesting earthworks and the difficulty of believing all of Macalister's interpretations the site was selected for new excavations in 1968 under the auspices of the Office of Public Works. We are now in a position to report briefly on two seasons work.

Guided by Macalister's findings it was not surprising that both in 1968 and 1969 late seventeenth-century structures emerged as soon as the sods were lifted. In 1968, when excavation was concentrated in an area north of the early church, the stone footings of an impressive rectangular building, measuring 65' x 18' internally, were uncovered. The walls, 2' 6" thick, were clay-bonded, the exterior was lime-washed and the corners rounded. Associated with the building were some sherds of pottery, which, tho' few in number, showed a remarkable variety and included a fragment of Chinese porcelain, some stoneware from the Rhineland, and wares from north Devon and Staffordshire. The north Devon pottery, such as the rim illustrated in Macalister's report (6) is, incidentally, of the same type that is turning up on excavations of colonial settlements in Virginia of the same period. Whoever lived in this building at Liathmore possessed some remarkable pottery for that time. The structure was evidently built in the seventeenth century on land outside the original monastery because no structures or finds of Early Christian date were found beneath it. It was set on the natural boulder

clay which had only been disturbed in two places, one for burials and the other for some deep-set masonry (perhaps an even earlier church?) just beyond the limits of the later house. This has not yet been fully investigated.

Believing therefore that the monastery must have been located to the south of the early church the 1969 excavations (visited by the Kilkenny Field Club on 3rd August) were concentrated on the earthworks between the two churches. A very small seventeenth-century house was uncovered almost immediately, but there was very little pottery in association with it. The search for earlier structures was hampered by burials which had disturbed the ground beneath; this suggests that there had been no activity on the site for a long time before the seventeenth century and that the knowledge of burials there had been forgotten, as it is most unlikely that houses would have been built on ground known to contain burials. Beneath the burial layer there were some features cut into the natural boulder-clay and into bed-rock; these may be Early Christian in date but we cannot be sure of this as there are no associated small finds.

Other excavations in 1969 showed that the mounds, far from being natural ridges of gravel, had well-constructed stone cores, in places faced and coursed, and the likelihood is that they were field banks of some kind. Because the gable-end of one of the houses was set on such a pre-existing bank we can be sure that the banks are earlier than the seventeenth century but how much earlier it is not yet possible to say.

In the last week of the 1969 excavation was located a circular stone foundation of average diameter 18' — 19', hollow in the middle, which is almost certainly the base of a monastic round-tower. This is of exceptional interest not only in its construction but because there was no previous evidence for a round-tower at Liathmore-Mochoemog although it is likely that a monastery of this importance would have had one. Whether or not it was ever built is a problem. So far there has

been no masonry on the site or, so far as can be seen, in the later church, which could have come from a round-tower; on the other hand, all the stone of a collapsed tower could have been carted away for building elsewhere in the medieval period.

While it is useful to find such evidence for the likely position of the monastery, the complete absence of small finds of Early Christian date is puzzling. So too is the absence of structures of the period 1200-1500 when there was such activity on the larger church. If there was nobody living on the site following the demise of the monastery why was the church enlarged? And by whom? Perhaps we shall get nearer to solving some of these questions when a large area is opened up for further excavation in 1970.

1. Maire and Liam de Paor, **Early Christian Ireland**, 3rd ed., 1961, 51.
2. H. G. Leask and R. A. S. Macalister, *Liathmore-Mochoemog (Leigh), County Tipperary*, **P.R.I.A.**, 51 (1945—1948), 9.
3. **ibid.**, 8-14.
4. **ibid.**, 1-7.
5. **ibid.**, 3.
6. **ibid.**, Fig. 5.

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## The Faithful Norman

RICHARD PRENDERGAST

In view of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the coming of the Normans to Ireland (1169—1969), as the Very Rev. William Grattan-Flood has said, (1) a concise history of that event is very desirable. While I have no aspirations to providing such a concise account of the invasion in general, or even of any aspect of it, I do feel it would be a pity to let the eighth centenary of that historic occasion pass without making some mention of it in our local journal and without recognising that there are still some of Norman descent who feel their ancestral arrival and settlement in Ireland should be commemorated. While this alone is suf-