The Plain of Blood

A Study of the Ritual Landscape of Magh Slecht, Co. Cavan

Replica of the Killycluggin Stone

By

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Abstract

The Plain of Blood
A Study of the Ritual Landscape of Magh Slecht, Co. Cavan

Kevin White

This thesis is a study of the landscape of Magh Slecht, Co. Cavan. This area contains over 30 prehistoric monuments in an area measuring 5km by 5km, something unseen in the rest of Co. Cavan. The area was the legendary centre of worship of the chief pre-Christian deity of Crom Cruach until St. Patrick and Christianity arrived in the 5th Century. It is the author’s belief that Magh Slecht is an unidentified minor “Royal” site. Through analysis of Medieval literary sources and a study of the monuments of the area it is hoped by the author that this will be proved. A geophysical survey was carried out at the hilltop enclosure site of Derryragh, the hypothesised focal point of Magh Slecht and location of Crom Cruach’s idols.

The geophysical survey disproved the theory that Derryragh is the location of Crom Cruach’s idol. The author firmly believes the aniconic stone, the Killycluggin Stone might have been perceived as Crom Cruach’s idol. The geophysical survey did produce evidence of a palisaded enclosure with a funnel entrance, a feature that is present at many of the major “Royal sites”. The analysis of the literary sources and the monuments of the area presents a strong case that Magh Slecht is a minor “Royal” site and it is the author’s conclusion that Magh Slecht actually is.
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1. Introduction

1.1 An Introduction to Magh Slecht

The area of Magh Slecht refers to an area of dense archaeological concentration which measures roughly 5km by 5km, enclosing an area of approximately 25km². Over 34 monuments consisting of megaliths, barrows and enclosures are located here, a situation not seen anywhere else in Co. Cavan. The area immediately surrounding Magh Slecht for a large part is devoid of archaeology that is on the same scale as that contained within Magh Slecht, this makes the area of Magh Slecht appear to have had considerable significance throughout prehistory as it appears as a possible regional focal point within the wider landscape.

The archaeology of the area of Magh Slecht can be traced back to at least the Neolithic as no traces of Mesolithic activity has yet been found within the area. The barony of Tullyhaw in which Magh Slecht is located is known as Teallach Eachdaich in Irish and was the tribe land of the Eochaidh, an old family of the Breifne kingdom. It is of this tribe that the Magauran family are descendant, the Magaurans being an important family in the later history of Magh Slecht. The first recorded inhabitants of Magh Slecht area are recorded to have been the Masraighe or the Tuatha Masraighe. The Book of Ballymote records them as being one of the rent paying tribes of Ireland (folio 140). They were described by the tribes in the neighbouring Magh Rein as being a hostile and hated race. The tribe are recorded to have been still in Magh Slecht by St. Patrick’s time as in 464 they are carrying out raids in Meath. The tribe were eventually subdued by the neighbouring Ui Briuin tribe of Magh Rein (Dalton 1922, 26-7).

As mentioned previously the area of Magh Slecht is believed to have been the cult centre for the pagan deity of Crom Cruach. The area became known as the “Plain of Adoration” or the “Plain of Prostrations” due to the worship of Crom. To the poet John Montague it was his inspiration behind his poem “The Plain of Blood” of which this thesis gets it title from (Montague 2004, 78). Many literary sources mention the worship of Crom at Magh Slecht which came to an end when St. Patrick came to the area and destroyed Crom’s sacred idols, converted the pagans that were worshipping there and founded Cavan’s first church. The area would later produce important Early Medieval Church figures such as St. Mogue, St. Dallan and St. Bricin the acclaimed brain surgeon and founder of an important monastic school on the outskirts of Magh Slecht (Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 15 & 21). The area of Magh Slecht would also produce the important Magauran clan whose seat of power was located in the centre of Magh Slecht (Simms 2001, 250-2).

Over the past two centuries many scholars have studied Magh Slecht. It is due to John O'Donovan that Magh Slecht was identified as being in the area of the village of Ballymagauran (O'Donovan in Dalton 1922, 45). John P. Dalton produced the most comprehensive study of Magh Slecht in 1922 were he supported and expanded on
O’Donovan’s theory. Today Magh Slecht remains an important feature in the archaeology of Co. Cavan, albeit an unappreciated feature.

1.2 Geographical Information

The work of scholars in the 19th and 20th century identified the area of Magh Slecht as being located in the area of the Co. Cavan/Co. Leitrim border around the area of the village of Ballymagauran and parish of Templeport, Co. Cavan. The parish of Templeport is located in the eastern end of the West Cavan barony of Tullyhaw. Today the area of Magh Slecht is located around the modern day Ballyconnell/Ballinamore road, the R205.

The area is dominated by drumlins, the highest of which is located at Derrryagh at over 100m above sea level. There are a high number of lakes in the area, these include Templeport Lake, Garadice Lake, Ballymagauran Lake, Derrycassan Lake and Brackley Lake. The Woodford River (now part of the Shannon/Erne waterway) runs along the east side of the area. The Blackwater River runs along the west side of the area.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into a number of sections. The literature review outlines the profile of Crom Cruach, a prominent figure of pre-Christian Ireland who was believed to be the chief pagan God and whose cult centre was located in Magh Slecht. Crom is strongly linked to St. Patrick and many places throughout Ireland as well as the festival of Domhnach Crom Dubh, all of which will be discuss in the first section of the literature review. Following this the relationship between Crom Cruach and Magh Slecht will be discussed by looking at the notable Medieval sources which refer to both. Patrician sources will also be referred to examine the important connection that St. Patrick has to Magh Slecht and the introduction of Christianity to the area. The final section deals with modern scholars who, by examining the Medieval and Patrician sources, have identified the where Magh Slecht was located within Ireland as well as providing further details on the area’s archaeology and cultural significance.

Following the literature review is the monument section which details all the prehistoric as well as a number of key Early Medieval sites that are relevant to the topic of this thesis i.e. ringforts and crannogs are excluded. Monuments such as the Killycluggin Stone, Derrryagh hilltop enclosure, the Killarah cairns and the multitude of megaliths will all be examined.

The geophysics section follows this. In this section the author will outline the aims of the geophysical survey. The methodology of the resistivity and gradiometry survey will be outlined. Following this the results will be outlined and discussed; any comparisons to other sites will be examined.
In the discussion chapter all the information from the previous three sections as well as new information on the Medieval history of Magh Slecht will be brought together to address the theory that Magh Slecht could possibly be a “Royal” site.

Following this will be a section containing some concluding points which in turn is followed by the bibliography. Three appendices, include a more detailed inventory of the monuments of Magh Slecht which adds more information than what was contained in the monuments section in the main body of the thesis; the prehistoric artefacts that have been found in the area of Magh Slecht and the original Latin and Irish texts from Medieval literary sources that are mentioned in the literature review.

1.4 Summary

This thesis is a study of the ancient monumental and ritual landscape of Magh Slecht located on the border of Co. Cavan and Co. Leitrim. The author will put forward the importance of Magh Slecht as a possible “Royal” site and Iron Age ritual landscape similar to but smaller than Tara, Rathcroghan etc. Magh Slecht is compared and contrasted with other “Royal” sites. As well as this a geophysical survey was carried out at the important Magh Slecht site of Derryragh hilltop enclosure (or Darragh Fort as it is also known as). The aim of this to verify the author’s opinion that the site is actually a hengiform monument or at least a ritual monument of some sort as it morphology does not suggest it is a defensive or residential site. As well as the geophysical survey a detailed examination of the 40 monuments of the area was carried out; historical references, locational data and morphology will be looked at for each monument. In summary, if the author’s aims are successful it is hoped that this thesis identify the area as a minor “Royal” site as well as bring Magh Slecht back into the spotlight of Irish archaeological studies for the first time in 91 years.
Figure 1 Location of Magh Slecht in Ireland
Figure 2 Location of Magh Slecht with Co. Cavan

Figure 3 Geological features of Magh Slecht
Figure 4 Towns and Villages around Magh Slecht

Figure 5 Some of the townlands of Magh Slecht
2. Literature Review

One of the defining features of the landscape of Magh Slecht is its strong connection to the figure of Crom Cruach. His links to Magh Slecht can be seen in the numerous mentions he has in Medieval literary sources all of which point to Magh Slecht being his centre of worship. These references in turn have brought many scholars to study Magh Slecht as well as Crom Cruach. In this section the author will give an overview of this complicated. An overview of how Crom Cruach fits into the landscape of Magh Slecht through accounts in literary sources will follow this. The final section will deal with studies into Magh Slecht by scholars over the past two centuries, most of these studies being based on following the literary sources.

2.1 Crom Cruach in Ireland

2.1.1 Introduction

According to O’hOgain (1990, 128), Crom Cruach was an archetypal pagan figure who was represented as an opponent to St. Patrick’s mission to convert the Irish to Christianity. He is referred to by many names; Cenn Cruaich in a 9th century AD biography of St. Patrick, Crom Cruach in a 11th Century AD text which describes him as an idol of the pagan Irish, Cenncroithi in the 12th Century AD “The Life and Acts of St. Patrick” and Crom Dubh in folklore but the name Crom Dubh possibly meaning “black stoop” or “dark croucher” is the most common name he is referred to as in Irish folklore (ibid). Literary sources seem to suggest that he was the chief god of the ancient Irish and Dalton suggests he is the most important god in the Irish “Pantheon” (1922, 48). His exact role is not however known, some believe that he was a sun deity (ibid, 49), a fertility god; that he may have been a thunder god on the lines of Zeus or Thor (O’Connell 1937, 60) or a later version of the Dagda (Monaghan 2009, 105). He is heavily associated with sacrifice in literary texts and is associated with many places across Ireland such as Croagh Patrick, Mount Brandon but most notably Magh Slecht; the subject of this thesis.

2.1.2 Stories and Places associated with Crom Cruach

As mentioned in the introduction Crom Cruach was represented as a pagan opponent to St. Patrick. There are many stories in folklore that feature St. Patrick and Crom together. A common theme is Crom’s hatred of Christianity but then his later conversion by Patrick. Another common feature of these stories is the presence of a bull owned by Crom of which Patrick tames or performs a miracle with. Many of these stories come from the area surrounding Croagh Patrick. Downpatrick Head in Co. Mayo is also associated with stories of Crom where is represented as a chief, a pagan god and a magician; again a bull is also associated with these stories (MacNeil 1962, 438-44).

Stories of Crom are also strongly connected to the area around Mount Brandon in Co. Kerry especially at a place called Cloghane. The main story here tells of St. Brendan and his monks
building a church and how they asked Crom, a rich pagan to help in the construction. Crom however offered them his bull, which since was dangerous he hoped it would kill the monks. St. Brendan and the monks however tamed the bull. Crom was then scared of the power of the monks that he went to St. Brendan and asked to be baptised. Before St. Brendan baptised him Crom was buried in the ground with only his head exposed for three days. For these three days it rained constantly but the final day was the worst, this day was then known as Domhnach Crom Dubh which fell on the last Sunday of July and it is said that it always rains on this day. A stone head (Pl.1) within the church is believed to be a representation of Crom (ibid, 449-50).

At Lough Gur in Co. Limerick there is a stone circle which has connections to Crom Dubh. At this stone circle there is an interesting feature known as Ronadh Crom Dubh or the “staff of Black Crom” at which offerings are left at harvest time. Local stories suggest that Crom Dubh was responsible for the introduction of wheat into Ireland (Dalton 1922, 55). Another site in Co. Limerick also has connections to Crom, this being Cromwell Hill where a conical shaped stone called Caisleán Crom is located (ibid, 55).

2.1.3 Domhnach Crom Dubh, Festival of Lughnasa and Crom Cruach

In many parts of the country festivities are carried out on the last Sunday of July. This day has many names but Domhnach Crom Dubh (or variants of this name) is common in some parts of the country. As mentioned in the previous section, a story from Mount Brandon shows one possible origin of the name of the festival, it being connected to Crom Dubh. Indeed Crom Dubh seems to have strong connections to festivities on the last Sunday of July and indeed on the festival of Lughnasa.

After his conversion Crom often appears to become a friend or associate of the saint who converted him. In Tirmany and Corcomore, Co. Clare he is associated with St. Bridget, at Corcaguiney, Co. Kerry it is St. Brendan and at Tirawley, Co. Mayo it is St. Cuimin. It is thought that Crom’s conversion and his assistance to saints may be one of the origins of the festival of Domhnach Crom Dubh (Dalton 1922, 52). At Askeaton, Co. Limerick local tradition states that Crom Dubh was a messenger for St. Patrick and on Domhnach Crom Dubh people could send messages to St. Patrick through Crom (ibid, 56).

At Mount Callan, Co. Clare an interesting tradition was carried out on Domhnach Crom Dubh (also known as Domhnach Lunasa or Garland Sunday in the locale). A mound is located at this site called Altor na Greine (altar of the sun) as well as an assembly site called Buaile na Greine (Stead of the Sun). People who took part in the festivities were known as Comthineol Chruim Duibh (the congregation of Crom Dubh). Those taking part in the festival would throw garlands of flowers onto the mound (ibid, 56). The fact that the sun and Crom Dubh are contained in the names is interesting; it seems to suggest Crom being represented as sun deity, at least in this particular location.
Some holy wells are the location of festivities on *Domhnach Crom Dubh*, two of which are located in Magh Slecht (Tober Patrick and Bellaleenan Well). Generally patterns where carried out at the wells on the last Sunday of July (ibid, 50).

Plate 2 Stone Head at Cloghane Church (http://irishphotographs.com/galleries/miscellaneous-1/)
2.2 Magh Slecht and the worship of Crom Cruach

All that we know of the worship of Crom Cruach at Magh Slecht comes from documentary evidence. This documentary evidence comes in the form of later Medieval texts and Patrician sources. In some cases full versions of the texts with their original Latin and Irish entries can be seen in Appendix III.

2.2.1 Medieval Documentary Evidence

A number of examples of Medieval literature contained references to Magh Slecht and Crom Cruach. A lot of these references mention Tigernmas, who is one of 191 kings of Tara which are mentioned in the Book of Conquests. The list in part is derived from the Annals of the Four Masters whose writers are thought to have obtained information from the earlier Labor Gabála which is contained in the Book of Leinster – it in itself being based on the poems of earlier Early Medieval writers. This list of Kings however cannot be seen as historic truth (MacAlister 1908, 1-2). Tigernmas is recorded to have become king in 1620BC and to have reigned for 77 years. He is said to have been the first to smelt gold. Unusually Tigernmas is the only pre-Christian king of Ireland to whom the writers refer to practicing a religion of any sort, this religion being the worship of Crom Cruach (ibid, 6).

He is referred to in connection to in the Annals of the Four Masters:

“…..At the end of this year he died, with three fourths of the men of Ireland about him, at the meeting of Magh Slecht, in Breifne, at the worshipping of Crom Cruach, which was the chief idol of adoration in Ireland. This happened on the night of Samhain precisely. It was from the genuflections which the men of Ireland made about Tighearnmas here that the plain was named” (O’Donovan 1848, 43)

His entry in the list of kings in the Labor Gabála states:

“Tigernmas son of Faillaich took the kingship after that……And he died on Mag Slecht with three fourth of the Men of Ireland about him, one Samhain Eve, while adoring Crom Croich, for he was the king-idol of Ireland; and only one fourth of the Men of Ireland escaped thence. From these bowings is said Mag Slecht” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 296-97)

A much more longer and detailed reference is in the Metrical Dindshenchas translated by Edward Gwynn that states:

“…..He was their god, the wizened Bent One with many glooms; the people who believed in him over every harbour, the eternal Kingdom shall not be theirs.

For him ingloriously they slew their wretched firstborn with much weeping and distress, to pour out their blood around the Bent One of the hill.
Milk and corn they used to ask of him speedily in return for a third of their whole progeny: great was the horror and outcry about him

It is to him the bright Goidil used to bow: it is from his worship many the slayings – that the plain bears the name Mag Slecht.

Thither came Tigernmas, prince of Tara long ago, one Samhain Eve with all his host: the journey was a source of sorrow to them.

The stirred evil, they beat palms, they bruised bodies: wailing to the demon who had enslaved them they shed showers of tears, prostrate their pouring.

Dead were the men, void of sound strength the host of Banba around ravaging Tigernmas in the north, through adoring the Bent One of the Hill: woe betide them!

......Since the kingship of Eremon, prosperous chief, worship had been paid to the stones until the coming of good Patrick of Armagh.

He plied a sledge hammer on the Bent One from his head to his foot: he removed with rough soldier-deed the weak image that was here.

(Gwynn in O’Duigeannain 1940, 297-98)

Further smaller passages in the Dindshenchas also make reference to Tigernmas in Magh Slecht. A couple of entries for Breifne state:

Why is Mag Senaig of the noble deeds called Magh Slecht?

Ten hundred and three thousand – it is true, perfect account – perished, a famous number, of their toil at the Plain of Prostrations.

Therefore the name Mag Slecht was given to Mag Senaig of the noble deeds” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 299)

And

“Mag Slecht, it is there the Men of Ireland bowed to Crom Cruaich around Tigernmas, son of Follach, and ten hundred and three thousand of them fell. Hence Mag Slecht, and Mag Senaig was its name at first” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 300)

An entry under Mag Slecht gives further information on how it is believed that Tigernmas and his followers may have died:

“Mag Slecht, whence was it named?

Answer: It is there the king idol of Ireland was, Crom Croich, and twelve idols of stone around him; but he was of gold. And until Patrick’s coming it was he was god to every people that took Ireland. It is to him they used to offer the first born of every stock and the first born of every family. It is to him that Tigernmas son of Follach, King
of Ireland came at Samain, together with men and women of Ireland, to adore him. And they all bowed before him, until their foreheads, and the soft part of their noses, and the caps of their knees, and the points of their elbows, broke; so that three fourths of the Men of Ireland died at these bowings. Hence Magh Slecht” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 299-300)

The writer Samuel Ferguson interpreted the physical style of worship practiced by Tigernmas and his followers as being similar in style those of people in the Middle East i.e. Muslims in that the earth is touched by the forehead. It is this style of worship that gave Magh Slecht one of its other names – the Plain of Prostrations or *Campus Prostrationis* (Ferguson 1879, 356).

In his paper on the Medieval literary sources of Magh Slecht O’Duigeannain basically dismisses all these entries as “pseudo-learned inventions of the tenth and eleventh centuries” and regards to the entry in the *Metrical Dindshenchas* “medieval invention at its very worst, and are alone almost sufficient to discredit the whole group of associated texts” (1940, 300). He goes on to say that all these accounts are the “evolution of a sham explanation of the place-name Mag Slecht” and that simply the Latin version of the word Slecht meant Prostrations and the whole story of Magh Slecht was based on the biblical story of Moloch with Tigernmas being added in as well as stories of St. Patrick to give weight to the explanation of the meaning of Magh Slecht. O’Duigeannain also dismisses the writers Dalton and O’Connell (see section 2.5.2 and 2.5.3) who followed the text of these entries as historical fact (1940, 300).

**2.2.2 Patrician Stories and Magh Slecht**

One of the most important aspects of the history of Magh Slecht is the arrival of St. Patrick and Christianity. Much of the information we have about the actions of St. Patrick in Magh Slecht and indeed Ireland as a whole comes from the writings of Tírechán. He wrote the “Collectanea” a collection of works on the life of St. Patrick c. 680AD, the collection reads as an itinerary of Patrick’s travels around Ireland. Much of the information he had on St. Patrick came from Ultan, a previous bishop of Ardbracan and a teacher of Tírechán. He also visited many churches and places associated with St. Patrick, mainly retracing Patrick’s route throughout Connacht, Leinster and Munster and gathered information as he went along. Tírechán’s work only survives in the much later Book of Armagh from the 9th Century. (Breen 2009, 378-379). There are two main entries of Tírechán’s that make reference to St. Patrick in Magh Slecht

Tírechán’s Memoir in the *Breuiarium* makes reference to St. Patrick’s travels around the area surrounding Magh Slecht. It was written between 668 to 701AD and later transcribed by Ferdomnach into the Book of Armagh in 807AD. It states that
“And he came into Mag Rein......Patrick however, sending Methbrain, a foreign kinsman of Patrick’s, to Rath Slecht, who told true wonders of God. And Patrick came to the channel of the Shannon.....here ends the first book, compiled in the territories of the Ui Neill” (O'Duigeannain 1940, 301)

A much larger entry in the *Vita Tripartita* which was compiled between 895 and 901AD goes into more detail of Patrick’s actions within Magh Slecht. It states:

“After that Patrick went over the water to Mag Slecht, the place in which was the chief idol of Ireland, Cenn Cruaich, covered in gold and of silver, and twelve other idols covered with copper around him. When Patrick saw the idol from the water whose name is Guth Ard, and when he approached the idol, he raised his hand to place the “Staff of Jesus” on it. And he did not put it, but it leaned over towards the sunset on its right side, for it is southwards its face, i.e. to Tara. And the mark of the staff still remains in its left side, and yet the staff did not leave Patrick’s hand. And the earth swallowed the twelve other idols up to their heads, and they are in that state as a sign of the miracle. And he cursed the demon and expelled him into Hell......... He founded, moreover a church in that place, namely Domnach Maige Slecht, and left there Mabran, *barbarous Patricii cognatusque ei et profeta*; and Patrick’s well is there, *ubi bætizauit multos*” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 313)

There are some other literary sources which describe St. Patrick’s time in Magh Slecht. A reference is made in the *Quarta Vita* written in the 8th or 9th Century AD. This Life is contained in Colgan’s *Triadis Thaumaturgae*. It states:

“There was a certain idol (in Mag) Slecht adorned with gold and silver, and twelve gods made of copper placed on this side and on that facing south. Kings and all people adorned this idol in which lurked a very bad demon who used to give answers to the people, wherefore they worshipped him as a god........... Moreover, the earth swallowed the twelve other images up to their heads, which alone remain to be seen in memory of the miracle. The demon, indeed, who had lurked for a long time in the idol and deluded men, came forth at St. Patrick’s command. When the peoples with their king, Loegaire, saw him they were afraid, and asked St. Patrick to command the horrible monster to leave their presence. St. Patrick ordered him to depart into the abyss. Then all the peoples gave thanks to Almighty God who deigned to deliver them through St. Patrick from the power of darkness” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 311-12)
Further reference to St. Patrick in Magh Slecht is mentioned in Colgan’s *Terra Vita*:

“Patrick, moreover, turned aside to see the idol well-constructed of gold and silver, which King Loegaire adored in Mag Slecht, and which was named Ceneroth (i.e. Cenn Croich). And at Patrick’s prayer that image which the peoples adored was broken up and reduced to powder” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 312)

In summary of above passages it appears that Patrick’s main objective when he came to Cavan or Breifne as it was known back then was to destroy Crom Cruach’s idols, the chief pagan idols in Ireland (O’Connell 1937, 39). It is noted that no other event in Patrick’s mission in Ireland is as vividly recorded as his destruction of Crom’s idols (ibid 1937, 46). It is believed that Patrick would have entered Magh Slecht from the west after passing through Magh Rein in Co. Leitrim. He then would have reached the shores of the lake called Guth Ard (believed to be Garadice Lake, see section 2.3.4). He then sailed over to the plains of Magh Slecht and then walked to the location of the idols (believed to be Derryragh hilltop enclosure, see section 2.3.4). He destroyed the idols and converted the pagans that were worshipping there in a nearby well (believed to be Tober Patrick, Corran, see section 2.3.4 and 3.11) and then founded a church in a nearby site referred to as Rath Slecht, the church being known as *Domnach Maige Slecht* (believed to be the present day Kilnavert Church, see section 2.3.4 and 3.10). He appointed his disciple Mabran or Methbrain to be custodian of the church. Due to number of holy wells dedicated to St. Patrick in the area of Magh Slecht it is believed that Patrick may have spent some time in Magh Slecht (ibid, 46).

One possible account of the idols of Magh Slecht may come from St. Patrick’s own *Confessio* written in the 5th century. Patrick mentions that before he arrived the Irish worshipped:

“idols and unclean things” (Borsje 2007, 130)

A similar style of phrase is used in the bible to describe idol worshipping cults in Egypt as well as describing an idol cult in Babylon where the King Nebuchadnezzar demanded his people to worship this idol, a similar story to that of King Tigernmas (Borsje 2007, 130).

As with the Medieval sources, O’Duigeannain (1940, 304) expresses his criticism of these Patrician accounts of St. Patrick’s actions in Magh Slecht. Although historical documents it should be noted that many of these accounts were written in Armagh at which time was trying to exert its control over other Patrician foundations. Original accounts written by Tírechán may have been changed in later copies to enhance Armagh’s and St. Patrick’s profile. In the entry in the *Breuiarium* no reference is made to Crom’s idol. This may be due to an omission in earlier version that the entry was copied from but even then the monk who was copying it would surely feel it important to mention Patrick destroying an important pagan idol. It may be concluded however that the original passage may have
mentioned an idol but not a nationally important one (ibid 1940, 305). In regards to the entry in *Terra Vita* the method of destruction of the idol i.e. turning to powder does not match the entries in *Quarta Vita* and *Vita Tripartita* which says that the idols were swallowed into the ground. In *Quarta Vita* no name is given to the idol while in *Vita Tripartita* the name Cenn Croich is given, this may mean that this name was a later invention if the idol existed (ibid, 305).

### 2.3 Modern Interpretations and Studies of Magh Slecht

As seen in section 2.2 many literary resources make reference to Magh Slecht and the activities that were carried out there. They however do not give an exact location for Magh Slecht. Over the past two centuries many writers and historians have but forward theories to the location of Magh Slecht and have carried out studies to the history of this location. Two locations have been forward to the location as to where Magh Slecht was located – Fenagh, Co. Leitrim and Ballymagauran/Kilnavert, Co. Cavan (of which this thesis is a study of). In this section the author will deal with the main people who have studied and wrote about Magh Slecht, these being John O’Donovan, Rev. Canon John O’Hanlon, Most Rev. John Healy and John P. Dalton.

#### 2.3.1 John O’Donovan

Dr. John O’Donovan of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland was the first person to hypothesis the location of Magh Slecht as being located in the barony of Tullyhaw in the area of the parish of Templeport. Although at first he believed Magh Slecht to be located in the townland of Cromlin in the parish of Oughteragh in Co. Leitrim, as stated in one of his letters from June 1836. In December 1836 however he realized that he had made a mistake when he consulted Colgan’s Life of Saint Dallan (patron of the parish of Kildallan located next to Templeport) which had the following passage:

“Born in the region of the borders of Connacht and Ulster, the area of the Masraige in plain of Slecht, where the present Teallach Eathach is located”

(O’Connell 1937, 50)

From this O’Donovan concluded that Magh Slecht must be located in the county of Cavan near the parish of Kildallan and not in Co. Leitrim as he previously thought. He also concluded that Magh Slecht was possibly the ancient name for the barony of *Teallach Eathach* (Tullyhaw). Later while compiling his book “Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts” he explained his error of locating Magh Slecht in Co. Leitrim as he was misled by a map (Map of Ancient Ireland in the Middle Ages) by Beauford which placed Magh Slecht in the area of Co. Longford/Co. Leitrim as well as consulting the writings of Lanigan and Seward who were also mislead by Beauford (Dalton 1922, 44-5).
In his book “Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts” he notes his belief that Magh Slecht was:

“That level part of the barony of Tullyhaw (in the County of Cavan) in which the island of Breaghwee, now Mogue’s Island, the church of Templeport, and the little village of Ballymagauran are situated” (O’ Donovan in Dalton 1922, 23)

In the notes of O’Donovan’s edition of the Annals of the Four Masters he states further his belief that the area around Ballymagauran was the location of Magh Slecht, in four different places throughout the book (ibid, 45). He further states this in 1856 while writing for the Kilkenny Archaeological Journal:

“The place at which this idol stood has not yet been identified. It stood near the river Gathard, in the plain of Magh Slecht, in the barony of Tullyhaw, and the County of Cavan somewhere in the neighbourhood of the village of Ballymagauran” (O’ Donovan in Dalton 1922, 45)

After his death in 1861 many other scholars accepted O’Donovan’s theory that Magh Slecht was located in Tullyhaw around Ballymagauran however some did not of which the author will now discuss.

2.3.2 Rev. Canon John O’Hanlon

John O’Hanlon makes reference to Magh Slecht in his entry on St. Patrick in his book “Lives of the Irish Saints”. O’Hanlon believed Magh Slecht to be located in the area of Fenagh, Co. Leitrim in the parish of Oughteragh at a place called Edertinny. At this place is there is an oblong enclosure with a large leaning upright stone with another stone leaning up against this several stones located around this (Fig. 6). O’Hanlon believed this to be the location of Magh Slecht (Kelly 1879, 485). In terms of the body of water that is referred to as Guth Ard in the literary sources O’Hanlon believed Lough Gowna or the upper courses of the river Erne (O’Hanlon 1875b, 580). However O’Hanlon was unable to identify who the Masraige, the tribe that inhabited Magh Slecht could be terms of in the area of Fenagh (Dalton 1922, 46). Despite this O’Hanlon still disagreed with O’Donovan’s theory that Magh Slecht was located at Ballymagauran (O’Hanlon 1875, 581)

2.3.3 Most Rev. John Healy, Archbishop of Tuam

In his book “Life of St. Patrick” Healy makes reference to Patrick’s actions in Magh Slecht. Healy, like O’Hanlon believed Magh Slecht to be located at Edertinny in the area of Fenagh, Co. Leitrim. To Healy the body of water i.e. Gut Ard that Patrick crosses to enter Magh Slecht is the string of lakes that run from Drumshambo, Co. Leitrim to the border with Cavan (1905, 182) however as Dalton points out these run a range of 32km (1922, 46). While Healy believed that the area around Fenagh was known by Magh Rein he disagrees that none of Magh Slecht was in Co. Leitrim, he believed that it reached as far as Ballinamore and covered most of the parish of Oughteragh and that Fenagh was enclosed
within the borders of Magh Slecht (Healy 1905, 183-84) (Fig. 7). However Dalton notes that Healy got this information from an entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters* which mentions the Battle of Magh Slecht which O’Donovan mistakenly believed to have been fought near Ballinamore when actually it was fought further to the east at Bellavally Gap beside Cuilcagh Mountain according to entries in *Annals of Lough Ce* and the *Annals of Connacht* (Dalton 1922, 46). Healy remarks that the ridge at Edertinny would be the perfect location for pagan worship and a strong spring is located at the base of this. This spring flows quite strongly in the winter and floods, Healy believed this could be the “fossa” of Slecht that is referenced by Tírechán (Healy 1905, 184). Healy notes the several stones that are located within the enclosure that O’Hanlon also mentioned (Fig. 6); he believed these to be the remains of Crom Cruach’s idols. In the Book of Fenagh it is mentioned that druidical practices were still being carried out in the area of Fenagh a 100 years after St. Patrick came. St. Caillin of Fenagh is said to have turned these druids to stone, these referring to the large number of standing stones located within the area (ibid, 187). In regards to the well that St. Patrick is meant to have baptized the pagan worshipers after destroying the idols Healy mentions a holy well dedicated to St. Patrick that is located a mile from Fenagh close to Edertinny. In terms of the church *Domhnach Magh Slecht*, Healy believed it to be located at Ballinamore, 3km east of Edertinny (ibid, 188).

![Figure 6 The enclosure at Edertinny, believed by O’Hanlon and Healy to be the location of Magh Slecht (O’Hanlon 1875, 581)](image-url)
2.3.4 John P. Dalton

Dalton is one of the most important writers to have studied Magh Slecht. Like John O’Donovan he agreed that Magh Slecht was located in the area of Ballymagauran and Kilnavart. It was him who hypothesised that Crom Cruach’s idols were located in the hilltop enclosure at Derrryragh, this being a major aspect of this thesis and an important part behind the geophysical survey that was carried out at Derrryragh (see section 4). Dalton carried out further work on defining the boundaries of Magh Slecht, he concluded that the border between Magh Slecht and its neighbour Magh Rein followed the present day boundary of the baronies of Tullyhaw and Carrigallen (1922, 25).

Dalton also worked on providing more definitive boundaries of Magh Slecht by working on O’Donovan’s description of Magh Slecht being:

“That level part of the barony of Tullyhaw (in the County of Cavan) in which the island of Breaghwee, now Mogue’s Island, the church of Templeport, and the little village of Ballymagauran are situated”

Dalton identified Magh Slecht as being the large “rhomboidal” area in the south east of the barony of Tullyhaw, roughly bordered by Slieve Rushen to the north, the Slieve Anierin
mountains to the west, Ballymagauran and Garadice lakes to the south and the Woodford River to the east (1922, 28-9).

Figure 8 Magh Slecht according to Dalton (1922, 67)
He proposed that Garadice Lake was the Guth Ard that is mentioned in literary sources, the name Garadice originating from an old name – Gorad Deas or Guthard Deas meaning “Southern Guthard”. The name Guthard Deas implies that there was a northern Guthard. This northern Guthard is likely to have been located were the present Ballymagauran, Derrycassan and Coologe lakes are located today as prior to the construction of the Shannon-Erne canal and other drainage works these three lakes would have been one large continuous lake which would have joined to the present day Garadice Lake (Guthard Deas) (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). Indeed on the Down Survey map there is a lake marked in between Garadice and Ballymagauran lakes called Lough Finvoy, which at the time joined the two bodies of water to form one large body of water – the Guth Ard mentioned in literary texts (ibid 1922, 31-2). At the narrowest point where Lough Finvoy was situated was the enclosure of Tuam Seanchaidh. Dalton believed that this enclosure, situated at the narrowest point on the water was where pilgrims embarked to go to Magh Slecht. He also noticed that there was a straight line of holy wells from Tuam Seanchaidh to outside Granard in Co. Longford dedicated to St. Patrick. Dalton believed that this showed the route that Patrick took to reach Magh Slecht, he also concluded that this may have been the route mentioned in literary texts that King Loegaire travelled from Tara to worship Crom at Magh Slecht (1922, 33).

Probably the most lasting effect of Dalton’s work on Magh Slecht is the theory that he produced that stated that Crom Cruach’s idols and shrine was located on the summit of Derryragh Hill which is the highest point in the plains of Magh Slecht. Dalton hypothesised that in St. Patrick’s time Derryragh would have had a more spectacular setting than it does today. By consulting the Down Survey maps and the Ordnance Survey Maps he concluded that the hill of Derryragh would have been surrounded on three sides by water, making a spectacular location for the worship of Crom Cruach in his opinion. His opinion of this theory was enhanced when he noticed that the old name of the townland of Portulan, which is located next to Derryragh was Portnerilinchy which in Irish translates to “the slaughter bank of the Island” which again points towards the area being surrounded by water as well as hinted towards the supposed human sacrifice that was carried out in the worship of Crom Cruach (1922, 34-5).

In terms of the enclosure on the summit of Derryragh when Dalton examined it he believed that the bank or vallum as he refers to it would be inadequate for defensive or residential purposes but suitable for enclosing a ritual site (1922, 36). Dalton also believed that the church founded by St. Patrick in Magh Slecht, Domhnach Maighe Slecht was located where the present day church at Kilnavert is now located. He noted that there was a holy well in the field next to the church, this well being called Tober Patrick. He thought this well to be the one mentioned in the literary sources where St. Patrick baptised the pagans after his destruction of Crom’s idol. The local parish priest at the time told Dalton that St. Patrick is meant to have moved on his knees from the well over to the site of the church. Dalton noticed that the church was situated within the remains of a ringfort, something Dalton
thought to be unusual. He concluded that this ringfort in which the church was situated in was the “Fossa Slecht” mentioned in the literary sources (*Breuiarium*, Appendix III) (1922 37-8). He believed that this ringfort may have been the residence of the guardians of Crom’s shrine and when St. Patrick arrived these guardians were banished and the church built (1922, 43). Dalton also discusses Methbrain, St. Patrick’s disciple who he appointed to care for this new church. He writes that Methbrain may have been born outside the Roman Empire unlike Patrick, as the term *barbarum* is an expression applied to a non-Roman. O’Connell also believed that he’s name is more likely to have been Nethbrain or Niabrain as referred to in the Book of Armagh (1922, 43). It should be noted that Dalton was unaware of the existence of the Killycluggin stone (one of five aniconic stone in Ireland, discussed in detail in section 3.7) which was not found (only 1km away from Derryragh) until shortly after he wrote his paper on Magh Slecht.
Figure 9 Extract of Down Survey map of Cavan showing the Barony of Tullyhaw (Large lake mentioned by Dalton can be seen in lower centre of image) (http://phaedrus.cs.tcd.ie/petty/petty/down-survey-maps.php#c=Cavan&indexOfObjectValue=-1&indexOfObjectValueSubstring=-1)
Figure 10 Down Survey Map of the Parish of Templeport (Large single lake can be seen on left side of map) (http://phaedrus.cs.tcd.ie/petty/petty/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Tullaghagh&c=Cavan&indexOfObjectValue=-1&indexOfObjectValueSubstring=-1)
3. The Monuments of Magh Slecht

This section outlines the monuments that are contained within the area of Magh Slecht. In total there are 40 monuments in the area which will be looked at. Each monument type is given a section where the monuments are listed and discussed in terms of location, historical references and morphological features. Each monument is given its own entry in Appendix III where more detailed information is given. The number it is referred to in the appendix is also given in each section.

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Table 1 The Monuments of Magh Slecht
Figure 13 The Monuments of Magh Slecht
3.1 Megalithic Tombs/Structures

There are three recorded megalithic tombs in Magh Slecht. As well as the three megalithic tombs there are two monuments which are recorded as megalithic structures as there typology could not be identified.

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</table>

Table 2 Megaliths of Magh Slecht

The most well preserved megalithic tomb in the area is the wedge tomb at Kilnavert (Pl. 2). It is possible that this tomb may be the origin of the name of the townland - *Cell na Fheart* or “church of the grave/monument” (Dalton 1922, 42) as Kilnavert church is located 250m away from the monument. There are two standing stones in close proximity to the wedge tomb, one located just outside the tree ring to the north east (CV013-037002) and another 90m to the south (CV013-038). It is recorded that teeth, two pots and two combs were found in a cist in the monument (Paterson *et al* 1938, 149).

Plate 2 Kilnavert Wedge Tomb (http://irishantiquities.bravehost.com/cavan/kilnavert/kilnavert.html)
The townland of Killymoriarty contains one of two court tombs that are contained within the area of Magh Slecht. This court tomb (Fig. 12) is located within sight of Derryragh and is located on a small hillock. The monument is in a very poor condition. It is contained within a long mound that is orientated east/west. The length of the monument, at 26m suggests that it may have been a dual court tomb (De Valera et al 1972, ). The court tomb at Boley (Fig. 13) is located on a north west facing slope. It consists of a long 15m gallery that is orientated north/south. Due to its length it is possible that this is also a dual court tomb like the one at Killymoriarty (Corlett 2000, 88).

The megalithic structure referred to in Derryragh (Pl. 3) is located at the base of Derryragh hill where Darragh Fort is located (O’Donovan 1995, 7). The megalithic structure in Killycluggin consists of two large stones and third smaller one. It is possible these structures may be the remains of possible megalithic tombs (ibid, 10).
Apart from the monuments recorded today there is the possibility that there were two further megaliths in the area of Magh Slecht that are no longer surviving. In the 1700’s Dean John Richardson appears to note two monuments which do not exist today. For the first one he states:

“On the lands of Crossmaclaght in the parish of Templeport, there was a sepulchral monument of a circular figure, consisting of one very large stone in the centre and four large stones at equal distances in the periphery, pointing to the four cardinal winds. It was circumscribed by smaller stones. The farmer that held the land, hoping to find something valuable as has been frequently done under some monumental stones in this neighbourhood, dug up the work, but he was sadly disappointed when he found nothing only under the center stone a small mass of black unctuous earth mixt with many bits of bone” (Paterson et al 1938, 147-8)

Crossmaclaght likely refers to the present townland of Crossmakelagher. There are no megalithic monuments in this townland however from local knowledge the author has found out that swallow holes are a common occurrence in this area and it is possible that the megalith was destroyed in this way. It is also possible that Richardson may have been referring to the wedge tomb at Kilnavert (Paterson et al 1938, 149). For the second monument Richardson writes:

“Near Bellahedy in the parish of Killdallan, there were four large stones sett up on one end, covered with a broad thick flag, converted lately into a mill stone; on digging under if found nothing but small pieces of bone. Many monuments of
this type since the late Revolution, in most of which were urns” (Paterson et al 1938, 149-50)

Richardson is most likely describing a portal tomb here. Local knowledge in the area states that there used to be two large stones that were located in a ringfort or enclosure in Toberlyan Duffin which were later removed. It is likely these were the remains of the monument described by Richardson (ibid, 150).

Figure 14 The Megaliths of Magh Slecht
3.2 Standing Stones

There are numerous surviving standing stones in the area of Magh Slecht, eight in total. These are recorded as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>In Text Reference</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-007</td>
<td>Camagh</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-035</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>Stone A</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-037002</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>Stone B</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-038</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>Stone C</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-058</td>
<td>Toberlyan</td>
<td>Stone D</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-059</td>
<td>Toberlyan</td>
<td>Stone E</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-060</td>
<td>Toberlyan</td>
<td>Stone F</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-074</td>
<td>Toberlyan</td>
<td>Stone G</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Standing Stones of Magh Slecht

As can be seen in Table 3 and Fig. 15 a large cluster of four standing stones are located in the townland of Toberlyan. It should be noted that these are not in their original location. There is no information provided on Stone E and Stone G in the Cavan Inventory.

Stone A at Kilnavert is one of the most interesting, according to local tradition it was used as a mass rock in penal times, with two depressions on the surface of the rock being believed to have been used to contain wine (ibid, 18). Two standing stones, Stone B (Pl. 4) and Stone C (Pl. 5) are located quite close together, 100m apart. Stone B is located in close proximity to a wedge tomb, CV013-
Both of the standing stones are in an upright position but are leaning. The standing stone at Camagh is located on a small hillock at the foot of Derryragh hill. It is rectangular in shape and is located close to the R205 road.

![Figure 15 The Standing Stones of Magh Slecht](image)

### 3.3 Stone Rows

There are three monuments recorded as stone rows in the area of Magh Slecht:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>In Text Reference</th>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-044</td>
<td>Lissanover</td>
<td>Row A</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-047</td>
<td>Lissanover</td>
<td>Row B</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-030</td>
<td>Killymoriarty</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Stone Rows of Magh Slecht

The two stone rows at Lissanover are located less than 250m from each other. Row A comprises of one stone today however in the 1912 edition of the Ordnance Survey maps two stones are marked. The orientation of Row A is in a west north west/east south east direction (O’Donovan 1995, 14).

Row B (Pl.6 and Fig. 16) is a more complete stone row comprising of three stones. The orientation of Row B is that of a north west/south east direction (ibid, 15). Interestingly the orientation of Row B means that is aligned in such a way that it points towards a stone circle (CV013-026002) and the finding place of the Killycluggin Stone (CV013-26001) (See Sections 3.6 and 3.9) Davies thought be may have be part of a larger monument or stone circle (Davies 1939, 13). Row B is also mention in an account written by David Grosse, a writer, a traveller and an artist who visited Magh Slecht in the 1830’s. Grosse believed that the stone row was the remains of a druidic temple and stone circle.
The stone row at Killymoriarty consists of two slabs, however a third may be present but overgrown in a nearby hedgerow. It is located near to Derryragh. This stone row has an east north east/west south west orientation (O’Donovan 1995, 14)

Plate 6 CV013-047 Stone Row

Figure 16 CV013-047 as drawn by David Grosse (http://www.templeport.ie/daniel-grosse/grose-MS10558_123druidic-circle.html)

Figure 17 The Stone Rows of Magh Slecht
3.4 Stone Circles

There are three stone circles located within the area of Magh Slecht, these are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-026002</td>
<td>Killycluggin</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-041</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-042</td>
<td>Lissanover</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Stone Circles of Magh Slecht

The stone circle at Lissanover is in a poor state of preservation. All that remains are a group of heaps of small stones and one partially buried large stone. 500m to the south east is the stone circle located in the townland of Kilnavert (Pl. 7). A barrow (CV013-043) can be seen 50m to the south east. Unlike the one at Lissanover, this one is in a much better state of preservation. 16 small squat stones make up this circle with two stones located near to the circle – one on the south western side and the other with the circle on the eastern side. It measures 12m in diameter (O’Donovan 1995, 13). Within sight of this stone circle is a barrow (CV013-040) located approximately 100m to the north.

Plate 7 CV013-041 Stone Circle
The stone circle at Killycluggin is probably the most significant monument of its type in the area of Magh Slecht. It is at this stone circle that the Killycluggin Stone (CV013-026001, see Section 3.9) was found immediately outside in the 1920’s. A total of 18 stones make up this stone circle, 13 of which have fallen. It has a diameter of 22m (O’Donovan 1995, 13). The two largest stones are on the north east side, both are now flat on the ground but they may have formed an impressive entrance (Burl 2005, 211).

It is interesting that Burl includes the legendary Crom idols as a stone circle in his book on the stone circles of Western Europe. He notes that the 12 idols in a circle may be referring to the orthostats of a stone circle. Burl later states his belief that the stone circle at Killycluggin may be the idols that are referred to as being Crom’s idols (Burl 2005, 211-12).

3.5 Barrows

In total there are seven barrows within the area of Magh Slecht, all of which are record as an unclassified barrow type, however it appears in the author’s opinion that they are ring barrows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>In Text Reference</th>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-016</td>
<td>Corran</td>
<td>Barrow A</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-017</td>
<td>Corran</td>
<td>Barrow B</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-034</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>Barrow C</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-036</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
<td>Barrow D</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 Barrows of Magh Slecht

| CV013-040 | Kilnavert | Barrow E | 20 |
| CV013-043 | Lissanover | 23 |
| CV013-061 | Toberlyan | 30 |

For the large part all of the barrows are located around the area were Kilnavert church and the Killycluggin stone are located. The barrow located at Toberlyan (CV013-061) is the only exception to this. Within the county of Cavan as a whole, the area of Magh Slecht contains the highest concentration of barrows compared to anywhere else in the county, it is possible that the barrows at Magh Slecht represent Co. Cavan’s only barrow cemetery in the opinion of the author. Six of the seven barrows follow the typical layout of a barrow with an internal fosse and external bank however the barrow at Toberlyan could possibly have an external fosse (O’Donovan 1995, ). The barrows in Magh Slecht can be defined as ring barrows due to the morphological features described by Waddell (2011, 389).

One of the barrows at Kilnavert (CV013-040) contains an interesting feature, 15 kerbstones that run along the perimeter of the remains of a possible stone cairn at a diameter of 7.5m (O’Donovan 1995, 22-3 ). It is surrounded by a rock cut ditch and outer bank. Davies visited the site in the 1930’s and he believed it to be a transitional form of stone circle (Burl 2005, 212). It is possible that this barrow may actually be a kerb circle which is a circle of
kerbstones which encloses an area of stones with a slight rise (Lynch 1979, 15). In the author’s opinion this monument may be wrongly categorised as a barrow.

### 3.6 Hilltop Enclosures

In total there are five hilltop enclosures recorded in the archaeological inventory of Co. Cavan. O’Donovan while compiling the Cavan inventory noticed that compared to other hilltop enclosures across the country the enclosures in Cavan had less substantial enclosing elements (1995, 173).

![Figure 20 The hilltop enclosures of Magh Slecht](image)

Hilltop enclosures are the largest recorded monuments in the area of Magh Slecht. There are two recorded hilltop enclosures in the area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-003</td>
<td>Belleheady</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV013-022</td>
<td>Derryragh</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Hilltop Enclosures of Magh Slecht

A large hilltop enclosure (LE025-046) is also located outside the environs of Magh Slecht to the south at Boeshil, Co. Leitrim (Moore 2003, 33).
Out of the two enclosures Belleheady is the largest, however only half of it survives but its original size can be estimated by looking at what survives; 160m by 100m. This enclosure is located on small drumlin which projects above marshy ground that is located beside the Woodford River which flows to the east of the enclosure. It is located nearby to a fording point on the river.

Although smaller (it measures roughly 100m by 60m), the enclosure at Derryragh (Pl. 8) commands the most prominent position in the landscape of Magh Slecht. It located on a large drumlin which is 100m above sea level. The enclosure is marked on all editions of the Ordnance Survey Maps. The monument is commonly referred to as “Darragh Fort”, Darragh coming from the local pronunciation of the townland name of Derryragh (Dalton 1922, 35). From the top of the hill extensive views of the surrounding area can be enjoyed indeed nearly every monument has a view of Derryragh and the enclosure located on its summit. To the north Slieve Rushen can be seen as well as views of County Fermanagh. To the northwest and west are the Cuilcagh and Slieve Iarainn mountains. Views to County Leitrim and some of its lakes particularly Lough Garadice can be seen. To the south east views to County Cavan and apparently on clear days County Longford can be seen. To the east the drumlin landscape of County Cavan extends while to the north east County Monaghan can be seen. As mentioned previously the enclosure is smaller than that at Belleheady but this not make it any less impressive. A low bank of earth, now covered in hedgerows encloses the entire monument. On the west, north and north east sides there are the possible remains of a wide internal fosse however it is unclear whether this is natural or man-made feature as there are no traces of it on the other half of the monument.
As mentioned in section 2.3.4 John Dalton hypothesised that the enclosure at Derrynagh was the centre of worship of Crom Cruach in Magh Slecht and the location of the idols of which St. Patrick supposedly destroyed. The enclosure is indeed in an impressive location to contain such important idols but even if the enclosure does not contain the mythical idols it could be still an important site in Magh Slecht.

3.7 The Killycluggin Stone

One of the most important monuments in Magh Slecht is the Killycluggin Stone (CV013-026001) (Pl. 9) which was found in the townland or Killycluggin. The stone is one of five aniconic stones in Ireland. These stones are often covered in La Tene styled carvings and are thought to have been a central part of pre-Christian shrines (Waddell 2000, 362), something that in the author’s opinion is significant due to the fact that one is located with Magh Slecht. The Turoe stone in Co. Galway is probably the most famous example in the country (ibid, 364). The other three stones are the Castlegrange Stone, the Mullaghmast Stone, Co. Kildare and the Derrykeighan Stone, Co. Antrim. Unfortunately none of the above four stones have been found in their original contexts – the Turoe Stone was removed from the foot of a hill to be placed with the gardens of a house, the Castlegrange Stone was removed from an unknown location to be placed in a garden as an estate monument, the Derrykeighan Stone is within the fabric of a church while the Mullaghmast Stone is within the walls of a castle (ibid, 364).

As for the Killycluggin Stone, it was first noted in 1922 by Robert A.S. MacAlister who recorded that when first found only the top surface of the stone was visible and that is was level with the ground surface (MacAlister 1922, 112). MacAlister noted the carvings that appeared on the stone and his opinion he thought that they most resembled the carvings that were on the Castlegrange Stone, he also stated that he believed that the nearby stone circle (CV013-026002) and the stone were related to each other (ibid, 116). The stone described by MacAlister however was only one part of the original Killycluggin Stone, a second piece was found in the 1950’s. Sean P. O’Riordain found the second fragment in the same field as where the first fragment was found however this fragment was found further downslope. O’Riordain concluded that this fragment came from the top of the Killycluggin Stone as it was rounded, this being similar in style to the Turoe Stone. This fragment measured roughly 1m in length and its decoration consisted of parallel lines (O’Riordain 1952, 68).

Both of the fragments were left in the open until the 1970’s when after an excavation they were both removed to the National Museum. The excavation was carried out at the site in 1974 by Barry Raftery with assistance from Eamonn Kelly of the National Museum (Raftery 1978, 52-53). The main trench was put around the area where the first fragment was found. In this trench the remains of two pits were found, one of the pits contained evidence of charcoal and burnt bone as well as a flint scraper while the second pit contained a mix of stone and grit however this could have possibly have been modern. The most important
“find” to come from this trench was the fact that it was discovered that the stone was deliberately buried in the ground in a pit. The base of the stone is slanted so for the stone to stand upright at a 90 degree angle the base has to be placed at an angle, as the stone was placed flat on its base the stone would stand at an angle thus it is obviously clear that the stone was not always located in this location at this incorrect angle (ibid, 52). Like MacAlister, Raftery concluded that the stone and the stone circle were related. In his opinion the stone could not have been moved very far due to its weight and its position on top of a small hill. He believes that the stone may of being deliberately buried to remove it from view, possibly by early Christians who wanted to remove symbols of paganism, even more potent for the Killycluggin Stone if it was the idol that is referred to in texts as being dedicated to Crom Cruach (ibid, 53).

Plate 9 The Fragments of the Killycluggin Stone (http://www.irishmegaliths.org.uk/zKillycluggin1.htm)

The excavation and removal of the fragments of the stone led to a clearer picture of the stone’s designs and form to be established (Fig. 21). The stone was worked into a roughly cylindrical shape, with a smooth upper half and rougher lower half which sat in the ground. It was at least 1.08m in height; however as neither of the two found pieces joined together it is hard to estimate its original height. The stone is 1.12m in length and 0.92m in width. The decoration of the stone is contained within a band that is 0.5m in height. The decoration consists of curves and spirals which are carefully and deeply carved, however due to destructive hammering on the upper surface and down one side of the stone not all of the carvings survive (ibid, 49). The Killycluggin Stone is a very important part in the landscape of Magh Slecht. Indeed its actual presence highlights the importance of the area as there are only five aniconic stones in total in Ireland.
3.8 Killarah Cairns

In the townland of Killarah on the eastern side of the Woodford River lie three stone cairns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>In Text Reference</th>
<th>Appendix Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV014-040</td>
<td>Killarah</td>
<td>Cairn A</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV014-041</td>
<td>Killarah</td>
<td>Cairn B</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV014-043001</td>
<td>Killarah</td>
<td>Cairn C</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Cairns of Magh Slecht

These three cairns all appear to line up in a roughly straight line that runs west north west/east south east from the top of Bellabeady Hill down to the Woodford River. Cairn A is located approximately 190m from the river on sloping pasture land. Cairn B is located 130m further upslope from the first cairn in a neighbouring field. The final cairn is located near the summit of Bellabeady Mountain and is 550m from the second cairn. The final cairn, cairn C (Pl. 10) is the largest of the three. This cairn is now surrounded by a coniferous forest plantation but according to local information prior to the trees being planted the cairn had extensive views of the surrounding area and the cairn itself could be seen from a distance at lower elevations. The cairn now is much denuded, indeed a cist burial (CV014-043002) was found by council workers who were removing stones for road construction. This cist burial was examined by Sean O’Riordain in the 1930’s who recorded the remains of three people and a number of cremation burials. No grave goods were found with the
burials but O’Riordain concluded that the cist was a Middle Bronze Age addition to the cairn (O’Riordain 1933, 167-170). Local stories say that the cairn was the burial place of Conall Cernach, a famous hero of Ulster who died at a ford of a river near Ballyconnell. The Irish name of Ballyconnell: Béal Átha Conaill (Entrance to the Ford of Conall) is derived from his name (Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 19).

The first documentary evidence of the three cairns comes from Dean John Richardson in 1739. Dean Richardson says of the cairns at Killarah:

“At Kilara in the parish of Kildallan there are three large cairns, 30 yards diameter, vitz: Carn na mban fion i.e. the monument of the fair woman, and Leabui Doarmud and Leaubi Graniu, that is Dermot and Granny’s bed. The two last had small apartments and urns in them. In the first there was found about 40 years ago a golden chalice of considerable value by a farmer, who thinking it to be brass made a present of it to Capt. Ellis his landlord” (Paterson et al 1938, 147).

The large cairn (C) on the summit of the Bellabeady Mountain is believed to be Carn na mban fion. Leabui Doarmud and Leaubi Graniu are believed to refer to the smaller cairns of A and B although which name refers to which is unknown. One of these cairns showed evidence that it was chambered and while material was being removed from it to aid in the construction of the railway unburnt bone was found.

Plate 10 CV013-043001 in the 1930’s (O’Riordain 1933, 169)
3.9 Gortnacargy Burials

In December 1956 in the townland of Gortnacargy (1.5km west from the village of Bawnboy and 5km north northwest from Derryragh) a series of 10 burials (Fig. 23) were discovered on a natural limestone knoll during the construction of a house and its associated utilities. The remains were first discovered during the construction of an underground water tank for the house. The first three burials found (A, B and C) were all extended, the orientation of burial A was not recorded but burials B and C where orientated east/west with the skulls lying on the western end of their respective graves. Sherds of a Food Vessel were found beside the skull of burial B. All of these three skeletons are believed to be those of males, two young adults and a middle aged adult (O’Riordain 1967, 61, & 63).

In 1957 further excavations revealed seven more burials (D, E, F, G, H, J and K) which were located a few metres to the north of the water tank were the first three burials were found. These seven burials were all located in graves which had been cut into the limestone knoll that was at a small depth under the ground surface. All of the burials were extended and except for G they were orientated north west/south east with the skull at the north west end of the grave. Burial G was orientated north east/south west with the skull at the south west end of the grave. The burial was that of an infant and within the burial were 18 potsherds, a blue glass bead, a chert flake and a polished chip of a stone (O’Riordain 1967, 64 & 66). Burials H and K were both of males in their middle age while burial J was that of a female, a mixture of pottery and animal bones were found within the fill of these graves (ibid, 66). The pottery was mainly of Beaker and Food Vessel style which dates from the
Early Bronze Age, the blue bead also may date from the Bronze Age but in Ireland they are more commonly associated with the Early Iron Age. In a concluding remark O’Riordain states that is not possible to give an exact date to the burial site at Gortnacargy however the Early Bronze Age date or Iron Age date was likely in his opinion (1967, 72-73). Although located from the central activity of Magh Slecht, the burials at Gortnacargy are an important part of the history of this area and show evidence of Bronze Age activity.

![Figure 23 Layout of Gortnacargy burials (O’Riordain 1967, 62)]

**3.10 Rath Slecht and Domhnach Maighe Slecht**

As mentioned in section 2.2.4 after St. Patrick destroyed Crom’s idol’s and converted the pagan worshippers at a well he established Cavan’s first Christian Church nearby. The well mentioned in the Tripartite Life is believed to be that of Tober Patrick (CVO13-015) in the townland of Corran (see section 3.11 for more details). The church, referred to as *Domhnach Maighe Slecht* in the Tripartite Life is believed to have been located in the exact same location as the modern day church of St. Patrick’s, Kilnavert (O’Connell 1937, 41).

In the 1836 6 inch edition Ordnance Survey Map St. Patrick’s Church or St. Mogue’s Church, as it was known as back then, appears to be located within a ringfort (Fig. 24). In O’Connell’s opinion this is an abnormal situation as a ringfort would not be seen as a suitable location to build a church unless for some important special reason (ibid 1937, 44), Dalton was also of this same opinion (1922, 38). It is recorded in the writings of Tírechán that Patrick ordered Methbrain his disciple to construct a church in Fossa/Rath Slecht. It is very likely that
Fossa/Rath Slecht refers to the ringfort in which St. Mogue’s/Patrick’s Church (Pl. 11) is located.

This was further backed up in Dalton’s opinion who believed that if the church founded at Templeport Lake by St. Mogue in the 6th was older than the church site at Kilnavart there would be no reason for the church at Kilnavart to exist.

The ringfort in which the church is surrounded by is now largely gone; mainly due to the construction of the present day church in 1864 that stands on the site today in 1864. However, prior to construction work it was noted that the ringfort was doubled ringed (Dalton 1922, 40). This fact led O’Connell to believe that Rath Slecht was the residence of the chieftain of Magh Slecht and when he was converted to Christianity he handed over his residence of Rath Slecht to Patrick who founded a church there (1937, 45). In Dalton’s opinion Rath Slecht may have been the residence of the community of druids or magi as he puts it whom had guardianship of the idols of Crom at Derryragh (Dalton 1922, 42).

The church site at Kilnavart appears to have been important in later history. In 1609 the church is recorded as having two pulls or polls of termon land (Fig. 26). This land represents the present day townlands of Kilnavart and Cloneary which measures 147 acres; quite a sizable amount for a rural church. Going by the amount of land attached to the church it is clear that the church was quite important (Dalton 1922, 38).

3.11 Holy Wells

Within the area of Magh Slecht and its hinterlands they are a multitude of wells many of which are associated with St. Patrick. It is from the numbers of wells in the area that O’Connell concluded that Patrick spent a long amount of time in the area of Magh Slecht (1937, 47).
The most famous of the wells within the area is Tober Patrick (CV013-015). This well is located approximately 300m east of Rath Slecht and the present day St. Patrick’s Church, at Kilnavart and is heavily associated with Patrician stories. It is said that Patrick came to the well and from there moved on his knees to Rath Slecht where he founded a church (see section 3.10 for more detail) (Dalton 1922, 37). It is this well that is mentioned in the Tripartite Life – the well in which Patrick baptised the pagans after he destroyed Crom’s idol. On the last Sunday of July every year a pattern was carried out at the well, were the patron of the well, in this case St. Patrick was honoured (O’Connell 1937, ). Pilgrims would have moved from the well to the church of Kilnavart on their knees, copying the style that St. Patrick is meant to have used. The patterns at this well died out in the 1860’s (MacNeil 2008, 604-5). It is interesting that the pattern day coincides with Domhnach Crom Dubh (see section 2.1.3).

In the townland of Bellaleenan there is a well which is located at the top of a hill near a bend on the river Blackwater. According to local tradition St. Patrick came to this particular spot after defeating Crom Cruach to rest, he then blesses the well and crossed the river and travelled westward. Annually on the last Sunday of July celebrations were carried out at the well. This Sunday was known as Domhnach Deireannach or Donagh Sunday. The celebration was often seen as an event for courtship for young people who often would travel up to 10km to take part in the festivities. The gathering usually lasted 5 hours and events usually consisted of weight throwing, high jumps, dancing, music, feasting and bilberry picking. The festival was a popular annual event up to the 1950’s (ibid, 119-121).

A small well (CV009-017) (Pl. 12) near the shore of Brackley Lake is also believed to be associated with St. Patrick; indeed it is like the well at Kilnavert is referred to as Tober Patrick. It was associated as a place of worship up to the 1890’s (O’Donovan 1995, 220). In the townland of Toberlyan Duffin another well (CV013-063001) is located. St. Leynie/Leyny appears to be the saint of whom the well is dedicated to going on the origins of the townland name (Tobar Laighin, “Lyon’s Well). It is likely that this is a later well to that of other three, all of which have connections to St. Patrick.
Figure 25 Christian Sites of Magh Slecht
3.12 Other Ecclesiastical Sites

Following the arrival of St. Patrick and the establishing of *Domhnach Maighe Slecht* at Kilnavart the area of Magh Slecht went on to produce some important figures in Early Medieval Irish Christianity – these being St. Mogue and St. Bricin. There are two sites in the environs of Magh Slecht that are connected to these two important figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record No.</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Townland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CV013-049001</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(St. Mogue’s Church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV014-052001</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Mullynagolman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(St. Bricin’s Monastic School)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

St. Mogue’s church is located on the Inch Island or Braighwee or St. Mogue’s Island in Templeport Lake. The monastery was founded in the 6th Century and soon became an important religious site in the area. The remains of a later Medieval church, built in the 15th or 16th century still remain on the island (Paterson *et al* 1940, 155-156). In around 1400 a church was built on the “mainland” on the shore of Templeport Lake across from the island church. Both of the churches are marked on the 1609 Baronial Map (Fig. 26) (Dalton 1922 39). A lot of reconstruction work was carried out on the church on the island in the 18th Century. Around the island there are the remains of numerous cut stones (Paterson *et al* 1940, 155-156) and from local information there are the remains of a stone wall that went around the perimeter of the island. The island is still used for burials today. A crannog is located directly adjacent to the island.

One of the most interesting Christian sites in the area of Magh Slecht is St. Bricin’s School or the University of Tuaim Drecuin as it is also known as. Founded around the 7th Century the school became famous across Europe for its schools of Classics, Law, Medicine and History. St. Bricin was a pupil and teacher at the university. He became famed for his skills of brain surgery after he saved the life of Cenn Faelad, a royal prince who was injured in a battle. The university is said to have been located in the area of the townland of Mullynagolman. In the 1900’s the remains of a round tower and church were found at the site. A sheela na gig (CV014-052002) known as the Tomregan Stone (after the parish it was found in) was also found nearby. This sheela na gig is thought to be a representation of St. Bricin. The university is thought to have passed out of existence in the 8th or 9th Century. St. Bricin’s Military hospital in Dublin is named in honour of the saint who created this great centre of Christian learning just outside the old centre of pagan worship of Magh Slecht (Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 14-6).
Figure 26 1609 Baronial Map of Magh Slecht area (http://www.templeport.ie/pages/1609-TP-Baronial-Map.html)
4. Geophysical Survey of Derryragh Hilltop Enclosure

4.1. Introduction

One of the main aspects of this thesis is a geophysical survey of the enclosure at Derryragh. The survey was carried out in February and March 2013. The main aim of the survey was to detect the presence of an internal fosse which is mentioned in the Cavan inventory as possibly existing (O’Donovan 1995, 173) as well as trying to determine whether or not the 12 idols dedicated to Crom Cruach might have been located here if they existed. Both an electrical resistivity and a gradiometry survey was carried out on the enclosure.

The northern half of the enclosure is dominated by a wide (roughly 10m) and shallow ditch feature (approximately 0.5m deep) that runs roughly from the midpoint on the western side of the enclosure northwards, along the northern boundary of the enclosure and then southwards to roughly the midpoint of the enclosure on the eastern side. It was hoped that this ditch feature could be the remains of an internal fosse. The central area of the northern half is a flat plateau area that is bounded on all sides by the aforementioned ditch feature. The southern half of enclosure is flat; there are no traces of the ditch like feature that is present in the northern half although the ground is considerably marshy along the bank of the enclosure especially on the western half.

4.2 The Grid Plots

For this survey a number of grids were set up – two on the outside of the enclosure, six in the northern half of the enclosure and three in the southern half; this making 11 grids in total (Fig. 27). Grids 3 through to Grid 11 were all orientated north/south, only Grid 1 and Grid were only orientated north west/south east. Below are descriptions of each of the grids:

Grid 1 and Grid 2 were located outside the enclosure on the north west side. Each of these grids measured 20m by 20m. The purpose of these grids was to establish if there were traces of an outer ditch or bank surrounding the main enclosure as well as determining whether there was any archaeological activity outside the enclosure. The bank of the enclosure was located immediately outside the bottom boundary of Grid 1.

Grid 3, Grid 4 and Grid 5 were located inside the enclosure along the top. The west side of Grid 3 fitted closely to the bank of the enclosure. Over half of this grid covered the shallow and wide ditch like feature; the other half covered the central plateau area. Grid 4 was located immediately to the east of Grid 3. Most of Grid 4 was located on the plateau-like rise that is located in the northern half of the enclosure. Parts of the shallow wide ditch were located on the northern and eastern boundaries of this grid. Grids 3 and 4 measured 20m by 20m. Grid 5 was the third and final grid that was located in the extreme north of the enclosure. It is located immediately east of Grid 4 and it’s closely to the bank of the
Figure 27 Grid Layout
enclosure which was located on the eastern side of this grid. This grid was entirely located on the shallow wide ditch feature. This grid measured 20m by 10m. A wooden electricity pylon was located outside the grid on its north east corner. It was hoped that evidence of an internal fosse as well as other archaeological features would be detected in these grids.

Grid 6, Grid 7 and Grid 8 were located immediately to the south of Grid 3, 4 and 5. In Grid 6 the bank of the enclosure was located along the western boundary of the. Like Grid 3 half of this grid covered the shallow wide ditch and the other half the plateau area. Grid 7 was located immediately underneath to the east of Grid 6. This grid was located in the centre of the plateau area. The south east corner of this grid covered an area of marsh ground. Grid 8 was located to the east of Grid 7. Like Grid 5 it was located over the shallow wide ditch feature (which in this grid is confined to the north half) and was right beside the enclosure’s bank which is along the eastern boundary of the grid. The southern half of this grid was marshy. All these grids measured 20m by 20m except grid 8 which measured 20m by 7m. As with the previous grids it was hoped that evidence of an internal fosse as well as other archaeological features would be detected in these grids.

Grid 9, Grid 10 and Grid 11 were located in the southern half of the enclosure. It measured 20m by 14m. This grid is located underneath Grid 6. Grid 10 was located to the east of Grid 9. It measured 20m by 20m. Grid 11 was the final grid located within the enclosure. It was located at the very southern “tip” of the enclosure. This grid measured 20m by 13m.

4.3 Electrical Resistivity Survey and Results

An electrical resistivity survey was carried out on all 11 grids. A RM 15 Electrical Resistance Meter was used for this survey. Readings were taken every 0.5m at traverse intervals of 1m. The zig zag method of surveying was used. The data (Fig. 28) was processed using Surfer 10 software and an interpretation graph was produced (Fig. 29). Below are the results by grid:

Grid 1 and Grid 2 located outside the enclosure showed no evidence archaeological activity. The only feature detected in Grid 1 was an area of high resistance (R2) located at the bottom of the grid. This is likely to have been caused by material slipping of the bank of the enclosure which runs along the bottom boundary of this grid. Grid 2 only showed an area of low resistance (R1).

In terms of inside the enclosure, a large area of low resistance (R6) was present in the centre of the enclosure. Areas of high resistance (R3 and R9) were present along the northern and southern boundaries of the surveyed area. Some areas of high resistance (R7 and R8) were present in the centre of the enclosure. The major feature detected in the enclosure was a large area (10m by 10m) of very low resistance (R4) surrounded by a faint band of high resistance (R5).
Figure 28 Resistivity Results
Figure 29 Resistivity Interpretation Graph

Green: High Resistance

Blue: Low Resistance
4.3.1 Summary and Interpretation

When looking at the results as a whole one feature stands out above all the rest, the large (roughly 10m by 10m) circular area of very low resistance (R4). This area of low resistance then appears to be enclosed by a feature which shows up with high resistance (R5). The wide shallow ditch feature however does not appear to show up on the results.

Other features apart from the large enclosure etc. in the northern half. The area of high resistance R9 could possibly relate to modern tractor tracks. It is likely that all the features showing in the resistivity results are likely natural rather than archaeological with R4 possibly referring to an area of marshy ground.

4.4 Gradiometry Survey and Results

The gradiometry survey was carried out on all 11 grids. A Fluxgate Gradiometer FM256 V.1.6 Geoscan Research 2004 was used to carry out the survey. Readings were taken every 0.125m at traverse intervals of 1m. The zig zag method of surveying was used. The data (Fig. 30) was processed using Surfer 8 software. An interpretation graph can be seen in Fig. 31. Below are the results by grid:

Results from Grid 1 and Grid 2 could not be used due to operator error while carrying out the survey. The results in general showed a large number of pits (M1, M2 M6, M7, M8, M9, M10, M12, M13 and M14) mainly in the northern half of the enclosure. Numerous dipolar anomalies (M16 & M17) where located in the southern half of the enclosure. M5 could possibly be the edge of an enclosure with a large negative reading (M4) in the centre, however these features could relate to an electricity pylon located just outside the grid. M11 may represent part of an enclosure as well. M3 refers to two curved lines of positive readings which may represent a double ringed enclosure. The most striking feature to be detected with the gradiometry was M1. This appears to be a large 20m by 20m enclosure, possibly palisaded with what appears to be a small funnel entrance.

4.4.1 Summary and Interpretation

The most interesting feature detected in this survey was the large 20m by 20m palisaded enclosure (M1). This enclosure appears to have a funnel shaped feature at its entrance, this funnel shaped entrances being found at some of Ireland’s “Royal” sites, something the author will discuss further in the discussion chapter. Also interesting is the number of possible pits that are located inside of the enclosure. The features M3 and M11 may be the traces of another enclosure. Another interesting feature is the unusual enclosure feature (M5) found in Grid 5. It is interesting to note the number of dipolar anomalies in the southern half of the enclosure, these may be traces of archaeological metal objects but could be easily modern.
Figure 30 Gradiometry Results
Blue: Negative Readings
Green: Positive Readings
Red: Dipolar Anomaly
4.5 Interpretations and Conclusions

The main aims of the geophysical survey was to detect the presence of an internal fosse thus making the hilltop enclosure at Derryragh actually a hengiform monument and to prove/disprove the theory that Derryragh was the location of Crom Cruach’s 12 idols. In regards to the idols, going by the results obtained from the resistivity and gradiometry it is clear that if they existed in the first place they are not located within the enclosure at Derryragh. The author is basing this on the fact that no feature resembling them was found in the geophysical survey i.e. at least 12 “sockets” in a circle. If looking at the geophysical results it is clear that there is no evidence of an internal fosse showed up. However a definite wide ditch like feature can be seen in the northern half of the site. Geophysics may not have picked it up due to its wide and shallow nature. A topographical survey may be needed to show that an internal fosse may be located at the enclosure.

In summary it appears that the 12 idols may not be located at Derryragh and signs of an internal fosse were not detected with the geophysics equipment however the survey proved that the site is indeed archaeological. The gradiometry showed up some very interesting features notably the possible palisaded enclosure with a short funnel entrance as well as many other possible enclosures and pit features.
5. Discussion

The previous sections of this thesis have showed the complexity of the area of Magh Slecht in terms of archaeology and historical references. In this discussion the author will aim to bring these sections as well as the results from the geophysical survey of Derryragh together in order to present the theory that Magh Slecht is an important ritual landscape and minor “Royal” site.

First of all what is a “Royal” site? Today the term is used to refer to the sites of Tara, Co. Meath, Navan Fort, Co. Armagh, Rathcroghan, Co. Roscommon and Knockaulin, Co. Kildare. These four sites are all mentioned in the Prolach (Prologue) of an Early Medieval text, the Felire Oengusso (Calendar or Matyrology of Oengus) which was compiled in the 9th Century. The author of this text compares the great Christian centres with those largely abandoned important ancient sites (Lacey 2011, 149). Cashel, Co. Tipperary and Uisneach, Co. Westmeath can also be added to the list of major Irish “Royal” sites (Newman 1998, 127). However it is true to say that these are not the only “Royal” sites in Ireland. Other “Royal” sites may be identified from certain criteria as mentioned by Newman. These criteria being that area being considered as a “Royal” site is a prehistoric complex of monuments that form a coherent group in terms of morphology, scale and sitting and that they are mentioned in documentary sources as being important or significant (1998, 129). In terms of a minor “Royal” site and what it may be, the author believes that they are simply smaller versions of major “Royal” sites that may not as be monumentally impressive compared to their larger counterparts or mentioned as much in literary sources but none the less have the same characteristics and features. Over this discussion the author will outline how Magh Slecht fits into the criteria outlined by Newman as well as discuss other features that may make Magh Slecht a minor “Royal” site.

As mentioned previously, Newman notes mentions in literary sources as one of the criteria in identifying “Royal” sites. In the literature review (see Section 2) the author gave an overview of the Medieval literature that refers to Magh Slecht. Many of the entries seem to present a general theme of ritual activity and sacrifice. The entries in the Metrical Dindshenchas appear to suggest ritual killing in the name of Crom Cruach in return for a good harvest. As also mentioned in the literature review Crom Cruach is a figure that appears throughout Ireland and its folklore. The fact that such an important deity is recorded in literary sources as being worshipped at Magh Slecht gives further importance to the area, more importantly it is recorded that High Kings of Tara came to Magh Slecht to worship Crom, indeed Dalton believed that a roadway may have existed between Tara and Magh Slecht (ibid, 33). Tigernmas is often associated in literary texts in relation to worship Magh Slecht and in particular his death while worshipping there. Tigernmas’s entries in the List of Kings in the Labor Gabála are interesting as he is the only King out of 191 referred to as practicing pagan beliefs (MacAlister 1908, 6) – these beliefs revolving around Crom Cruach and his worship place of Magh Slecht. If his entry in the List of Kings is believed to
have reigned around 1620BC, meaning that Magh Slecht was a place of worship in at least the Bronze Age, however the List cannot be fully treated as historical fact (ibid, 1-2). One thing is clear though; the mentions of Tigernmas at Magh Slecht further highlight the importance of the area as a pagan cult centre.

One other King is mentioned to have worshipped at Magh Slecht, this being Loegaire. His reference comes from Patrician sources. The Patrician sources on Magh Slecht are amongst the most important literary sources we have on Magh Slecht as they account the actions of St. Patrick and the coming of Christianity to the area and the abolition of this important pagan cult centre. No other event in Patrick’s mission in Ireland is mentioned in such detail as the actions he carried out in Magh Slecht. Various sources reference how he came to Magh Slecht with the sole intention of destroying Crom Cruach’s sacred idols and his confrontation with Crom and the pagans. All these entries explain in detail Patrick’s destroying of the idols of Crom and his confrontation with the demon Crom. In other parts of the country such as Croagh Patrick Crom is often referred to meeting Patrick or other Christian figures in folktales (Section 2.1.2) however none of these accounts quite match Patrick’s actions against Crom in Magh Slecht. No account of St. Patrick’s mission in Ireland is as clear and detailed as his actions in Magh Slecht, this shows from a Christian perspective the importance that destroying the pagan cult centre at Magh Slecht was in the Early Medieval church as well as suggesting further the importance of Magh Slecht in the pagan community of Ireland. It is clear that Magh Slecht definitely follows the literary requirements of making a “Royal” site as mentioned by Newman (1998, 129)

It is by consulting Patrician sources that much of the modern studies have been based on (Section 2.3). John O’Donovan identified Magh Slecht as being located around Ballymagauran, Co. Cavan while John P. Dalton was instrumental in furthering this theory and defining the area of Magh Slecht as being located in O’Donovan’s hypothesised location. In the author’s opinion both O’Donovan and Dalton are correct in their theories. When Dalton visited the area around Ballymagauran in 1919 he described the area as follows:

“A country strewn with monumental symbols of long vanished races; and before I had gazed for many minutes the conviction flashed on me that, if the story of Crom Cruaich were not a myth, I was standing on the ground where his worship had been celebrated. Here was Magh Slecht” (Dalton 1922, 30)

The landscape in which Dalton is describing is indeed impressive. A total of 33 prehistoric monuments and several important Early Medieval sites (related to the story of Magh Slecht) are contained within an area measuring roughly 5km by 5km (Fig. 11) (mentioned in Section 3 and Appendix III). Nowhere else in Co. Cavan and very few places in Ireland contain this sort of density of archaeological monuments in such a small area. This makes the area of Magh Slecht further significant as a monumental landscape. From the presence of megaliths it is clear that area was notable from at least the Neolithic onwards. The area
in some cases contains the majority of some monument types in Co. Cavan, stone rows for example as wells barrows (section 3.5). The area of Magh Slecht may contain Co. Cavan’s only barrow cemetery, this showing the importance of the area in the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Also another important indicator of activity from this period in the area comes in the form of the Gortnacarry burials (Section 3.9) dating from either the Bronze Age or Iron Age. The fact that the area also contains two of the six hilltop enclosures in Co. Cavan is also notable. The important Derryragh enclosure of which Dalton believed was the location of Crom Cruach’s idols and shrine is an impressive and important feature in the landscape of Magh Slecht; see below. For a large part the monuments in Magh Slecht seem to cluster around the area where Rath Slecht and the Killycluggin Stone are located rather than at Derryragh. Although there are a quite a number of monuments located around Derryragh it may that the area around Killycluggin/Kilnavart could be the focal point of Magh Slecht in terms of monuments, something which may be important as the author will discuss later. The monuments in this area are also closer to a possible fording point on the Woodford River at Belleheady; it is possible that this may be a reason for the occurrence of all these monuments. Herity identified certain monuments that are common to “Royal” sites throughout Ireland. He writes that the “Royal” sites that have been identified all contain ring barrows, cairns or mounds, standing stones, embanked enclosures and linear earthworks (1993, 127). Magh Slecht definitely contains these monuments, all apart from linear earthworks. The area also matches the density of monuments that are located at the major “Royal” sites. If Magh Slecht was to be compared to one of the major sites in terms of archaeology it would probably most resemble Uisneach, Co. Westmeath. Like Magh Slecht, Uisneach contains a wide range of monuments such as cairns, enclosures, barrows and stone monuments (Schot 2011, 98). Also like Magh Slecht it was a centre of pagan worship, as it was believed to be located at the centre of Ireland, with the “Cat Stone” believing to mark the spot (ibid, 87). Comparisons may also be drawn to Rathcroghan and Tara in terms to the presence of barrows at these sites as well as Magh Slecht, although at a smaller number (Newman 1997, 153-7; Waddell et al 2009, 4).From this it is clear that Magh Slecht appears to match the criteria of Royal Sites in terms of archaeology as mentioned by Newman (1998, 129). Apart from the criteria noted by Newman, Magh Slecht presents other evidence that may make the area to be seen as a “Royal” site. The author will discuss these factors in the next few sections.

A study of the artefacts that have come from the area of Magh Slecht (Appendix II) also paints an interesting picture of prehistoric activity in the area. As seen in Fig. 32 many of the artefacts that have been found in the area of are concentrated within the boundaries of Magh Slecht and its immediate hinterlands and approaches. Axes, both stone and bronze are the dominate type of artefact found within Magh Slecht. One of the most impressive artefacts from the area is the gold lunula found at Lissanover.
Figure 32 Distribution map of artefacts from Magh Slecht
Most of the artefacts were found in watery contexts such as rivers, lakes and bogs, a high concentration of which is found in the area of Derrycassan which is located quite near to Derryragh and if we believe Dalton, they are located along the main approach to Magh Slecht beside the Guth Ard. These artefacts show further ritual activity in these area, an area already dominated by ritual monuments. One very important artefact or find comes in the form of the Killycluggin Stone (Section 3.7), one of five aniconic stones in Ireland that was found within Magh Slecht. In the author’s opinion the Killycluggin Stone may represent the only example of an aniconic stone in Ireland which has been found in its original location i.e. its connection to the nearby stone circle (CV013-026002, Section 3.4). Interestingly the writer Burl believed that the Killycluggin Stone may have been Crom Cruach’s idol mentioned in literary texts (2005, 212). Also interesting to note is something that MacAlister wrote in his paper “The Legendary Kings of Ireland” written in 1908, 14 years before he noted the discovery of the Killycluggin Stone. He mentions the idols of Crom in Magh Slecht which were worshipped by Tigernmas. He writes about stone circles and how there is often a stone outside the circle which is the most important, the ones in the circle being less important. MacAlister then goes on to talk about a visit he had to a stone circle in Greece, the outside stone was elaborately decorated with concise carved lines (1908, 7). Returning to the subject of Crom’s idol, MacAlister states that we can’t take the literal description of the idol being made of gold and that “gold” in this case may mean a decorated carved stone like the example from Greece (ibid, 7). The author notes the striking coincidence between the context within what the Killycluggin Stone was found and the idea expressed by MacAlister 14 years before he himself would first write about the Killycluggin Stone. Literary sources mention that Crom’s idol was surrounded by 12 idols and that Crom’s idol was swallowed into the ground – the Killycluggin Stone was found buried in the ground outside a stone circle made of 18 stones. The author concurs with Burl’s theory that Crom Cruach’s idol (if it existed) is actually the Killycluggin Stone and that the stone circle represented his “12” surrounding idols. When looking at a distribution map of the monuments in Magh Slecht, the large majority of them are located around the area where the Killycluggin Stone was found, this fact pushes forward the idea that the Killycluggin Stone was the focal point of the area of Magh Slecht and the location of Crom Cruach’s idols, not Derryragh.

Dalton’s theory was that the idols of Crom were located in the enclosure at Derryragh. The geophysical survey (Section 4), in particular the gradiometry survey showed no evidence for anything resembling a central idol with smaller idols located around it. In this case it is likely that the author has disproved Dalton’s theory and thus has pushed forward the theory that Crom’s idol is actually the Killycluggin Stone. However Derryragh cannot be dismissed as not being important, the gradiometry survey (Section 4.4) did show that there is archaeological activity within the enclosure and in particular it showed up one interesting feature – a possible 20m by 20m palisaded enclosure with a eastern funnel entrance. The fact that this feature turned up makes Derryragh possibly more important than previously
thought. These sort of structures have appeared at sites such as Rathcroghan, Navan Fort and Knockaulin (albeit on a larger scale) all of which are “Royal” sites (Waddell 2011, 367) (Fig. 33). At Rathcroghan this feature appeared in the vicinity of the central Rathcroghan Mound where two enclosures both had long funnel shaped structure which served as avenues to the enclosure (ibid, 364-5). The examples at Rathcroghan are the largest examples in Ireland. As mentioned previously these sorts of structures have been found at Navan Fort and Knockaulin but also at the henge site of Lismullin. At Navan Fort this feature appears at Site B where a circular palisaded enclosure is located (ibid, 353). At Knockaulin the funnel feature appears at the “Rose” phase of the palisaded enclosure that is located there. Even though a small version it is still important, it may yet be larger as operator error on behalf of the author (due to inexperience) may have not fully picked up the feature. Although Crom’s idols appear not to be located at Derryragh, the site may have been an important focal point in the landscape of Magh Slecht.

As seen in the literature review, the monuments section and possibly the geophysics section it is clear that Magh Slecht was an important place in prehistoric Ireland however it can be seen that its importance continued into the Medieval period. As mention in the literature review St. Patrick introduced Christianity to the area of Magh Slecht after he destroyed Crom’s idols (Section 2.2.2). He then founded Cavan’s first church at Rath Slecht (Section 3.10). The area of Magh Slecht would go on to produce important Irish saints such as St. Mogue, St. Bricin and St. Dallan. St. Mogue (or Maedoc/Aedan as he is also known as) was born in Magh Slecht in 555AD on Mogue’s Island in Templeport Lough. Mogue was educated by St. David of Wales and when he returned to Ireland he settled in Wexford where he established a number of monasteries. He also established Drumlane, Co. Cavan, a kilometre from Magh Slecht and a monastery on the island he was born on. Mogue later went on to become the first Bishop of Ferns (O’Hanlon 1875a, 528-36). Another important figure is St. Dallan, a cousin of St. Mogue. He was born in the 6th century and was thought to be descended from a High King of Ireland, Colla Huais. He was praised for his knowledge and apparently lost his sight after studying too long. He was also praised for his skills of poetry and was the Chief Ollam of Ireland. He died after being attacked by raiders or pirates who attacked the monastery he was staying in (ibid, 496-502). St. Bricin is the final major saint associated with the area of Magh Slecht. He was born in the latter half of the 6th Century, possibly in the environs of Magh Slecht and as a descendent of the Kings of Munster and Meath. He was educated at the University of Tuaim Drecuin, a Europe wide famous School of Law, Classics, Medicine and History (see Section 3.12). Bricin became the Head of the University and was known as an acclaimed brain surgeon who saved the life of an injured prince of Ulster (Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 14-5). The area of Magh Slecht would become home to the Magauran family, an important family in the history of Cavan. The Magaurans were the chieftains of the barony of Tullyhaw, sandwiched in between the O’Rourkes in Leitrim (of whom the Magaurans paid a yearly tribute to) and the O’Reillys in East Cavan. They are associated with the townlands of Bawnboy, Lissanover, Coologe,
Derrycassan, Killywillin, and Ballymagauran, all being located within Magh Slecht (Maguire 2007, 35-41). The Magaurans were an important part of the history of Magh Slecht for many centuries up until the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century, but their legacy lives on in their descendants, the McGovers which is now the common surname in this part of Cavan. The Magaurans very likely represent ideas of kingship in Magh Slecht, kingship being one of the characteristics of “Royal” sites. Like the sites of Tara, Rathcroghan etc. the importance of Magh Slecht continued from the prehistoric period to the Medieval period.

Figure 33 The palisaded feature at Derryragh compared to its Royal site counterparts (Waddell 2011, 367)
6. Conclusions

Apart from the work carried out on hypothesising that Magh Slecht is a “Royal” site the author has in turn possibly disproved one of Dalton’s main theories on Magh Slecht. Through the geophysical survey no evidence of a feature resembling idols were found at Derryragh. This has now led the author to conclude that the Killycluggin Stone is, if it existed, Crom’s Cruach idol that is mentioned in literary texts. The context of its find and the distribution of the monuments around it has led the author to firmly believe that the Killycluggin stone and its neighbouring stone circle are the legendary idols Patrick is meant to have destroyed.

As seen in the discussion the case for Magh Slecht being a “Royal” site is pretty strong. The area matches Newman’s criteria for “Royal” sites based on literary and archaeological evidence. When compared to other identified minor “Royal” sites Magh Slecht stands up pretty well to the evidence. Lacey in his paper outlines three examples of minor “Royal” sites in Co. Donegal. Some common traits throughout the three include extensive views, associations with kings and clan groups as well as mythological figures, large numbers of monuments and the location of important Early Medieval Christian centres (Lacey 2011, 152-62). The area of Magh Slecht also has many of these traits. The area is referred to in relation to the kings Tigernmas and Loegaire, the area was the seat of power of the Magauran clan, the area enjoys extensive views in all directions and it is associated with mythological features such as Crom Cruach and Conall Cernach. Cavan’s first Christian centre (Domhnach Maighe Slecht) was established here by St. Patrick himself and the area would go on to produce in later centuries important saints such as St. Mogue, St. Bricin and St. Dallan. It is striking to see how such a small area in Co. Cavan had remained very important over the course of thousands of years from the Neolithic to Medieval period.

The fact that a possible example of an enclosure with a palisaded funnel entrance, a feature that is present “Royal” sites is located at Derryragh enclosure further pushes forward the author’s belief that Magh Slecht is indeed a “Royal” site. The comparative archaeology to other sites also points to the importance of Magh Slecht. When combined with the other factors that have been mentioned it is the author’s conclusion that Magh Slecht may be Ireland’s newest identified minor “Royal” site.
7. Bibliography


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### Appendix I An Inventory of Monuments in the Magh Slecht Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>RMP Number</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Townland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CV009-017</td>
<td>Holy Well (Tober Patrick)</td>
<td>Mullaghlea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CV009-011</td>
<td>Burial (Gortnacargy Cemetery)</td>
<td>Gortnacargy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CV013-003</td>
<td>Hilltop Enclosure</td>
<td>Belleheady of Rossbressal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CV013-007</td>
<td>Standing Stone</td>
<td>Camagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CV013-015</td>
<td>Holy Well (Tober Patrick)</td>
<td>Corran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CV013-016</td>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Corran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CV013-017</td>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Corran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CV013-022</td>
<td>Hilltop Enclosure (Darragh Fort)</td>
<td>Derryragh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CV013-026001</td>
<td>Stone Sculpture (Killycluggin Stone)</td>
<td>Killycluggin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CV013-026002</td>
<td>Stone Circle</td>
<td>Killycluggin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>CV013-030</td>
<td>Stone Row</td>
<td>Killymoriarty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>CV013-031</td>
<td>Court Tomb</td>
<td>Killymoriarty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>CV013-034</td>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>CV013-035</td>
<td>Standing Stone</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>CV013-036</td>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>CV013-037001</td>
<td>Wedge Tomb</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
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<tr>
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<td>CV013-037002</td>
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<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>CV013-038</td>
<td>Standing Stone</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>CV013-039001</td>
<td>Church (Rath Slecht/ Domhnach Maighe Slecht)</td>
<td>Kilnavert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>CV013-040</td>
<td>Barrow</td>
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<tr>
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<td>CV013-041</td>
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<td>CV013-042</td>
<td>Stone Circle</td>
<td>Lissanover</td>
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<td>CV013-043</td>
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<td>CV013-049001</td>
<td>Church (St. Mogue’s Church)</td>
<td>Port</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Standing Stone</td>
<td>Toberlyan</td>
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<td>Toberlyan</td>
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<td>Killycluggin</td>
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<td>CV013-068</td>
<td>Megalithic Structure</td>
<td>Derryragh</td>
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<td>CV013-072</td>
<td>Court Tomb</td>
<td>Boley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>CV013-074</td>
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<td>Toberlyan</td>
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<td>CV014-040</td>
<td>Cairn</td>
<td>Killarah</td>
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<td>Cairn</td>
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<tr>
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<td>CV014-043001</td>
<td>Cairn</td>
<td>Killarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>CV014-052001</td>
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<td>Mullynagolman</td>
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<td>CV014-052001</td>
<td>Church (St. Bricin’s Monastic School)</td>
<td>Mullynagolman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 The Monuments of Magh Slecht
Figure 34 The Monuments of Magh Slecht
Irish Grid Reference: 219587.821393

ITM Reference: 619534.821393

This holy well is located on the northern shores of Brackley Lake. It has associations to St. Patrick, hence the name *Tober Patrick*. An annual pattern was held here up until the 1920’s. There was a practice of tying a rag of cloth to a nearby bush after drinking from the well (Anon 2009). It is marked on OS Map Editions.

![Figure 35 CV009-017 on 6 Inch OS Map (OSI Mapviewer)](image)

Plate 12 Photo of CV009-017 (http://www.templeport.ie/pages/stpatrickswell.html)
Irish Grid Reference: 219497.319044

ITM Reference: 619444.819053

This record refers to the Bronze Age/Iron Age cemetery excavated by O’Riordain in the 1950’s. In total 10 burials were found, all inhumations. The first three burials found (A, B and C) were all extended, the orientation of burial A was not recorded but burials B and C where orientated east/west with the skulls lying on the western end of their respective graves. Sherds of a Food Vessel were found beside the skull of burial B. All of these three skeletons are believed to be those of males, two young adults and a middle aged adult (O’Riordain 1967, 61-3). Further excavations revealed seven more burials (D, E, F, G, H, J and K) which were located a few metres to the north of were the first three burials were found. All of the burials were extended and except for G they were orientated north west/south east with the skull at the north west end of the grave. Burials D, E and F were all those of males, sherds of pottery and a mixture of animal bones were contained within the burials. Burial G was orientated north east/south west with the skull at the south west end of the grave. The burial was that of an infant and within the burial were 18 potsherds, a blue glass bead, a chert flake and a polished chip of a stone. Burials H and K were both of males in their middle age while burial J was that of a female, a mixture of pottery and animal bones were found within the fill of these graves (ibid, 64-6).

Figure 36 Layout of the Gortnacargy burials (O’Riordain 1967, 62)
**Irish Grid Reference:** 224370.314690

**ITM Reference:** 624316.814699

This hilltop enclosure is not marked on either the 6 Inch or 25 Inch Ordnance survey maps but is known locally as a “fort”. It is one of two hilltop enclosures in the area of Magh Slecht. This enclosure is located on a drumlin which is surrounded by marshy ground to the south and the Woodford River to the east. Only half of this enclosure survives. This surviving half measures 160m north east/south west and 100m north west/south east. The enclosure is marked by an earthen bank and swallow fosse both of which are now part of a field boundary (O’Donovan 1995, 173).
Irish Grid Reference: 222003.314654

ITM Reference: 621949.814663

This rectangular shaped standing stone is located upon a small hillock that looks over the R205 road. It is located at the foot of Derryragh hill. It is not marked on the 6 Inch OS Maps but is on the 25 Inch Edition. It measures 1.58m in height, 1.02m in length and 0.57m in width. It is aligned north north east/south south west (O’Donovan 1995, 17).
Irish Grid Reference: 223520.315250

ITM Reference: 623466.815259

This is the most famous holy well in the area of Magh Slecht. It is believed that this is the well that St. Patrick blessed the pagans after he destroyed Crom Cruach's idols. Today the well is referred to as Tober Patrick. It is located 300m to the east of the present day St. Patrick’s Church, Kilnavart and Rath Slecht, the supposed located of the church (Domhnach Maighe Slecht) that St. Patrick founded. An annual pattern was held here on the last Sunday of July, also known as Domhnach Crom Dubh. Pilgrims would visit the well and then on their knees move towards the church (MacNeil 1962, 604-5), copying the actions of St. Patrick who is said to have went over to Rath Slecht on his knees after converting the pagans (Dalton 1922, 37). The pattern died out in the 1860's. The well itself is 6m long and 2.1m wide. There are many boulders surrounding it which acted as stations during pilgrimages (O’Donovan 1995, 217). The site is overgrown but a tall ash tree marks the site today.
Irish Grid Reference: 223630.315350

ITM Reference: 623576.815359

This is the first of six barrows that are located in the Kilnavart area of Magh Slecht. It is marked as a “fort” on the 6 Inch OS Maps. It is sites on the north east slope of a drumlin ridge. It has a diameter of 5.3m east/west. It consists of a central mound with a wide and shallow internal fosse and external bank, from this it is possible that this barrow may be a ring barrow. From the north east to south south east side of the barrow the external bank is part of a field boundary. The entrance to the barrow is not present (O’Donovan 1995, 22).
This is the second barrow in the group of six that are in the Kilnavart area. This barrow is marked as a “fort” on the 6 Inch OS Maps. It is located on a north north east slope of a drumlin ridge. It is a low circular mound with a diameter of 9.4m. It has a wide shallow internal fosse and an external bank, of which can be seen from west south west to the north and to east side of the monument. This barrow may be a ring barrow. The entrance is unidentifiable (O’Donovan 1995, 22).
Irish Grid Reference: 221837.314308

ITM Reference: 621783.814318

Derryragh is the second of the two hilltop enclosures located in Magh Slecht. It is located on the highest point in Magh Slecht at over 100m above sea level. It enjoys commanding views of the surrounding area. The enclosure is oval in shape, measuring 104m north/south and 58.8m east/west. A shallow internal ditch like feature runs along the foot of the bank from the south south west to the north and south south east side, it is possible that this may be an internal fosse. The original entrance is unrecognisable but there are four “modern” entrances, one at each cardinal point on the monument (O’Donovan 1995, 173). Derryragh is famous for being the location of the legendary 12 idols of Crom which were destroyed by St. Patrick as hypothesised by Dalton in the 1920’s. Dalton believed that the enclosure at Derryragh may have had some ritual function due to the size of its small banks which would have been unsuitable for defence (1922, 34-5). The site has connections in folktales to leprechauns (Hunt 1912, 179)
One of the most important monuments to be found in Magh Slecht is the Killycluggin Stone, one of five aniconic stones in Ireland. The stone was first noted in 1922 by Robert A.S. MacAlister who recorded that when first found only the top surface of the stone was visible and that is was level with the ground surface (MacAlister 1922, 112). MacAlister noted the carvings that appeared on the stone and his opinion he thought that they most resembled the carvings that were on the Castlegrange Stone, he also stated that he believed that the nearby stone circle (CV013-026002) and the stone were related to each other (ibid 1922, 116). A second piece of the stone was found in the same field in the 1950’s by Sean P. O’Riordain. He concluded that this fragment came from the top of the Killycluggin Stone as it was rounded, this being similar in style to the Turoe Stone. This fragment measured roughly 3 feet in length and its decoration consisted of parallel lines (O’Riordain 1952, 68).

An excavation was carried out at the site in 1974 by Barry Raftery with assistance from Eamonn Kelly of the National Museum to remove the fragments of the stone from site. It was discovered that the stone was deliberately buried in the ground in a pit. (Raftery 1978, 52-3). The stone was at least 1.08m in height; however it is hard to estimate its original height. The stone is 1.12m in length and 0.92m in width. The decoration of the stone is contained within a band that is 0.5m in height. The decoration consists of curves and spirals which are carefully and deeply carved, however due to destructive hammering on the upper surface and down one side of the stone not all of the carvings survive (ibid 1978, 49).

![Plate 19 The Fragments of the Killycluggin Stone](http://www.irishmegaliths.org.uk/zKillycluggin1.htm)
Irish Grid Reference: 224020.315780

ITM Reference: 623966.815789

This stone circle is located directly beside the finding spot of the Killycluggin Stone (CV013-026001). It is one of three stone circles in the Magh Slecht area. It is a large stone circle made of 18 stones, five of which are still standing. It has a diameter of 22m east/west and 8.6m north/south. The western part of the circle is divided from the rest by a field boundary. The largest of the stones is on the north north east side of the circle. It measures 3.93m in length, with a width and height of 1.45m by 0.68m (O’Donovan 1995, 13). Burl believed that this stone circle may be the idols that are mentioned in literary texts as Crom’s idol with the Killycluggin Stone being Crom’s golden idol (Burl 2005, 212). The circle is not recorded on either the 6 Inch or 25 Inch OS Maps.
Irish Grid Reference: 221270.314660

ITM Reference: 621217.814669

This stone row consists of two stones, with a possible third one. The first stone measures 1.12m in height and 1.1m by 0.2m in length and width. The second stone measures 1.15m in height and 1.4m by 0.13m in length and width. The possible third stone could be present within a large hedgerow. The stone row is orientated east north east/west south west. The stone row is not marked on the 6 Inch OS Map (O’Donovan 1995, 14) but is marked on the 25 Inch OS Map as “Standing Stones”.

Figure 42 CV013-30 on 25 Inch OS Map (OSI Mapviewer)
Irish Grid Reference: 221480.314710

ITM Reference: 621427.814719

This court tomb is situated in grassland on a small hillock. The monument is in a poor state of preservation. It consists of a long mound that is orientated east/west that contains the remains of a dual court tomb. It is 26m long and 6 to 7m wide and has a maximum height of 0.75m on its western end. The western gallery was at least 5.5m long and 2m wide with a possible jamb stone of 0.75m in height at the western end. Five orthostats make up this gallery. Two orthostats are located in northern end of the monument. It is possible that there are more stones concealed within the mound (De Valera et al 1972, ).
Irish Grid Reference: 222892.315193

ITM Reference: 622838.815202

This monument is situated just south of the summit of a drumlin ridge. This barrow comprises of a raised circular area with an internal diameter of 12.7m north/south with a wide and shallow internal fosse and a large earthen bank. This barrow is most likely a ring barrow. The original entrance is not recognisable (O’Donovan 1995, 22).
Irish Grid Reference: 222908.315320

ITM Reference: 622854.815329

Marked on all OS Map editions. This standing stone is a large irregular boulder measuring 1.1m in height and 1.15m by 0.76m in width and height. It is orientated east/west. A hole has been cut into the top of the stone to hold a wooden post which forms part of the field boundary. According to local information The stone was used as an altar during the Penal times and two apparently natural depressions in its upper surface were used to hold the water and wine. An OS benchmark is located on top of the stone (O’Donovan 1995, 18).
Irish Grid Reference: 222980.315270

ITM Reference: 622926.815279

This barrow is sited immediately east of the highest point of a drumlin hill. It is marked as a 'Fort' on 6 Inch OS Maps. This barrow consists of a circular raised area with dimensions of 29.6m north east/south west and 27.6m north west/south east. It is enclosed by a low earthen bank with a very wide and shallow internal fosse. It is likely that this is a ring barrow. A large part of the bank has been modified and incorporated into the field boundary. The bank is identifiable from the east north east to north north east side of the monument. The original entrance is not recognisable (O’Donovan 1995, 22).

Figure 46 CV013-036 on 6 Inch OS Map (OSI Mapviewer)

Plate 23 Aerial Image of CV013-036 (Bing Maps)
Irish Grid Reference: 223156.315544

ITM Reference: 623102.815553

This wedge tomb is sited on a slight rise in undulating land where it enjoys impressive views of the surrounding countryside. It is located with a tree ring which was planted by a local landlord. There is a slight rise of 0.75m in this tree ring from the surrounding area. A standing stone (CV013-037002) is located 4.5m away, a second (CV013-03800) is located 100m to the south. The tomb consists of a ruined gallery flanked by outer-walling around which there are traces of a mound measuring 11m by 10m. A gallery is 3.5m long and narrows in width from 1.5m at the south west to 1.35m at the north east. A single large capstone covers all but its north east side. About 2m west of its most northerly side there is a single facade-stone. Just beyond the south side of the gallery there are three outer wall stones and another 2.5m west of these. There are two outer wall stones, 5m apart, at the north side (O’Donovan 1995, 10).
Irish Grid Reference: 223148.315552

ITM Reference: 623094.815561

This standing stone is not marked on the 6 Inch OS Maps but is on the 25 Inch Map. It is located 4.5m from Kilnavart wedge tomb (CV013-037001). It is a large irregular shaped leaning stone. It has a height of 1.76m and a length and width of 0.8m by 0.35m. It is orientated east north east/ west south west (O’Donovan 1995, 18).
Irish Grid Reference: 223200.315450

ITM Reference: 623146.815459

This standing stone is not marked on 6 Inch OS Maps but is on the 25 Inch OS Map. It is sited on the north west slope of a low drumlin ridge. It is located not far from a wedge tomb (CV013-037001) and another standing stone (CV013-037002) which are located to the north of this site. It is a large irregular shaped boulder. It has a height of 2.1m and a width and length of 0.97m by 0.78m It is aligned east/west (O’Donovan 1995, 18).

Figure 49 CV013-038 on 25 Inch OS Map (OSI Mapviewer)

Plate 25 CV013-038 Standing Stone (O’Donovan 1995, 70)
The church at Kilnavart is located within a circular graveyard which is 60m in diameter. It is believed that the church is sited within a ringfort. In O’Connell’s opinion this is an abnormal situation as a ringfort would not be seen as a suitable location to build a church unless for some important special reason (ibid 1937, 44), Dalton was also of this same opinion (1922, 38). It is thought that the church at Kilnavart could be on the sight of Domhnach Maighe Slecht, the church that was founded after St. Patrick destroyed Crom Cruach’s idols. It is possible that the ringfort in which the church is built in could be the Rath Slecht that is mentioned in Medieval literary texts. The ringfort in which the church is surrounded by is now largely gone; mainly due to the construction of the present day church in 1864 that stands on the site today in 1864. However, prior to construction work it was noted that the ringfort was doubled ringed (ibid, 40). This fact led O’Connell to believe that Rath Slecht was the residence of the chieftain of Magh Slecht and when he was converted to Christianity he handed over his residence of Rath Slecht to Patrick who founded a church there (1937, 45). In Dalton’s opinion Rath Slecht may have been the residence of the community of druids or magi as he puts it whom had guardianship of the idols of Crom at Derryragh (Dalton 1922, 42). In 1837, in his Topographical Dictionary Lewis states that there are the remains of an ancient monastery with an extensive burial ground attached at Kilnavart (1837, 613), this showing the importance of this church site.
Irish Grid Reference: 223520.315780

ITM Reference: 623466.815789

This monument is sited immediately south of the highest point of a prominent drumlin hill. It is a small, circular, flat-topped mound of earth and stone with a diameter of 7.5m north north west/south south east. An interesting feature at this site is the presence a kerb of low stones that go around the perimeter of the mound. There are 15 in total, four on the south south east side and 10 from the south west to north north west. Outside of the mound is a well-defined bank of earth and stone with a deep internal fosse. The bank has been removed from south west to west side of the monument probably in relatively modern times (O’Donovan 1995, 22-3). Davies visited the site in the 1930’s and he believed it to be a transitional form of stone circle (Burl 2005, 212). It is possible that this barrow may actually be a kerb circle which is a circle of kerbstones which encloses an area of stones with a slight rise (Lynch 1979, 15).
Irish Grid Reference: 223520.315650

ITM Reference: 623466.815659

This stone circle is not marked on 6 Inch OS Maps but it is on the 25 Inch edition. The monument is situated on a ridge which has been planted with coniferous trees. The site composes of a slightly raised circular area with diameters of 11.8m north east/south west and 10.9m north west/south east. A total of sixteen squat irregularly shaped boulders make up this circle. There is a large break in the circle from the north east to east to east south east side of the monument and a smaller one from the west to west north west to north west side. There are two stones located outside the perimeter of the stone circle, one is located 2m to the south south west and another is located inside the circle on the eastern side (O’Donovan 1995, 13).

Plate 27 CV013-041 Stone Circle
Irish Grid Reference: 222949.315899

ITM Reference: 622895.815098

This stone circle is not marked on the 6 Inch OS Maps but is on the later 25 Inch edition. The monument is situated on the north north west side of a low rise. It is a poor state of preservation; all that remains of the site is a heap of small stones containing one large partly buried recumbent stone, with a height of 0.9m and a length and width of 2.25m by 0.7m. There are two smaller heaps of small stones located 11.3m to south south east (O’Donovan 1995, 13).
This site is marked as a 'Fort' on 6 Inch OS Maps. It is sited on the highest point of a low natural rise. The monument comprises of a raised circular area with dimensions of 15.7m north/south and 15.3 east/west. It is enclosed by a low but well-defined earthen bank with a wide and shallow internal fosse. This monument is likely a ring barrow. The original entrance is not recognisable (O’Donovan 1995, 23).
Irish Grid Reference: 223360.316160

ITM Reference: 623306.816169

This stone row is located at the eastern end of a flat topped ridge. The site is not marked on 6 Inch OS Maps but on the 25 Inch Edition it is, were two stones are identifiable. Today only one of the two stones depicted on the 25 Inch map edition is still identifiable. It is a low slab with a height of 0.94m and a length and width of 1.1m by 0.18m. It is aligned west north west/east south east (O’Donovan 1995, 14).
Irish Grid Reference: 223601.316253

ITM Reference: 623547.816262

This stone row is sited on the south east slope of a drumlin ridge. It is composed of three stones in a north west/south east alignment. The first stone measures 2.1m in height and 1.2m by 0.64m in length and width. The second stone measures 1.55m in height and 0.95m by 0.7m in length and width. The third and final stone leans against the second stone; it is 1.95m in height and 1.55m by 0.43m in length and width. There is discolouration on the leaning stone suggesting that at least half of its height was formerly beneath ground level (O’Donovan 1995, 15). This stone row was drawn and written about by David Grosse, a traveller and artist who visited the area in the 1830’s.

Figure 54 CV013-047 as drawn by David Grosse
(http://www.templeport.ie/daniel-grosse/grose-MS10558_123druidic-circle.html)

Plate 30 CV013-047 as it is today
Irish Grid Reference: 221430.316430

ITM Reference: 621377.816439

The island monastery on St. Mogue’s Island in Templeport Lake was founded in the 6th Century by the local saint, Mogue. The island was used as a church site until at least the 17th Century where it is marked on the 1609 Baronial Map. The present ruins on the island date to at least the 15th or 16th Century, with 18th Century reconstructions. A church was built on the shores of Templeport Lake on the present site of St. Peter’s Church, but this did not replace the church on the island. There are many items of carved stone on the island. Patterson and Davies (1940, 154-6) described foundations of a rectangular dry stone-built church (int. dims. 12m ENE-WSW; 5.3m NNW-SSE). Paterson and Davies visited the island in 1940. They recorded that east wall then stood to a height of 0.9m and that south wall had been destroyed at west corner and another wall of rough ashlar standing about 6m high had been built across it. The west wall according to their observations contains a large rectangular window which they suggested was 'a type unusual in ecclesiastical buildings, in this position' (Paterson et al 1940, 154-156). Local tradition states that soil from the island placed in a house can prevent fires.

Figure 31 St. Mogue’s Island (O’Donovan 1995, 205)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV013-058</th>
<th>Standing Stone</th>
<th>Toberlyan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irish Grid Reference: 223520.314230

ITM Reference: 623466.814240

This standing stone was formerly sited on the western slope of a drumlin ridge in a recumbent position. It is a large irregular boulder. It is now lying in a quarry site 120m south of its original position (O’Donovan 1995, 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV013-059</th>
<th>Standing Stone</th>
<th>Toberlyan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irish Grid Reference: 223551.314121

ITM Reference: 623497.614131

Not much information available on this monument. It is located within a group of standing, most of which have been removed from their original position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV013-060</th>
<th>Standing Stone</th>
<th>Toberlyan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irish Grid Reference: 223680.314010

ITM Reference: 623626.814020

This standing stone was formerly located on the south east slope of a drumlin ridge in a recumbent position. It is a large irregular boulder. It is now located within a quarry site, 80m north west of where it was originally located (O’Donovan 1995, 18)
Irish Grid Reference: 223657.314182

ITM Reference: 623603.814192

This barrow is marked as a 'Fort' on 6 Inch OS Maps. It is located on the west south west slope of a prominent drumlin ridge. It was levelled in the early 1960s. The outline of the site was still identifiable in 1969. It comprised a small raised sub-circular area with dimensions of 8.7m east/west and 7.1m north/south. It was enclosed by a low earthen bank with possible traces of a shallow external fosse. There was a break in the bank at north north east side. It is not visible at ground level today (O'Donovan 1995, 23).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV013-065</th>
<th>Megalithic Structure</th>
<th>Killycluggin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Irish Grid Reference: 223864.315820

*ITM Reference: 623810.815829

This monument consists of three stones. The first stone is 1m in height, 1.8m in length and 0.25m wide. It is aligned east/west. The second stone is set to the south of the first one and at a right angle. It is 0.4 metres in height, 1.25m in length and 0.25m in width. The final stone is located to the west of the second stone. It is aligned east/west and measures 0.6m in height and 0.6m by 0.4m in length and width. This configuration of stones may represent the remains of some form of megalithic monument. Field-clearance debris has been heaped around it (O’Donovan 1995, 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CV013-068</th>
<th>Megalithic Structure</th>
<th>Derryragh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Irish Grid Reference: 222026.314331

*ITM Reference: 621972.814341

Located at the base of Derryragh hill this site comprises of three stones. The first stone is 1.15m in height and 1.6m in length. It leans against an upright stone which is 0.85m in height and 1.35m in length. The third stone rests against the leaning stone and to the N of the group there is a prostrate stone. This site may be the remains of a megalithic tomb or it may largely natural in origin (O’Donovan 1995, 7).

Plate 32 CV013-068 Megalithic Structure
The court tomb at Boley is located on a north west facing slope where it enjoys views to the Cuilcagh Mountains and Slieve Rushen but views in other directions are quite limited. The site consists of a long gallery that is north/south aligned, 15.5m in length and 2m wide. The orthostats that make up the tomb range in length from 1m to 2.75m and height from 0.3m to 0.4m. It is likely that this was a dual court tomb with galleries that were located 5m apart from each other. There is no trace of a cairn and the courts (Corlett 2000, 88).

Figure 57 Plan of CV013-072 (Corlett 2000, 88)

There is not much information on this monument. It is located within a group of standing stones that have been moved from their original position.
Irish Grid Reference: 225100.315420

ITM Reference: 625046.815429

One of three cairns located on the eastern side of the Woodford River. The cairn was first noted by Richardson in the early 18th century who said that it was known as Leabui Doarmud or Leaubi Graniu. He also notes that a chalice was found in it (Paterson et al 1938, 147). The cairn is marked as a 'Fort' on 6 Inch OS Maps. It is situated on the summit of a low hill. The cairn is much denuded and consists of small stones. It has a diameter of 20.7m east north east/west south west and a height of 0.4m. The cairn is divided into two unequal portions by a field boundary. Only the outline of the perimeter is identifiable on the south south east side of the boundary (O’Donovan 1995, 26-27).
Irish Grid Reference: 225250.315390

ITM Reference: 625196.815399

This is the second of three cairns located on the eastern side of the Woodford River. It was first noted by Richardson in the early 18th century who said that it was known as *Leabui Doarmud* or *Leaubi Graniu*, he notes that the cairn had compartments with urns in them as well (Paterson *et al* 1938, 147). It is marked on all marked OS Map editions. It is situated on the summit of a low hill overlooking the Woodford River. It appears from its depiction on the OS Maps to have been originally oval in plan with diameters of 37m north east/south west and 22m north west/south east. The site is thickly overgrown with vegetation. It is a much-denuded apparently circular cairn of small stones with a diameter of 14m and a height of 0.8m. A modern field boundary divides the site into two roughly equal portions. A second bank of earth and stone runs from along the outside of the cairn (O'Donovan 1995, 27).
Irish Grid Reference: 225750.315220

ITM Reference: 625696.815229

This is the final and largest of the three cairns located on the eastern side of the Woodford River. It is located just north east of the summit of Ballyheady Mountain in a coniferous plantation. It was first noted by Richardson in the early 18th century who stated that the cairn was known as *Carn na mban fion* (Paterson *et al* 1938, 147). It is marked on all editions of the OS Maps. It is a much-denuded, large, circular flat-topped cairn of large and small stones. It has a diameter of 28m north west/south east and 27.2m north east/south west and a height of 3.2m. A large slab is visible within a hole which has been dug into the lower edge of the cairn at east north east side of the cairn (O’Donovan 1995, 27). It apparently formed part of the cist burial (CV014-043002) that was investigated by Ó Riordáin in 1932. The remains of three people and a number of cremation burials were found in the cist. No grave goods were found with the burials but O’Riordain concluded that the cist was a Middle Bronze Age addition to the cairn (O’Riordain 1933, 167-170). Local stories say that the cairn was the burial place of Conall Cernach, a famous hero of Ulster who died at a ford of a river near Ballyconnell. The Irish name of Ballyconnell: Béal Átha Conaill (Entrance to the Ford of Conall) is derived from his name (Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 19).
Irish Grid Reference: 227960.314710

ITM Reference: 627905.814719

St. Bricin’s School or the University of Tuaim Drecuin was founded in the 7th Century. It is believed to have been located in the townland of Mullynagolman. The school was founded around the 7th Century the school became famous across Europe for its schools of Classics, Law, Medicine and History. St. Bricin was a pupil and teacher at the university. He became famed for his skills of brain surgery after he saved the life of Cenn Faelad, a royal prince who was injured in a battle. The school is said to have passed out of existence in the 8th or 9th Century. In the 1900’s the remains of a round tower and church were found at the site as well as a number of cut cuts, querns and a large lump of iron slag. A sheela na gig (CV014-052002) known as the Tomregan Stone (after the parish it was found in) was also found nearby. This sheela na gig is thought to be a representation of St. Bricin ((Ballyconnell Heritage Group 2010, 14-6).

Plate 36 The Tomregan Stone (http://www.beyond-the-pale.org.uk/zberrymount.htm)
The holy well at Bellaleenan is not a recorded monument but is an important feature in the archaeology of Magh Slecht. The well is located at the top of a hill near a bend on the river Blackwater. According to local tradition St. Patrick came to this particular spot after defeating Crom Cruach to rest, he then blessed the well and crossed the river and travelled westward. Annually on the last Sunday of July celebrations were carried out at the well. This Sunday was known as *Domhnach Deireannach* or Donagh Sunday. The celebration was often see as an event for courtship for young people who often would travel up to 10km to take part in the festivities. The gathering usually lasted 5 hours and events usually consisted of weight throwing, high jumps, dancing, music, feasting and bilberry picking. The festival was a popular annual event up to the 1950’s (MacNeil 2008, 119-121).
# Appendix II Artefacts from Magh Slecht

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Artefact Type</th>
<th>Artefact No.</th>
<th>Townland</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Storage/Habitat Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
<td>1961:214</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
<td>1957:104</td>
<td>Derryniggin</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>B4:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
<td>1957:105</td>
<td>Derryniggin</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>B4:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
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<td>Mullaghmore</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>ON DISPLAY (NMI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
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<td>Greaghrahan</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cormeen</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>D31:1 (AL)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cavan</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Lakefield</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>Cavan Museum</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1935:455</td>
<td>Cranaghan</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C16:10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bronze Spearhead</td>
<td>1936:1988</td>
<td>Carrickmakeegan</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>C19:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1941:328.1</td>
<td>Carrickmakeegan</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>ON DISPLAY (NMI)</td>
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<td>Toberlyan Duffin</td>
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<td>Ballyconnell</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C2:25</td>
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<td>Cavan</td>
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<td>Coologe Lough</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>OC34:5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Killycrin</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
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<td>1962:128</td>
<td>Brackley</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1962:129</td>
<td>Brackley</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:10</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Iron Cauldron</td>
<td>1993:50</td>
<td>Erraran</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>SH12:4</td>
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<td>1962:127</td>
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<td>Cavan</td>
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<td>Stone Axe</td>
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<td>Ballyconnell</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C1:12</td>
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<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C6:14</td>
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<td>OC33:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
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<td>1941:500</td>
<td>Magh Slecht</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C24:18</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Ring Stone</td>
<td>1932:3 (?)</td>
<td>Magh Slecht</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C5:19</td>
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</table>

| Table 12 Artefacts of Magh Slecht |

106
Figure 5 Artefacts of Magh Slecht
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bronze Axe</th>
<th>1961:214</th>
<th>Ray</th>
<th>Cavan</th>
<th>B26:4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1961:214</td>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A flanged bronze axehead found on the surface of a field during digging. L: 15.75cm, Max W: 5.4cm and Min W: 2.7cm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1957:104</th>
<th>Derryniggin</th>
<th>Leitrim</th>
<th>B4:25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bronze Axe</td>
<td>1957:104</td>
<td>Derryniggin</td>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>B4:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flanged Bronze axehead of Harbinson Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A fragment of a Flanged Bronze Axehead of Harbinson Type. Part of a hoard that also contained two flint knives.

A decorated flat bronze axehead found on rocky ground while filling in a quarry. L: 17.15cm, Max W: 9.5cm and Min W: 2.5cm.
A socketed bronze axehead found on the shore of Killywilly Lough after water levels on the lake fell.

A socketed bronze axe of Eogan Class II found on a crannog in Killywilly Lough. L: 10.1 cm, W: 6.8 cm at cutting edge, 4.7 cm by 4.3 cm diameter at socket.

A socketed bronze axehead found 1.2 m under the old bed of the Woodford River. Made of a bright yellow metal. It has a broad fillet, a loop and an oval socket.
A late Bronze Age penannular bracelet. Provenience is unknown as it was found in a farmhouse of a deceased man. Has a maximum width of 8mm. End terminals have a width of 24mm (Corlett 2000, 89).

A bronze fibula with a circular ring form head which is 5.7cm in diameter. The acus is 16.5cm long.

A ring headed pin found at a depth of 1.2m in a bog in 1834.

A bronze/copper alloy pin. Has a twin spiral. Found on the shore of Lakefield Lough near a Crannog.
12  Bronze Sheet  1935:455  Cranaghan  Cavan  C16:10/11

A fragmentary bronze sheet. Found near a lake shore crannog.

13  Bronze Spearhead  1936:1988  Carrickmakeegan  Leitrim  C19:15

A bronze kite-shaped side looped spearhead. Found in a bog
A leaf shaped bronze spearhead found at Lough Garadice. It has peg holes and decorated lunate openings in blade.

A bronze socketed spearhead tip and blade fragment. Found 45cm below the ground surface. Damaged towards butt end, maybe due to being partially melted. L: 15.1cm, Max W: 3.3cm and Min W: 1.5cm.

A bronze sword of Eogan Class 4. In two parts.
A bronze leaf shaped sword. Blade expands towards point. Two angular wings near handle each pierced with a rivet hole. Handle tang pierced with two holes. L: 60cm and B: 3.8cm.

A pair of twisted bronze tubes with punched decoration.

A flat copper axe found in a bog. The cutting edge is slightly bent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Flint Blade</td>
<td>1958:41</td>
<td>Killycrin</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B16:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A flint invasively flaked blade. Found in a field during drainage work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Flint Scraper</td>
<td>1962:128</td>
<td>Brackley</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A flint convex scraper found 30cm below ground surface.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Flint Scraper</td>
<td>1962:129</td>
<td>Brackley</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>B26:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flint convex end of blade scraper found 30cm below ground surface.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A graphitised iron cauldron. Found near a crannog in multiple fragments.

An iron wedge shaped object. L: 5cm and W: 2.6cm.
**Iron Pommel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Display</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E621:165</td>
<td>Iron pommel found on the edge of a lake. Contains no ornamentation. The underside is concave and contains two rivets.</td>
<td>Ballymacgauran, Cavan</td>
<td>ON DISPLAY (NMI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lunula**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Display</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RIA1910:45</td>
<td>A gold classical lunula found in a fissure 2.5 metres underground during quarrying. Ornamented at the two ends with incised half lozenges and cross hatches. 20cm in height and 20cm in diameter.</td>
<td>Lissanover, Cavan</td>
<td>ON DISPLAY (NMI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Quern</td>
<td>1972:356</td>
<td>Coolege</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upper part of a rotary quern found at a depth of 1.2m in a reclaimed cut.

![Image of quern](image1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>28</th>
<th>Quern</th>
<th>Port</th>
<th>Cavan</th>
<th>Private Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A possibly Iron Age sandstone beehive quern. 39.5cm in length and 22.8cm high. Provenance is unknown (Corlett 2000, 89-90).

![Image of beehive quern](image2)
A polished stone axehead with a damaged striking edge. Found in a field during drainage work.

A polished stone axehead. Found 60cm under ground surface. L: 8.5cm, W at butt: 3.1cm and W at cutting edge: 9.9cm.
A fragment of a polished stone axe. The cutting edge is intact but due to flaking and reworking the rest of the axe is quite diminished leaving a triangular shaped object. Found 30cm under the ground surface. L: 7.5cm, Max W: 7.2cm and T: 2cm.

Procellanite stone axe found in bog. L: 14cm and W at cutting edge: 6.35cm.

Light brown stone axehead found in bog. L: 10.3cm, W at cutting edge: 2.8cm and Max T: 2.8cm.
Polished greenstone axehead. L: 10.3cm, W at cutting edge: 6.5cm, W at butt end: 3.5cm and Max T: 3cm.

A polished stone axehead.
A light grey polished stone axehead. L: 12cm, W: 4.7cm and T: 2.3cm.

A stone axehead found in bog. L: 9.3cm, W: 3.7cm and T: 2.10cm.
A stone axehead found in a bog. L: 5.6cm, Max W: 4.7cm and T: 1.4cm.

A stone axehead found in a bog. L: 11.5cm, Max W: 4.8cm and T: 3cm.
40 Stone Axe 1933:585 Derrycassan Cavan C8:26

A grey fine grained polished stone axehead found in a bog. L: 12.5cm and W: 6cm.

41 Stone Axe 2004:10 Derradda Leitrim OC33:15

A polished stone axehead found in a drain.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Ring Stone</td>
<td>1941:500</td>
<td>Magh Slecht</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C24:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Circular stone hammer/ring.

![Circular stone hammer/ring.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Number</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Ring Stone</td>
<td>1932:3</td>
<td>Magh Slecht</td>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>C5:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fragment of half a ring stone.
Appendix III Medieval Literary Sources of Magh Slecht

Annals of the Four Masters

“It was by Tighearnmas also that gold was first smelted in Ireland, in Foithre Airthir Liffe. It was Uchadan, an artificer of the Feara Cualann, that smelted it. It was by him that goblets and brooches were first covered in gold and silver in Ireland. It was by him that clothes were dyed purple, blue, and green. It was in his reign the three black rivers of Ireland burst forth, Fubhna, Torann, and Callan, their names. At the end of this year he died, with three fourths of the men of Ireland about him, at the meeting of Magh Slecht, in Breifne, at the worshipping of Crom Cruach, which was the chief idol of adoration in Ireland. This happened on the night of Samhain precisely. It was from the genuflections which the men of Ireland made about Tighearnmas here that the plain was named” (O’Donovan 1848, 43)

Labor Gabála

“Ro gab Tigernmas mac Fallaich rige hérenn iar sin.....athbach i mMaig Slécht cethreamma fer nÉrenn imme aicche Samma saindruidh hic adra do Chrum Chróich daig ba hesside ri hidhal Hérenn ní térna acht encethramadh fer nÉrenn ass; dona slécchtanaib sin atberar Mag Slécht” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 296 & 297)

Metrical Dindshenchas

(1)

“Here used to be a high idol with many fights, whose name was that Bent one of the Hill; he caused every tuath to be without peace.

Sad the secret, the keen Goidil used to adore him; from him they used lawlessly to ask for their satisfaction as regards the hard world.

He was their god, the wizened Bent One with many glooms; the people who believed in him over every harbour, the eternal Kingdom shall not be theirs.

For him ingloriously they slew their wretched firstborn with much weeping and distress, to pour out their blood around the Bent One of the hill.

Milk and corn they used to ask of him speedily in return for a third of their whole progeny: great was the horror and outcry about him

It is to him the bright Goidil used to bow: it is from his worship many the slayings – that the plain bears the name Mag Slecht.

Thither came Tigernmas, prince of Tara long ago, one Samhain Eve with all his host: the journey was a source of sorrow to them.
The stirred evil, they beat palms, they bruised bodies: wailing to the demon who had enslaved them they shed showers of tears, prostrate their pouring.

Dead were the men, void of sound strength the host of Banba around ravaging Tigernmas in the north, through adoring the Bent One of the Hill: woe betide them!

For I know, except for a fourth of the eager Goidil, no living man lasting the snare approached him without dying.

Around the Bent One of the Hill, there the host to bow: though he brought them under mortal shame, the name cleaves to the great plain.

Four times three idols of stone in rows: for the bitter deception of the hosts the figure of the Bent One was formed of gold.

Since the kingship of Eremon, prosperous chief, worship had been paid to the stones until the coming of good Patrick of Armagh.

He plied a sledge hammer on the Bent One from his head to his foot: he removed with rough soldier-deed the weak image that was here.”

(Gwynn in O’Duigeannain 1940, 297-98)

“Sund nobid ídal ard, co n-immud fích, diarbo chomainn in Cromm Crúach: tuc in cach thúaithe beith cen síd.

Trúag in rúin, nonadratis Góedil gúir: úad nicochuingtis cen cháin, a ndíl im dáil domuín dúir.

Ba hé a ndía, in Cromm crín, co n-immund chia; in lucht rancreit ós cach cóin in flaitius búan nochosbia.

Dó cen búaid, marbtais a claint toisig trúaiq co n-immund guil ocus gáid a fuil do dáil mon Cromm Crúach.

Blícht is ith, úaid nochuingitis for rith dar cend trín a sotha sláin, ba mór a grán is a grith.

Is dó sain, nosléchtaitis Gáedil glain: is dia adrad, ilar n-écht, atá Mag Slécht or in maig.

Tánic and, Tigernmas, triath Temra thall, aidche Samna, lin a slóig: rosbaí damna bróin don bann.

Lúiset olc, buailset bassa, brúiseg corp: ac coí ri demun rosdáer, fertais frossa, fáen a folc.

Marba fir, slúag na banba cen bríg mbil im Thigernmas taglach thúaid, d’adrad Chruimm Chruaich, nímsucin.
Uair itgén, acht cethraimthe Gaidel ngér, fer I mbethaid bún in sás, ni dechaid cen bás na bél.

Im Chromm Crúaich and nosléchtaitis na slúaig: cá dosfuc fo mebail mairb, lenaid a n-aíin don maig múaid.

Na srethaib tri hídail chloch fo chethair: fri sáebad serb inna slóg delb in Chruimm d’ór dodechaid.

O bai flaith, Héremóin, ard fir in raith, adrad robáit for clacha co thecht Pátraic Macha maith.

Ord don Chrumm rogab ó bathis coa bunn: rodíchuir co ngall ait gann, in n-arracht fann robáit sund.” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 297 & 298)

(2)

“Cá hadbar dis fuil Mag Slécht ar Mag Senaig na sáer-éacht?

Deich cét ocus trí mile issé in rád foirbthe fire, dorochradar, líth co mblaíd le sáethar ag Sléchtan-maig.

Is aire tucad Mag Slécht ar Maig Senaig na sáer-écht” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 299)

(3)

“Mag Slécht, is ann do sléchtsad fir Érenn do Crom Chrúach im Thigernmas mac Follaich, co ndorchair deich cét trí míli díb. Unde Mag Slécht, Mag Senaig a anim ar tús” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 300)

(4)

Magh Slécht, canas ro ainmiged?

Ni ansa. Ann roboi ríg-idal Erenn in Crom Cróich, dá idhal decc do clocaib ime, eisium di őr, is é ba déa do cach lucht ro gab Érinn co toracht Pátric. Is dó no idpradis cét-geine cacha sotha prim-gene cacha cloinde. Is cuca rosiacht Tigernmas mac Follaich ri Erenn dia Samna to firu co mna Erenn imalle dia adhradh, coro Slécht uile fiadh, co raemdetar tul a n-étan maetha a srón faircledha a nglún corra a n-uillend, co n-eplatar teora cethramain fer nÉrinn oc na sléchtonaib sin. Unde Mag Slécht” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 299)

Breuirarium

“Et uenit in Campum Rein.......Mittens autem Patricius Methbrain ad Fossum Slect barbarum Patricii propinquum qui dicebat mirabilia in Deo vera. Uenitque Patricus as alueum Sinone....Finit liber primus in regionibu Nepotum Neill peractus” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 301)
**Vita Tripartita**

After that Patrick went over the water to Mag Slecht, the place in which was the chief idol of Ireland, Cenn Cruaich, covered in gold and of silver, and twelve other idols covered with copper around him. When Patrick saw the idol from the water whose name is Guth Ard, and when he approached the idol, he raised his hand to place the “Staff of Jesus” on it. And he did not put it, but it leaned over towards the sunset on its right side, for it is southwards its face, i.e. to Tara. And the mark of the staff still remains in its left side, and yet the staff did not leave Patrick’s hand. And the earth swallowed the twelve other idols up to their heads, and they are in that state as a sign of the miracle. And he cursed the demon and expelled him into Hell. His pin, moreover, fell from Patrick’s clock when he was engaged in the struggle and the exploit with the idol. He stripped the heather in that place so that he found his pin, and no heather-plantlet grows in that place as distinguished from the rest of the field. He founded, moreover a church in that place, namely Domnach Maige Slecht, and left there Mabran, *barbarous Patricii cognatusque ei et profeta*; and Patrick’s well is there, *ubi babtizauit multos*” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 313)

“There was a certain idol (in Mag) Slecht adorned with gold and silver, and twelve gods made of copper placed on this side and on that facing south. Kings and all people adorned this idol in which lurked a very bad demon who used to give answers to the people, wherefore they worshipped him as a god. St. Patrick, moreover, when preaching all around, came to the plain in which the idol was situated and lifting his right hand, threatened to overthow the idol with the
“Staff of Jesus” which he held in his hand. But the demon, who was in the idol, fearing St. Patrick, turned the stone towards it right side, and the mark of the staff still remains in its left side; and yet the staff did not leave the saint’s hand. Moreover, the earth swallowed the twelve other images up to their heads, which alone remain to be seen in memory of the miracle. The demon, indeed, who had lurked for a long time in the idol and deluded men, came forth at St. Patrick’s command. When the peoples with their king, Loegaire, saw him they were afraid, and asked St. Patrick to command the horrible monster to leave their presence. St. Patrick ordered him to depart into the abyss. Then all the peoples gave thanks to Almighty God who deigned to deliver them through St. Patrick from the power of darkness” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 311-12)

“Erat quoddam idolum (in Campo) Slecht auro et argento ornatum et duodecim dij aerie fabricate hinc et inde erga idolum positi. Rex autem et omnis populous hoc idolum aborabant; in quo daemon pessimus latitabat; qui response populis dare solebat; quapropter illum pro deo coelebant; veniens autem S. Patricius circumquaque praedicando, ad campum in quo idolum jugulare minabatur. Daemon autem, qui in idolo fuerat, timens S. Patricium, lapidem in latus dextrum vertit, et in latere sinistro vestigium baculi adhuc manet: et tamen de manu sancti baculus non recessit. Caetera autem duodecim simulacra terra absorruit vsque ad capita, quae tantum videntur in miraculi memoriam. Daemon vero qui in idolo multis temporibus latitabat, et homines ludificabat, S. Patricio jubente foras venit: Quem jussit S. Patricius abire in abyssum. Tunc omnes populi gratias omnipotenti Deo egerunt, qui per S. Patricium illos de potestate tenebrarum liberare dignatus est” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 311 & 312)

Terra Vita

“Divertit autem Patricius ut uideret ydolum ex auro et argento ualde constructum, quod rex Loegaire adorabat in Campo Slecht cui uocabulum Ceneroth. Et orante Patricio ymago illa quam populi adorabant comminute est et in puluerem redacta” (O’Duigeannain 1940, 312)