
Colonial appropriation of Gaelic urban space: creating the first Ulster plantation town

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ABSTRACT

Using a diverse range of source material this paper highlights the colonial appropriation of the existing Gaelic market town of Cavan, founded by the O'Reillys, in the establishment of the first Ulster plantation town. In contrast to what may be expected, a reading of the socio-economic, political and cultural landscape of the newly incorporated town of Cavan in the early years of the 17th century, highlights the dominant position and important civic role played by families of Gaelic origins in the governance of the town. Unlike other plantation towns Cavan town remained 'unplanned' in its morphological layout with the colonisers utilising and modifying the existing Gaelic urban fabric. The decision by English colonial powers to use the pre-existing urban settlement of Cavan town led to success for the colonial project on paper. Unlike other Ulster plantation towns, it also uniquely permitted the retention of a strong and distinct Gaelic presence and character which manifested itself in both the population and space of the town during the early decades of the 17th century.

Key index words: Gaelic Towns, colonial urbanisation, Ulster plantation towns

Introduction

In Ireland, Cavan and Longford are the only towns to be classified as Gaelic market towns and they provide unique examples of indigenous urbanisation (Simms and Simms, 1979:43). Set within the wider context of colonial urbanisation in Ulster, this paper initially explores the morphology of Cavan town at the end of the 16th century charting its origins, growth and development as a Gaelic market town. The established nature of Cavan town as an important urban and trading centre, where many of the inhabitants were thoroughly anglicised by the end of the sixteenth century, explains why it was incorporated in 1610 under the Ulster plantation scheme before the arrival of the colonists. While the development of other plantation towns was left in the hands of individual English and Scottish settlers, Cavan was unique in that the lands set aside for its maintenance were granted by charter to the towns new governing body; its corporation. The confidence of the colonial powers in Cavan town becoming a successful corporate town and of its inhabitants ability to implement the terms of the plantation were rooted in the long standing social and economic relationships developed over the previous centuries between the Gaelic families of the lordship of Breifne in particular the O'Reillys and the Bradys with the English families of the Pale- the bastions English administration in Ireland- centred on Dublin. This article assesses the impact of the incorporation of the town on its social, cultural and physical fabric, the changing relationships between coloniser and colonised in the town during the early decades of the 17th century, and the retention of its Gaelic character until the mid seventeenth century.

In attempting to address these themes, a wide range of primary source material has been examined. Of particular importance are the *Calendar of State Papers for Ireland (Cal. S. P. Ire.)*; the *Annals of the Four Masters (A.F.M)*; the *Calendar of Patents Rolls for James I (Cal.P.R.James I)* and the *Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Edward IV (S.R.P. Ed. IV)*. The

Ulster Plantation Papers held in Trinity College Dublin, were edited by T. W. Moody and published in *Analecta Hibernica* in 1938 and, in conjunction with Rev. George Hill's *The Plantation of Ulster*, they provide detail regarding the official scheme and plans for the plantation. The main cartographic source is a map of the Upper and Lower Lough Erne region which depicts Cavan town in the late sixteenth century. This map is now housed in The National Archives, London (TNA). Manuscript material from the Farnham estate papers contains a series of property leases, and lists relating to property transactions in Cavan town during the early seventeenth century are held in the Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Ireland (NLI). The charter granted to the town in 1610, a copy of which is now held in the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), is also of vital importance to this study. Other manuscripts consulted include the Muster Roll for county Cavan compiled circa 1630 contained in the Milles Collection in the British Library (BL), which provides detail relating to the armed settler population in Cavan in the early 1630s.

Colonial urbanisation

Colonialism as a process may be described as the conquest and domination of a territory, its people and resources by an outside force (Ruane, 1992). The 'opening' of the frontier is often initially achieved through military conquest and the 'closing' of the frontier occurs when a single political authority emerges (Ohlmeyer, 1998), with the subjugation of the native people of the territory to colonial rule (Meinig, 1982). Colonial powers often establish a number of key settlements - both rural and urban - in closing the frontier. In particular, the establishment of towns as 'central instruments of imperial expansion and control' (Smyth, 2006:219) is considered essential in maintaining hegemony over the newly conquered territory and its inhabitants. Acting as centres of trade and administration, and as centres of security for colonial settlers, these urban settlements were seen as being key civilising components introduced by colonial powers in their plantation of new territories (Ohlmeyer, 1998). The impact of colonialism on any particular place may be assessed in five key ways: political, social, cultural, economic and psychological (Meinig, 1982:72-73). Changes within each of these may be examined to identify the impact and outcomes of the processes and patterns of colonialism. Smyth has employed this model in his insightful introduction to understanding colonialism in Ireland (2006:9-12). In this paper, assessing the impact of colonialism in the form of the Ulster plantation on Cavan town, I will attempt to answer the question that Meinig poses to us as geographers; that is, 'how have areas been changed as the result of the encroachment of one people upon the territory of another?' (1982:72).

The urbanisation of Ulster under the plantation scheme

By 1610 the colonial scheme devised for the establishment of English and Scottish settlers in counties Donegal, Derry, Tyrone, Armagh, Fermanagh and Cavan was complete. the replacement of the customs, laws and material culture of Ulster's Gaelic society with English laws and customs, and their associated impact on both landownership and the landscape itself followed, with the classic colonial objective of bringing order to both the people and landscape of Ulster. As Hunter (2001:273) has observed:

Somewhere in the mix of aims that underlay the formidable decision can be found the contemporary English ideal of 'improvement': land would be used better, society would be more ordered, domestic dwelling would be transformed. 'Civility' would ensue, renewed rebellion in Ulster would be entirely pre-empted and English culture extended into the formerly Gaelic north.

The urbanisation of the six planted counties of Ulster would, it was envisaged, provide the foci to aid the subjugation and 'civilising' of the former Gaelic territories and its inhabitants. Learning from their experiences during the sixteenth century Munster plantation,

English officials recognised that colonial efforts would require a strong urban basis if they were to succeed. Both government and settler alike were aware of the importance of these towns throughout the planted counties in providing the institutional, economic and military framework of the plantation scheme. The 'Orders and Conditions' of the plantation scheme stated 'there shall be a convenient number of market towns and corporations erected for the habitation and settling of tradesmen and artificers' (Hill, 1877:88). Likewise writing in 1609, during an investigative tour of Ulster, Englishman Thomas Blennerhasset (in Gilbert, 1879:317) who later settled in county Fermanagh noted the importance of:

building a well fortified town, to be able at any time at an hours warning with five hundred men well armed, to encounter all occasions: neither will that be sufficient, except that be seconded with such another, and that also (if it may as easily as it may) with a third so that there may be help on every side to defend.

The majority of the locations identified for these towns under the terms of the Ulster Plantation were already established places, either as monastic settlements, recently fortified and garrisoned sites, or castle centred settlements of political importance in Gaelic Ireland, with only two greenfield sites identified. One of the strategic and politically important sites identified in south Ulster was Cavan town, which was an established urban centre at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In order to assess the justification for the choice of Cavan as a suitable site for a plantation town, an overview of the origins and development is discussed and the morphology of the town at the end of the sixteenth century is examined.

Pre-plantation Cavan town

Despite its uniqueness in the Irish context no substantial body of research has been published to date regarding the origins or development of Cavan town during the Gaelic period. Before embarking on an assessment of the impact of the plantation scheme on Cavan town, it is important to draw on the fragmentary range of sources available in establishing an understanding of the origins and development of the pre-plantation settlement of Cavan town, as it provides a unique example of indigenous urbanisation. Central to the establishment and development of the town was the O'Reilly sept, Gaelic lords of the territory known as Breifne. Their territory was bounded to the north with the Gaelic families of Ulster, in particular the powerful O'Neill, and to the south east with the Old English of Meath and the New English of the Pale. In this frontier location, the O'Reillys, were subject to both formal and informal processes of anglicisation, at political, religious and social levels as outlined by Cunningham (1995: 51-73), who notes that 'interaction between the Pale and Breifne was also evident in the significant merchant traffic involved' (1995:57). By the later fifteenth century a substantial market was in existence at Cavan, which provided the O'Reillys with good financial returns, especially as it is likely, they held a monopoly on the hides sold within the market (Nicholls, 1972: 119). The negative economic effects of the markets at Cavan and several other towns on the English economy of the Pale were recorded in 1479:

That whereas divers Irish merchants lately supplied with stock of goods, by concourse of English merchants in Irish country, have lately found great means of destroying and injuring the markets of Athboy, Kells, Fore, Mullingar, the Oldcastle and other ancient English market towns, by means, namely, [that] they have commenced markets in Orailly's country and in Offerroll's country, at Cavan, Granard, Longford and other places, which if they are long continued, will bring great riches to the King's enemies and great poverty to the King's subjects. Whereupon it is ordained by authority of the said Parliament, that no English merchant shall take any goods or merchandise to any of the said markets of Cavan, Granard, Longford, or to any Irish country out of the English country or carry any goods from the said markets, or make any concourse or resort to them, on pain of forfeiture of the said goods and merchandise and their bodies at the King's will (S.R.P. Ed. IV: 818-821).

The geographical location of Breifne may be viewed as the single most important factor in influencing the development of the trading and market centre at Cavan town, 'the only example of what could be called town development in a Gaelic lordship' (Nicholls, 1972: 122). Alongside the development of the market at Cavan, the appearance of what was contemptuously referred to as 'O'Reillie's money' illustrated the sophisticated commercial status of the O'Reillys, the highly developed nature of their lordship and their anglicised nature. The use of coinage was seen as being exceptional in the Breifne region. In most other Gaelic areas trading in cattle was still the norm for economic transactions. The 'O'Reilly money' was an imitation coinage similar to that of the sheared English groats of Edward III and Henry IV (Dolley and Seaby, 1967:116), which had been introduced to Ireland in the first half of the fifteenth century. It gained its name due to the fact that Breifne seems to have been the centre of production and distribution of these coins (Dolley and Seaby, 1967: 116). Throughout the sixteenth century the market of Cavan continued to expand and as Nicholls observes 'a real town, a trading centre of some importance grew up' (1987:404).

The initiation of settlement in what was to become Cavan town occurred when Giolla Íosa Ruadh O'Reilly, chief of the O'Reillys at the time granted several townlands to Franciscan friars between 1300 and 1330 for the founding of a friary, to be known as St Mary's (Gwynn and Haddock, 1970:245). Occupying a site in a low lying plain between several drumlins, the friary was a substantial complex of buildings by the end of the sixteenth century, including a church and reception houses (Figure 1). Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the principal seat of O'Reilly power was transferred from the island castle of Clough Oughter to the more accessible site at Tullymongan Hill, where a castle was constructed on a long drumlin ridge south east of the friary (Figure 1 & Davies, 1947: 88-89). The castle and friary were both burnt by the English under the Lord Deputy, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester in 1468 (*AFM, IV*: 1057). However by 1487 the castle had been rebuilt (*AFM, IV*: 1147). The Lord Deputy, Henry Sidney writing in 1550 referred to Cavan's 'great town and castle'. However in 1575, it is recorded that the town was again destroyed and 'the great monastery of Cavan and from the great castle downwards to the river, were burned' (*AFM, V*: 1685) by a woman of the O'Reilly family 'through jealousy' (*AFM, V*: 1685). By 1583 the chief of the O'Reillys, 'had by dewty all manner of chardges both for workmen, store and labourers, and victuals, for the buildinge and maintaininge of his castell of the Cavan and all other necessary romes and offices about the same, borne and payed by the gentill and others of the barony of Cavan' (*AFM, V*: 1806). Cartographic evidence from the end of the sixteenth century as seen in Figure 1 shows an urban settlement of some fifty houses built in the traditional medieval style, with their gables facing the street. The street pattern of Cavan town as depicted on this map was essentially linear, with a main street running in a north to south direction and another street running at a right angle from the main street. At the intersection of these two streets a widening is evident, the location of the market cross and place (Figure 1).

The O'Reillys did not act alone in the development of Cavan town during the sixteenth century. In one instance they co-opted the assistance of the MacBradys, natives of Breifne, but recorded as merchants resident in Navan in the mid- sixteenth century, in developing Cavan town. In a grant dated 1558 (NLI D 10023) Myles O'Reilly, chief of the O'Reillys, granted to Bernard MacBrady:

As payment for the pavement of one street in the town of Cavan... the unoccupied area of one street and the stream which runs through the aforesaid Cavan... this street lies between that great cross which is called the Market Cross in the South and the highway leading to the town of Cavan in the North: and between the monastery of the above mentioned Cavan in the East and another street in the West.

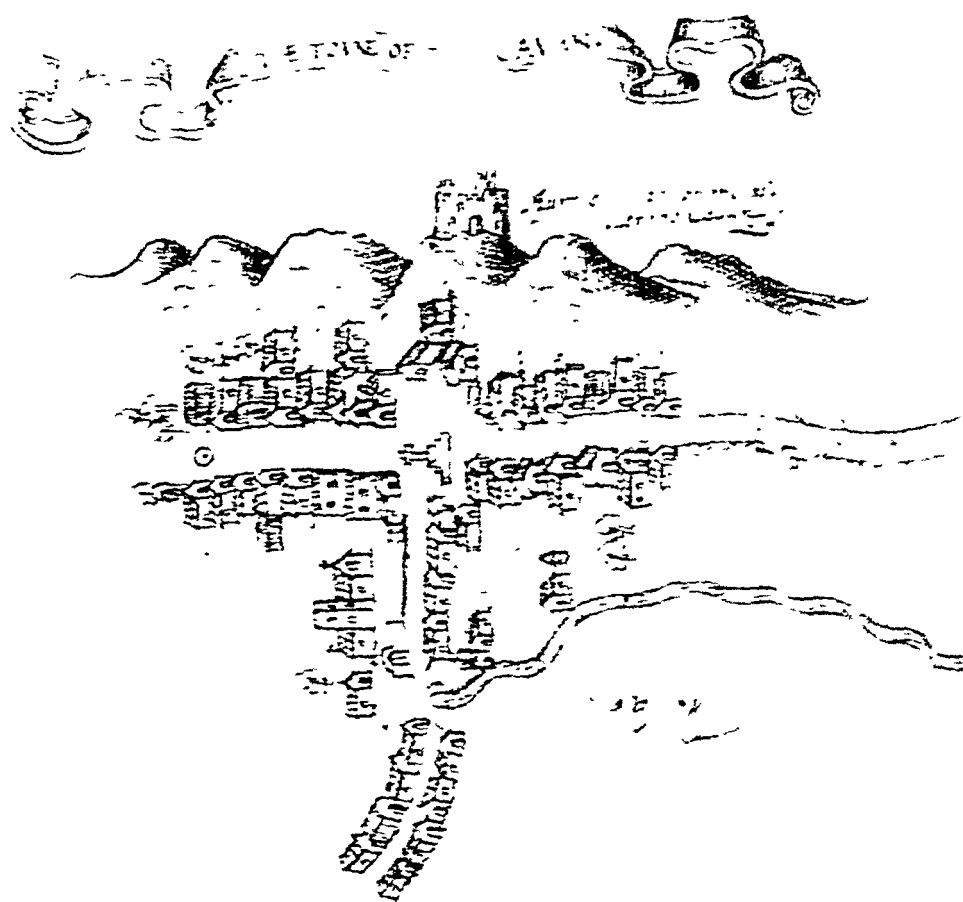


Figure 1: Cavan Town pre-1598 Source Reproduced by permission of TNA, MPF 1/81

A clause in the grant compelled MacBrady to build a watermill ‘for the purpose of grinding the grain belonging to the inhabitants of the town of Cavan and its vicinity’, and ‘to build houses along the whole of the same street’, and the tenants to pay for their rents with whiskey (NLI D 10023). Such clauses, and indeed the impetus to develop the town in such a manner by the O’Reillys, further attests to their strong connections and familiarity with the economic and legal norms of the Pale and the manner in which towns were established. As the county town of the newly formed county of Cavan in 1579, it is likely that some further buildings including ‘a jail, court house and school’, as necessitated by the twenty one articles of agreement that set down the organisation of the governance of the county agreed to by Sir John O’Reilly were constructed (Quinn, 1964: 146-148). In 1584, Walter Brady was granted ‘the office of constable and gaoler of Cavan’ (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*,1509-1573:646) Reporting to the lord Deputy Fitzwilliam in 1592 on a visit to Cavan, his commissioners Thomas Fleming, William Bathe and Roger Wilbraham, noted that ‘we found the gaol full of prisoners’ (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*,1588-1592:539-540). Occupying as it did a precarious geopolitical location, much of Cavan town was destroyed in June 1594 after it was attacked and burnt by ‘the rebels

of Ulster' (Wood, 1933: 82) when it was recorded that 'all but two castles of the Bradys which still remain' (*Cal. S.P.Ire.*, 1592-1596:299). However the former friary, having been used as a courthouse survived, as an English garrison was stationed there at the time (AFM, VI: 1959). By 1596 one of the remaining castles belonging to the Bradys had been razed (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1592-1596: 541). With the involvement of some of the O'Reillys in the Nine Year War, between 1594 and 1603 (Cunningham, 1995:67- 72) and the subsequent departure of the Gaelic leaders of Ulster, the last remaining stronghold of Gaelic society in Ireland was laid open to colonisation as the lands of counties Donegal, Derry, Armagh, Tyrone, Fermanagh and Cavan were vested in the hands of the English Crown.

Plantation town

As a territory, which had been subjected to both formal and informal processes of anglicisation throughout the sixteenth century, Cavan provided an easy point of access into the rest of Ulster at the initiation of the plantation scheme. Writing in July 1610, Sir Arthur Chichester, one of the most influential plantation commissioners, noted that he wished to 'begin with the Cavan because the people are more pliable to reason than in the remoter parts' (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1608-1610:480). On one of his earlier tours in 1606 he had noted that 'in this county there is a poor town bearing the name of the Cavan, seated betwixt many small hills' (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1603-1606:565) and by March 1608, he was recommending that 'the principal place to be cared for is the town of Cavan which wishes to be made a corporation, and a ballibeto [ballybetagh] of land (if it may) to be laid unto it out of the barony of Cavan' (*Cal. S. P. Ire.*, 1608-1610:55). In addition the strategic and indeed symbolic site occupied by O'Reilly's castle on Tullymongan Hill overlooking the town of Cavan was requested by Chichester to:

be likewise reserved, and the like allotment of land to be made for the maintenance thereof, and the same to be passed to or given to some honest, trusty and powerful man, who shall be able, with some small help from the King, to rebuild the castle and to stock and manure the land, whose residence there will greatly avail the settlement of that county (Cal.S.P.Ire., 1608-1610: 55 & Moody, 1938:281).

Chichester's desire to place an English settler, on the castle site at Tullymongan, exemplifies one of the key objectives of colonial powers, to achieve and maintain political authority over the colonised, through the positioning and presence of an agent of plantation at strategic sites. However Chichester's suggestions for the development of the castle site was disregarded and in January 1610, the Lord Deputy and plantation commissioners requested that the 100 acres of land adjacent to Tullymongan castle, be given for the support of a free school, which was to be built from the stones of the castle in the grounds of the abbey (Moody, 1938:243). The planned erasing of O'Reillys castle from the landscape of Cavan, which was an important and symbolic site for the native Irish of Cavan, was a very deliberate move by the colonial powers to utilise the landscape as a tool in expressing their hegemony over the conquered. The construction of new and the modification of existing buildings coupled with the equally important erasing of other symbols and buildings was a key strategy employed by colonists in expressing their dominant position.

Regardless of the 1610 recommendation of the plantation commissioners regarding the usage of O'Reilly's castle, Chichester's desire to see English occupation of the site was realised in December 1616, when the castle described as being 'the ruinous castle of Cavan, near the town of Cavan with the site thereof and a green piece of land in Tullymongan' was granted to Sir Thomas Rotherham for a period of 21 years (*Cal.P.R.James I*:313). However just three years later in 1619, Rotherham, even though he was the overseer of fortifications in Ulster had not developed the site described as, 'the old ruined castle of Cavan and two polls of land adjoining' (*Cal.P.R.James I*:454) and the site was granted to Charles, Lord Lambert,

Baron of Cavan 'upon the consideration of his building a strong house or castle adjoining the town of Cavan within seven years' (*Cal.P.R.James I*:454). Another source indicates that Lambert was obliged to 'build a citadel and town wall' (Davies, 1948: 98). Although Lambert did not develop the castle site, he may have attempted to fortify the town through the construction of what was referred to in 1631 as the 'town wall' (NLI D 20417) and by 1634 as the 'town ditch' (NLI D 20429). However, no remains of such a wall have been discovered and it is likely that the town's location in a hollow would have made its entire walling a difficult task. Nonetheless by transferring the ownership of O'Reilly's castle to an English settler, the colonists achieved the desired effect of expressing their new found hegemony over the people of Cavan. However, in achieving full subjugation of the colonised, the most important colonial objective was the exercise of political authority and control. In February 1610, Chichester requested a 'warrant to make out a grant of incorporation of the town of Cavan' (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*,1608-1610:480) and again in October 1610, when no warrant had been forthcoming he reiterated his demand requesting 'to pass to the said town, 500 acres of land' (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*,1608-1610:514). Finally in November 1610, the town of Cavan was granted a charter from King James I, making it the first town in the six counties to be incorporated under the Ulster plantation scheme. Town charters put in place a framework for both the governance and regulation of the town and its economic development particularly through the granting of rights to holds fairs and markets.

The Corporation

The preamble to the charter (RIA MS Q 10) outlined the main reasons why Cavan had been chosen as a plantation town. First, the importance of Cavan as an existing town of significance was noted the charter recording that it, 'is now and long since has been the only place of trade and commerce within that county and the only town wherein our justices of assizes and gaol delivery may conveniently hold their public session' (RIA MS Q 10). Second, the charter recalled that 'the inhabitants of the said town did in the time of the late general rebellion supply our garrison of soldiers residing there with many necessaries and performed good and acceptable services unto our late dear sister Queen Elizabeth from time to time according to their best abilities' (RIA MS Q 10). Interestingly the government agents within the town such as the sovereign or mayor and the burgess, viewed as being vital to the success of the incorporation, were in the majority drawn from the native Gaelic families and not as in the other towns established from the ranks of the newly arrived English and Scottish settlers. The first sovereign or mayor of the town was Walter Brady, who had been appointed gaoler of the town in 1584 (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1509-1573:646). He was allowed to exercise his power 'in as absolute and ample manner as the sovereign of Kells', with Farrell McErigules and Owen Brogan appointed as portreeves (RIA MS Q 10). As sovereign, Brady and his successors also held the offices of justice of the peace, coroner and clerk of the market, which entitled them to levy tolls on produce sold at the eight annual fairs and weekly markets held in the town and to convene courts every three weeks to settle both personal and financial disputes (RIA MS Q 10). The largest component of the corporation - the burgesses - was dominated by persons possessing Gaelic surnames. They accounted for nine out of the twelve appointed and included Patrick Brady, Thomas Brady, Philip Tuite (most likely Old English), Farrell McRegelles, Owen Mor O'Brogan, Owen Begg O'Brogan, Turlough O'Dolly, Patrick Fitzwilliam Brady and Donagh O'Brogan (RIA MS Q 10). The sovereign Walter Brady and both Patrick and Thomas Brady, burgess were also land grantees under the Plantation in close proximity to Cavan town (Hill, 1877:344). Only two English settlers were appointed as burgess, these being James Murray and Hugh Culme. Besides his position as constable of Lough Oughter castle and provost-marshal of county Cavan (*Cal.S.P.Ire.*,1615-1625:284), Culme had also been granted land in the county under the scheme of plantation (Hill, 1877:338). The remaining burgess was Walter Talbot, of Old English stock who had also been

granted lands around Ballyconnell, county Cavan where he resided and whom it was noted was 'to be respected... [having] begun a civil plantation already' (Hill, 1877:338). Notably none of the non-native corporation members resided in Cavan town. In addition to these main offices of the corporation, a recorder or town clerk and a sergeant of the mace were to be appointed to assist in the civic administration of the town. Furthermore the corporation also had the right to elect freemen who they would 'think fit to choose according as the multitude of the inhabitants shall increase and grow from time to time' and the important right to 'return and send two discreet burgesses of the said town and borough unto every parliament' (RIA MS Q 10). The makeup of this first corporation, so heavily representative of Gaelic families, made it, 'distinctively different from the other plantation corporations' (Hunter, 1971:68). Therefore, in Cavan town, unlike other plantation towns in Ulster, members of the native Gaelic community rather than the colonisers exercised political authority and the traditional inequalities associated with coloniser governing the colonised in the political field did not materialise. Thus, in the case of Cavan corporation, lacking as it did a significant settler membership it may be argued that the emergence of a bi-cultural society, resulting in social stratifications within the town may have been delayed and its impact lessened when compared with other colonial towns. The fact that an 'Irishtown' as a separate residential quarter and a geographical expression of such social stratification did not develop in Cavan town is testament to this.

The extent of the jurisdiction of Cavan corporation was delimited by the charter as being 'all that circuit and extent of land lying within the compass of one mile every way around and about the said town to be measured from and taken from the stone house or castle wherein Walter Brady, Gent now dwelleth, the Castle of Cavan commonly called O'Reilly's Castle and the two polls of land called Roscolgan excepted' (RIA MS Q 10). Again, using the medium of the landscape, the colonists were shifting the psychological focus of the town's inhabitants, stripping away all importance of O'Reilly's castle as a focal point within the town and now instead placing it on the home of the new loyal sovereign Brady. In providing themselves with a meeting house the Corporation were charged by the charter to 'build or cause to be built a common hall or toltshall to be called by the name of the toltshall of Cavan wherein the said sovereign portreeves burgesses and freemen shall and may from henceforth for ever lawfully assemble themselves to deliberate and consult touching the public welfare of the said town of Cavan' (RIA MS Q 10). Working with the existing morphology and buildings within Cavan town the corporation seemingly utilised an existing building on the Main Street of the town as a meeting hall for the transaction of Corporation business and as a courthouse (NLI 21 F 119 / 16). The elected officers of Cavan Corporation were also entitled to 'wear such or the like robes, habit and liveries according to the several degrees as they the sovereign, portreeves, burgesses and freemen of the said town of Kells may or do usually wear in the said town of Kells' (RIA MS Q 10). It is not known if such robes were worn by the members of Cavan Corporation but the intention of including the provision to wear them within the charter is notable, as is the appointment of a sergeant of the mace, who would carry the town mace at the head of the procession of the officers of the corporation. Such public processions and displays of power, prestige and wealth expressed through the distinctive dress were strategies employed by colonial powers in demonstrating their 'civilised' and sophisticated customs and manners.

The religious, educational and economic endowment of the plantation

Such attempts at cultural change and colonial dominance found more tangible expressions in most other Ulster plantation towns. Churches, courthouses and schools were the key colonial institutions established in Ulster in exerting these changes and in the bringing of 'civility'. The overriding religious objectives of the plantation scheme and the establishment of the Anglican church throughout Ireland was expressed in most Ulster

plantation towns by the dominant situation given to the parish church which was endowed with lands under the scheme of plantation. Some well-known examples include the church in Enniskillen, county Fermanagh which sits on a hill in the town and that of Donegal town which is located on a site at the junction between one of the streets which leads away from the diamond. The obscure location afforded to the Anglican church in Cavan town is notable in comparison to these towns. In 1608, 'the abbey, monastery of Caban... and half a poll of land with the appurtenances' (NLI MS 41116 /1) was conveyed from Theobald Burke to Sir Thomas Ashe. In January 1610, the plantation commissioners recommended that Ashe 'to be dealt withal, that the abbey of the Cavan may be converted to a parish church and a free school' (Moody, 1938:243) the lands being formally granted to Ashe in June 1611 by James I (*Cal.P.R., James I*: 199). Thus, the low lying inconspicuous site of the ruined friary lying off Bridge Street was to serve the dual purpose of site for both parish church and free school. By 1622, in a report on the state of the Anglican church in the diocese of Kilmore, the church in Cavan town was described as 'ruinous' with the recommendation that 'a new church should be built' (Hunter, 1969:466). The remnants of the friary church were renovated and served as parish church for Cavan from the mid 1620s until 1815.

The establishment of one Free School – later referred to as the Royal School in each of the six planted counties was another key institution which the plantation scheme envisaged would aid in bringing civility to Ulster. Some 900 statute acres were granted for the Cavan school and these were 'to be set to such as will give most for it' (Moody, 1938:243). The school was constructed by 1622 in the precincts of the former friary and the first headmaster, John Robinson who had been appointed as early as 1611, was to be given the rents of the school lands, 'without delay for his better encouragement and relief' (Moody, 1938:259-260). It is difficult to assess the impact that the church and school as important components of the colonial scheme had on the inhabitants of Cavan town. However, cultural change also occurs during the normal activities of everyday life such as on the street and in the traditional meeting place in Irish towns- the market place. Such cultural change while being relatively slow will develop more rapidly amongst people who see opportunities for personal advancement in social and economic terms through the adoption of another culture. Such personal gains in the case of Cavan town included the tolls and customs of the markets and fairs which provided an important and indeed substantial source of revenue to the sovereign of the corporation, creating a new economic relationship between the agents of the colonisers, although Irish themselves and the colonised, in the extraction of wealth. The surplus produce from the estates of the English settlers around the town was most likely sold in the market. The charter of 1610 (RIA MS Q 10), allowed the corporation to:

hold and keep one free market within the said town on Tuesday in every week and two fairs within the said town at several times of the year viz. The one to begin and be holden within the said town upon the 14th September and to continue the day following yearly for ever and the other the said fairs to begin and be holden upon the feast of All Saints and to continue the day following unless the said days happen to be a Saturday or Sunday in which we do give and grant that the said fairs shall begin and be kept on the Monday next ensuing and each fair to continue for two days respectively.

As an already established market town with its own market place located at the intersection of Main and Bridge Street, the laying out of such a site in Cavan around the traditional 'diamond' of the Ulster plantation towns did not take place. During a tour of Ireland in 1645, Dino Massari, secretary to the Papal Nuncio remarked on the nature of the fair at Cavan. He wrote:

I went to see the great fair held in a field near Cavan. It is attended by crowds and great quantities of merchandise are brought hither by the people of the surrounding districts. I was amazed at the abundant supply, especially of animals of all kinds of eatables which were sold at an absurdly low price... for the supplies were as plentiful as money was scarce in the country (In: The Catholic Bulletin and Book Review, 1917:249).

The Corporation lands

Other personal gains for individuals within Cavan Corporation came from the lands which had been granted to the corporation in order to support them in their civic duties. Over 800 statute acres lying in close proximity to and within the town of Cavan were granted directly to the corporation through the 1610 charter (RIA MS Q 10). These included the lands of:

Tullymongan at Cavan being two polls of land Dromgoone also Dromdoone being two polls of land and Dromeala being two polls of land. And also fourteen acres of land parcels of the two polls of Roscolgan and lying next to the ford of Belaakneigh and with all the singular their and every of their rights and appurtenances whatsoever except only and out of this grant always reserved the said castle of Cavan commonly called O Reillys castle and the green piece of land lying east and south east from the said castle enclosed with ditch containing fourteen acres or thereabouts being parcel of the said two polls of land called Roscolgan with appurtenances.

It was intended that the Corporation would lease these lands and use the revenue generated to develop the town. However this does not seem to have happened and the use to which they were put remains rather obscure. Hunter (1971:71) writes that 'in the early years the borough was rent by dispute, both internal and external. In 1612 commissioners for adjudicating land disputes in the plantation decided and 'quieted' differences between the townspeople'. It seems that Patrick Brady and Robert Brady, who it may be suggested were close relatives, perhaps even the sons of the first sovereign of the town Walter Brady had taken occupation of the corporation lands as private owners, taking the revenue from rents as private individuals. In 1634 the Corporation of Cavan petitioned through the House of Commons, 'against Patrick Brady and Robert Brady, to be relieved from certain lands they wrongfully withheld from your petitioners' (Commons Journal, 17 March 1634:105). Again in 1635, it was recorded that a committee within the House of Commons, 'peruse the pleadings between the Corporation of Cavan and the Bradys' (Commons Journal, 14 April 1635: 117) and as late as 1641 the House of Commons, requested that 'the petition of Patrick Brady shall be referred to the consideration of the Committee of Grievances, and that in the mean time, the Corporation to appear and answer in writing to the said petition' (Commons Journal, 15 July 1641:257). The Books of Survey and Distribution, compiled between 1676 and 1678 for county Cavan record the former corporation lands of Drumalee and Swellan Lower which amounted to some 440 acres to be in the ownership of Patrick Brady with the remaining corporation lands of the Burgesses Acre, Rosscolgan and Kilnavarra, in the hands of Robert Brady by circa 1640. However under the Cromwellian settlement these Corporation lands were granted to Earl Annesley, Colonel Robert Sanderson and Dr Edward Cook with the remaining lands being granted to the church as detailed in Table 1.

Within the town of Cavan these disputes over the use of the Corporation lands were also felt in the early years following the plantation. Reporting on the progress of the plantation in 1613 Sir Josias Bodley stated that, 'At the Cavan there is little show of any purpose... two or three houses there are built of lime and stone by the townsmen, but through contention among themselves they are now at a non plus' (HMC, 1947:162). Despite Bodley's unflattering

report of 1613, we know that by 1611, a 'vicus novus' (NLI D 20409) or new settlement had been constructed. However without documentary evidence one can only surmise that the corporation undertook this development. A later indenture dated March 1631 mentions 'new street of Cavan leading from the High Crosses unto the Gallows Hill' (NLI D 20417). This new street may at a later date have been named Castle Street, as it led from the main or high street towards the castle at Tullymongan. Fragmentary documentary evidence permits an assessment, albeit in a limited manner, of the role of the Corporation in administering their lands that lay within Cavan town. Manuscript evidence survives that shows that between September 1611 and August 1634, the Corporation had made nineteen freehold grants of land within the town (NLI D 20409-D 20475 and MS 11490/4). Most of these were made to persons with both Gaelic and English surnames, such as O'Brogan and O'Reilly and Moore and Newman respectively. From the six surviving grants which show the acreage leased it can be estimated that their average size was between one and four acres. In many of the leases however it is impossible to calculate the acreage as the reference made to the property granted, crudely states, 'for land within the town of Cavan' (NLI D 20414).

Table 1. Owners of Cavan Corporation Lands circa 1640 and circa 1660

Townland Name	Owner 1640	Owner 1660
Burgesses Acre	Robert Brady	Church Land
Drumalee	Patrick Brady	Earl Annesley
Kilnavara	Robert Brady	Dr. Ed. Cook & Earl Annesley
Rosscolgan	Robert Brady	Earl Annesley
Swellan Lower	Patrick Brady	Col Robert Sanderson

Source: Compiled by author from NLI, Copies of Annesley Manuscript Books of Survey and Distribution, circa 1676-78

Case study: John Gibson, merchant and property speculator

By the late 1630s much of this property had been transferred from the original lessees to a Dublin merchant named John Gibson who was an absentee freeman of the town of Cavan. During the 1630s property speculation was at its peak and many Dublin merchants acquired large areas of land throughout the country. The *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin* (CARD) record Gibson as entering the franchise of Dublin in 1631 'in right of wife' (CARD:244). His wife was Lettice Barry, a daughter of one of the most prominent merchants and aldermen in early seventeenth century Dublin Richard Barry, who had been mayor of Dublin in 1610 (GO MS 292 Vol. I:121). Gibson's familial connections undoubtedly helped to facilitate his appointment to several important offices in Dublin Corporation. In 1634 he was appointed Sheriff of Dublin (CARD:290) and joined the board of auditors of the city in the same year (CARD:295). During the following year, 1635 he was recorded as 'master of the cittie works' (CARD:313). Despite his political commitments in Dublin, over a five-year period between 1631 and 1635 Gibson purchased fifteen properties comprised of both buildings in Cavan town and adjoining lands (Table 2). From the names on the deeds of transfer it is possible to suggest that Gibson purchased properties in almost equal numbers from English settlers and the native proprietors.

In March 1631 Gibson made his initial purchase of property in Cavan town (NLI D 20417) buying from Patrick and Thomas Brady:

...thirteen polls of land being in high street of the town of Cavan in the county of Cavan being part and parcel of the two polls of Tullymongan with all and single houses built thereupon and built lying next to the house of Walter Brady and occupation of John Whitman to the south and the new street of Cavan leading from the high crosses onto the Gallows Hill in the north and lying next to the town walls of Cavan.

Table 2 Property acquired by John Gibson in Cavan town: March 1631-February 1635

Year and Date of Sale	Vendor(s)
1631 March 13	Patrick Brady, Thomas Brady and Nicholas Garnett
1632 May 9	Patrick Brady and George Brady
1632 June 23	Patrick McOwen O'Brogan
1632 September 14	John Moore, William Moore and Anne Moore
1632 September 16	Patrick O'Brogan
1632 August 1	Thomas Newman
1633 July 9	John Moore
1633 July 9	John Whitman
1633 July 9	Patrick McDonagh O'Brogan
1633 July 30	Terence O'Reilly
1634 March 10	William Moore and Owen Moore O'Brogan
1634 May 30	Laurence Dardis
1634 May 30	William Clifford and James Gray
1634 August 28	The Burgess
1635 February 20	Laurence Dardis

Source: Compiled by author from Farnham Papers NLI D 20409-20475 and MS 11490/4.

For this property Gibson expended £31, and in total it can be estimated that the purchase of the fifteen properties in Cavan town cost Gibson £360 (NLI D 20409-D 20475, MS 11490/4). Eight of the fifteen were from English proprietors; the remaining seven from Irish. One of the Irish proprietors who sold their interest to Gibson was Terence O'Reilly who in 1627 (NLI D 20413) had been granted four acres of land from the Corporation, which he sold to Gibson on 30 July 1633 (NLI D 20425). Thus, by 1635, Gibson was the largest property owner in Cavan town. As to the choice of Cavan by John Gibson as a location for the acquisition of property, it may be suggested that he considered Cavan town as a secure plantation town where he would have been afforded some level of security in his ownership of property. In 1639 John Gibson is recorded as having died (CARD:364) and his ownership of the Cavan property was most likely succeeded to by one of his two sons, Richard or John (GO MS 70:232). The Gibson estate continued in the ownership of descendants of John Gibson until 1745 when it was inherited by a Charles Barry - a descendant of Gibson's wife Lettice Barry- (NLI, MS 41115/3) who sold the property in March 1746 to John Maxwell, later 1st Baron Farnham (NLI, MS 41115 / 6).

This alienation of property away from the Corporation of the town, coupled with the problems surrounding the ownership and administration of the rest of the corporation lands obviously reduced its revenue greatly and subsequently its ability to develop the town. Despite the fact that the lands that had been granted to the Corporation had been alienated by the 1640s the Corporation of Cavan continued to operate and conduct the business of the town. In the absence of Corporation records for the early seventeenth century it can be assumed that a high proportion of members were from the native Irish community and this may have continued up until 1654 (Gale, 1834, 60). This assumption can be supported in the case of Cavan by using the grants of land made by the Corporation during the 1620s and 1630s, which detail the names of the holders of the main offices of the Corporation. In 1627, Patrick Brady was sovereign of the town (NLI D 20413), with Nathaniel Dardis, of Old English descent, holding the office in the following year (NLI D 20415). From the 1630s onwards, British settlers started to take more important offices within the corporation and began exerting themselves in a more traditional colonial role than they had hitherto. In 1633, Alan Cooke, chancellor of the diocese of Kilmore, was sovereign of the town (NLI D 20422), with Lawrence Moore taking his place in 1634 (NLI D 20429), when Cooke became MP for Cavan. In 1641, Stephen Allen, the king's attorney in Ulster, was sovereign (Hunter, 1971), residing in part of the precinct of the former friary, while Walter Brady's house or castle was in the occupation of John Whitman, an important merchant within the town (NLI D 20417).

While the colonists may have been able to attract a number of key agents into Cavan to reside or at least take ownership of important symbolic properties such as the former friary and O'Reilly's castle, what was their success in attracting ordinary migrant settlers to Cavan? It is not possible to provide exact details in the early part of the seventeenth century regarding the number of English settlers in Cavan town. However, the Muster Roll of 1630 provides a good estimate of the British adult male population. In Cavan town 27 males were recorded, of whom only three were armed (BL Add MS 4770, f22) and, of these at least three bearing the surnames of Dowdall and Dardes were of Old English ancestry. Evidence drawn from an early eighteenth century deed of sale (NLI, MS 41118 /8) detailing fifty properties in Cavan town would suggest a continuing strong Irish presence in the town until after the Cromwellian settlement. The deed includes the names of the early eighteenth century occupiers all of whom possessed English names such as Clowe and Sanderson and the former occupiers of these properties during the seventeenth century who all possessed Gaelic names such as O'Reilly and O'Dermott. This tolerance of allowing the native Irish to continue residing in the town is also noted as having been extended to the Franciscans from the former St. Mary's friary. Their friary had been dissolved in 1608 but by 1616 they had built a new house in the vicinity of Cavan town (Gwynn & Haddock: 1970, 245). Information on the diocese of Kilmore in 1636, stated that, 'There is no City in the diocese, but there is one town called Cavan, where the Order of Saint Francis had a Convent in the days when the Catholic religion flourished. Now a few priests of the aforementioned order live in private houses' (See Appendix I a translation from Moran, 1874:208). This was unusual in an Ulster Plantation town where between 40% and 80% of the urban population would have been composed of Protestant settlers (Smyth, 2006). However, this was not the case in Cavan town where the migrant community remained relatively small, comprising between 20% and 25% of the urban population (BL Add MS 4770, f22 & Smyth, 2000:170), and where Gaelic families continued to wield substantial power and influence during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Nonetheless despite the residence of a large number of native Irish within Cavan town, when the 1641 Rebellion began in October of that year, the plantation towns of Belturbet and Cavan were amongst the initial targets for the O'Reillys to disarm, suggesting that the British settler presence in Cavan town was quite substantial. Contact between the settler community and the O'Reillys still resident in Cavan would suggest that relationships between at least some members of the two groups had been cordial. The 1636 report on the dioceses of Kilmore had noted that 'the people of English extraction and the Scottish heretics live in among the native Catholics' (Moran, 1874: 208). John Whitman noted in his depositions that Philip MacMulmoe O'Reilly had 'worked to assist endangered English, issuing his protection in writing under his hand to those who hoped to make an escape to Dublin' (Cope, 2003:303). On meeting Whitman, it is recorded that O'Reilly 'seeming to pity him, gave him five shillings in money and promised to do him what other good he could' (Cope, 2003:303). Such details illustrate in some small measure the relationships and linkages that had developed between settler and native in Cavan town by 1641.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to examine the impact of colonialism on Cavan town during the first half of the seventeenth century. The plantation scheme under which the urbanisation of Ulster was planned, envisaged the creation and development of towns, which would act as centres of civility. Through its incorporation by charter in November 1610, Cavan town became the first plantation town created in Ulster and provided an instant success in the planned urbanisation of the six counties. As an established market town – an uncommon settlement feature in Gaelic Ireland; that had developed under the auspices of the O'Reilly family, the town of Cavan provides an exceptional example of how the existing urban form

was adapted and modified under the scheme of Plantation. In marked contrast to the manner in which other Ulster plantation towns originated and were developed, the existing town of Cavan, restricted the imposition of the diagnostic features of colonial urban settlement such as 'the diamond', regularly laid out streets and the dominant siting of the Anglican church, that were to become synonymous with plantation towns such as Coleraine in county Londonderry, Enniskillen in county Fermanagh and Donegal town. However the colonial powers through their altering of the function and their transferring of ownership of strategic and symbolic Gaelic sites achieved some symbolic hegemony.

At a social level Cavan town also remained distinctly different when compared to the other plantation towns, which were governed primarily by English and Scottish settlers. Uniquely the native Irish of Cavan town played a central role in the town's corporation, taking many of the influential offices within it during the opening decades of the 17th century. These relatively powerful political positions afforded some of the native Irish the opportunity to make significant personal gains, a prospect it may be argued that was the main driving force in their acceptance of and participation in colonial rule within the town. Some native Irish members of Cavan Corporation had by the 1640s claimed ownership of the lands originally granted to the corporation to generate revenue that would finance the development of the town. Likewise the town's chief officer, the sovereign, claimed the revenues from the tolls and customs of the markets and fairs. Within the bi-cultural society of Cavan town during these early decades of the 17th century, this paper has shown that the native Irish retained important civic positions prior to a greater number of English settlers moving in during the 1630s. Relations between some of the native Irish and the migrants within the town would appear to have been cordial during this period, as exemplified in Whitman's dealings with O'Reilly during the 1641 Rebellion. Ultimately what emerges in this examination of Cavan as the first Ulster plantation town, is the complexities and contradictions of our understanding of the urbanisation of Ulster during the early colonial period.

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Appendix I: Information on the Diocese of Kilmore

The Diocese of Kilmore consists of 40 parishes with 28 priests to look after their souls. There is no City in the diocese, but there is one town called Cavan, where the Order of Saint Francis had a Convent in the days when the Catholic Religion flourished. Now a few priests of the aforementioned order live in private houses.

The village in which the Cathedral Church is situated has inhabitants who are English, together with those who promulgate heretical depravity, as well as the Pseudo-Bishop himself. In addition, throughout the whole diocese, the people of English extraction and the Scottish heretics live in among the native Catholics. The area of which the diocese consists is for the most part made up of woods and mountains but there is some fertile and pleasant land.

The Cathedral Church once had a full Chapter but, since there is no hope of any benefits from it, only two members of the Diocesan clergy from the Chapter remain, namely the Dean and Archdeacon.

Source: MORAN, P.F. (1874) *Spicilegium Ossoriones* Dublin, 208.