

Wastelands in Tudor and Stuart Ireland

Colin Everett

HIS 640 Seminar: Early Modern Ireland

Providence College

Dr. Karen A. Holland

December 11, 2002

Introduction

One of the major components that nineteenth century nationalists used to identify a people, as a '*nationality*' was the common land they inhabited. One of the techniques nationalists would use was to go into an areas' past and establish a historical tradition to base their new sense of nationalism on. In a contested land like Ireland this process has the important value of researching the means by which political control of the island of Ireland shifted from loosely held Gaelic hands to that of the tightly controlled English crown. It is therefore necessary to establish the state of Ireland before English colonization and examine the methods of by which the shift in power occurred, why it occurred, and what made it possible. While the '*Irish*' shared an island as a common geographical feature that would separate them from their neighbors, they did not share any significant historical unity. A glance at any map of Europe will lead the viewer to hastily lump Ireland into one quick ethnic group, with a common culture, common language, and a common religion. Much of what contributes to any Irish identity defies category. Prior to the English colonization of Ireland, there was very little in the way of unifying factors for the Gaelic residents of Ireland. A common adherence to Catholicism and a Gaelic root language that was spoken with thick regional dialects were the only factors one could point to of a unified country. No centralized administrations existed to govern the country, no single political leader had control over the majority of the land, very little existed in the way of a 'national economy existed. When the English invaders sought to gain, control over Ireland in the Tudor period they suffered repeated setbacks in gaining control over the whole of Ireland. The explanation for the failures of both the Gaelic Irish and the Tudor English to effectively centralize and administer Ireland lay in the islands geography. The Gaelic Irish traditionally did not live in urban areas but instead scattered themselves thinly across the country. Their presence was so thinly distributed because the land of Ireland is not wholly suited for permanent settlement ¶ a large segment of the country was considered by the English as '*wastelands*'. For the purpose of this paper '*wastelands*' will be defined in the as land that is not being utilized or land that is being under utilized. This paper will examine the role that wastelands played in the Tudor and Stuart periods in Irish history. The bogs, woods, mountains, and general open spaces of Ireland as view by the Tudor and Stuart English immigrants to Ireland as '*wastelands*' were a crucial feature of any sense of Irish identity, a valuable economic resource, and a great hindrance to the conquering and colonization of Ireland. When the English colonizers and even the Old English residents of eastern Ireland (Pale) viewed Ireland they were impressed by the fertile land and natural resources of the country but viewed the Irish use of

their land as gold in the hands of children. The English view of the Irish was that they existed in a state of negative civility, nomadic, barbaric, and backwards. They wasted their land, their only natural resource of value. Barnabe Rich summarizes a typical Elizabethan view of Ireland

From hence I might affirm and confidently conclude that throughout the whole realm of Ireland, what between the ill-husbandry of that which is inhabited and so much of the country again lying waste for want of inhabitants, there is not the third-part of that profit raised that Ireland would afford.^[2]

Motivated by intense racism and hatred the majority of the English colonizers misunderstood the Irish relationship with their land and viewed the geographical features of Ireland as an extension of the Irish people themselves. This paper will consist of an overview of Irish geography, a comparison between English and Irish views of land use, a survey of the economic uses of the Irish wastelands, an examination of communication and military affairs across the wastelands, and finally a brief overview of Ulster as a case example for many of the points discussed in the paper. The bogs, woods, mountains, and general open spaces of Ireland as viewed by the Tudor and Stuart era immigrants to Ireland as *'waste-lands'* were a crucial feature of any sense of Irish identity, a valuable economic resource, and a great hindrance to the conquering and colonization of Ireland.

Overview of Irish Geography and Differing Views of Land Use

When the English seriously started considering colonizing Ireland utilizing the land was the dominant motive. The other major motivation for seizing control of Ireland was defensive. If the status quo of a independent Ireland were allowed then the possibility of Ireland being a starting point for a invasion of one of England's many enemies. This view of Ireland as a *'buffer'* zone was intensified after Henry VIII enforced the Reformation in England and giving many of England's continental enemies that excuse of using any campaign against England as a war of religion. When the English viewed Ireland, they saw a land dominated by, as they perceived it unutilized land. Urban society was not indigenous to Gaelic Ireland, it was an innovation brought forward by the Viking and later Normans. The early settlers established the first towns, which were mainly trading centers located on the coast. J.H. Andrews describes the relation-ship between the Gaelic Irish and large settled communities, *"Towns were a new and alien settlement form, and one that Gaelic Ireland has never fully succeeded in fully assimilating"*.^[3] The geography of Ireland helped in the fragmentation of the Gaelic Irish. Hills and mountains alone made up one eighth of the island, while the bogs, forests dominated the rest.

To the English Ireland represented the farthest extension of the Western European world, filled with mystery that would in later generations be held for the interior of Africa, Asia and the islands of the Pacific. Before the discoveries of Columbus and the explorers who followed him for the English as well as the continental European Ireland represented the western outer realm of Christendom. Ireland was the wilderness filled my obscure legends and myths.

The English viewed the Irish under use of their land as the height of idiocy. To the English the Irish were wild and nomadic the very opposite of the civility England felt it possessed. Ireland had the forest, which is described by Joep Leerssen as,

The absolute counterpart of the court, which is the place where civility reigns under the supervision of the king or noblemen with his attendant, well-ordered, and polished courtly train, with its embellished and refined interior and its ceremonious ordering of daily activity.” [4]

To the English of the sixteenth century “*civility meant towns, villages and enclosed fields*” and when they viewed Ireland, they saw the same vacuum of power that the English of the seventeenth century would see when they viewed North America. [5] In 1609, Sir John Davies in correspondence to the Earl of Salisbury described the challenges of establishing colonies in Ulster and the mystery of the soil as, “*heretofore as unknown to the English here as the most inland part of Virginia as yet unknown to our English colony there*”. [6] This revealing quote informs us that the wilds of North America with its endless expanse of land and foreign peoples was just as wondrous, frightful, and potentially dangerous as the interior of Ireland. In the seventeenth century no maps of the interior of Ireland existed to aid colonizers and English explorers. Being an Island the shape of the majority of the coastline was well explored and charted. The interior remained a different story it was a wilderness. The only maps that did detail the interior of Ireland focused on identifying powerful families in strategic places. [7]

When the English discussed the Gaelic Irish a common rational given for explaining why they were an inferior race was the English belief that civility was a settled society. Being a ‘*nomadic*’ race like the Gaelic Irish therefore were not civilized. Barnabe Rich writing in 1610 describes a his journeys through Ireland and the people he encountered “*The time hath been when they lived like barbarians in woods, in bogs, and in desolate places, without politic law or civil government, neither embracing religion, law or mutual love.*” [8] The rational the English used for describing the Irish as nomadic was their incorrect interpretation of the Irish practice of ‘*booleying*’. English colonizers the Ireland like Edmund Spenser described the process as,

There is one use amongst them to keep their cattle and to live themselves the most part of the year in bollies, pasturing upon the mountain and waste, wild places, and removing still to fresh land as they have depastured the former...the Irish bollies are, driving their cattle continually with them and feeding only on their milk and white meats. [9]

Transhumance or ‘*booleying*’ was a seasonal migration where an animal herder would move to another pastureland for the summer months. This process should not be confused with a nomadic practice because the summer pastures tended to be fixed places and the herder would return to his winter home yearly. The herder was often a young adult male who would stay with his herd without the rest of his family. Typical English colonizers like Spenser viewed this as an entirely disturbing practice that allowed for disorder. “*There be any outlaws or loose people (as they are never without some) which live upon stealth and spoil, they are evermore succored and find relief only in those bollies being upon waste places*”. [10] According to Spenser the people who lived in the ‘*bollies*’ were the most dangerous type of people and since Ireland was so littered with ‘*bollies*’ it was that much more of a dangerous place.

*Moreover, the people that live thus in these bollies grow thereby the more barbarous and live more licentious than they could in towns, using what means they list and practicing what mischiefs and villainies they will, either against the government there generally by their combinations, or against private men whom they malign by stealing there goods or murdering themselves; for their they think themselves half-exempted from law and obedience, and having once tasted freedom do, like a steer that hath been long out of his yoke, grudge and repine ever after to come under rule again.***[11]**

A critical examination of Spenser's motives behind this view will reveal his agenda. Creating this image of the Irish as being wild and beyond civility served Spenser's purpose of scaring his English government backers of supplying more resources and funds for an army that Spenser desired to subdue the entire Gaelic Irish population. He needed to portray the Irish as being so beyond any resemblance of civility to achieve his ultimate goal of permanently removing the Irish from Ireland. Fantasies of genocide aside his source his valuable as long as it is taken in perspective.

In addition to attacking the Irish for being nomadic the English colonizers of the Tudor era also criticized the Irish for their under use of their fertile land. The Old English who mainly resided around the Pale promoted the idea that the Irish farmed very little was actually a tool they utilized to paint the Irish as being not civilized. This would be useful for them in explaining their dire circumstances and the constant threat that the Irish posed to them. This rationale was delivered to the royal authorities in requests for increased funds and/or military aid.**[12]**

One of the major factors that made the English view the Irish as not being civilized was the openness of their fields as opposed to fenced off or partially enclosed fields in England. In England, almost all of the land would be accounted for as either the property of the crown, a noble, municipal common land or even some land owned by independent peasant farmers. R.F. Foster writing in *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* believes that this is purely misunderstanding on the part of the English.

*Their {English} assumption that most of the farmland was unenclosed may, for instance, have been based on an inability to recognize traditional boundaries, a 'ditch' in Ireland still means the exact opposite to what it signifies in England.***[13]**

The Irish did in fact practice enclosures but have a different standard than the English. Instead of obvious fences, the Irish instead utilized low banks, shallow ditches, and wattle fences-as well as occasional temporary fences to keep cattle from grazing on crops.**[14]** For the English colonizers the lack of consistent Gaelic Irish enclosures was a great annoyance with regards to the theft of cattle. English farmers complained that "*the want of good enclosures is a great help to the rebels, who suddenly raid for cattle and drive them off*".**[15]** Cattle theft played an important role in traditional Gaelic combat and greatly confused, annoyed, and disrupted English colonizers.**[16]**

Gaelic farming was different for English standards with more emphasis being placed on animal rearing for traditional meat and the '*white meats*'**[17]** than the production of grains and cereals. This does not mean that the Irish did not raise annual crops

such as oats and barely. They did and in some areas, the Irish farms could be surprisingly productive. One example of this is according to Lord Chancellor Gerrard who traveled through Leinster in 1577, *“the best platt of tilled grounde for so much together, the best stored cattell where pasture was of any parte I traveled in all the journey”* and amazingly that *“all these Irish people...were ritch, and everything plentiful in their country no waste land but...it bare corne or horn”*.**[18]**

One of the major motivations for the conquering of Ireland was utilization of the land, which the English considered was not being utilized. In the early 1550's, the Irish Parliament created a commission to survey Ireland for the purpose of exploiting the land and turning it into counties. The reports of that commission were followed by a proclamation of Parliament: An Act to Covert Waste Grounds Into Shire Grounds, this act was instituted in 1557 and a similar version was passed again in 1569. The commission found that the rural interior of Ireland posed a threat to colonization.

Where divers and sundry robberies, murders, and felonies be daily committed and done within sundry towns, villages, and other waste grounds of this realm, being no shire grounds, to the great loss of the divers and sundry true subjects if this realm”.**[19]**

The results of the commission's findings and the act were the creation of more towns. For the English town life not only was the abstract representation of civility but the also the very real seat of government, commerce, and most importantly control. A society of villages and towns was much easier to control than that of a non-settled rural society. This decision was reached within the Act of Covert Waste Grounds Into Shire Grounds, *“to limit, make, nominate, and divide by certain limits and bounds all such towns, villages, and waste grounds within this realm, being presently no shire ground nor country, into such and as many counties, shires, and hundreds”*.**[20]** The land was Ireland's chief resource and something that English observers of the period championed as being of great benefit to the English Crown. In 1601, Lord Mountjoy describes the benefits of the land of Ireland.

*That it may please her excellent majesty to conceive of this her kingdom of Ireland that it is one of the goodliest provinces of the world, being in itself either in quantity or quality little inferior to her realm of England...abounding with all the sustenance of life, as corn, cattle, fish, and fowl.***[21]**

Through the Tudor period in Ireland the struggle would persist between Lord Governor's and English colonizers to attempt to spread the English view of the use of land beyond the Pale and latter Ulster to the rest of Ireland. In summary, what the English saw in the Irish was the near complete opposite of themselves in regards to land use. The English grew grains and cereals; the Irish mainly ate meats and white meats. One was based in towns the other was rural. One could be supervised and controlled with a sheriff and, if needed, a small army the other was nearly uncontrollable.

Economic Benefits of the Wastelands

Beyond farmland, Ireland held enormous wealth in natural resources that the English sought to exploit. In an era before steel, oil, rubber, and natural gasses,

wood was one of the most important natural resources. One of the chief areas the English sought to exploit were the famous and expansive woods of Ireland. In 1600 forests made up of willow, hazel, pine, alder, oak, elm and ash trees covered over one eighth of Ireland.^[22] By the early seventeenth century, English forests were already seriously depleted of hard woods needed for important industries like shipbuilding. One of the prerequisites for having an overseas empire, merchant fleet, or sizeable navy was wood to build ships. In 1608, Lord Salisbury commissioned an exploration of Ireland for the purpose of finding wood for shipbuilding. The agents of Salisbury found that there existed far too much profit in pipe-staves and that it was not worth establishing a base for ship-building.^[23] Wood was not exported to England because it was prohibited by the English government and somewhat impractical. Despite the negative findings of the Salisbury commission in 1611, the East India Company established a shipyard in Cork. The settlement was complete with a transplanted English community of shipbuilders, a dock, and an iron works. The English government opposed the shipbuilding colony possibly because of the possibility that it might fall into Gaelic hands and was beyond the general reach of the English crown. Such a valuable resource as a shipyard was far too important to the national interest to be located outside of the land securely controlled by the crown. The shipbuilding colony ran into numerous problems when they tried to gather wood. Venturing into the forest was dangerous because of frequent encounters with Gaelic Irish would clash with the tiny colony. After only launching two ships of 400 and 500 tons the shipyard closed a few years later as a failed experiment.^[24] In addition to shipbuilding, the valuable woods of Ireland were exploited for their uses in making barreling and pipe staves. Galway was a boat building center and Cork and Waterford both sustained large glass industries that required great quantities of wood. The forests were being so aggressively utilized that by the end of the 17th century people were already starting to comment on the lack of mature timber.^[25] Gaelic Ireland was becoming as treeless as the Pale, which was commented on as being almost completely stripped of all significant forests in the early 1500s.^[26]

Another use of the dense forests of Ireland was the trade in wild animal furs. Hides such as marten, fox, otter, wolf and cattle-fish were important items for international trade. This trade slowed during the 17th century for two main reasons. The depletion of forestlands and the increased amount of hunting that was brought on by the trade in animal furs sought to limit the supply of available animals. In addition, as the seventeenth century went along the international trade in furs shifted both to the extreme west and east as Europe expanded. To the West English and French colonies in North America soon flooded the European markets with furs. In the East, the Muscovy Company imported additional and exotic furs from Russia. Combined with the depletion of the native forests in Ireland and the increased supply of furs on the international markets the trade in Irish furs dwindled. One animal trade that did not diminish was the trade in cattle hides that Ireland, having such a tremendous population of cattle kept constant throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Irish cattle hides never became as valuable as cattle hides from other regions because the Irish kept their cattle mainly for dairy production and as a result the animal lived longer and was usually killed because it was in old age or had become unproductive.

Forests also allowed Ireland to exist in the international European economy independently of England. Irish traders dealt extensively with France, Portugal, and

Spain in a number of commodities. Pipe-staves being an important resource that was often traded for continental wine as well as other resources. The dependency on products from the Irish forest was a major incentive for the Spanish intervention at Kinsale in 1601. According to John Silke Spain helped support the Irish attacks against the English so they could once again receive, *“supplies of fish, provisions, and corn, and from the vast Irish forests...pipe staves and timber for her galleys: for these naval supplies Spain was so dangerously dependent upon the Baltic Trade”*. [27] In 1612 the Bishop of Derry Christopher Hampton on taking the position of Bishop stated that the person who held the position of Bishop prior to him had in two years cut down over 3,000 trees on church estates and exported them to Spain. [28]

The international trade that took place between the Gaelic Irish and the continent was often done illegally outside of the governance of Dublin this trade was one of the many activities of Ireland's numerous pirates. Much like the uncontrolled interior, large portions of the Irish coast lay beyond the reach of English officials and existed in a state of negative civility. From an English point of view, this was another miserable place in Ireland to exist. Lady Burgchlere who at one point in her biography of James the First Duke of Ormond reveals her English bias when she states that *“the cause of civilization triumphed in the victory of England”* in regards to the English triumph of control in Ireland [29]. She describes the coastal communities of Ireland's west coast in horrific terms, *“Yet, miserable as was the interior of the island, its inhabitants were less to be pitied than the seafaring portion of the population, and the dwellers on the coast, exposed to all the horrors of piracy”*. [30] To local population of sailors and fishermen lived in fear of being kidnapped and sold into slavery in the form of ‘*servitude*’ on an English colony in North America or the Caribbean. The problem of piracy became so troublesome along the coast in 1611 the Dutch sent out a fleet to rid the Irish coast of pirates because they complained that the English were either not capable of solving the problem. [31] Pirates were bold and beyond the control of the English authorities, they often frequented St. Georges Channel. Some eighty pirates were so bold as to attack Dublin Castle and even captured shipments meant for the Lord Governor Wentworth. The pirates made off with the governor's wardrobe, which was valued at five hundred pounds. [32] The thought of pirates strutting about in the governor's finest clothes must have been too much for Wentworth because in 1630 put his forces behind ridding Ireland's east coast of piracy. [33] While the east coast was to be cleared of piracy the west coast of Ireland, especially areas around Donegal would remain havens for pirates for many years to come.

Wastelands Effect on the Military Conquest of Ireland

The issue of piracy was for the English (both Old and New) governor's of Ireland only part of a much larger problem, securing the peace. Lawless coastlines did hinder international trade and English shipping but the real issue of control of Ireland was not on the coasts but in the interior. European history has long been filled with bandits, barbarians, and rebels who have fled into the wilderness as a means of escaping their much larger and organized enemy. Conquerors throughout history have preferred to attack more urbanized societies. While concentrated urban populations can favor subjugated peoples in times of organized uprisings, they overall provide the controlling force a much greater advantage. In an urban area the conquered peoples are accounted for in one area; so if back up troops are needed

they can be called for and told where to go. In this regard trying to control a rural population can be much more difficult. The wastelands of Ireland, whether they be mountain, bog, coastline, forest, or open field gave the most worry and greatest difficulty to the English in military affairs. Edmund Spenser summarizes here the position held by most of the English administration and English military that waged war in Ireland.

It is well-known that he {Irish} is a flying enemy, hiding himself in woods and bogs, from whence he will not draw forth but into some strait passage or perilous ford where he knows the army must needs pass-there will he lie in wait, and if he find advantage fit, will dangerously hazard the troubled soldier. [34]

The Gaelic Irish employed a tactic of hit and run guerilla warfare. Stealth, small numbers and a detailed knowledge of the landscape were all advantages that were in the Irish favor. Sir Oliver Lambert added not only the landscape of Ireland but also the weather to his list of complaints in regard to combat in Ireland, “*there has been so much rain that the bogs and mountains are too wet and the rivers too high for me to drive the enemy out of the Curlews*” [35] Constant rain was a constant complaint of English soldiers. Far more important than a weakened moral of the enemy the consistent rain in the in Ireland allowed the Gaelic Irish to utilize their preferred means of travel over water and not over land for transport and escape. The turning of swampy bog land into temporary water-ways made this possible.

In Ireland, not only did the Gaelic Irish use the landscape, and climate to their advantage they were also keenly aware of the season in which they fought. The winter left the landscape bare, wet and cold, the English troops constantly complained of dysentery. [36] Waging war in the winter allowed seasonal farmers to continue to attend to their farms and cattle in season. In regards to their enemy fighting in the winter months put them at a decisive disadvantage, because they would be fighting on foreign soil and the supply bases would be further away forcing the armies to find shelter wherever they could.

The English constantly searched for ways to put themselves at an advantage. One suggestion for overcoming the lack of control associated with the wastelands is a passage written in an English guidebook for Ireland. The author suggests the following for taking over Ireland, “*let them build and fortify castles, cut down and open passes, and do all such other things as the nature of wars requireth to be prevented.*” [37] Blocking passage ways between bogs, mountains, and the forest was a common Gaelic practice, “*Ulster and the western parts of Muster yield vast woods in which the rebels, cutting trees and casting them on heaps, used to stop passages, and therein, as also upon fenny and boggy places, to fight the English*” [38] The Irish were also keen on destroying any existing roads as another means of slowing the advancement of the enemy. One of the favorite tricks of the Gaelic Irish was to attack and then retreat to one of Ireland’s many lakes and hid on an island. This practice continued until and throughout the eighteenth century. An account from 1699, from a letter of John Dunton speaks of a typical pursuit and a typical result.

We steered course towards the Bog of Aleen which though is be the greatest in Ireland, yet never was so famous as in the last rebellion, where the Rapparrees had

their rendezvous when they designed any mischief in the country, to the number of five or six thousand, and where they easily hid themselves when pursued.^[39]

Islands located inside lakes were a common hiding place that this source alludes to. These secret bases on islands inside of lakes allowed for a fixed, well stocked, and easily protected fortification. Baranbe Rich cites another of the common accounts of the Gaelic Irish utilizing waterways as a means of escape,

Ireland is full of great rivers and mighty, huge loughs, such as we call meres in England, wherein are many large and spacious islands where the Irish have many times fortified themselves against the Prince, but are still ferreted and drawn out by the ears, though others whiles with great difficulty.^[40]

Besides hiding, another Gaelic tactic was to destroy the roads therefore not allowing the English to pursue. The English considered the Irish style of warfare yet another indicator of their utter lack of civility. In the sixteenth and seven-teenth centuries, modern warfare was being coming of age. Complete with large armies, with uniformed troops, a fixed hierarchy, and general albeit often, vague rules of combat. Even if the seventeenth century standard of warfare was put aside, the medieval concept of chivalry stilled played an important role in the minds of the English military. By either modern or medieval standard, the English considered themselves to play but the rules of warfare, which were comparable with the continental European standard. John Dutton, summarizes here the typical English reaction to Irish standards of warfare. Describing the Irish he illustrates the ancient warfare of the Irish “*They were a loose and undisciplined people who were not subject to command, but like freebooters made everything that belonged to the English a prey if they could come to it*”.^[41] Guerilla warfare as was practiced by the Irish needed considerably less command hierarchy, and military protocol as a traditional army like the English. In addition, to all the other failings that the English saw in the Irish their lack of civility in all manner of war was another. The Irish were no less civil than the English but their environment simply demanded that they develop a different type of military combat because of generations of fighting in and around the bogs, mountains, forests and general wastelands.

Traditional combat in Ireland had developed around the cattle raid. Ireland being such a under populated country with lots of open land the Gaelic Irish had developed a tradition of cattle raids as a means of weakening their opponents and strengthening their own side. This method of combat had the overall strategy of weakening your enemy into submission without an actual instance of combat. If an enemy had enough of their cattle stolen then they would simply submit to their enemy. To be successful in a cattle raid the instigating force had to possess great stealth, speed, and fierceness. These were the very characteristics the English despised in the Gaelic Irish. In general, the Gaelic Irish found this to be an effective way of establishing supremacy over an enemy without a tremendous investment of human life and resources. Traditionally the Gaelic Irish had practiced these raids against each other but with the arrival of the Old English in Eastern Ireland in areas that surrounded the Pale, and later in the English colonies, their came frequent attacks. In 1561, the future mayor of Dublin Thomas Smith described the ‘wild Irish’ who stole his cattle described the Irish wild Irish celebrating as they returned to their wilderness with their cattle “*muste then have the bagpipe bloinge afore them*”.^[42]

Yet, another example of the uncivilized Irish was the attachment that the sheppard's who resided with their bollies in the wastelands had for their bagpipes. The bagpipe all throughout Europe would be the traditional instrument of the wastelands, its loudness was the perfect companion for the herder and the warrior. These would most likely be the two most commonly held vocations for the Gaelic Irish that went on cattle raids.

Communication In, Through, and Around the Wastelands

Another of the problems that Ireland's geography created for the English in their attempts at colonization were related to communication. Ireland had no common road system for overland transport. The Gaelic Irish themselves preferred to travel by waterway either river or sea as it allowed for quick transport without the investment in the necessary infrastructure. The roads that did exist were in of poor design, not well maintained, and often not connecting to each other. Edward MacLysaght describes Tudor era roads,

An important main road might be quite good for a stretch and then you would meet an almost impassable patch, due as a rule not to the nature of the land but to the incompetence or laziness of the local people charged with the responsibility of repairing it.^[43]

Maintenance of roads was the responsibility of the local parish or the local Gaelic chieftain. Disputes over exactly whose responsibility road maintenance was common. Another common problem related to road maintenance was that fact that many paths (routes that do not deserve to be called 'roads' but passage ways) went through areas that were not controlled by any Parish or local chieftain. In areas under control of the English, such as the Pale, or later plantations the responsibility of maintenance fell to the regional lord. Thomas Dingley toured throughout Ireland between 1675-80 and observed that, "*The roads were maintained by the joint effort of the landowners and labourers of each parish: the former were obliged by law to furnish horses and vehicles for six days per annum and the latter to labour for six days.*"^[44] As a result, of poor conditions of the roads the amounts of public coaches were few in Ireland for inland travel.^[45] The issue of inland travel was also complicated by the lack of inns as travelers were forced to either provide their own impromptu housing or try to find lodging with natives. This was not an attractive prospect for a traveling merchant who would rightfully fear having their merchandise stolen.

The major reason that kept people from traveling or traveling with great fear was issues related to safety. From the elements Ireland was often cold and rainy but rarely dangerous. Nature provided a forest full of fear and at the start of the sixteenth century still very full of wolves. The wolves were said to be a decent barometer of human population, with some areas like Munster holding a reputation for them.^[46] The largest threat to the safety of the traveler was attacks from raiding Gaelic Irish. This danger was by no means only associated with English or foreign travelers, anyone even the Gaelic Irish could be considered a target. Of Sir Edmond Butler, it was said that he could "*ride up and down the country like a priest*" which suggest that priests were the only people who could travel freely about Ireland without constant fear of attack.^[47] Even among the Old English settlers the various Earls would prefer to go great lengths to circumnavigate an enemies property than

risk conflict by going through it. In the 1560s when the Earl of Desmond would travel to London, he would leave from Waterford rather than go through the land, which was inhabited by his enemy the Earl of Ormond.^[48] As a result of the dangers of inland travel the foreigners who colonized in Ireland and developed the towns and later cities preferred the coast to the interior. Traditionally the Gaelic Irish did not live in towns. Town were an innovation that was brought into Ireland with the Vikings and later the Normans. The English were the first to develop larger towns and with the exception of Kilkenny most were on the coast. Dublin the largest of all communities in Ireland had at most a population of 60,000 throughout the seventeenth century with most of the inhabitants being Old English.^[49] While the Pale area around Dublin was populated largely with, Old English residents that extended somewhat into the countryside and like most Irish towns there existed right next to the town center open land.

Travel times around Ireland were hampered by the various wastelands. In the 1660's to go from Limerick to Dublin took four days. Even as late as 1709 Sir Thomas Molyneux reported that it took him three days to travel from Limerick to Cork; an overall speed of seven miles per hour.^[50] John Stevens a seventeenth century English traveler through Ireland reports in his journal that the constant rain made the roads boggy and that roads were in such poor shape because the Gaelic Irish kept destroying them in times of conflict as a way of slowing invading troops.^[51] The slowness of travel was a perennial complaint of the Viceroyalties because of the slowness of postal delivery. The government post of Postmaster was in constant flux, and unreliable as mail was often reported lost or opened.^[52] The effect of the wastelands is obvious because a colony that can not communicate effectively with itself and its home government cannot rule efficiently.

The result of the incredible difficulty of travel in Ireland was that it became an incredibly localized country. Because of the natural landscape of bogs, mountains, and forests that prevented good communication, this served to separate and isolate the population from a variety of things. For the Irish themselves they were never able to develop a unified island wide system of organization. No single Gaelic leader ever fully conquered every region of Ireland and retained absolute control over the island. No island wide economy existed. Culturally this created an incredibly homogenous society where the majority of the populace lived close to where they were born and seldom ventured outside of their own world. This was true not only of the peasant classes in Gaelic Ireland but also of the ruling classes as well. Nicholas Canny even goes as far as suggesting that Ireland was one of the most regionalized societies in Western Europe.^[53]

Ulster

One of the most separated and regionalized of all of the areas of Ireland was Ulster. Ulster is surrounded by natural boundaries of by mountains to the south and coastline in every other direction. The closeness to Scotland would before colonization allow for some unity between Gaelic Scottish and Irish resisters to English dominance. After the establishment of colonies and the settlement of many Scots in Ulster, and the remoteness of Ulster from the rest of Ireland would allow for a separate largely Protestant and non-Gaelic Irish community to develop. Ulster was by the English standards of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries considered largely depopulated. In the seventeenth century, Edward MacLysaght estimates that

Ulster had under 3,000 residents and Belfast was *'not being large enough to mention at all'* [54]. This allowed Gaelic Irish nobles to retain strength in areas that were hard for the British to access. Most noteworthy among the Irish chieftains of Ulster was the O'Neil's. Shane O'Neil fought against English intrusion in Ulster in the later part of the sixteenth century. In Shane O'Neil stands, a powerful symbol of not only Irish resistance towards English hegemony but a perfect synthesis of all the characteristics of the wastelands. He practiced the traditional method of cattle raids as a means of extending his power, and he was a master of attacking an area and retreating afterwards into the bogs, lakes, and mountains that surrounded Ulster. English governor the Earl of Sussex battled O'Neil with thousands of troops and military budgets that exceeded by 1560, over a quarter of a million pounds. [55] Even with the full force of the Pale Earls opposing O'Neil, he still managed massive cattle raids like a May 1562 expedition against Tyrone where he drove 30,000 head of cattle into the town as a means of supporting his enemy army from and surrounding estates. [56]

Conclusion

In conclusion the bogs, woods, mountains, and general open spaces of Ireland as viewed by the Tudor English immigrants to Ireland as *'wastelands'* were a crucial feature of any sense of Irish identity, a valuable economic resource, and a great hindrance to the conquering and colonization of Ireland. Both before and during the attempts at colonization the disunity of Ireland was significantly a result of the Islands natural geography. The various wastelands retarded the development of an urban and centralized Gaelic Ireland as well as slow the political conquest of Ireland by the English. The English used the wastelands and the image of the Irish misuse of land to contribute to the image of the civil English and the uncivil and barbaric Gaelic Irish. The economic benefits of the forests and underutilized fields of Ireland contributed to the constant attempts by the English at conquering and colonization. Besides creating a *'buffer zone'* from Catholic invasions the wastelands also provided the English with an economic incentive that constantly gave the prospect of providing the English with enough resources to pay for the military presence and administration needed to govern Ireland. The wastelands of Ireland made travel and communication extremely unreliable. This lack of constant communication allowed for many unexplored areas and political disunity in controlling the Gaelic Irish and the Old English. In military affairs the wastelands of Ireland had their greatest historical impact. The general openness of the land saved Ireland from a possible near assimilation of Irish culture because until the era of Cromwell the vast majority of Ireland was not under political control. Mountains, island lakes, bogs, and forests all allowed Gaelic Irish rebels to disappear, regroup, and attack again. Their intimate knowledge of their own geography, their guerilla tactics allowed them to fight a force often much larger and usually much better equipped than themselves. Because the wastelands prevented the quick and complete military conquest of Ireland, a tradition of rebellion was established and the complete assimilation of Ireland was an impossibility.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Cambrensis, Gitaldus. Translated by: John Hooker. "The Conquest of Ireland". In *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1983.

Curtis, Edmund and **R.B. Mc Dowell** Editors. *Irish Historical Documents 1172-1922*. New York, Barnes & Nobles, 1968.

Gernon, Luke. "A Discourse of Ireland." In *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1983.

Rich, Barnabe. "A New Description of Ireland, Together with the Manners, Customs, and Dispositions of the People" In *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1983.

Spenser, Edmund. "A View of the Present State of Ireland, Discoursed by the way of Dialogue Between Eudoxus and Irenius." In *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1983.

Secondary Sources:

Andrews, J. H. "A Geographers View of Irish History." In *The Course of Irish History 4th Edition.*, Editors T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, 1-12. Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001.

Becket J.C. *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

Burgchlere, Lady. *The Life of James First Duke of Ormonde 1610-1688*. London: Hohn Murray Publishers, 1912.

Butlin, R.A. "Land and People, Circa 1600." In *A New History of Ireland: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*, Editor T.W. Moody, 143-167. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

Canny, Nicholas P. *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established 1565-76*. New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1976.

Donnelly, Sean. *The Early History of Piping in Ireland*. Mallusk, Newtownabbey Ireland: Na Piobair Uilleann Teoranto, 2001.

Foster, R.F. *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. New York: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1988.

Lennon, Colm. *Sixteenth Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest.* New York: St. Martins Press, 1995.

Leerssen, Joep. "Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility." *Journal of the History of Ideas.* Volume 56, Number 1 25-39.

MacLysaght, Edward. *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century.* Irish University Press: Cork, 1969.

Silke, John J. Kinsale: *The Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars.* Liverpool England: Liverpool University Press, 1970.

Quinn, D.B and **K.W. Nicholls.** "Ireland in 1534" in *A New History of Ireland: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*, Editor T.W. Moody, 1-38. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

[1] Not meant for large settlements based on the Gaelic Irish model, but better suited for larger English style communities.

[2] Barnabe Rich, "A New Description of Ireland, Together with the Manners, Customs, and Dispositions of the People" in *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*, James Myers D. Ed. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), 130.

[3] J. H. Andrews, "A Geographer's View of Irish History," in *The Course of Irish History*, Ed. T.W. Moody (Lanham Maryland, Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001) 5.

[4] Joep Leerssen, "Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility," *Journal of the History of Ideas* Volume 56: 28.

[5] Andrews, 6-7

[6] Nicholas P Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established 1565-76* (New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1976) 1.

[7] R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (New York: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1988) 5-6. The exception being Donegal, which was not charted until 1602-03.

[8] Rich, 132

[9] Edmund Spenser, "A View of the Present State of Ireland, Discourse by way of a Dialogue Between Eudoxs and Irenius", in *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland*, James Myers D. Ed. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), 79.

[10] Spenser, 80

[11] Spenser, 80

[12] Canny, 13

[13] Foster, 6

[14] R.A. Butlin. "Land and People, Circa 1600." in A New History of Ireland: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691, Editor T.W. Moody (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 150.

[15] D.B. Quinn and K.W. Nicholls. "Ireland in 1534" in A New History of Ireland: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691, Editor T.W. Moody (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 12.

[16] This issue is further explored in the military section of the paper.

[17] White meat is the typical description used for cheeses, curds, and milk

[18] Canny, 14

[19] Edmund Curtis and R.B. Mc Dowell Editors, Irish Historical Documents 117201922. (New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1968) 109.

[20] Curtis, 109

[21] J.C. Becket, The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) 25.

[22] Foster, 6

[23] Becket, 29

[24] Becket, 29

[25] Foster,6

[26] Quinn, 36

[27] John Silke, Kinsale: The Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars (Liverpool England: Liverpool University Press, 1970) 78.

[28] Becket, 29

[29] Lady Burgchlere, The Life of James First Duke of Ormond 1610-1688 (London: Hohn Murray Oublishers, 1912) 50.

[30] Burcherery, 79

[31] Becket, 27

[32] Burcherey, 80

[33] Becket, 27

[34] Spenser, 111-112

[35] Butlin, 145

[36] Burchery, 50

[37] Gitaldus Cambrensis, "The Conquest of Ireland" in Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland, James Myers D. Ed. (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983) 56.

[38] Butlin, 143

[39] Dunton, 361-362

[40] Baranabe, 129

[41] Dunton, 362.

[42] Sean Donnelly, The Early History of Piping in Ireland (Mallusk, Newtownabbey Ireland: Na Piobair Uilleann Teoranto, 2001), 16.

[43] Edward MacLysaght. Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century. (Cork, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1969) 247.

[44] MacLysaght, 248. The appendix to this book contains several primary sources that the author published exclusively for this work. The travel logs of Thomas Dingley are on of them.

[45] MacLysaght, 251

[46] Becket, 25

[47] Quinn, 2

[48] Quinn, 2

[49] MacLysaght, 183

[50] MacLysaght, 242-243

[51] MacLysaght, 245-247

[52] MacLysaght, 259-260

[53] Canny, 3

[54] MacLysaght, 183

[55] Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). 269.

[56] Lennon, 270

'Mr. Everett is a full time faculty member of the Social Studies Department at Old Rochester Regional High School Mattapoisett, Massachusetts.

Mr. Everett holds/attains for the following degrees:

Associate of Arts- Cape Cod Community College (Philosophy Concentration)

Bachelor of Arts- University of Massachusetts (History Major)

**Masters of Arts European History Major/ American History Minor
Providence College**

**In progress,
Masters of Arts American History (Teaching American History Program)**

The webmaster rejects the ownership of intellectual property and allows reproduction of ideas and activities presented on this website with acknowledgment of the author.'

Source: Mr. Everett's World History Web Pages

<http://users.rcn.com/ceverett.massed/>