

Kilronan Through Time, c. 8000BC until c. 1600

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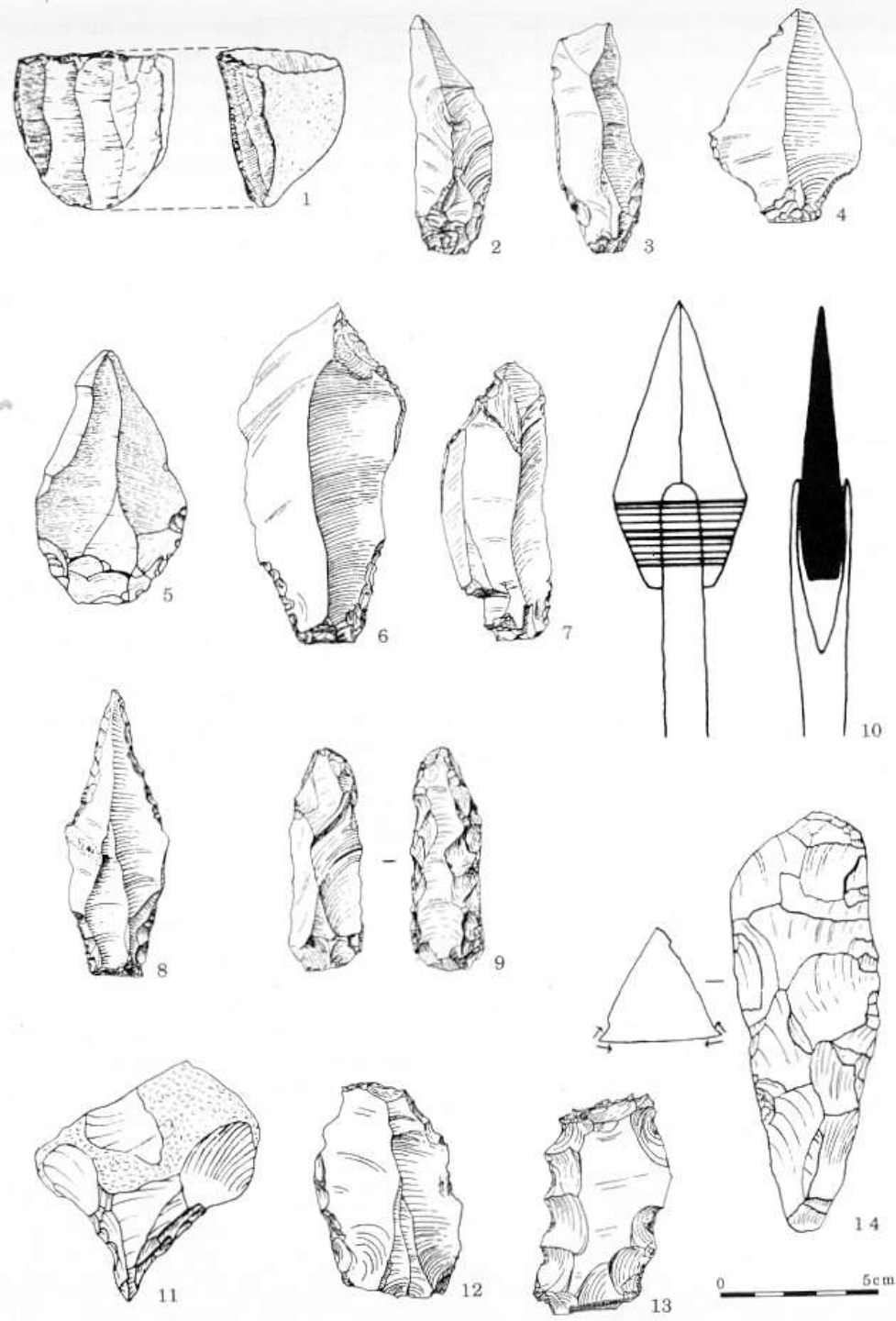
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- When we think of the 'past', we tend to think of the recent past.

How do we access the more 'distant' past?

- The first evidence that we have for settlement in the Kilronan area comes in the Mesolithic Period (8,000BC to 4,000BC).
- People in the Mesolithic lived a nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle in small family groups and bands. Their economy was based on a mix of hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild vegetables and fruits from the forest.
- The tools and weapons of these Mesolithic people were made of wood, bone and stone (usually chert or flint).

- Kilronan was an ideal area for Mesolithic hunters and gatherers, with its lakes and rivers.
- The first definite evidence for people in Kilronan Parish is from about 6,000BC in what we call the Late Mesolithic.



- Late Mesolithic artefacts have been found in Derrynadooey townland beside Lough Allen.





- However, Early Mesolithic flakes did turn up at Cormongan on the eastern shores of Lough Allen.

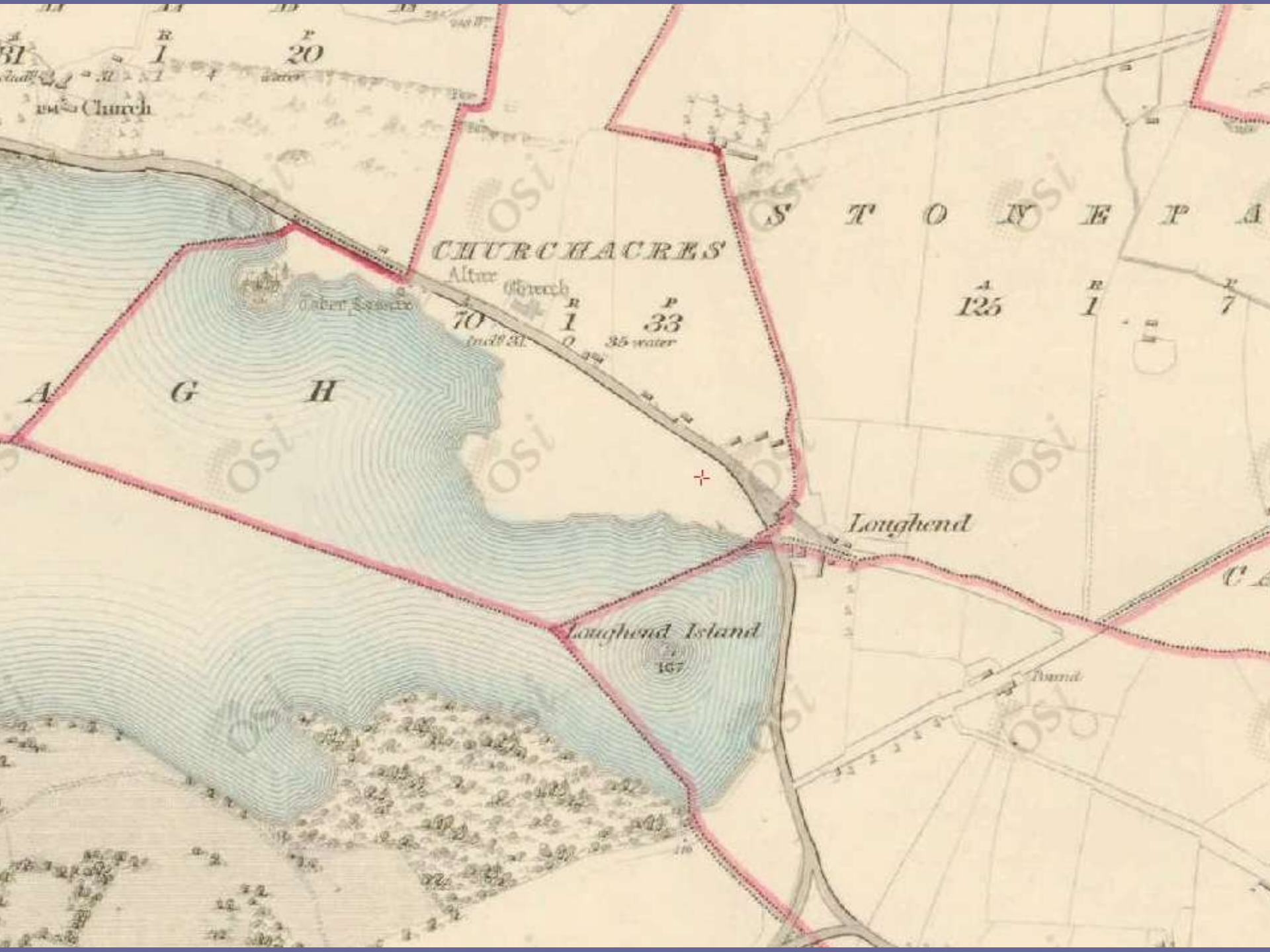
- Farmers and farming arrived to Ireland about 4,000 BC. This period is known as the Neolithic and it ended around 2,500BC.
- Cattle, sheep, goats and cereal farming arrived. Tools were still made of wood, bone and stone throughout this period.



The passage grave (marked Carn on the map) on Kilronan Mountain, Keadue, Co. Roscommon. There are strong hints that a pre-bog field system exists nearby.

- The most enduring monuments left in the landscape by these Neolithic farmers are megalithic tombs.
- Burial places? Also, places of ritual and religious activity (possibly associated with some form of ancestor worship). Group ceremonies.

- 3 types of megalithic tomb date to the Neolithic period. These are: the portal tomb; the passage tomb; the court tomb.
- No portal tombs have been recognised within the bounds of Kilronan parish.



Church

CHURCH ACRES

Altar Church
70 R 1 P 33
incl 31 35 water

A G H

S T O N E P A

125 R 1 P 7

Loughend

Loughend Island

167

Road



- The court tomb at Knockranny, Kilronan.



- Three court tombs and one possible example occur within the bounds of the parish, all to the east of Lough Meelagh, in the vicinity of the modern village of Keadue. This is a dense concentration for this type of megalithic tomb



The passage grave (marked Carn on the map) on Kilronan Mountain, Keadue, Co. Roscommon.



R 1 20
P 33
Church

CHURCH ACRES

Altar Church
R 1 P 33
Incl. Bl. 0 35 water

S T O N E Y

A 125 R 1

A G H

Loughend

Loughend Island

167

BAND

- Vibrant and prosperous farming community in the Keadue area during the Neolithic Period, since maybe as early as 4,000BC. Good farmland in this area.
- At the end of a natural routeway linking the strong Mesolithic and later Neolithic communities around Ballysadare Bay and the Cuilera Peninsula to Lough Allen and the Upper Shannon area (now followed by the R284).
- Modern farmers in Kilronan Parish are the inheritors of 6,000 years of farming experience on their lands.

- The Bronze Age in Ireland begins c. 2,500BC. A great change happened around this period and this was caused by the gradual introduction of metal working, with the production of copper, bronze and gold objects.
- Nevertheless, in the early part of the Bronze Age, some stone tools, such as barbed and tanged arrowheads, were still used. A type of megalithic tomb known as the wedge tomb seems to mostly date to the early Bronze Age.



Wedge tomb at Cartronaglogh, above Keadue, Co. Roscommon

- The existence of the wedge tomb and Cuilkeel hoard suggests that Kilronan parish, particularly the area to the east of Lough Meelagh, was still important during early Bronze Age times.
- Lack of later Middle and Late Bronze Age (ie from c 2000BC to c. 600 BC and Iron Age (c.600BC to 400AD) evidence in the area is interesting. There is some evidence for the continued occupation of the parish but it is not as strong as before.

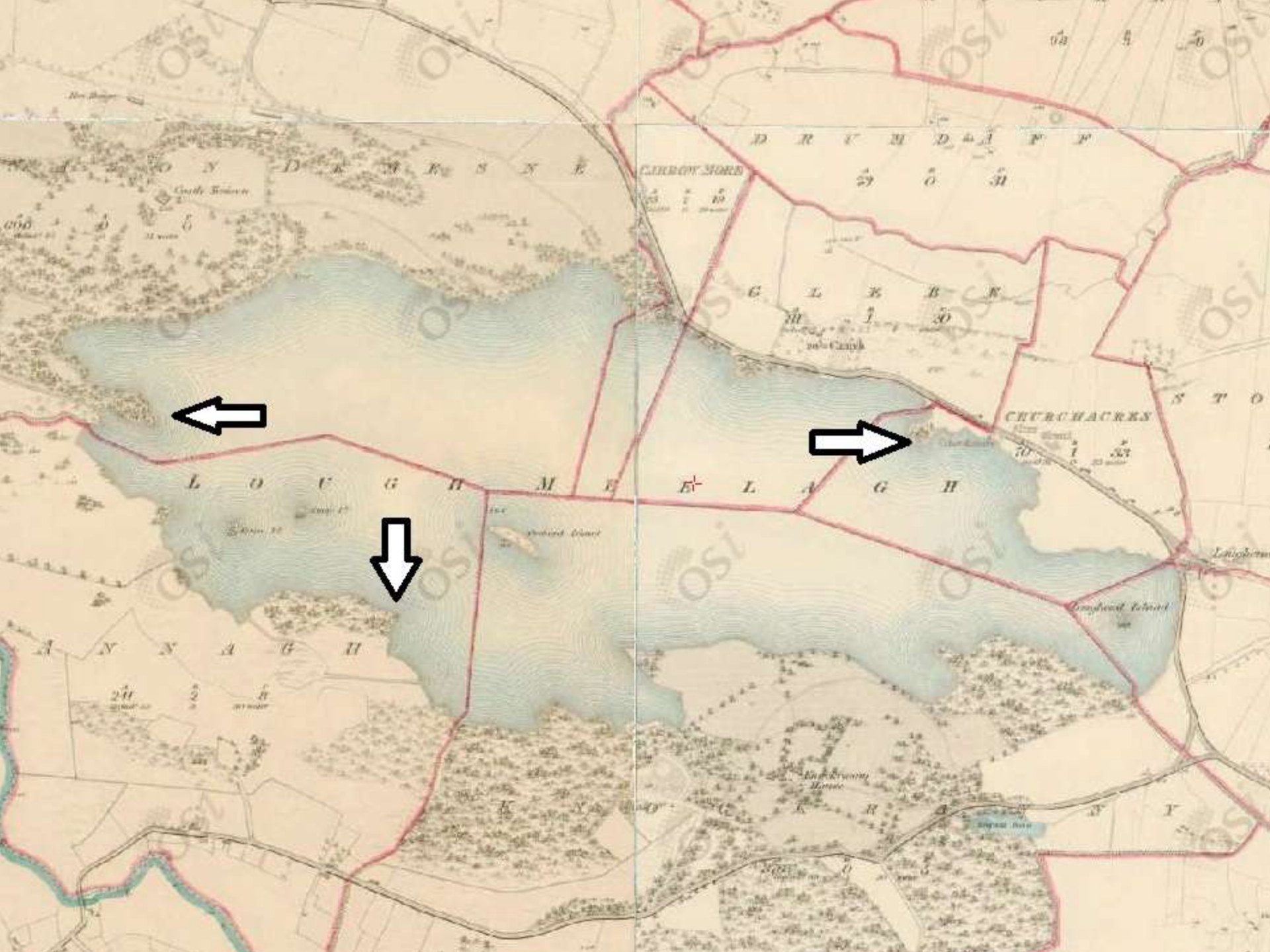


- Looking across the Arigna Valley to the inland promontory fort (Dun Ruairi) at Greaghnaclogh.





View from the north-west, showing the bank and ditch, cutting off the spur, of the inland promontory fort at Greaghnacloch, Arigna.



This all suggests that the Kilronan area, in particular, the Keadue area, lost its prominence around 2000BC. The field evidence for barrows, ring barrows, henges to the south of Lough Key around Boyle and Ardcarne suggests that this area rose to prominence at this time.

Nevertheless, evidence from the Annagh hoard suggests that the Kilronan area was occupied during this whole time period but possibly not as intensively as before.

- The Iron Age and prehistory in general is seen as coming to an end with the coming of Christianity to Ireland in the 5th Century AD.
- The coming of Christianity also saw the introduction of writing. Surviving written records help understand society and life from this time onwards. At times, however, these written records are sparse or only inform us about certain things. They do not leave a full picture of how society operated during the long centuries of the medieval period. Archaeology is useful in filling these gaps in our knowledge.

- The early medieval or Early Christian period is seen as beginning in the early 5th century and ending c 1100.
- Most churches during this period were built of wood and, so, have not survived.



Holy well, Kilronan, Keadue, Co. Roscommon

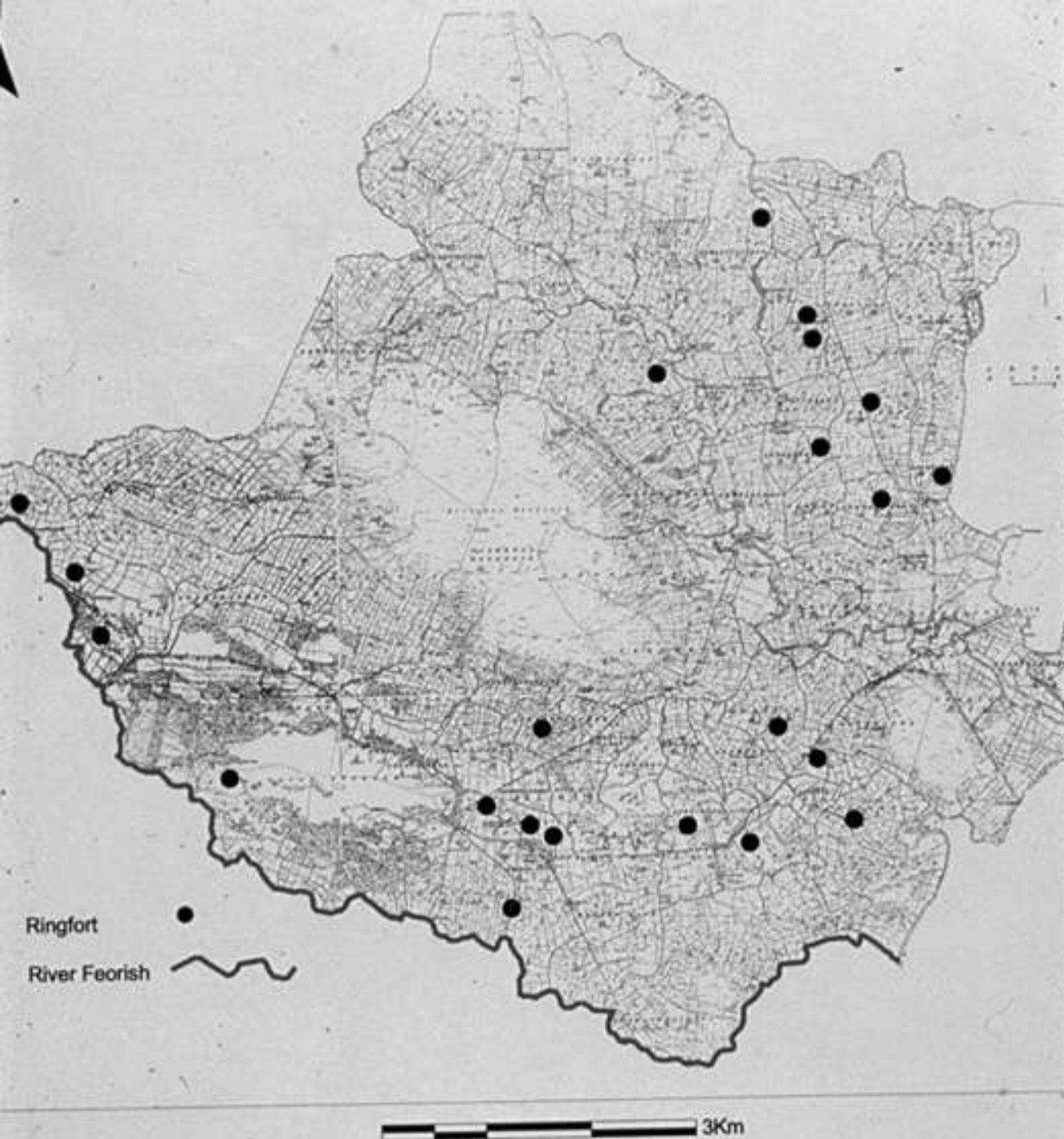
The church at Kilronan is probably mid 14th century in date.





- A Romanesque doorway was
- inserted into this 14th-century church. This suggests a late 12th-century stone church once existed here. Earlier churches were probably made of wood.

- What about secular settlement during the early medieval period?
- (a) ringforts
- (b) crannogs
- © promontory forts?



Distribution of ringforts in Kilronan parish, Co. Roscommon.

22 ringforts are recognised within the bounds of Kilronan Parish.



Aerial photograph of a Roscommon ringfort



Reconstruction of ringfort defences



Reconstruction of ringfort interior



Cashel at Ballykinvarga, Co. Clare



Ringfort near Keadue, Co. Roscommon.

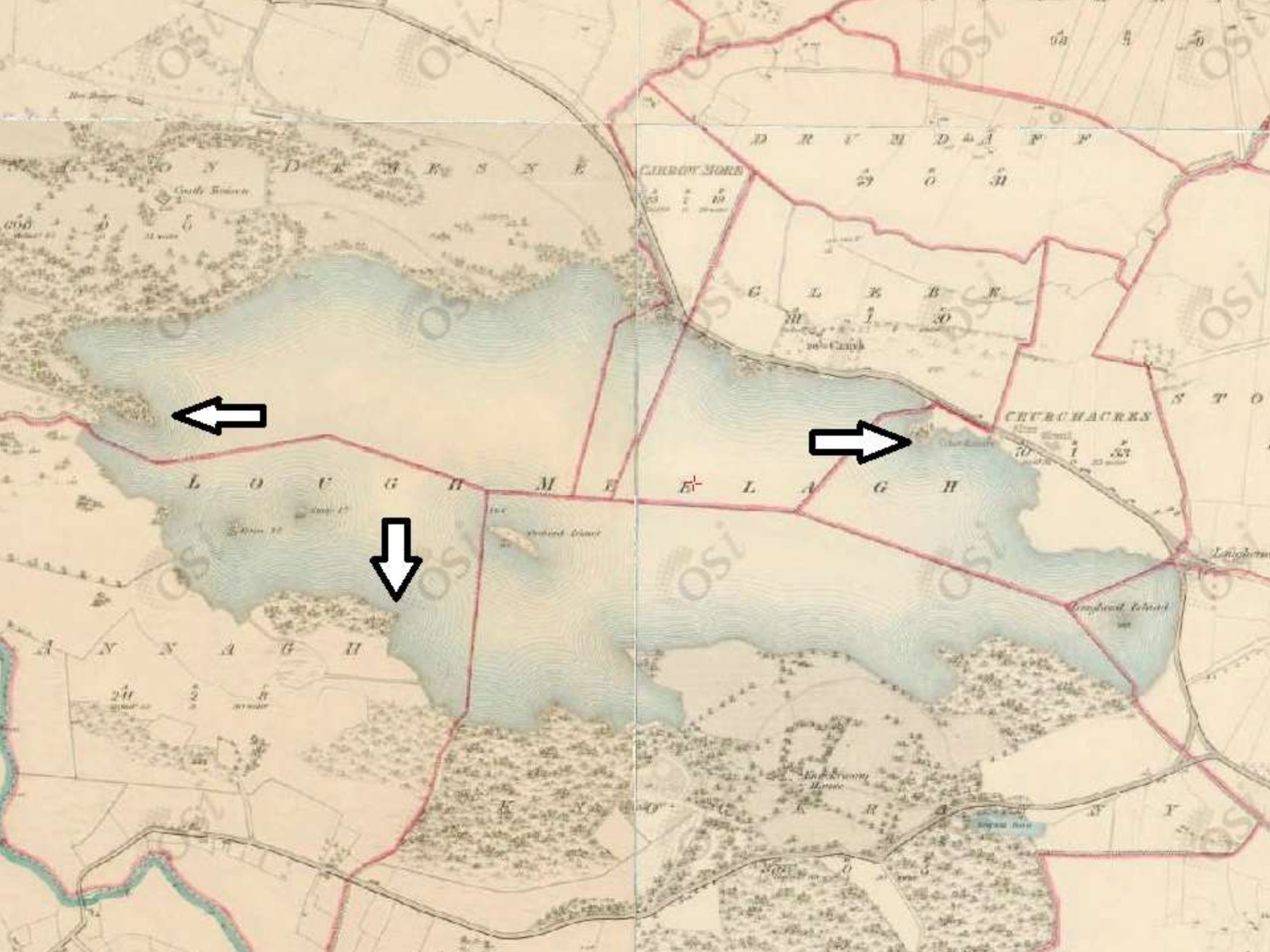


A Kerry Cow





Crannog on Lough Meelagh, Co. Roscommon



CARROW FORD

D R I M D A I F F

29 0 31

G L E B E

31 1 30

CHURCHACKS

70 1 33

L O U G H M E L A G H

A N N A B H

24 2 8

K Y G C K R O Y T

- The 12th century saw many changes in Irish society.
 - (a) Reform of the church
 - (b) Closer links to Europe
 - © The arrival of the Anglo-Normans
-
- These changes ushered in the later medieval period (c. 1100 -1600). The later medieval period is the high (c. 1100 -1380) and late (c 1380-1600) medieval periods combined.



Boyle Abbey, Co. Roscommon



- A Romanesque doorway was
- inserted into this 14th-century church. This suggests a late 12th-century stone church once existed here. Earlier churches were probably made of wood.



Anglo-Norman settlement in Ireland about the year 1300. Note that 'Tir Tuathail', which corresponded to Kilronan Parish, was not settled or conquered by the Anglo-Normans. The area seems to have become part of Connacht in 1186, having been part of Breifne. Tir Tuathail remained under general O'Connor control even after the 1230s. A branch of the O'Conors, the McManuses, set themselves up as lords of Tir Tuathail by the mid 13th century. They remained pre-eminent in Tir Tuathail until the 15th century but were still important landholders in the area into the 17th century.



Roscommon Castle from the north east showing the twin-towered gatehouse



A Kerry Cow

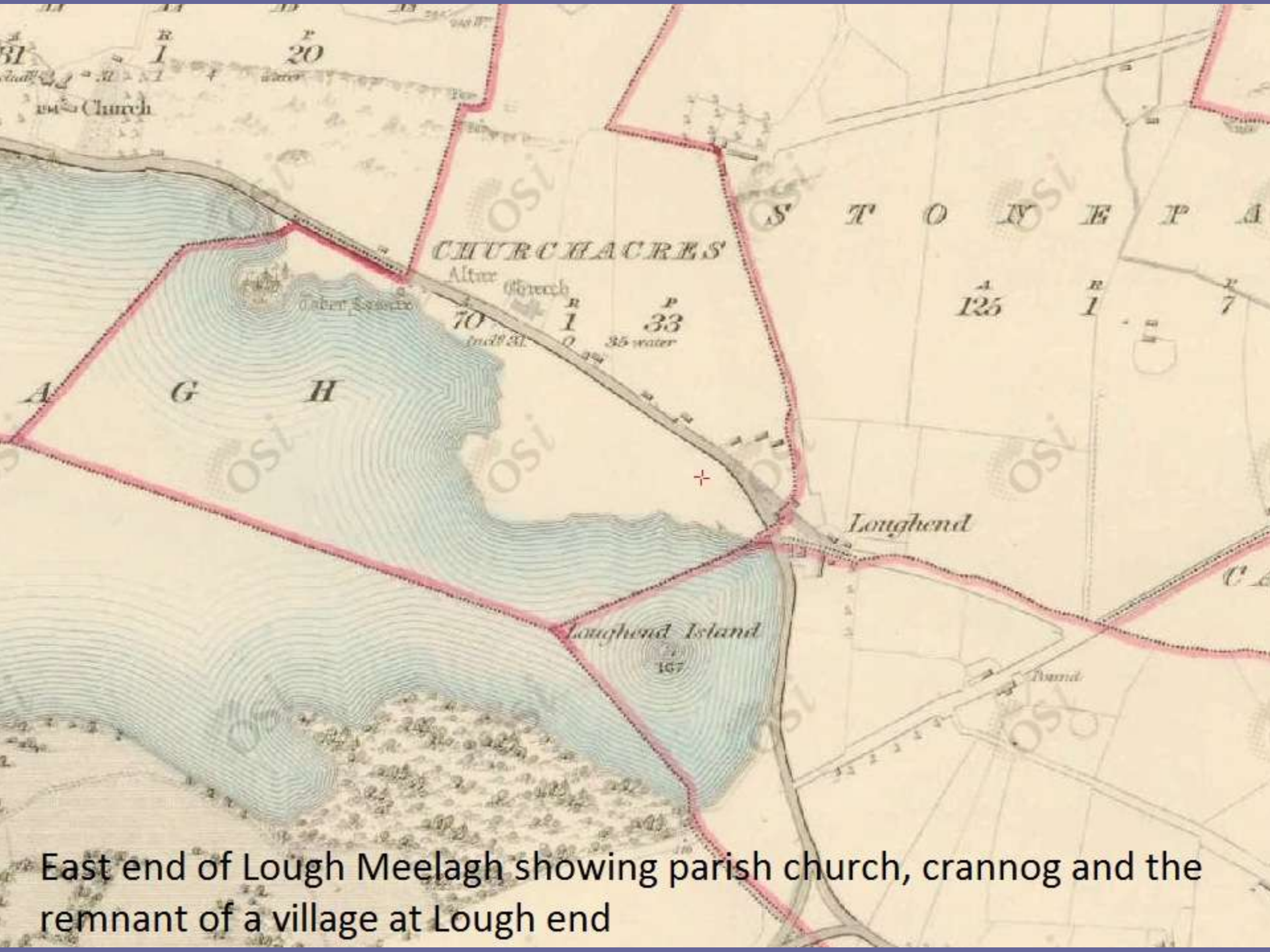
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Crannog on Lough Meelagh, Co. Roscommon. This seems to have been the fortified residence of the McManus lord of Tir Tuathail.



East end of Lough Meelagh showing parish church, crannog and the remnant of a village at Lough end



Ringfort near Keadue, Co. Roscommon.

- However, this importance of the eastern end of Lough Meelagh, while still very important, wanes somewhat from the 15th century onwards.
- Parts of Tir Tuathail came under the control of the MacDermot Roe – a cadet branch of the McDermots of Moylurg. The MacDermot Roe was the most prominent landowner in Tir Tuathail / Kilronan by the late 16th century.
- All indications are that they first settled the Ballyfarnon area. Assarting.



Rockfleet Tower House, Co. Mayo

Conclusions

- East end of Lough Meelagh was important in prehistoric and medieval times.
- The overall evidence suggests that this location was a place of cultural, economic, ritual and political importance through time.
- Ballyfarnon area begins to become important from the 15th century onwards, with the rise of the MacDermot Roe sept.
- While there was settlement at the eastern end of the Arigna Valley since early medieval times at least, presumably it began to become important in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the development of the ironworks and then the coal mines there.