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Theory and History in Irish Conflict Archaeology, with specific reference to the role of British Crown Forces in the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798

G. Hughes and J. Trigg

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between history and archaeology and presents pertinent areas where theory and practice can be shared. It will concentrate on the United Irishmen's 1798 Rebellion. This conflict encapsulates many issues relevant to the study of conflict archaeology and military history, in terms of the physical evidence in the archaeological record, artefacts associated with the Rebellion and the sites that are connected to it. In particular, the main focus is to ascertain whether archaeology can give new interpretations of the Rebellion and, by so doing, further increase our understanding of the military conduct of Crown Forces. As a pivotal period of British and Irish history, the archaeological study of the conflict can reveal much about the nature of these locally raised Yeomanry and Militia regiments and their Fencible counterparts. Using archaeological practice and recent discoveries, combined with artefactual evidence and documentary sources, a more detailed and informative view of 1798 can be tentatively constructed. Whilst still a work in progress, this paper proposes that an integrated approach between archaeological and military historical practice, as opposed to fragmentation along traditional disciplinary lines, is not only logical but also of mutual academic benefit.

Introduction

This paper's objective is to consider the current balance between Irish history and archaeology and isolate the potential benefits of shared theory and practice.[1]

[1] Attendance at the conference which gave rise to this paper (TAG) was, in the case of one of the authors (JT) funded by the Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow. We would like to

In this, the military contribution of Irish Yeomanry and Militia regiments is explored along with that of their English, Scottish or Welsh Fencible counterparts and their presence in the Irish archaeological record defined. Following on from this is an overall discussion on the nature of interdisciplinary co-operation through the distillation of military archaeological evidence from camps, barracks, execution sites and battlefields of 1798. At the same time, this paper considers wider methodologies and examples (such as commemorative practices) to further an understanding of the military archaeology of 1798. Equally, if, as Matthew Johnson suggests, archaeologists should treat historical sources and contemporary documents as material culture in itself[2], then the 1798 campaign also has a rich potential. Whilst the paper can only hint at future avenues of research, we demonstrate that the fusion of archaeological and military historical practice and theory, combined with other disciplines, is perhaps the best way to tackle military sites with academic sympathy.

At the end of the 18th Century, it was feared that Ireland may be used as a springboard for a French invasion of Great Britain. In October 1791, 'The Society of United Irishmen' was founded in Belfast by Thomas Russell and Theobald Wolfe Tone to actively promote self-government for Ireland under Republican, egalitarian, principals. To denote their French Revolutionary leanings, many rank-and-file followers shaved their heads or had cropped haircuts, giving rise to the nickname of 'croppies'. In 1796, the French attempted a half-hearted amphibious landing on the western coast of Ireland. During the following two years a familiar pattern emerged, contrary to the founding tenets of the United Irishmen, where agrarian violence against Protestant or Catholic Loyalist land-owners or tenant farmers in rural areas became commonplace. It was met with equal violence by Loyalist 'Orange' organisations and British troops from the Yeomanry, Militia and Fencibles. The United Irishmen's Rebellion began at the

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[2] Johnson 1999: 23-36.

end of May 1798 and spread throughout Meath, Queen's County (Kildare), Wexford, Down and Antrim.

Often seen as the culmination of the agrarian and sectarian difficulties in Ireland dating back to the 1760's, the explosive nature of the 1790s gave an added dimension to the conflict and although the Rebellion only lasted a few months, it threw the country into turmoil. Consequently, the brief but bloody United Irishmen's Rebellion is a greatly important campaign, not only in an Irish national context but from a pluralistic British perspective as well. It came at a perilous time when Britain was almost alone in combating Revolutionary France and, more than this, was slowly beginning to emerge as its foremost opponent. More pertinent, however, is that in 1798 'Revolutionary' ideology was practically translated from the French lexicon and transposed to an Irish environment. It became a very real threat to British traditional society and the danger of its radical message spreading further was apparent. Equally, as Hayes-McCoy states, 1798 "…is the first [Irish war] with a recognisable aim."[3] As a result, it is hard not to stress the vast importance of the 1798 Rebellion, whether in the context of Irish unity, the implications of a French attack on British soil during the Napoleonic wars or simply as a religiously charged event.

Historical Archaeology and 1798

There has been much detailed and enlightening historical research recently into many aspects of the 1798 rebellion and the role of British Crown Forces. Yet, to date, archaeology has been largely sidelined from such analyses with the observation that, for an activity that has such a devastating impact on society, warfare can often only be detected and defined archaeologically with great difficulty. Even then, that can often only be by implication, unless it involves massive construction. Indeed, the location and definition of battlefields has often proved problematic, and myth has to be separated from reality. Furthermore, it is

[3] Hayes-McCoy 1989: 274.

noted that artefacts which are associated with violence in actions such as these are not necessarily obvious, since many items are likely to have been pressed into service on an *ad hoc* basis, for example as weapons. Such items are not readily identifiable, since they were not originally designed for this purpose. As Damian Shiels and Natasha Ferguson have commented, the archaeological study of Irish battlefields as a general concept has not been fully recognised until recently.[4] This has been rectified somewhat by the cross-border 'Irish Battlefield Project' initiative with the aim of constructing a register of sites with a view to their protection. Despite this, the number of investigated Irish battlefields in general remains small, although this avenue of research, as elsewhere, has begun to blossom. Notable contributions include the valuable scholarship undertaken by O'Neill, Logue, De Buitléir, Shiels and Cooney *et alia* regarding battlefields and various military sites.[5] Archaeological evidence regarding conflict sites in the 1798 campaign may, at first glance, seem slender. Yet, upon closer scrutiny, there is much valuable information to be gathered from archaeological investigations with the examination of topography and artefacts and demonstrable potential for future work. Considering this, archaeology can certainly assist in providing new perspectives and insights in any academic assessment of the conflict.

But with this quiet revolution in conflict archaeology in general, where does the role of military history now fit in? As the confidence in conflict archaeology grows, it could be argued it is beginning to replace military history and those who have traditionally written it. Indeed, this actually seems to be the case for the wider relationship between archaeology and history. Stewart recently stated that, given the potentially introspective state of current historical practice, 'historians are no longer the only, or the best, people to tell us the truth about the past.'[6] This frank admission, regardless of debates over the notion of 'truth' and the past, is as much a chastisement of some modern historical practice as it is a nod of

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[4] Shiels 2006; Ferguson 2007.
[5] De Buitléir 1998; Cooney et al 2002; Shiels 2006, O'Neill 2007; Logue 2010.
[6] Stewart 2001: 14.

approval to other disciplines - notably archaeology.

Of relevance here is the way we might use, as the Carman's have termed it, 'the archaeologist's eye'[7] and expand upon this, using what might also be called 'the soldier's eye': the appreciation of strategy, tactics, landscape and terrain for military purposes. Neither of these interpretations should necessarily contradict each other. The approach used in the Bloody Meadows Project, of using archaeological methodologies to understand differences and commonalities in places of battle, 'allows the identification of the types of location favoured as battle sites in particular periods of history, and these can be related to other aspects of the battle as recorded by historians'.[8] These 'other aspects' (such as technological, tactical, strategic and logistical considerations) are perhaps what concern military historians the most and, as we shall see, on certain 1798 battlefields – as elsewhere – the site of conflict can be at the mercy of the traditional narrative.

Just as it may not be helpful for military historians to narrowly fixate upon such narratives, conversely to reduce battles to a mere archaeological event often removes their humanity and lessons. While a quasi-Rankean archaeological approach may have the benefits of being able to remove preconceptions from a site - and view it objectively - it also relies on evidential integrity and substance.[9] In many cases, as with 1798, this may be unsustainable, as sites are rarely undisturbed by the passage of time. The landscape may change, finds will decay and context may become obscured. Without the all-important military context to give vital, albeit sometimes misleading, reference points, the study of the battle site becomes less well informed. It may seem glib, but ignoring the soldier's perspective from the site of battle is ultimately counterproductive. As Osgood has noted, 'We must also consider the limitations of the archaeological record…only

[7] Carman 2003; Carman and Carman 2006.
[8] Carman and Carman 2005:22.
[9] Leopold Von Ranke believed that the academic historian must establish 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' ('how it really was') by analysing history exclusively within its own context and using primary sources alone. Secondary sources or influences were a contaminant.

a sample of evidence for combat survives…sometimes archaeology will confirm historical tracts, on other occasions new theories will emerge as a result of these studies.'[10] As an exploration of relatively undisturbed battlefields and sites of conflict, a phenomenological approach can provide an interesting interpretation of the less obvious factors that may influence where a battle was fought and how the terrain was perceived by and impacted on the participants. For if, as Carman has commented, 'it presents an opportunity to gain a direct insight into the ideological factors guiding warfare practice in a particular historical period, which can be compared with those guiding warfare in a different period',[11] then this has direct relevance to any military historical analysis. However, to be effective when applied to recent sites, it must be used alongside other considerations in order to prevent a normative view of battlefield landscapes.[12] Thus a consideration of historical, social and cultural sources must also be paramount.

Crown Forces as 'Other': issues of identities, ownership and 'orphan heritage'

The following section highlights immediate and potential problems when trying to understand this period of Irish history. The literature of the time is widespread, controversial and frequently contradictory. It is often written from diametrically opposed political and/or religious standpoints. These sometimes amount to little more than a catalogue of atrocities, frequently attributed to whichever side a particular author wished to demonise. Such sources include the writings of Sir Richard Musgrave (1799), Sir Herbert Taylor (1799), Edward Hay (1803) and Rev. Ledlie Birch (1799), with each demonstrating conflicted interests. Whilst this may be understandable given the extremely deeply held convictions at the time, it can also subsequently distort our view of the historical record and perpetuate such convictions. In this, there has been a considerable output of (deliberate or

[10] Osgood 2005: 212-3.
[11] Carman and Carman 2006: 21.
[12] Pollard and Banks 2006.

accidental) manipulation of the rebellion's imagery, especially regarding the role of Crown Forces. Interestingly, this seems to come from both sides of the political divide and, unsurprisingly, is particularly difficult to dispel or analyse constructively in the popular domain. Indeed, Louis Cullen referred to this overall erosive process by saying that, since the Rebellion, 'concepts and phrases acquire a simplified meaning which, far from illuminating the 1790s, falsifies the realities of the decade.'[13] For historians and archaeologists keen to illuminate the realities of 1798, the subject can perhaps be approached from a slightly different angle. With all this in mind, it may be helpful to explore the role of the Militia, Fencibles and Yeomanry, their associated material culture and some pertinent archaeological case studies. Issues of identity and ownership, and how they can affect our understanding of these events, are also examined.

There are many reasons for isolating British military units during the 1798 Rebellion. Firstly, as we shall see below, the Crown Forces leave an apparent and distinct trace of their activities on the Irish landscape. Secondly, modern historiography tends to concentrate mainly on the United Irish socio-political perspective and includes the British Army's input as the necessary counterpoint to the general background. This leads us to a third reason: the complicated notion of an Irish identity within a British military one and the ways this expressed itself through structure, culture, ethos and artefacts. As Price[14] argues regarding the notion of dislocation and Great War battlefields in Belgium, there is likewise an intriguing element of ownership regarding battlefield sites in Ireland which has not, as yet, been seriously discussed. In this, it would appear that the contradictory historical interpretations of 1798 have had a direct effect on how associated archaeology is perceived. The reasons for such potential disparity in remembrance are both historical and common throughout the world; as Price[15] suggests, 'the owners of the location become actively antagonistic towards the orphaned heritage, engaging in destruction of the material; or it can simply mean

[13] Cullen 1997: 7.
[14] Price 2006.
[15] Price 2006: 182.

that the owners of the location are passively disinterested'. In our study area, for example, the very evident memorialisation of the Battle of Vinegar Hill, County Wexford, contrasts rather starkly with that of the equally important Battle of Saintfield[16], County Down, and it is to this very issue that we turn next.

Commemoration, Selective Memorialisation and Comparative Remembrance

Since most aspects of the 1798 Rebellion are intensely political, it is important to consider the relationship of politics and the interpretation of the past. As Seretis[17] has observed, many examples of battlefield commemoration or memorialisation can be perceived as being remembrances from one particular identity:

> Landscape is not simply the realm of memory; it is at the same time the sphere of forgetting. Neither individuals nor communities are in a position to remember everything… However, forgetting may not be an innocent process. We forget what we don't want to remember, communities forget what in the opinion of their members is against their interest, and both processes have their, often neglected, moral dimension.

The process of forgetting can also be paralleled by selective memorialisation, cosmetic distortion or direct appropriation of the past. For example, the Wexford memorial of an insurgent pikeman, sculpted by Oliver Sheppard and unveiled in 1905, was placed in the Bull Ring, an area of Wexford which had been used as a munitions 'factory' by blacksmiths during the Rebellion. Yet its positioning had a much deeper meaning, for the Bull Ring was also associated in Wexford with the Cromwellian massacre there in 1649. Furthermore, it was no accident that a fragment of the Market Cross destroyed during this earlier campaign was incorporated into the monument and that the foundation stone was taken from 'Three Rocks', a near-by 1798 battle-site.[18] This appears to be a deliberate recapturing of political and cultural territory, revising any Loyalist associations of

[16] This has changed very recently, with the addition of new interpretation boards, which would tend to indicate shifting viewpoints and perspectives regarding the modern memorialisation process in the locality.
[17] Seretis 2006: 225-6.
[18] Turpin 1998: 45.

Wexford's past and subordinating them. Likewise, at the iconic site of Tara the standing stone known as the Lia Fáil was moved from its original position in 1824 to its current location in commemoration of those who fell during the Battle of Tara (27th May 1798). This stone had RIP and a cross lightly engraved onto it.[19] Again, this demonstrates a practical retaking of the landscape, turning the battlefield and seat of ancient Gaelic power into a sacred site with highly modern political implications. Accordingly, much twentieth century memorialisation continues this ethos and is of a very stylized form, common in Irish Republicanism. For example, the modern United Irishmen Statue on the Wexford to New Ross road by Eamon O'Doherty echoes the work of Oliver Sheppard closely, with its imagery of insurgent pikemen.

It must also be recognised that, as Beiner[20] has noted, in certain parts of Ireland (notably the west) traditional methods of cultural commemoration took the form of oral memorialisation with *aisling* poetry (laments). However, as McBride points out, it is not at all clear how representative such *aisling* poems were and whether these too were constructed for – and by – eighteenth century Gaelic elites.[21] It seems likely that in the west, as elsewhere, folk memory certainly played its part in remembrances of 1798. In Gaelic culture, commemoration also took the form of identifying, marking and naming areas sacred to memory. This included the placing of stones on burial sites and an additional practice of the veneration of trees, usually associated with hangings or planted to remember the 1798. However, as we shall see later, provenance based on such vernacular topology can be problematic. Notably, 'Liberty Trees' were a popular feature of American and French revolutionary symbolism; in America being a sign of 'opposition to English tyranny'.[22] The modern sculpture of the 'Liberty Tree' memorial in Carlow, for example, seems to echo these earlier commemorative practices. Equally, shortly after 1798, Loyalists in Wexford were commemorating the defeat

[19] Newman 1997: 86-8 and 320-1.
[20] Beiner 2000: 65.
[21] McBride 2009: 135.
[22] Armstrong 1998: 147.

of the insurgency by marching to the top of Vinegar Hill and burning a 'Liberty Tree'. Such demonstrations frequently ended in violence.[23]

Although the first commemorations of 1798 came with the establishment of the Castlebar Committee in 1876 and the '98 Club' in Dublin in 1879, it was largely down to John O'Leary of the Irish Republican Brotherhood that a 1798 memorial centenary committee was created.[24] This began a surge of commemorative activity in the years surrounding 1898 (backed by the Westminster Leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond), which resulted in numerous commissions for the erection of memorials. This activity was also designed to counterbalance and undermine celebrations by Irish Unionists for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. As Arthur Griffith stated, 1898 would be "…the beginning of all modern efforts towards the ideals of independence."[25] As such, the centenary was largely used by Republicans and Nationalists to unify their cause and promote their respective approaches to Irish autonomy. Control of the centenary events was seen by the Irish Parliamentary Party as an opportunity to establish their own interpretation of the Rebellion and its ideals. In this, they were heavily influenced by the nationalist historian, Father Patrick Kavanagh, especially regarding commemoration in the important county of Wexford. The Catholic Church was central to the popular interpretation of the Rebellion as a fight for 'Faith and Fatherland'; it viewed the Irish Rebellion of 1798 as a struggle of the Irish Catholic people for their religion against alien oppression. The stress was on the cruelties of the British colonial establishment.[26]

Commemorative items and memorials from around this time reflect this attitude and overtly illustrate the defiance of British authority. By so doing, they also excluded Irish Protestantism from identifying with – and thus participating in –

[23] Gahan: 1995: 299.
[24] Turpin 1998: 44.
[25] Griffith in Bourke, 1967: 216.
[26] Turpin 1998: 44.

commemoration of the events of 1798. This point is brought into sharp focus by the commemoration and dedication of a memorial to Betsy Gray, the heroine of the battle of Ballynahinch. Although she was already remembered through numerous folk ballads (such as 'Bessie Gray', published in 1861[27]), she was truly immortalised in the popular historical novel by Wesley Guard Lyttle in 1891.[28] This in itself was a curious act of Irish Protestant commemoration, which combined contemporary recollections and background with an invented hagiography. As McClelland stated in 1968, Lyttle's readership were either children or grandchildren of rebels who "…although loyal to the Crown admired the struggle of their relatives against wrongs that were subsequently righted."[29] This spirit culminated in 1896 with the erection of a monument by relatives and supporters on the supposed gravesite of Betsy Gray at Ballycreen, outside Ballynahinch. Yet the memorial was destroyed only two years later by the same locals. They were apparently angry that a special ceremony was to be held there in memory of the 1798 anniversary. The ceremony had been organised, in the words of James Mills, an eye-witness, by "…Roman Catholics and other Home Rulers. They [the 'wreckers'] didn't like these people claiming Betsy, and they became so enraged that they decided to prevent the ceremony taking place, so they smashed the monument with sledge hammers." [30] Needless to say, when the carriages of nationalists arrived, scuffles broke out, the carriages were over-turned and the assembly driven away. As we shall see, the case of the destruction of the Betsy Gray monument by Ballynahinch residents in order to deny it to their political opponents is particularly interesting given subsequent Republican pilgrimages to this Unionist town. Of equal interest is the apparent destruction of the 'liberty tree' planted in 1998 at Vinegar Hill and the damage to it associated plaque.[31] Whether this suggests mere vandalism or a disaffected Unionist minority in an otherwise Republican area is unknown.

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[27] McComb 1861: 131.
[28] Lyttle, W.G. 'Betsy Gray' (Belfast, 1896) & 'Betsy Gray or Hearts of Down with Other Stories and Pictures of '98 (Mourne Observer, 1968).
[29] McClelland 1968: vii.
[30] Mills in Lyttle: 1968, 162-3.
[31] Visit by one of the authors (GH) 1st Oct. 2010.

Whilst Presbyterian and Catholic may have been united in 1798, by the time of the centenary, attitudes had shifted considerably. As Stewart states, the "...Protestants healed their rifts, but only in the face of the Catholic republicanism which was the ultimate legacy of 1798."[32] If unity had been the initial aim of 1798, its ultimate legacy was that of utter division and continuing ‘enmity’.[33] It is clear that any ‘shared rituals’ regarding the 1798 became instantly divisive with only a minority of Ulster Presbyterians influenced by the centennial reappraisal of events. Despite this, there was a significant number of Ulster Protestants who were affected by stories of 1798 (such as Ernest Blythe, Dennis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson *et alia)* and became influential in anti-recruiting and the 1916 Rising.[34] Furthermore, the 1798 Rebellion battlefields inspired many of the combatants in the War of Independence. Interestingly, all appear to have been introduced to Republicanism via the Irish Republican Brotherhood.[35]

The systematic recreation and literal re-taking of those landscapes and territory by an independent Irish identity reinforces that these areas, lost to them in 1798, have an independent Irish heritage that predates the State. As such, memorials tend to reflect this change in national identification. At New Ross there is an impressive statue to insurgent Mathew Furlong of Templescoby outside the Main Guard in the town square. Furlong was shot whilst carrying a flag of truce to the Government forces in the town in the early morning hours prior to the battle. There does not, however, appear to be any commemoration in the town of Lord Mountjoy, who led the Dublin Militia on the opposite side, and was killed at the nearby Three Bullet Gate a few hours later. Interestingly, both were killed whilst attempting to secure the surrender of the other. Lord Mountjoy is remembered, however, on a memorial plaque to his daughter Margaret, in St. Thomas' Church,

[32] Stewart 1998: 256-7.
[33] Bew 2007: 30-47 and Girvan 2009: 99.
[34] Phoenix 1994, Shiels 2006:169.
[35] PRONI MIC.448, Reel 78; Reel 59.

Dublin[36], which states that he "...fell at New Ross in 1798 at the head of his regiment."[37] Again, we are potentially confronted with issues of the 'Other' here, for commemoration of 1798 Crown Forces can seem almost invisible in the modern Irish landscape. Where memorials do remain, many appear to be *inside* Anglican Parish churches, such as that to three York Fencible officers at Saint Mary's Church of Ireland, Comber, County Down.[38] However, they are not exclusively so; in 1921, a memorial was recorded to two soldiers of the 8th Regiment killed by a mob in Athaboy in St. Patrick's Churchyard, Trim, County Meath[39] and in 1926, a memorial to Captain Henry Cookes in Carnalway Parish Church, County Kildare was recorded as still in existence. Captain Cookes, of the New Romney Light Dragoons, was described as "…bravely falling in defence of the religion, laws and liberties of this kingdom at Kilcullen Bridge, on the 23rd May 1798 in the 26th year of his age. His mortal remains are deposited near this place."[40] Given the subsequent process of forgetting, such contemporary inscriptions to Loyalist Irishmen or Crown Forces remain an interesting parallel to those erected to United Irishmen.

Furthermore, Turpin's assessment of the impact of Sheppard's (and similar) monuments raises an often neglected issue, that whilst apparently commemorating 1798, they are perpetuating a continuing agenda: "…these physically large, dramatic and forceful monuments pointed to the possibility of using violence again to solve Ireland's political problems."[41] Indeed, the modern monument on the Lisnaksea Road on the Northern Irish side of the Monaghan border was ostensibly concerned with the commemoration of four individuals killed in 1798 and erected on the 200th anniversary. However, three other

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[36] St. Thomas' interior was destroyed by fire in 1925 during the Irish Civil War; the land around it was acquired by the City Commissioners who saw the opportunity to widen the road around the church. Consequently all human remains were removed from the graves and vaults in October 1925 and re-interred at Mount Jerome. LeFroy, 1926: 58-9

[37] Long, 1921: 40.

[38] The authors would like to thank the Revd Canon Dr. Jonathan Barry and the Revd Mervyn Jamison, St. Mary's Parish Church, Comber, for their generous assistance during our visit.

[39] Fitzgerald, 1921: 71.

[40] Sadleir, 1926: 92-3.

[41] Turpin 1998: 48.

Republicans from 1955, 1973 and 1986 were included. Interestingly, all date to periods of intense Republican activity in the area and the latter two were active members of the Fermanagh I.R.A. A further connection is actively drawn by the representation of a pike on one side of the memorial, balanced by an armalite on the other. This perhaps demonstrates the continuity in Republicanism's commemorative aims of 1798; as with the 1890s, in 1998, Republicanism was again attempting to unify all types of Nationalist opinion in support of its approach to the Good Friday Agreement. Equally, in Unionism, the bicentenary offered the opportunity for Irish Protestants to rediscover their contribution to the 1798 campaign whether it was with the United Irish, or Crown, forces. Outside the Provincial Masonic Hall in Rosemary Street, Belfast, is a plaque unveiled to Henry Joy McCracken, leader of the Belfast United Irishmen, captured after the Battle of Antrim and hanged in Cornmarket on the 17th July 1798. The placing of the plaque there, following the devastation of the area by German bombs in World War II, not only reflects the fact that McCracken's house was near to the current site of the Hall, but also obliquely acknowledges that many Masons were involved in the Rebellion.[42]

Archaeological Evidence for Crown Forces: Barracks and Military Camps

One of the clearest examples of military identity is the major camp at Laughanstown, south County Dublin. By 1796, this was a complex site built on the much smaller Jacobite campsite of 1690, with 125 wooden huts and brick buildings, constructed on two ridges. In 1798, Laughanstown was used for Courts Martial in dealing with the insurgents both during and after the Rebellion. A number of military roads were constructed around the base, some of which are still extant. Initial excavation confirmed the existence of five midden sites and, whilst farming activity had disturbed these considerably, finds were plentiful. A

[42] See Mirala 2007: 141-234, in particular, Part II, 'Alike and Level'? Ulster Freemasonry and politics.

preliminary metal-detection survey of the site produced over 1000 readings.[43]

Consequently, more work was completed, much of which centred on 'Site 35D', a low oval enclosure thought to date to the Bronze Age, although it appears to have been reused between 1796 and 1798. Much relevant 18th century material was recovered, including a 'significant number of coins and tokens'. These were of George III date, the tokens being regularly used at Laughanstown as a form of soldiers' pay and at the weekly market that set itself up at the camp.[44] Of direct interest here are the 'considerable numbers' of gunflints, unused musket shot and weights bearing the official Crown measure. In addition, a metal badge of a bugle insignia – usually associated with Light Infantry - was discovered along with a number of copper-alloy buttons from various regiments, including the Royal Irish Artillery and the Kildare and Louth Militias.[45] Another small military-type copper-alloy button was discovered at the nearby 'Site 36E' and cautiously dated to the late 18th century.[46] The location of a stray button here might possibly relate to the 'dash and dive' tactics of light infantry skirmish training, although this is entirely conjectural. That it remains of a military origin, however, is highly probable and it is certainly believed that the fields around the camp were used for military manoeuvres.[47] Within the camp itself, a strange indented circular feature was discovered which, after comparison with similar sites at the Curragh, County Kildare, was established as a very large field kitchen. It was found to have 29 fireplaces, hinting at the large numbers of soldiers the camp was built to contain.[48]

Evidence for military activity on such a site might be expected. However, whilst Laughanstown has proved to be evidentially profitable, it cannot be guaranteed that on a site where we know British Army activity occurred, military material

[43] Lynch 2000.
[44] Seaver 2001.
[45] Keeley and Seaver 2000.
[46] Keeley and Seaver 2000.
[47] Seaver 2001.
[48] McQuade and Clancy 2005.

culture will survive. In contrast to later periods, the mass of written and oral sources for other historical periods also highlights a problem with material evidence for 1798. Although Osgood suggests a conflict which 'ended relatively recently [results] in the excellent preservation of much of its related artefacts",[49] such preservation is not generally the case with 1798, with the exception of artefacts currently in private or public ownership and display. This could simply be due to the passage of time. Items which may have been kept as remembrances of '98 may not have survived the subsequent years or (just as likely) their significance may have been lost. Equally, many items have been recovered quite accidentally in more recent times. At Saintfield, a pike-head was recovered from the thatched roof of a house in the townland of Lessans, a mile or so from the town.[50] Lessans' townland is near to the area of Oughley (Ouley) Hill where the insurgent camp was located in June 1798. This is an interesting example of the 'pikes in the thatch' traditional narrative for the 1798 and demonstrates that military material culture of the period can still be found in unexpected places. For example, evidence of uniform buttons and a George III coin were found by a metal detectorist in Ballynahinch and placed on an internet auction site in June 2004.[51] Equally, it was common practice among insurgents to dispose of weapons soon after a disastrous engagement and there is a continued oral tradition regarding the 'dumping' of such items in loughs, rivers, bogs or other suitable locations.[52]

At Barrack Lane, Townparks, Galway, excavations established the site of the 18th century military barracks, built in 1734 on the fortified bastion erected by Cromwellian troops in 1652. The site was prominent during the 1798 campaign and it may be reasonable to expect artefacts associated with military activity. However, what was actually found reveals more of the social life of the barracks

[49] Osgood 2005.
[50] Artefact donated by Mr. Hugh McWilliams and now in the collection of Saintfield First Presbyterian Church.
[51] The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge Natasha Ferguson, Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, University of Glasgow, for drawing this assemblage to their attention.
[52] During the period, illegal possession of weapons was punishable by death or deportation; hence such items were often deliberately hidden.

than its military function. The 18th century parade ground was investigated, south of the bastion, and the forge area of the barracks was also discovered. Whilst outside the east wall, numerous artefacts dating to both the late 17th and 18th centuries were recovered (these included glass, clay pipes and local pottery), on the parade ground site only ‘a few fragments’ of glass dating to the period were uncovered. Other than this, no military material culture was found.[53] Equally, excavations on the nearby eighteenth century Lombard Barracks site in Market Street, revealed much about its construction in 1749, but little evidence of military activity. No buttons, coins or other directly military artefacts were found.[54] This is in contrast to Laughanstown and other sites in Great Britain of a similar period and function, such as Fort George in Inverness, Porchester Castle in Hampshire or the Berry Head series of Napoleonic era forts on the approaches to Torbay Head.[55]

Evidence for Atrocities and Punishment: Victims and Perpetrators

In a similar vein, atrocities and excesses committed by Crown Forces or United Irishmen may have left imprints on the archaeological record, but their survival is problematic. We do, however, have a significant amount of surviving contemporary (or near-contemporary) monumental evidence for atrocities and executions in the form of gravestone inscriptions or markers. These, perhaps unsurprisingly, lie mainly within the cockpit areas of the Rebellion, namely Wexford, the Ards and Down. In Movilla Cemetery, there is a gravestone to the Rev. Archibald Warwick, United Irish leader of the Lower Ards contingent, who was hanged outside Kircubbin Presbyterian Meeting House. Similarly, the gravestone of Rev. James Porter, who was hanged on a tree outside his own Manse, still survives at Greyabbey. Indeed, the gravestone of the ‘first victim of the counter-terror in Newtownards’,[56] Archibald (Archibel) Wilson, is in a

[53] Clyne 1989.
[54] Delaney 1998.
[55] Cunliffe and Garratt 1994: 107-8 & Armitage and Rouse 2003:31.
[56] Robinson, 1998:89.

remarkable state of preservation in Bangor Abbey. Wilson, a rebel leader from Conlig, was hanged there on the 26th June by a troop of Lancashire Light Dragoons who, in keeping with the appropriate punishment for High Treason, struck off his head and placed it on a pike.[57]

Atrocities against Irish Loyalists were equally common and brutal. In the corner of a field at Monart Farm, County Wexford, a box-tomb was erected to the memory of William Reynells who was ''...inhumanly murdred [sic] / by the rebels [sic] on Vinegar Hill.'[58] This monument still existed in 1992 but in some state of disrepair.[59] Again, in St. Selskar's Churchyard, Wexford, there is evidence for a stone erected to William Daniel "one of the unfortunate Ninety-Eight/ Who suffered on Wexford Bridge 20th June/ 1798, aged 44 years / Father forgive them for they know not what they do."[60] The inscription refers to one of the most notorious atrocities of the campaign, the 'piking' of a hundred Loyalist prisoners during the rebel evacuation of Wexford town.[61] From these monuments, combined with historical sources we can immediately see this period as one of immense political and violent cultural upheaval; 'outrages' of attacks on persons or property were commonplace. Such violence can often be unsystematic, fleeting and difficult to establish forensically, with the possible exception of the deliberate destruction of buildings, as explored below. Archaeological searches for traces of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' become blurred and are never clear cut. Instead, we have victims and perpetrators in their most complete sense. In this, we can point to examples where exhibitions of possible atrocity or punishment have possibly occurred. Whilst the physical remains for violent specific events, such as transient atrocities like 'pitch-capping' or 'piking' can be completely invisible in the archaeology, other possible forms of destructive conflict in the Irish landscape might be suggested. For example, excavations in 1998 on the late 17th century farmstead and estate site of Downshire House at Ashton,

[57] PRONI: T2286/1.
[58] Walsh, 1921: 101.
[59] Cantwell, 1992:50-51.
[60] Walsh, 1921: 102.
[61] Gahan, 1998:202-3.

outside Blessington in County Wicklow, identified almost three centuries of continuous tillage features. As the name suggests, the house was one of the grand estates that belonged to the Marquis of Downshire and the field boundaries were shown to be contemporary with the house's usage which, of interest to us, ended abruptly in 1798, when the house was burnt down by United Irishmen and left derelict. Whilst no evidence of burning among the ruin site was confirmed**,** it appears that the site was not returned to, although the neighbouring field systems were actively maintained.[62] The current 'Downshire House' in Main Street, Blessington, is actually the Gate Lodge and Stables of the original house. Equally, during the fighting around Ballynahinch, 63 of 132 houses were deliberately set alight. Most of the town's central buildings were razed; the Market House was deliberately targeted by Royal Irish Artillery guns which destroyed its roof with round shot fired from the lower slopes of nearby Windmill Hill. Yet, there is little archaeological evidence to reflect this specific destructive event in Ballynahinch's history, other than the subsequent rebuilding of the Market House.

Just as there are problems with historical sources regarding atrocities, equally, we are at a disadvantage when studying the material remains of atrocities perpetrated by either Crown or United Irish forces, considering the distance in time from events. Often the facts have become so dislocated that myth and ignorance have filled the void of truth and memory. Again, the windmill site at Ballynahinch, County Down, has long been associated with the 1798 battle in the town. It was here on the evening of 12th June that the Monaghan Militia and Argyll and Fife Fencibles ousted the insurgents from their first encampment. In the pursuit into the town which followed, the commander of the Bangor United Irishmen, Hugh McCullough, was captured and summarily hanged from the sails of the windmill. Whilst no evidence of this act survives in the landscape – apart from the mill built by Lord Moira in 1770 – the place has become a site of pilgrimage for 20th century Irish Republicans; ironically in one of the now most

[62]Dunne 1998.

fiercely Unionist areas of County Down. The windmill is covered with faded but relatively recent political graffiti. There are at least three pieces of modern Republican graffiti on a lower bricked-up entrance, with two small Irish tricolours and the letters 'IRA' placed on the respective fields. A further 'IRA!' has been written in between the depiction of the two flags and all are presumably contemporaneous with each other as the paints used in the three graffiti seem to coincide. Half way up the windmill on the western face and written in very large faded capital letters descending, is a now rapidly peeling 'IRA'. Even higher up on this side and above one of the two square openings at the top of the structure is the faint remnants of a painted tricolour, of which the green can just be made out. Whilst all of the above marks cannot be attributed to any specific date, the phrase "SMASH H-BLOCK!' can be faintly discerned written in white on the north-western face again midway up the windmill. This might tentatively suggest a date of *circa* 1981 and, given its size and prominent position it would have been easily visible from the Unionist town below. As such, it may have simply been chosen for this reason. However, given its association to 1798, it could equally be a site sacred to Republicanism being reused for modern Republican agendas.

Places of Imprisonment, Punishment and Execution

We also have a ready wealth of information regarding places of confinement, punishment and execution used by the Crown Forces. This in itself is a major topic and it is not our intention to dwell on it here except to draw several general observations. Many of the court houses and places of imprisonment can still be seen in the landscape of Irish and Ulster towns; although in some cases they lie derelict, abandoned or their function may have fundamentally changed. In Downpatrick, for example, alleged insurgents were marked for either transportation or, in many cases, execution on the gallows which projected from the Gaol's gatehouse into the Mall and English Street or the ones on nearby Gallows Hill. For others, a temporary gallows was especially erected opposite the

entrance to the Gaol. This was by no means uncommon in the post-1798 period. Excavations at Wesley Square in Cashel, Tipperary revealed the 'remains of at least two individuals' directly under the modern level. In the northern edge of the site two more intact inhumations were found in shallow graves. It was initially thought that these were the remains of insurgents hanged in 1798, when a gallows was erected on the site. Interestingly, it was noted that 'Local sources also indicate that a number of other burials were removed from the site (and were interred in unmarked graves in the cemetery adjoining the present Catholic church in Friar Street.')[63] However, it transpired that the remains in question were actually medieval.[64] This ably demonstrates the difficulty in finding evidence of places of punishment and execution in a specific era of Irish history. It also hints at another problem; that discoveries of human remains in the past, whilst being treated with respect and legal requirements, may not have undergone proper scientific investigation. Of significance here is the observation, made in relation to prehistoric evidence but equally significant to historic archaeology, that osteologists and archaeologists can make 'substantial contributions to the study of violence and the body…once we get beyond a veneer of history…skeletal evidence is one of the most important primary sources on actual violence'[65], for example in signs of healed or fatal wounds.

Palaeopathological evidence for violence/trauma is provided by the evidence from Dungarvan Castle, Waterford, which was reused as a barracks from the early 1700s onwards and was garrisoned in 1798. Excavations revealed numbers of late post-medieval human skulls, close by the abandoned round tower, with some showing signs of trauma from a bladed instrument or weapon. These partial human remains most likely date to 1798 and may point to the common Crown practice of exhibiting the heads of rebels from the tower's walls during and following the rebellion.[66] For example, at a Court Martial at Lisburn in

[63] Hughes 2005.
[64] Pers. Comm. (GH) Joanne Hughes, [March 2011].
[65] Armit et al: 2006: 5.
[66] Pollock 1997.

County Antrim in July 1798, Richard Vincent was found guilty of treason and rebellion and of coercing others to take up arms to assault John Antwhistle of Saintfield. Major General Goldie passed judgement that Vincent's head be cut off and put on a pike to be displayed at the Market House in Lisburn. However, he also ruled that his friends and family could retrieve his body if they desired; if they did not then Vincent's corpse was to be buried in un-consecrated ground. [67]

Battlefields, Burial Pits and War Dead…

This leads us finally to a persistent issue within Irish battlefield archaeology in general and 1798 in particular; that of locating actual battlefield features and any associated burial sites for the war dead. Indeed, an area where fighting has occurred in the countryside, town or city is likely to be cleared of debris and dead by either the local inhabitants or the military once the area returns to safety. In 1798, civilians were often found to be undertaking these tasks, as shown by one citizen's 'Petition for Recompense' in the aftermath of the battle of Ballynahinch. John McCalla recovered some 1236 muskets, pikes, pistols and swords from the streets and area of battle and delivered them to the Crown Forces. Similarly, the burial of those killed during the battles of 1798 is also well recounted in both oral and written traditions. Again, according to McCalla's petition, 'when Dogs & Swine were tearing the Dead Bodies in the streets of Ballynahinch after the Battle he obtained an order…for Burial of the Same, which he did with the assistance of men he employed for the purpose performed'.[68] Equally, there are a number of documented – or alleged – sites in Ireland directly relating to the United Irish dead or those of British forces. The Battle of Clonard (11th July 1798) in County Meath, saw a force of Wicklow insurgents attack the fortified manor house of the High Sheriff of Kildare, Lt. Thomas Tyrell. The small garrison repelled the attack and many of the resultant United Irish dead were hastily buried in a war-pit in the adjoining field by the banks of the Boyne. The field

[67] NAI, *Rebellion Papers* 620/2/8/13.
[68] NAI, *Rebellion Papers* 620/7/76/6.

subsequently became known as 'The Croppies' Graves' and was enclosed by a wall in 1873. As part of the 1898 centenary commemorations, the parishes of Clonard, Ballyna and Ballynabrackey erected a Celtic cross and slab on this site. For the bicentenary, the Bishop of Meath celebrated Holy Mass at the site for *all* the dead of the battle and a further inscription was carved on the cross: "Remembered by the people of Clonard 12th July 1798'. This post-dating of the inscription is not explained. Apparently another unmarked grave was dug across the river in the Church of Ireland graveyard, where a memorial oak was planted on the 11th July 1998.[69] Such mass grave sites often seem to be remembered in the landscape only by place name references.

An excavated example comes from Benburb Street in Dublin. According to local tradition it has long been associated with a mass burial site from executions following Courts Martial at the nearby Royal (now Collins) Barracks. According to Dublin oral tradition, it was claimed that those executed for their involvement in the 1798 rebellion were buried in unmarked pits somewhere in this area, which subsequently became known as 'Croppies Acre' or 'Hole'. In 1995, archaeological testing was begun to authenticate the site. Twelve trenches were dug, and three phases of activity could be distinguished on the site. However, the excavation report is unequivocal in saying that there was "no archaeological evidence to support the contention that the mass burial is within the area tested."[70] Furthermore, recent rescue excavations along the Dublin LUAS tram-line investigated the eastern end of Benburb Street at 'Croppie's Acre' but no human remains were recorded. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that the notion of burial on the site is, in itself, a myth, it does suggest that, in the best light, the traditional location for it has perhaps become obscured.

There are other possible explanations. This could reflect deliberate obfuscation of rebel graves (to hinder such places from becoming shrines) or, equally, the

[69] Information courtesy of Meath County Council, April 2010.
[70] Swan 1995.

name could be a later invention to promote the notion of it being a sacred site. Whilst the disposal of human remains in unmarked mass graves could necessitate the need for sudden burial or a lack of respect for the individuals concerned, a number of factors may provide a different interpretation. Whilst the site currently purports to be where those executed were buried, with an associated modern memorial, a study of the area's past is enlightening. ‘Croppies’ Acre’ is a strip of land between Barrack Street and the River Liffey, which adjoins a street named in John Rocque's 1756 map as Liffey Street.[71] In subsequent paintings, it is shown as a grassed area leading down to the river and seems directly associated with the Barracks opposite. By 1861, the official name of this plot of ground is the Esplanade and it is shown, walled and tree lined, much as it is in photographs from 1914. During this period, the area was clearly treated as a public parade ground, with some eight flagstaff stands. In fact, it changed little in aspect until the late Twentieth Century. Only at this point (1985) were small granite stones (evocative of grave markers) and a large wall of remembrance erected. This was at the behest of GOC Eastern Command, Irish Defence Forces, to officially recognise the area of 'Croppies' Hole'. Whilst not discounting that the ground was used for some prisoner burials in 1798, contemporary accounts suggest that many executions took place at Arbour Hill (behind the barracks) or outside Green Street Prison.[72] Perhaps, as at other prospective but unconfirmed 1798 war pits, somewhere underneath the current Esplanade by Collins’ Barracks, a burial site could remain to be discovered. Equally, it may simply be that these memorial stones satisfy the public need to cherish the mythology of the site rather than commemorate any accurate location of the same.

There is some tantalising battlefield evidence as well. In 1876, a committee was formed in Castlebar, County Mayo, to commemorate the death of four French dragoons who were buried at ‘French Hill’ in 1798; this mound was excavated

[71] Dunlevy 2002: pl13b, 28.
[72] Dunlevy 2002: 51.

and, according to reports in *The Nation* of 13th May 1876, they '…exhumed four bodies clothed in fragments of blue uniform."[73] In County Down, at the back of the graveyard in Saintfield First Presbyterian Church are two contemporaneous headstones associated with United Irishmen killed during the battle there on 9th June 1798. What is most interesting about the Saintfield site is that the battle raged nearby the church which, at the time, was on the fringes of the town in a rural environment. It was fought on a narrow strip of land sandwiched between the modern Comber and Belfast roads and a small stream. Here, Crown Forces comprised of the Newtownards Yeoman cavalry and infantry and the York Fencibles were ambushed along the narrow hedgerows of the Comber road. Today, the road where the Government troops were attacked can be followed on the ground but little of the actual battle site remains. Indeed, the pivotal area where the most desperate part of the engagement was fought largely appears to be under the 'Cotswold Downs' housing development. The stream which saw much of the fighting still exists but has recently been developed and landscaped. Some limited archaeological investigation has apparently been done at the foot of the graveyard by Down Council and the District's Head Archaeologist as a part of the church renovations. To date, no plans are underway for any further investigation or excavation and nothing was found on the site.[74] This is particularly disappointing as the building work lies on top of an area known as 'York Island' which, according to local tradition and documentary sources, was the site of the burial of Government troops after the battle. As discussed above, the nomenclature of the site could be a symbolic attempt to imbue the area with a sense of sacred ground. However, as many eye-witness accounts verify the burial of the Crown troops on the boggy ground somewhere here, it seems likely that this naming is an actual remembrance in the landscape. Additionally, in the anecdotal evidence collected together by C.J. Robb, R.U.C. Constable Billy Grant (whose parents lived in the The Square, Saintfield) was "one of the local

[73] Beiner 2000: 66.
[74] Pers. Comm. (GH) Rev. James Hyndman, Minister of Saintfield First Presbyterian Church [01/03/2010].

people to have recovered swords and bayonets in this swampy area."[75]

In a parallel to both world wars, many of the engagements fought during 1798 were in towns. For example, some of the most ferocious battles of the campaign were virtually house to house affairs, such as at New Ross, Arklow and Ballynahinch. As such, the archaeology is subject to the constraints of urban archaeology. In all of the cases mentioned above, large parts of the towns were razed to the ground either by insurgents or Crown Forces. Furthermore, many battlefields connected to 1798 have become subject to development which has propelled both the opportunity for archaeological investigation and, ironically, the obliteration of vital phenomenological evidence at the same time. It may be that the best we can hope for regarding Irish battlefields is a relatively undisturbed landscape or street pattern where a historical engagement can be followed on the ground. Thus we are lucky that many urban 1798 battle sites can still be followed on the ground with the essential street plans and alignment remaining roughly the same, despite extensive damage at the time or subsequently. New Ross is a good example of this, as the modern street pattern conforms strongly to that of 1798. Indeed, the streets and layout where the main fighting in the town took place, such as Michael Street, Church Lane and St. Mary's Church still exist in their topography, and the churchyard (and the position where the Royal Irish Artillery was sited) can likewise be made out. The site of 'Three Bullet Gate', where the Dublin Militia fought so determinedly, is still extant, albeit very much the worse for wear. At Ballynahinch, the area of conflict is still amazingly intact considering the passage of time. From the Parish Church, a clear view can be seen across to Montalto Hill where the United Irishmen pitched their camp and from where they advanced onto the town. From this road, a view of the Windmill is still visible, emphasising how compact the battle area was. Further downstream the Mill Bridge, where the Argyll and Fife Fencibles halted the United Irish right wing, still exists.

[75] Robb MSS, C.J. Robb, Down Recorder, 4th June 1971.

In conclusion then, using archaeological practice and recent discoveries, combined with artefactual and documentary evidence, a picture of some of the 1798 battles can be tentatively pieced together. Furthermore, using such combined practices the presence of Crown Forces during the conflict can be more objectively defined. Whilst this academic blending can go some way to explain the more contentious aspects of Irish military history, as the past is often used in the political present, inherent dangers persist. Equally, the impact of selective commemorative processes on historic sites of conflict must also be maturely considered. Indeed, the huge battlefield resource potential in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland should be preserved and duly recognised as such for future archaeologists and historians to interpret. But first, as Daire O'Rourke has commented, we must perhaps widen our perceptions regarding the exact point when the Irish landscape ceases to be 'living' and instead becomes an historical or archaeological feature.[76] With regards to battlefields, this has been – and will probably continue to be - a hotly contested issue. As such, the combined work of military historians and conflict archaeologists can assist in such future debates, to the mutual benefit of both disciplines.

[76] O'Rourke 2006: 6.

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