INTRODUCTION

There are several bodies of archaeological evidence that may be used, alongside historical, literary and other sources, to elucidate and interpret the nature of the Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian impact and settlement in Ireland during the ninth and tenth centuries. These comprise, first and foremost, the results of the excavations of the Hiberno-Scandinavian towns, most notably those at Dublin and Waterford, as well as the evidence of associated rural settlements in the hinterlands of these and other towns. The large number of silver hoards on record represents the second body of evidence, and this is of primary importance in understanding both the nature of Scandinavian activity in Ireland and the economic and social relationships that existed between the Irish and the Scandinavians. The information that can be inferred from the grave-finds, on the other hand, though limited due to the fact that most of them were unearthed during the nineteenth century, has been enhanced by current work on the antiquarian sources relevant to them as well as by several recent discoveries of burials. Much the same limitation applies to the single-finds of weapons and other objects of Scandinavian workmanship. The only focus of research to have taken place on a major “new” aspect of the archaeology of the Scandinavians in Ireland over recent years, apart from various artefact and related studies, is that on the longphuirt (sing. longphort). The aim of this paper is to summarise and evaluate this work particularly in the context of the relationship between the longphort phenomenon and silver in Viking-age Ireland.

LONGPHUIRT

The initial phase of seasonal Scandinavian raiding in Ireland, commencing according to the annals in 795, gave way to the establishment of the first winter-camps in Ireland during the 830s, and of the historically documented longphuirt of the 840s and their successors. The annalistic sources record the establishment of such permanent bases at two locations in 841, at Duiblinn (Dublin) and Linn Duáchaill (Louth) – the latter location generally being identified as Anagassen, on the south side of Dundalk Bay. Their foundation, and the recording of other bases at Lough Neagh, Lough Ree, Cork, Limerick, and elsewhere, during the 840s, is associated with the ‘second phase’ of Scandinavian activity in Ireland, as identified by Byrne and Doherty. This phase, dating to between 837 and 876 and recently referred to as ‘The Time of the Longphuirt’ by Mytum, was initiated by the arrival of large Viking fleets at the mouths of the Liffey and Boyne and was characterised by heavy raiding and over-wintering in the longphuirt. Duiblinn and Linn Duáchaill became permanent and enduring bases. The construction and use of longphuirt should not be confined to this phase, however, as a second series of foundations is recorded in the 920s and 930s.

The term longphort, according to Doherty, was a new compound based upon two Latin loanwords that were borrowed into Irish at an earlier period, long from L. (navis) longa ‘ship’ and port from L. portus ‘port’, ‘landing place’, ‘shore’, and he suggested that the term was originally coined by the annalists to describe a new and specific phenomenon, that is ‘an earthen bank thrown up on the landward side to protect ships that had been drawn up on a beach or river-bank’. The word dúnad is also used in the annalistic sources to refer to Viking (and Irish) bases of the ninth century and later, though it may well be synonymous with longphort. Doherty has proposed that the two words, longphort and dúnad, may distinguish, respectively, between ‘coastal and riverine encampments enclosing ships’ and ‘encampments made while the army

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John Sheehan
was on the march in the interior’, and suggested that from the contemporary Irish perspective there may have been little apparent difference in these phenomena. By the late tenth century longphort had become a broader term, usually used to describe a military encampment, Irish or Scandinavian, and need not necessarily have had any association with ships; later its meaning was broadened further and it came to signify other things, such as ‘dwelling’. The longevity and varied uses of the term longphort has led to interpretative and contextual difficulties amongst scholars in recent decades. In this paper, however, the term is used, along with those sites sometimes referred to as dinad, to refer only to Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian bases located in coastal, lacustrine or riverine contexts from the period encompassing the mid-ninth to the mid-tenth centuries; these were initially established for offensive or raiding purposes, though some developed trading and other economic functions.

From an archaeological perspective, it is difficult to assess the precise physical nature of these sites. Part of the problem is that many of them are referred to only once in the historical sources, usually in reference either to their establishment or destruction, and consequently it is difficult to ascertain how enduring individual examples actually were. A short-lived longphort, perhaps established simply as a winter base, is likely to be different in form to one that endured and developed over decades, such as the Duiblinn and Linn Duachail examples. Another difficulty lies in actually identifying these sites in the field, as the historical sources that refer to them often do not assign them anything more than a broad location; for instance, the “encampment [dinad] of the foreigners” in Lough Ree in 844-45, from where the Viking leader Turgesius plundered “Connacht and Mide, and burned Cluain Moccu Nóis with its oratories, and Cluain Ferta Brénaínn, and Tír dá Glas and Lothra and other monasteries”, is not given even a general location along the shoreline or islands of this very large Shannon lake. The likelihood that some longphuirt were not referred to at all in the historical sources should also be borne in mind.

Another problem concerns whether longphuirt were generally purpose-built monuments, or whether pre-existing monuments or even islands were used. Ó Floinn has suggested that “an existing complex of buildings, surrounded by an earthen bank on a riverside location such as that afforded by an early monastic site, would have been perfect as a base”, and proposed that such was the case at the documented bases at Linn Duachail, Cluain Andobair, Co. Kildare, and Clondalkin, Co. Dublin. This is a plausible theory, bolstered by the fact that Scandinavian bases in England were sometimes located at or near monasteries, as at Thanet and Sheppey, both in Kent, in the 850s, and at Repton, Derbyshire, in 873-74. Both Thanet and Sheppey, furthermore, were on islands, and it is interesting to note Clarke’s suggestion that while the original Duiblinn longphort was located around the tidal pool of the River Puddle, it was shortly afterwards relocated to the nearby river crossing of Áth Cliath, possibly on the island subsequently called Usher’s Island.

The characteristics of the longphort that are inherent in the term itself suggest that they took the form of ship-bases situated in coastal, lacustrine or riverine locations. There are no associated descriptions of landward defences in the annalistic sources, but it is evident from some references concerning the use of these sites that they were designed to be raiding bases, whether permanent or semi-permanent; therefore, these examples, at least, must have had both defensive and settlement elements to them. The concept of the longphort as a settlement, with associated agricultural interests, is supported by an annalistic entry that records how, in 866, Aed Finnliath, king of the Northern Uí Néill, ‘plundered all the strongholds of the foreigners [longphortu Gall] … both in Cenél Eógain and Dál Araidí, and took away their heads, their flocks, and their herds from camp [longport] by battle….’ The defences of a longphort could have been, as Ó Floinn suggests, pre-existing, or, in the case of islands, natural, and he warns against the notion of the longphort acquiring “the status of a monument in some minds”. Nevertheless, a not inconsiderable body of evidence has now accumulated to suggest that several longphuirt did, in fact, conform to a novel and fairly standardised site-type. Kelly and Maas, who have identified and discussed several possible examples, such as the enclosure on the River Barrow at Dunrally, Co. Laois, have pioneered this proposal.

The Dunrally site is a large D-shaped enclosure, 360m long and 150m in maximum width, defined by a bank and external ditch, within which is a sub-circular enclosure, 52m x 41m in diameter, also defined by a bank and ditch (Fig. 1). It is not known if this latter enclosure is contemporary with the larger D-shaped one. The site is situated at the confluence of a minor stream and a bend of the River...
Clare, near Athlunkard (Áth Longphuirt – the Ford of the Longphort), and protected on its landward side by marshy ground and flanked on one side by a stream. Neither of these sites has been excavated, but it may be significant that Scandinavian-type objects, comprising two conical silver weights, have been found in the immediate vicinity of the Athlunkard site. Viking-age weights in silver are practically unique, and it is interesting to note that the only other example on record from Ireland, an unusual example of ninth-century Scandinavian type, also derives from a longphort, that at Woodstown, Co. Waterford (see below). The interior of the Athlunkard site also produced a rare example of a long-tanged coulter, a type that Brady has associated with the large plough-shares known from tenth-century Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin, as well as a spear-butt, spearhead and a hooped iron band which were found in close proximity and may well have belonged to the same spear; the spear-butt is of a type that is also represented amongst the finds from the Scandinavian cemetery at Kilmainham/Islandbridge, in Dublin. The evidence clearly indicates that the most likely cultural context for these Athlunkard objects is a Scandinavian one.

A potential longphort site, first identified as such by the late Thomas Fanning in the 1970s, is located at Ballaghkeeran Little, Co. Westmeath, on the southern side of Killinure Lough, a large inlet on the eastern shore of Lough Ree, on the River Shannon (Fig. 2). It consists of a triangular promontory of land, c.200m by c.100m, bounded on its southern side by the Breensford River, and defined on its landward side by two banks and an intervening ditch, beyond which lies a low-lying, marshy area; a gap in the banks and ditch may represent an original entrance. On the southern side of the enclosure, alongside the small river, is a large, embanked, hollow feature that Fanning interpreted as a possible Scandinavian-type naust, while the remains of an apparently ancient oak-plank jetty projected into the lake on its north-western side. Considering that the site was possibly a longphort associated with the historically attested Scandinavian occupation of Lough Ree in 845 and/or the 920s and 930s, he conducted minor trial excavations there in 1981. Cuttings within the enclosure revealed two shallow parallel trenches, but no evidence of occupation, while a cutting through one of the landward banks showed this to have been substantial. A cutting within the naust-like feature produced iron slag and fragments of fired clay. Fanning

Barrow, at which point there was formerly a pool, and has a marshy area on its landward side. Kelly and Maas proposed that it be identified as the Scandinavian longphort specifically named as Longphort Rothlaibh in the annals, the destruction of which is recorded by the combined forces of the kings of Loígis and Osraige in 862. One of the relevant annalistic entries for this event records the defeat of Rodolb’s fleet, “which had come from Lochlann shortly before that”, confirming the association of ships with the base. The essential components of this site, a D-shaped enclosure, open to the water, located at the confluence of a river and tributary, adjacent to a pool, close to a fording point, and protected on the landward side by marshy ground, along with other factors, sometimes including place-name evidence, has led to the identification of several potential longphuirt elsewhere in Ireland.

These include the D-shaped, cliff-edge enclosure, measuring 73m by 34m, known as Lisnarann, at Annagassin, which, along with an adjacent river island, has been suggested as the location of the Linn Dúachaill longphort, as well as an apparently historically undocumented D-shaped enclosure, measuring 75m by 30m, located on a bend of the River Shannon at Fairyhill, Co. Clare, near Athlunkard (Áth Longphuirt – the Ford of the Longphort), and protected on its landward side by marshy ground and flanked on one side by a stream. Neither of these sites has been excavated, but it may be significant that Scandinavian-type objects, comprising two conical silver weights, have been found in the immediate vicinity of the Athlunkard site. Viking-age weights in silver are practically unique, and it is interesting to note that the only other example on record from Ireland, an unusual example of ninth-century Scandinavian type, also derives from a longphort, that at Woodstown, Co. Waterford (see below). The interior of the Athlunkard site also produced a rare example of a long-tanged coulter, a type that Brady has associated with the large plough-shares known from tenth-century Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin, as well as a spear-butt, spearhead and a hooped iron band which were found in close proximity and may well have belonged to the same spear; the spear-butt is of a type that is also represented amongst the finds from the Scandinavian cemetery at Kilmainham/Islandbridge, in Dublin. The evidence clearly indicates that the most likely cultural context for these Athlunkard objects is a Scandinavian one.

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obtained two radiocarbon dates from the site, and these yielded 4th/5th century AD determinations; both, however, were from wood charcoal that was apparently derived from the old ground surface beneath the enclosing bank and consequently merely provide terminus post quem dates for the construction of the enclosure. It is apparent, nonetheless, that the orientation of the site was towards the lake rather than the land, and the occurrence of the possible naust and jetty appear to confirm its association with ships. Fanning’s hypothesis that it is a longphort may well be supported by the fact that significant finds of Viking-age silver and gold are provenanced to within its immediate environs (see below).

Connolly and Coyne have recently tentatively identified another potential longphort, at Rathmore, near Castlemaine, Co. Kerry (Fig. 3).\(^\text{29}\) It is located on the southern bank of the River Maine, upstream from Dingle Bay, at the point where it changes from being tidal. It consists of a large D-shaped enclosure, c. 250m by c.170m, open to the river and defined on its landward side by two massive banks and an intervening ditch. This may well be the Scandinavian site that is referred to as ‘Dún Mainne’ in Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, where its destruction around the year 867 is recorded. Another account of this event, as identified by Ó Corráin,\(^\text{30}\) is recorded in the Fragmentary Annals, where it is noted: ‘At this time the Ciarraighe besieged the followers of that Tomrar … Old Congal, king of the Ciarraighe, took the victory in this conflict. A few of the Norwegians [Lochlannaibh] escaped, naked and wounded; great quantities of gold and silver and beautiful women were left behind’. Evidently Dún Mainne was considered a major threat to the area, as the force that destroyed it comprised the kings of Ciarraighe Luachra, Eóganacht Locha Léin and Uí Fidgeinte, the leading kings of west Munster. This is in keeping with the identification of the Rathmore enclosure as this dún, given its size and the strength of its defences. The record of the taking of women prisoners and the capture of precious booty, including gold and silver, implies that Dún Mainne was probably a strong, enduring, defended settlement rather than simply a short-term fortified raiding base.

In overall terms, therefore, there is evidence to suggest that both the location and morphology of several potential longphuirt do, in fact, conform in a rather strik-
which met both of these needs were actually required by the Scandinavians. This is not to say that all longphuirt were of this form, or that islands, monasteries or various forms of pre-existing fortifications could not have been used as longphuirt, but it does appear that there was a formal longphort concept in existence which was developed and regularly adhered to by the Scandinavians in Ireland, and was somewhat later transferred to Britain.

A final point that links together the potential longphuirt sites noted above, and others, concerns the fact that they tend to be located on Early Medieval political boundaries: Linn Dúachaill, for instance, was located on the borders of Conaille and Ciannachta; Dunrally was positioned at the point of convergence of three kingdoms, those of Loígis, Úi Failge and Úi Muiredaig; Ballagheeran Little, being located on the Shannon, was at the boundary of Clann Cholmain of Mide and Connachta, and close to their boundaries with Tethba; Rathmore, is located on the River Maine which formed the boundary between Ciarraighe Luachra and Eóganacht Locha Léin; Duiblinn lay between Brega and Laigin; while Woodstown was positioned on the border of the Déisi Muman and Osraige. This trend is hardly coincidental and suggests that the Scandinavians, as Kelly and Maas have proposed, may have had a considered strategy of taking advantage of the rivalries that existed between bordering territories.

This is certainly what seems to be suggested, for instance, by a mid-ninth-century entry in the Annals of the Four Masters which recounts how Maelseachlainn, King of Ireland, marched into Munster and, upon arrival at Indeoin na nDéisi, enforced hostages and submission from them ‘for they had given him opposition at the instigation of the foreigners’.

It is also entirely likely that the establishment of longphuirt in such boundary zones may occasionally have had the support of local rulers, who hoped to benefit from trading opportunities as well as the local availability of mercenaries.

WOODSTOWN, CO. WATERFORD

The Woodstown site, discovered and subjected to limited archaeological investigations in advance of a planned road-building scheme in 2003-04, features most of the diagnostic longphort characteristics outlined by Kelly and Maas who, incidentally, had earlier suggested the existence of a Scandinavian base in the Waterford harbour area on the evidence of ninth-century annalistic references.
to fleets operating from there. Located on the southern bank of the River Suir, near a bend and about five kilometers upstream from the location of later Viking-age and Medieval Waterford, the Woodstown site appears to have comprised a large, shallow D-shaped area, c.450m long by up to 160m wide, enclosed by a bank and an external ditch, now ploughed out; it was open to the water, located at the confluence of the river and a small tributary, and protected along portion of its landward side by a wetland area (Fig. 4). The excavated portion of the enclosing bank was topped with a palisade. Within the enclosure testing resulted in the discovery of a large number of features, including post-holes, hearths and cobbled surfaces, which may represent structures and houses of both rectangular and oval/circular plan. A Viking burial, complete with sword, shield-boss, spearhead, axe-head, and other items, was excavated just outside the enclosure.

An extensive number of artifacts, numbering over 5000, were recovered from the investigations, most of which, however, were not excavated archaeologically. Many of those finds that are culturally diagnostic are indubitably of Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian character, including hack-silver, lead pan-weights, a fragment of a Kufic coin, ringed pins, ships’ roves, sword fittings, rotary whet-stones and some hones. Among the remainder of the culturally affiliated material is a small collection of Irish ecclesiastical metalwork items, of the type that also forms part of the find assemblages from the ninth-century Scandinavian cemeteries in Dublin and from Viking burials of similar date in Norway.

The evidence, as it currently stands, indicates that the cultural context of the Woodstown site is Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian. In terms of its locational and physical characteristics it is in keeping with the essentials of the other proposed longphort sites, as noted above. Apart from the aforementioned grave-finds, the artefacts from the site include weaponry, which conforms to what one would expect from a longphort given that it is evident from the historical sources that they functioned as raiding bases. The linguistic evidence implies that these sites also had an inherent association with ships, and it is instructive to note in this regard that the Woodstown find assemblage includes over two hundred roves and clench nails of the type used in the construction of boats’ hulls. In fact, when staples, spikes and other forms of nails are taken into account, the total number of examples of this category of material from Woodstown exceeds 1500.

It has, however, been argued by O’Brien, Quinney and Russell, each of whom was involved in the investigations at the site, that the Woodstown enclosure was built in the fifth century, possibly as a ‘monastic settlement’, otherwise unevideenced in the historical and archaeological sources, and was later, from the ninth century onwards, reoccupied by Scandinavians. If this interpretation could be sustained it would clearly qualify the notion of the development of the longphort as a distinct type-site, given that Woodstown is the only potential longphort - apart from the small-scale work carried out at Ballaghkeeran - to have been subjected to any archaeological investigation. On the basis of the published evidence, however, it is difficult to support the arguments of O’Brien et al concerning the date of origin of the site. Firstly, there is a complete absence of the sort of features and artefacts that one would expect to find in an early ecclesiastical site of this date in Munster, such as imported Mediterranean and continental pottery, cross-inscribed stones, etc. More importantly, however, it is evident that the early dating of the site is based solely on three radiocarbon determinations, all of which derive from the fills of its enclosing
ditch. These dates, when calibrated at 2-sigma level, fall within the fifth to seventh centuries AD, but in each case they derive from oak charcoal; clearly, this charcoal could be derived from old wood, as oak is a long-lived species. That this was almost certainly the case is inferred when the artefacts from this ditch are considered, for these include amber and ivory as well as a silver ingot. These are materials that one would not normally expect to find in Ireland during the fifth to seventh centuries, though they are familiar from Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts of the Viking Age. Indeed, the ingot is an example of somewhat unusual form that is closely paralleled in the Viking-age hoard from the Scottish island of Tiree, the deposition of which is coin-dated to the later tenth century.

Given that the seven other radiocarbon dates from elsewhere within the site, when calibrated, yield date-ranges that either fall within, or overlap with, the period of the Viking Age, it seems that there is little evidence to support the claim that Woodstown “does not represent a Viking-only settlement”. It appears that the ethnic and cultural monomorphic aspects of the post-processual revisionist paradigm have overly influenced O’Brien et al, but the problem is that their consequent theorising is inconsistent with the archaeological evidence from the site itself. An alternative model, that deserves testing, is simply that the enclosure at Woodstown was built as a Scandinavian longphort.

In this regard it is interesting to note Ó Cíobháin’s proposed identification of the placename Cammus Hua Fathaid Tire - which is recorded as a base with a fleet of 120 Viking ships in 821 in Cogadh Gaedhel re Galaibh - with the bend of the River Suir just upstream from Woodstown. It is also possible that the Woodstown site dates to the 860s, during which Downham notes a “radical increase” in the recording of Scandinavian attacks that emanate from Waterford Harbour - and that it may have endured to become a Hiberno-Scandinavian settlement, probably with broader functions, into the tenth and possibly even the early eleventh centuries. Whether it was the focus of unbroken settlement is debatable on present evidence. It may appear curious that such a large and strategically located site is not directly referred to in the historical sources. In this regard, however, Etchingham’s point about ‘demonstrable geographical bias’ in the reporting of the annals, and the fact that the south-east of Ireland lay outside the areas of bias, should be borne in mind.

It is, of course, also possible that the Woodstown enclosure dates to the second decade of the tenth century, during which the annals record, for 914, ‘A great new fleet of foreigners came to Loch dá Chaech, and placed a stronghold [longphort] there’, and, for the following year, ‘A great and frequent increase in the number of heathens arriving at Loch dá Chaech, and the laity and clergy of Mumu were plundered by them’. The name Loch dá Chaech refers generally to the Waterford Harbour area, though Downham has recently drawn attention to the fact that from 914 to 918 it is exclusively used in the annalistic sources to refer to a Scandinavian settlement at Waterford; both before and after this period the name Port Láirge is used. The final entry for the Loch dá Chaech base, ‘The foreigners of Loch dá Chaech, i.e. Ragnall, king of the Dubgail [Dark Foreigners], and the two jarls, Oittir and Gragabai, forsook Ireland’, implies its abandonment. The name-change from Port Láirge to Loch dá Chaech might indicate, as Downham has suggested, that a new Scandinavian base was established in the area in 914. Is Loch dá Chaech to be identified with the Woodstown site? It seems possible that this is the case, and this question should become a focus of further research. Some of the information contained in the annalistic references to Loch dá Chaech, such as the mentions of ‘a great new fleet’, the arrivals of ‘great and frequent reinforcements of foreigners’ and the ‘plundering of Munster and Leinster’ from it, as well as the use of the term longphort to describe it, serve to create the impression that it was a very large defended base with, of course, access to water, and this is entirely consistent with the broad picture that has emerged from the archaeology of the Woodstown site to date.

**DUIBLINN/ÁTH CLIATH**

The most important historically attested longphort in Ireland was established at Duiblinn (Dublin) in 841, though Clarke has proposed that shortly afterwards it may have been relocated upstream to the nearby river crossing of Áth Cliath, by which name it is referred to after 845. According to the historical sources it was occupied until 902, when it was apparently destroyed and abandoned following an attack by the combined forces of Brega and Lagin. During this period there are many references to its use as a raiding base, and it seems to have become strong enough to establish other bases further inland at Clúain...
Andobair and Clondalkin. Slave raiding from the base is recorded, with the most significant reference to its role in slaving occurring in the Annals of Ulster under the year 871, where it is recorded: ‘Amlaib and Ímar returned to Áth Cliath from Alba with two hundred ships, bringing away with them in captivity to Ireland a great prey of Angles and Britons and Picts’. This international aspect of raiding from Áth Cliath may also be attested by the hoard from Coughlanstown West (Mullaghboden), Co. Kildare, deposited c.847, possibly in a Viking grave, for this was composed of Carolingian coins that, according to Dolley, probably represent loot from the documented Viking raids on Aquitaine in the mid-840s.

There is considerable archaeological evidence, however, that the Áth Cliath longphort developed beyond being a mere raiding base to become an important trading and market settlement during the second half of the ninth century. Clarke has noted that this stage of economic activity paralleled that in Norway, where Kaupang came to function as an international emporium, and suggested “in Ireland Áth Cliath became its equivalent”. Ó Floinn has observed that evidence for the paraphernalia of trade, such as balance scales, weights and purse mounts, is well represented among the grave-finds of the Dublin cemeteries, and suggested that these finds were “those of a military elite engaged in commerce”. It is also evident that considerable amounts of silver, the common currency of the Scandinavians, had already been amassed in Ireland before the establishment of the Hiberno-Scandinavian towns during the opening decades of the tenth century, and this can only have come about through the involvement of the longphort, particularly Áth Cliath. Downham has recently made the suggestion that some of the Scandinavian raids on ecclesiastical sites may “also have served as strikes against rival trading-centres, as Vikings sought to develop their bases as permanent trading-sites”.

The location of the Dublinn/Áth Cliath longphort has been debated at length over recent decades, while the current state of knowledge arising from several important recent excavations in ninth-century Dublin has been discussed by Simpson. She notes that early Scandinavian occupation has been unearthed along both the northern and southern sides of the Black Pool (Dublinn) that gave the longphort its original name. This pool is on the Poddle, a tributary of the River Liffey, close to their point of confluence, a location that reflects the topographical trends noted above in relation to other potential longphort sites. It should be noted, however, that there was probably an early ecclesiastical settlement located close to the pool, and its enclosure may have been adapted for use as a longphort by the Scandinavians, as has been suggested for this and other sites by Ó Floinn. Along the southern side of the pool early settlement evidence, represented by post-holes, refuse pits, hearths and large quantities of butchered animal bone, was revealed. The pool itself produced a collection of ship-rivets, suggesting that boats were docked there, and along its southern rim five furnished graves were excavated. Osteological examination revealed that these burials were all of young men, each radiocarbon dated to between the late seventh and the late ninth century; their grave-goods included shield-bosses and weapons. On the northern side of the pool the ninth-century settlement, which was apparently established somewhat later than the one on its southern shore, included examples of Wallace’s Type 1 houses, flood banks, property boundaries, animal pens and a stone roadway. In Temple Bar West, a part of the site on which portion of the tenth-century town was later superimposed, no evidence was found to suggest a break in occupancy following 902 when, according to the documentary sources, the longphort was abandoned. In the light of the currently available evidence, Simpson has proposed that the longphort may have been located on the eastern side of the Poddle, within an area subsumed by later settlement.

The date-range of the burials from the southern side of the Black Pool, several of which have pre-841 intercept dates, prompted Simpson to suggest that there may have been a Scandinavian encampment in this area before the 841 establishment of the annalistically recorded longphort. This may well have been the case, even though there are no direct records of such, and it should not be assumed that all Scandinavian activity in Ireland was recorded in the historical sources. Indeed, Downham has recently suggested that a ‘short-term Viking base’ may have been set-up in the Dublin area in the late 790s, partly on the basis that the Annals of Ulster record that ‘the heathens … took the cattle-tribute of the territories’ following their raid on Inis Pátraic (perhaps Holmpatrick, north county Dublin) in 798. As she points out, cattle-tribute was not a practical way of transferring wealth overseas, and the implication is that it represented supplies for a Scandinavian base in the locality.

To date, the excavated mid- to late ninth-century levels of Scandinavian Dublin conform to what might
be predicted of an important longphort, particularly the focus around the confluence of a river and its tributary, the presence of a pool that offers protection for boats, and the occurrence of settlement evidence and ‘warrior’ burials. There is as yet, however, no clear evidence for the presence of an early defensive bank in an appropriate location. The existence of an apparently undefended settlement on the north side of the Black Pool implies that the longphort and its associated settlements had a large population that manifestly did not perceive itself as being under constant danger. It may well be that there was a considerable amount of associated settlement strung out along both sides of the Liffey estuary, as may be indicated by the distribution of early cemeteries and single burials along a two kilometre long stretch, and that the longphort came to function as the military and administrative nucleus of this early Scandinavian settlement zone. Indeed, this zone, protected by the outlying bases at Clúain Andobair and Clondalkin, probably formed the original core of the broader settlement’s agricultural hinterlands, which were later to be called Fine Gall/Cric'H Gall and Dyflinarskiri in native Irish and Icelandic sources respectively.

LONGPHUIRT AND WEALTH

The annalistic reference, quoted above, which recorded that ‘great quantities of gold and silver’ fell into Irish hands following the defeat of the Scandinavians at Dún Maimne, c.867, serves as a reminder that the predominantly tenth-century range of deposition dates of Ireland’s Viking-age coin hoards does not actually reflect the period during which the Scandinavians first introduced silver into Ireland. Analysis of the hoards containing non-numismatic material, and the recognition of the Hiberno-Scandinavian and Irish silver-working traditions, indicate that the period during which by far the greatest amounts of silver was imported lies between c.850 and c.950. This is of particular interest for a number of reasons, but in the present context the most important one is that considerable silver resources had clearly been amassed in Ireland well before the establishment of the formal Hiberno-Scandinavian towns during the opening decades of the tenth century. The fact that silver was in circulation in large quantities in the later ninth century serves to focus attention back on the nature of Scandinavian activity and settlement in Ireland at this time and, in particular, it raises questions concerning the role and functions of the longphuirt, suggesting that some of these, especially Duiblinn/Áth Cliath, should be viewed primarily as important trading and market settlements rather than simply as fortified raiding bases.

That ninth-century Dublin was a prosperous and wealthy settlement has been elegantly demonstrated by Graham-Campbell in his preliminary analysis of the massive silver hoard from Cuerdale, Lancashire, the greatest known Viking-age coin from both Scandinavia and the West. Weighing over forty kilograms, it comprised over a thousand individual pieces of bullion and over seven thousand coins, the latter enabling its deposition to be dated to c.905. The major part of the bullion is demonstrably of Hiberno-Scandinavian origin, as characterised by its large quantity of broad-band arm-rings, and it has been proposed that it comprised the capital of some of the exiled leaders of Dublin following their expulsion in 902. Other hoards, on both sides of the Irish Sea, may relate to the same event and also testify to the wealth of the Dublin longphort. Chief amongst these is the hoard found at Drogheda, Co. Louth, in 1846, also deposited c.905, that reportedly contained almost ‘two gallons’ of coins of both Kufic and Viking York type. Downham has suggested that this hoard may represent booty gathered from Dublin by Mael Finnia, king of Brega, who played a prominent role in the dramatic events of 902. Equally important is the Dysart Island (no.4) hoard, from Lough Ennell, Co. Westmeath, deposited c.907, which, in addition to coins and ingots, contained a large quantity of hack-silver derived from Hiberno-Scandinavian, Irish, Norwegian and Baltic material. Both in terms of its date and the wide variety of its components it is closely comparable to the Cuerdale hoard, and Ryan and Ó Floinn have suggested that it derives, at least in part, from the 902 sack of Dublin. The later ninth-century hoards are indicative of a flourishing bullion economy, with Scandinavian, Baltic and Islamic connections, and this economy was confident enough to develop its own distinctive ornament forms. Many of their components occur in hack-silver form, often displaying nicking, indicating that they formed part of a pool of silver that circulated through economic transactions. It is evident that the economic outcomes of the original activities associated with longphuirt, raiding, ransoming and slaving, were sufficient to set up trading undertakings, and thus trading became as much a part as
raiding in the economics of the Dublin longphort. What is surprising, particularly in the light of the recent discovery of significant amounts of hack-silver at Woodstown, is that virtually no material of this kind has been found in the excavation of Dublin’s ninth-century levels. It may well be, however, that the excavated areas around the Black Pool may be associated settlements, rather than the nucleus, of the longphort. However, as Simpson has recently pointed out, the tenth-century Hiberno-Scandinavians of the ‘re-founded’ Dublin continued raiding activities, yet little evidence of torn up metalwork or hack-silver has emerged in its excavated levels. She notes that this should serve as a warning ‘against dismissing any potential longphort site in Dublin merely because it did not produce this kind of material’.

Reference was made above to the fact that significant finds of Viking-age silver and gold are on record from the vicinity of the potential longphort site at Ballaghkeeran Little, Co. Westmeath. These finds may relate to the occupation of this site and, if so, may testify to its importance as a base with commercial functions. The two best known of these finds comprise a pair of lost hoards, one gold and one silver, which were discovered only a few metres apart in the early nineteenth century on Hare Island, otherwise known as Inis Ainghin, a monastic centre with Clonmacnoise connections. The silver find comprised an unknown number of ingots and arm-rings, while the gold hoard comprised ten massive arm-rings with a combined weight of about five kilos, making it by far the largest gold hoard on record from the Viking world (Fig. 5). Indeed, it is possible that the Lough Ree longphort was located on Hare Island itself, within the enclosure of Inis Ainghin, though the evidence supporting the Ballaghkeeran Little enclosure as the site of the longphort is difficult to dismiss. In fact, Hare Island is located close to the entrance of Killinure Lough, within which Ballaghkeeran Little is located. An important discovery of a hack-silver hoard, consisting of fragments of arm-rings and ingots, together with one complete ingot, was made in the 1980s on a small natural island in Killinure Lough, at Creaghduff, close to the Ballaghkeeran Little site. This could well be contemporary with the Hare Island hoards, but it is clearly different in character, relating more directly to the type of silver that presumably circulated in the longphuirt at Dublin and, as has recently emerged, at Woodstown.

To date, thirty-eight items of Viking-age silver derive from the Woodstown site. These comprise complete ingots, ingot and arm-ring fragments, a weight, a wire fragment and pieces of casting waste. Unfortunately, with only one exception, all of these finds were retrieved from topsoil contexts. In numerical terms the collection represents more non-numismatic silver than had been found in over forty years of excavation in Viking-age Dublin. On the basis of the dating evidence for its various components, it is clear that as an assemblage it contains elements from as early as the later ninth century to, potentially, as late as the mid-eleventh century. The bulk of the material, however, as represented by ingots and ingot-derived hack-silver, most likely dates to the period encompassing the later ninth and tenth centuries. The collection also includes some casting waste and this should probably be regarded as evidence for silver-working on the site, along with the excavated evidence for a smithing hearth.

Given the nature of the overall assemblage it is likely that the main product of such silver-working would have been ingots.

Amongst the silver material from Woodstown is a small silver scale-weight of polyhedral form (Fig. 6). Weights of this form and size are of particularly common occurrence in Scandinavia, especially in its Baltic region, where they are usually made in copper alloys. The Woodstown example weighs 2.51 gm, and it is interesting to note that this was one of the target weights identified by Kyhlberg in his analysis of a series of such weights from Birka.88 Weights of polygonal type are absent from the large assemblage of Viking-age weights from Dublin, though a small number are on record from England. For example, three copper-alloy polyhedral weights, with ornamentation, were amongst the finds from the Viking winter camp at Torskey, Lincolnshire, associated with the
that other finds of Viking-age silver from Munster derive from this and other longphuirt.

Finally, it should be noted that the occurrence of Viking-age silver and hoards in the vicinity of longphuirt need not necessarily imply that these were buried by Scandinavian hands. An interesting case in point concerns four hoards from the Inishowen region of Co. Donegal, those provenanced to ‘north-west Inishowen’, Carrowmore/ Glentogher, Roosky, and ‘near Raphoe’. This is a striking concentration of finds, especially given the rarity of silver hoards from elsewhere in the north-west of Ireland, and their general contemporaneity is suggested by the fact that all feature broad-band arm-rings in their composition. Graham-Campbell has interpreted them as relating to the historically attested presence of a Scandinavian fleet, led by one Acolb, in the Inishowen region during the early 920s, and has suggested that they were deposited during this period. The annalistic records of Acolb’s presence in the region notes that he commanded a fleet of thirty-two ship in Lough Foyle and that he occupied a place named ‘Cennrig’. Although neither ‘longphort’ nor any other specific term was used in connection with this place in the annalistic sources, it may be assumed that even a short-lived land settlement associated with a fleet of this size was likely to have been a defended one. One of the annalistic entries recounts that ‘it was quickly(?)-completely abandoned by them, except for a few who remained behind in it through sloth’ and that a local king ‘killed the crew of one of their ships and wrecked the ship and took its booty’.

The equation of the Inishowen hoards with Acolb and his ill-fated expedition is supported by Ó Floinn, who presents additional literary evidence relating to it, and suggests that the finds are representative of silver bullion that was acquired as loot by local rulers during the campaign against Acolb. The fact that at least two of the four hoards in question were buried in ringforts, the dominant Irish settlement type of the Early Medieval period, supports the idea that the hoards were in Irish ownership. The implication of this case study is that some of the silver wealth known from the vicinities of longphuirt elsewhere may represent Irish loot, or Scandinavian tribute, rather than just the proceeds of trade.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the evidence to date it may be concluded that the longphort existed both as a specific concept and
as a monument type in Ireland during the Viking Age, particularly during the mid- to late ninth and the opening decades of the tenth century. This does not exclude the likelihood of pre-existing and naturally defended sites also being used by the Scandinavians for the same purposes, but there is no reason why these would not also be referred to as longphuir in the contemporary historical sources. Though it is certain that very few longphuir, if any, endured and developed to become permanent multifunctional settlements like Dubhlinn/Ath Cliath, it seems probable that most examples functioned solely or predominantly as raiding bases and thus may have been relatively short-lived. In most cases historical records refer to a longphuir only once, and consequently it is impossible on the basis of this evidence to gauge whether the use of an individual site extended over months, years or decades, or whether its occupation was continuous or periodic. Archaeological excavation in the future, however, should be able to throw light on these questions. At present the archaeological evidence from Woodstown indicates that it was a strongly defended site with settlement and raiding functions, while the nature of its silver assemblage suggests that it also participated in a broader economic framework. The evidence of Cuerdale, and other hoards, has already established a link between silver and longphuir in the case of Dubhlinn/Ath Cliath. The suggested association of silver, and sometimes of gold, with other potential longphuir, such as Athlunkard, Ballagheeran and Rathmore, indicates that this link may have been a common one. It may, perhaps, have been mainly due to the role these types of sites played in the slave trade, though, given the historical evidence for the establishment of political and military alliances between the Scandinavians and the Irish from the mid-ninth century onwards, it is also likely that some of them may have developed local trading and market functions. The evidence of Ireland’s hoards demonstrates that considerable silver resources had already been amassed there before the establishment of the formal Hiberno-Scandinavian towns, and the longphuir must have played a key role in this.

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ENDNOTES

1 In this paper the terms ‘Scandinavian’ and ‘Hiberno-Scandinavian’ are used in accordance with the definitions that are proposed in Sheehan et al 2001:93-4.
4 Sheehan 1998.
5 Harrison and Ó Floinn, forthcoming.
10 See Downham 2004: 75, fn. 7, for a listing of the annalistic references to these foundations. Downham 2007, figs 4 and 8, conveniently lists the ninth- and tenth-century chronicle references to ‘viking-camps’ in Ireland.
12 Ibid.: 326.
13 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 844, 845.
15 Ibid.: 162-64.
16 Clarke 1998:348. Simpson reports that a limited area of this island was subjected to archaeological testing in 1995 and that no apparent Viking-age material was found (2000:21).
17 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 866.
20 Fragmentary Annals: s.a. 862.
21 Kelly and Maas 1999:141.
24 Brady 1993, 40. The object is illustrated in Kelly and O’Donovan 1998. I am grateful to Michael A. Monk for discussing this object with me and for drawing my attention to the Brady reference.
25 The author is grateful to E.P. Kelly, Keeper of Antiquities, National Museum of Ireland, for information on the Athlunkard material.
26 This was noted and recorded by Victor Buckley, then of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.
27 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 845; Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 922, 927, 929, Annals of Inisfallen: s.a. 922. It should be noted that John O’Donovan, the nineteenth-century scholar, proposed that the location of the Lough Ree longphuir may have been on the promontory of Rindoon, on the Co. Roscommon side of the lake. See Journal of the Old Athlone Society 1.4 (1974-75), 288. I am grateful to E.P. Kelly, National Museum
of Ireland, for drawing my attention to this reference.

28 Fanning 1983: 221. The two radiocarbon dates obtained from the site are recorded in the topographical file for the site in the National Museum of Ireland.

29 Connelly and Coyne 2005: 172-73, pl.42.

30 Ó Corráin 1996, 273. Ó Corráin suggested that the site of the Scandinavian dún was near Castlemaine, where there later was a medieval castle, but this was prior to the discovery of the Rathmore enclosure.

31 Ó Floinn 1988:164.

32 Ibid.: 162.

33 Kelly and Maas 1999: 140.

34 Ibid.: 140.

35 Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 852.


37 Kelly and Maas 1999:133.


40 Preliminary accounts of the finds are included in ibid.: 58-73 and McNamara 2005. The rotary whetstones from Woodstown belong to the pan-Scandinavian type, datable from the ninth to the early thirteenth century, recently published by Stummann Hansen and Sheehan (2001).


42 Ibid.: 71.

43 Ibid.: 68-69, pl.23.

44 Ibid.: 74-78, 82; O’Brien and Russell 2005: 115, 119, 124

45 O’Brien, Quinney and Russell 2005: 43-45, figs.12, 15-16. The relevant ditch is numbered F2174.

46 Graham-Campbell 1995: 97-98, pl.3a.

47 O’Brien, Quinney and Russell 2005: 82.

48 See, for instance, ibid.: 57, fn.15.


50 Downham 2004: 77-82.

51 Etchingham 1996: 21-2, map 3.

52 Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 912.

53 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 915.

54 Downham 2004: 82-84.

55 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 918.

56 Ibid.: s.a. 914; Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 912.

57 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 915; Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 913.

58 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 916; Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 914.

59 Annals of the Four Masters: s.a. 912.

60 See note 14.

61 Annals of Ulster: s.a. 902.

62 Ibid.: s.a. 845, 867.


64 This event is also recorded in Annales Xantenses: s.a. 871.

65 Sheenan 1872, 13, records that the hoard was associated with a group of burials from which was also recovered ‘a small bronze pin, with a ring at the top’. This appears to have been a ringed pin.


68 Ó Floinn 1998: 143.


70 Downham 2004: 88.


72 Simpson 2005.

73 Ó Floinn 1998, 163-64.

74 Ibid., 56-59.

75 Simpson 2005, 53-54.

76 Downham 2004: 75.


80 Dolley 1966: 49, no.57.

81 Crofton Croker 1848. See, however, Dolley’s comments regarding the size of this hoard (1966: 26-27).

82 Downham 2003, 251.

83 In Ryan et al 1984: 361.


87 O’Brien, Quinney and Russell 2005: 45, pl.5.


89 Wallace 1987: 212.

90 Hårdf 1996: 33.

91 Sheehan, forthcoming.

92 Details of these finds, and published references for them, are included in Graham-Campbell 1988.

93 Ibid., 109-10; the two annalistic references are the Annals of Ulster, s.a. 921 and the Annals of the Four Masters, s.a. 919.

94 Ó Floinn (1995, 103) suggests that this ‘Cenrig’ may be equated with the site of Dunree fort in north-west Inishowen.

95 Annals of Ulster, s.a. 921.

96 Ó Floinn 1995, 101-03.

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Author’s address
#Arheology, University College Cork
Cork
Ireland
jsheehan@archaeology.ucc.ie