"Pathways to our Past" is a series of books published by Four Courts Press in association with the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Launched in 2011, the series aims to shed new light on important aspects of Ireland's past. Since its foundation in 1849, the RSAI has had a long and distinguished record of promoting learning about the culture and past of Ireland, most consistently in its annual journal, but also through field survey, the collection of artefacts, excursions, lectures and occasional publications. Over the decades, writing about our past has progressed from antiquarianism to professionalism, with the result that many older themes need to be reviewed and reinterpreted. This occasional series reflects the striking progress that continues to be made both in writing and in publishing about this island's distinctive and fascinating past.


Próinséas Ni Chatháin & Siobhán Fitzpatrick, with Howard B. Clarke (eds), *Pathfinders to the past: the antiquarian road to Irish historical writing, 1640-1960* (2012)


Howard B. Clarke & Ruth Johnson (eds), *The Vikings in Ireland and beyond: before and after the Battle of Clontarf* (2015)

Howard B. Clarke and Ruth Johnson
EDITORS
a pair of coins excavated from Beal Boru and three arm-rings from the Shannon. Then there are the finds from Athlunkard and its vicinity – a spearhead and butt, a celt and an iron ring from the site itself, as well as two weights from Corbally and Summerhill and an axe from the Shannon near St Thomas’ Island.²

When all the evidence presented above is plotted on a map (fig. 11.1), the first observation that can be made is that, barring Gorteenreynard, Strand village and Cloghanarold, everything in Co. Limerick is east of the River Deel. The Deel, however, forms the eastern boundary of Cloghanarold townland and it is worth noting that, according to Curtin, Strand lies on the Norse-derived Hernik river (neither named on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey), which passes through Gorteenreynard townland on its way to its eventual confluence with the Deel. Place-names with a personal name element are fairly evenly spread across Co. Limerick.

In conclusion then, while archaeological evidence for Vikings in Limerick city is elusive, there are sufficient annalistic references to demonstrate an important Viking town. There is a scattering of evidence to suggest that the hinterland of the town, at its maximum, extended as far west as the Deel valley in Co. Limerick, with settlement spread across the remainder of the county, away from the uplands, in the baronies of Owneybeg and Coonagh. What is not clear, however, is whether or not the settlement represented local focal points for tributary payments exacted from the Irish in the surrounding area, or whether the Norse themselves farmed the land. By contrast, the northern side of the Shannon in Co. Clare is devoid of evidence for Viking activity, except in the district around Athlunkard.

The break-up of Dál Riata and the rise of Gallgoídl¹

CLAIRE DOWNHAM

This essay is divided into two parts. The first is devoted to the end of the transmarine polity of Dál Riata in the context of Viking activity in the ninth and tenth centuries. The second part is concerned with the origins and development of Gallgoídl, a label that translates as ‘foreigner-Gaels’ and came eventually to be assigned to the region of Galloway in south-west Scotland. The exact nature of that society and its leadership has been debated. It will be argued here that the dismemberment of Dál Riata created new cultural frontiers in the Viking Age between Vikings, mixed-culture Gallgoídl and Gaels. It will be suggested that Gallgoídl initially developed as a distinct group occupying some of the former territories of Dál Riata in Britain and Ireland before this hybrid polity shifted southwards into what is now Ayrshire and Galloway. Nevertheless the limited nature of the historical sources means that such theories must remain speculative. This is simply a new way of looking at old evidence.

One of the main historical sources for early medieval Dál Riata is Míniugud senchasa fher nAlban (‘An explanation of the history of the men of Alba’). This textual palimpsest is part foundation legend, part military census. As it stands, the Míniugud seems to have been compiled in the tenth century from seventh- and/or eighth-century materials.² The text identifies three major subgroups of Dál Riata: Cenél nÓengusso, Cenél nGabráin and Cenél Loairn. A genealogical source, Cethri príemhendia Dál Riata, datable to the years 697-719, identifies (as the title implies) another kindred, Cenél Comgaill, among the principal subgroups of Dál Riata.³ Other major sources for tracing the early history of Dál Riata are the Irish chronicles and hagiographical literature, including Adamnán’s Vita sancti Columbae.

According to Míniugud senchasa fher nAlban, the men of Dál Riata inhabited Muirbog (an area along the north Antrim coast), but its focus is on the lands of Dál Riata in Britain. The Irish territories of Dál Riata receive further mention in Irish chronicles and the Tripartite Life of St Patrick.⁴ Its area roughly

¹ This essay was presented as a paper to the Scottish Society for Northern Studies conference in Ardbeg Distillery, Islay, 13 Apr. 2012. I should like to thank Shane McLeod, Fiona Edmonds and David Dunville for their comments and corrections. ² D.N. Dunville, Ireland and north Britain in the earlier Middle Ages: contexts for Míniugud senchasa fher nAlban’ in C. O’Boin and N. McGuire (eds), Rannachadh na Gáidheal 2000 (Aberdeen, 2005), p. 236. ³ D.N. Dunville, ‘Cethri príemhendia Dál Riata’, Scottish Gaelic Studies, 20 (2007), p. 236. ⁴ D.N. Dunville, ‘Ireland and north Britain’, p. 189; The Tripartite Life of St
have remained outside the grasp of Pictish rulers and retained a separate identity. The British and Irish portions of Dál Riata may have alternatively remained one polity into the early Viking Age.13

The arrival of Vikings in the Hebrides is well attested. The Annals of Ulster report the ‘devastation of all the islands of Britain’ under the year 794, which may refer to the Scottish islands. Soon afterwards Vikings undertook a series of raids on the church of Iona — including the years 802, 806 and 824.14 It is often assumed that the raids were closely followed by occupation and settlement of the Hebrides, although this need not have happened immediately. The Isles provided a chain of communication and stopping-off points for Scandinavian raiders and traders who plied the seaways from Norway to the Irish Sea. When Vikings extended their ambitions to Ireland in the late 830s with the foundation of Lochmuir, secure possession of the islands around Argyll may have been a strategic precondition. It may be no surprise that tensions between Vikings and the rulers of Scotland’s western seaboard came to a head at this time.15

In 839 a famous battle was fought in which Æd son of Boanta and two sons of Óengus, overking of the Picts, were killed by Vikings, which presumably weakened Pictish control along Scotland’s western seaboard.16 This was followed by a report in the Annals of Saint-Bertin for the year 847 that Vikings took control of the islands around Ireland.17 This may mark the Viking conquest of the Inner Hebrides and the break-up of Dál Riata.18 Written sources are silent as to how Gaelic islanders reacted to the arrival of Vikings. They do not state whether Viking colonization was marked by wholesale emigration or massacre, whether Viking settlers simply replaced an existing elite, or any range of possible scenarios in between. To answer these questions scholars have turned to archaeological and onomastic evidence for clues.

PLACE- NAMES IN FORMER BRITISH DÁL RIATA

Whether the division of lands in Dál Riata proceeded along the line of pre-existing units or represented a complete reconfiguration of boundaries is unclear. As Alex Woolf has pointed out, Cowal and Lorne take their name from the

pre-existing units, Cnét Comgaill and Cnét Loain, which favours a theory of continuity in some regions. The names of the other major groups, Cnét n'Oengusso and Cnét nGabrán, were lost, which may indicate radical change. Place-names provide some clues to cultural divisions within Dál Riata after Viking settlement. Andrew Jennings and Arne Kruse have identified two zones of Viking settlement, which have been dubbed an inner zone and an outer zone. In the outer zone lie Islay, Coll, Tiree and the Outer Hebrides, western Mull and Skye. In this outer zone there is a lack of evidence for pre-Viking Age names, indicating that Viking settlers made little effort to integrate culturally with the pre-existing population. Old Scandinavian habitation names in the outer zone indicate that Scandinavian speech persisted over several generations. The inner zone comprises mainland Dál Riata, Arran, Bute and eastern Mull. In these areas Scandinavian place-names are toponymical, but not habitation. Jennings and Kruse have argued that Gaelic society survived in these areas and that the Vikings who settled here soon adopted Gaelic speech. Their argument is that these areas of integration were occupied by Gallgoth, whose name implies a people who spoke Gaelic but who had Scandinavian aspects to their culture. The position of Jennings and Kruse finds some support in historical references to the activities of Gallgoth in Bute (discussed further below).

One of the most heavily Scandinavianised areas that can clearly be identified within the former territories of Dál Riata was Islay. The island bears a pre-Viking name (Gaelic Ìle) recorded in Adomán’s Vita sancti Columbae. There is, however, little evidence that other place-names on the island ante-date the Viking Age. Alan Macniven has made the case that the extant Gaelic names on Islay were coined after the Viking era and that many Gaelic names were coined during processes of land reorganization since the sixteenth century. Maclain has argued that the pre-Viking Age Gaelic names of Islay were swept away in a phase of settlement by Scandinavian-speakers. The evidence points to an Old Scandinavian speech community becoming dominant in the island over many generations. For example, a place-name element that was presumed to be productive after the first generation of Viking settlement is -bostair, indicating the subdivision of lands. The strategic importance of Islay may have encouraged a strong assertion of Scandinavian language and place-names to secure its possession by the Viking overlords. In this light it is relevant to note Woolf’s suggestion that the west of Islay became a political base for Viking power, from which raids were launched against Ireland. The lack of evidence for pre-Viking Age place-names in Islay, Coll and Tiree may suggest that Gaelic speakers on these islands either left, lost status, or quickly adopted Scandinavian speech.  

VIKING GRAVES

Archaeology also provides an insight into the strong Scandinavian character of the ‘outer zone’ of the former lands of Dál Riata in the Viking Age. Islay and its northern and western neighbours, Coll, Oronsay, Tiree and Eigg, are rich in Viking burials. There are fewer Scandinavian graves to the east. One has been discovered on Mull and a furnished boat burial has recently been excavated on the Ardnamurchan peninsula. To the south Jura, Kintyre and Bute have no known Viking graves. Arran has one or possibly two furnished burials. Disparities in wealth, such as the relative poverty of Jura, may explain some differences in distribution. The density of burials may also hint at distinctions between areas of dominant Scandinavian culture and areas of mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic culture. It would be unwise to correlate cultural evidence with linguistic evidence too closely owing to the chance nature of archaeological discoveries and the fact that burials represent a moment of cultural expression whereas place-names reflect long-term linguistic interactions. The heathen burials of what we might call the outer zone of Dál Riata demonstrate a perceived need to display Scandinavian religious identity in ostentatious burial rituals. It is possible that the burials visually encoded the landscape with Scandinavian cultural references, through the use of grave-markers and mounds that would remain after the funeral festivities were forgotten. The heathen burials of Islay, Coll, Oronsay and Tiree tend to focus on the western coasts of the islands. This corresponds to the more fertile areas, which were more densely settled. The burials look to the Scandinavian cultural world of the Hebridean seaways. The heathen burials sited along maritime routeways and at entry points to the islands may have consciously displayed their place in a Scandinavian cultural world.

A further striking feature of the outer zone graves is the high proportion of female incumbents gendered by assemblage. On Isleay four female graves have been identified. There are two female graves from Oronsay, one each from Colonsay, Tiree and Mull, and one possible female grave from each of Arran and Eigg. It is hard to determine the number of graves recovered since numerous finds precede the twelfth century. Vague accounts are given of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discoveries. Nevertheless there is a rough 1:1 gender ratio of burials in these islands, which is similar to that of Scotland as a whole. Farther south the proportion of females is lower. In some districts of Norway during the Viking Age the ratios of male to female furnished graves are as contrasting as 10:1, although the ratios appear to vary over time as well as space. It is necessary to keep in mind that grave-assemblages are gendered rather than sexed; they provide a less reliable guide to biological sex than do osteological studies. The former technique has usually been prioritized because of its convenience. Assemblages provide a display of identity (including ethnicity and gender) that reflects what people in the past considered to be important.

The evidence from the Scottish islands may indicate that female Scandinavian culture was more highly prized on the Isles than it was in Scandinavia. To draw on modern parallels, female display of ‘homeland’ culture in a diasporic environment can be seen to symbolize cultural integrity and continuity, and is therefore regarded as important. This may occur in societies where the maintenance of a separate identity from indigenous or neighboring peoples is considered a priority. The female Viking burials may show the economic and social prominence of women and/or the islands’ strong adherence to Scandinavian identity (whether inherited or adopted). Around the Insular Viking zone, the archaeological evidence points to varied levels of assimilation.

The break-up of Dál Riata and the rise of the Gallgoidi

between Gaelic and Scandinavian culture from region to region. The evidence from Isleay and its northern and western neighbours, and perhaps Arran, indicates a marked desire among island elites at the moment of burial to maintain a sense of Scandinavian heritage. This display of Scandinavian identity may have been in contrast to more Gaelicized communities in the inner zone of former Dál Riata.

The origins of the kingdom of the Isles

The island territories of Dál Riata were incorporated over time into the kingdom of the Isles. When this development took place is unclear and the origins of the polity are shrouded in Gaelic and Scandinavian legends. In Gaelic pseudo-history the foundation of the kingdom is linked with Cnäid mac Ailpin (better known as Kenneth MacAlpin). Under the year 853 (~856), the Annals of the Four Masters report that ‘Guthreor son of Fergus, chief of Argylla, went to Alba, to strengthen Dál Riata, at the request of Cnäid son of Alpin’. Some time later, the entry for 853 (~855) states that ‘Guthreor son of Fergus, chief of Innis Gall, died’. But Woolf has convincingly shown that these entries cannot be taken as face value and that they represent a confection of the fourteenth century or later.

In Icelandic sagas, the legendary origin of the kingdom of the Isles is credited to Haraldr háfagri (Harald Finehair). According to Landnámabók and Eyrbyggja saga the king sent Kettill flatnefri to deal with Viking settlers in the Hebrides who were raiding Norway. Kettill’s western expedition was so successful that he set himself up as leader in the Hebrides and ceased to recognize Harald’s authority. Landnátta saga gives a different account, claiming that Kettill travelled to Scotland to flee Harald’s tyranny. Kettill is said to have made peace with leaders around the Irish Sea and married his daughter Àubh to a Viking leader in Ireland called

Clare Downham

The break-up of Dál Riata and the rise of the Gallgoïdil

This was followed in the 970s and 980s by the reigns of Macuas and Guðrøðr Haraldsson, who are accorded the title 'king of the Isles' in Insular sources. These kings played an active role in English, Irish and Welsh affairs. The wealth of the kingdom of the Isles in this period is witnessed in silver hoards. After Guðrøðr's death in 989, the independence of the Isles was compromised by the competing interests of three foreign kings – Brian Bórama of Ireland, Æthelred of Denmark and Ethelred of England. The Isle of Man was attacked by Æthelred in 993 and by Brian in 1000. Five years later, Æthelred son of Guðrøðr Haraldsson, king of the Isles, died in Munster. If this event hints at alliance with King Brian, the amity was soon dissolved. The Islesmen sent a contingent to oppose Brian at the Battle of Clontarf, fought on Good Friday 1014. The failure of the Vikings of Dublin and the Isles to secure victory on this occasion further weakened their political status. It was in the early eleventh century, when the power of kings of Dublin and the Isles was relatively weak, that evidence emerges of a kingdom of Gallgoïdil in western Scotland.

THE ORIGINS OF THE GALLGOIÐIL

Groups bearing the name Gallgoïdil are recorded in both medieval Ireland and Britain. Scholars have debated whether they are the same people or different in each island. Their presence in Ireland is recorded only for a short time during the 850s, yet their persistence in Scotland eventually gave rise to the modern regional name Galloway. Among the scholars who have considered that the Gallgoïdil were a single group, the prevailing argument has been that the Gallgoïdil in Ireland were temporary visitors from north Britain. A second argument is that Gallgoïdil were plural groups, who arose here and there across Gaeldom.

In favour of the argument for polygenesis is early evidence of cultural borrowing and integration across ethnic boundaries in Ireland, which makes the development of a bicultural group within Ireland plausible. For example, in 842 Vikings and Irish joined together to attack the church of Linn Duacaitli (Anagnassan, Co. Louth), and in 847 an Irish chronicler castigated the Irish population groups of Luigne and Gallenga for behaving 'in the manner of heathens'.

(trans.), The sagas of the Icelanders (London, 1997), pp. 276-8, §§ 1-4. 44 Woolf, From Pictland to Alba, pp. 295-6. 45 Jennings and Kruse, 'From Dal Riata to Gall-Ghàidheil', 127-8. 46 AU, s.a. 913. 47 AMF, s.a. 895; AU, s.a. 896. 48 AMF, s.a. 897; AU, s.a. 903. 49 CS, s.a. 902. 49 CS, s.a. 904; AU, s.a. 904. 50 Downham, Viking kings, p. 30. 51 M. Blackburn et al., 'Checklist of coin hoards from the British Isles', 1450-1380', BU 90, 91, 93, Aug. 2012; J. Sheehan, 'Early Viking-Age silver hoards from Ireland and their Scandinavian elements' in Clarke et al. (eds), Ireland and Scandinavia, p. 198. 52 AU, s.a. 913, 914. 53 Etchingham, 'North Wales', 167-70. 54 Downham, Viking kings, pp. 185-96. 55 Blackburn et al., 'Checklist of coin hoards', nos 1384, 1423, 1478, 1555, 1557, 1672, and nos 1062, 165, 1711. A hoard at Port Glasgow, no. 167, may also be linked with this group. 56 AMF, s.a. 988; AU, s.a. 989; CS, s.a. 987. 57 Downham, Viking kings, p. 197. 58 AU, s.a. 1005; CS, s.a. 1005. 59 Downham, Viking kings, pp. 197-8. 60 W.J. Watson, The history of the Celtic place-names of Scotland (London, 1923), pp. 172-4; T. Clancy, 'Gall-Ghàidheil and Galloway', Journal of Scottish Name Studies, 2 (2008), 20. 61 D.N. Dunville, The churches of north Britain in the first Viking Age (Whithorn, 1997), pp. 27-8; J.L. Young, 'A note on the Norse occupation of Ireland', History, 35, 1950, 24. 62 AU, s.a. 842, 847; CS, s.a. 847; more genteilum.
The first instance of Gallgoidil in Ireland was made with reference to the year 856, for which the Chronicle of Ireland records a great war between the heathens (that is, Vikings) on one side, and Mael Sechnaill, over-king of the Southern Uí Néill, and Gallgoidil on the other. In the same year, the Northern Uí Néill over-king Æed Findlath won a great victory over Gallgoidil in Glenelly, Co. Tyrone. In 877 Gallgoidil under the leadership of Caithil Finn fought and was defeated at Munster against the Vikings of Dublin, led by Ívarr and Oláf. This war continued in the following year when the Gallgoideil were annihilated with their allies from Cennél Fiachach at Arra (Co. Tipperary) by Ívarr of Dublin and his Irish ally Cercball of Oesraige. In this event 6,400 men are alleged to have fallen. While this figure may not be accurate, it must indicate that many men died. The defeat dealt a significant blow to the fortunes of Gallgoideil in Ireland, from which they never recovered. From this time either the identity of Gallgoidil merged with other Viking groups in Ireland, or they were expelled from the island.

The Irish chronicles provide a few hints as to the character of the Gallgoidil in the ninth century. It is intriguing that in 838 they are called the Gallgoidil of Leth Cuinn, that is to say, the northern half of Ireland. The need to specify where they are from comes from the fact that there were indeed plural groups of Gallgoideil at different territorial locations. They are also linked here with Ireland and the suzerainty of Mael Sechnaill, rather than being identified as colonists from Scotland. Mael Sechnaill seems to have deployed his Gallgoideil allies to campaign on his behalf in Munster. They also fought against his rival Æed in the lands of the Northern Uí Néill. The defeat of the Gallgoideil in Co. Tyrone in 877 could imply their connection with the coasts of Leth Cuinn. It may be possible to reconcile the different arguments of Scottish or Irish origins for the Gallgoidil if we put aside perspectives based on modern national boundaries. They may have been a single group who occupied an area straddling the northern shores of Ireland and the western seaboard and islands of northern Britain (where they are later recorded). As with the example of early medieval Dál Riata, the Gallgoidil may have treated the sea as a routeway rather than a frontier. Between the arguments of Scottish monogenesis or Gaelic polygenesis for the Gallgoidil, there is space to suggest that they were a single ‘discrete and coherent’ group whose boundaries crossed the sea.

The earliest witness to identify the Gallgoidil as holding territory in north Britain may be the Martyrology of Tallaght. The record of St Bláith’s feast day (10 August) locates Kingarth on Bute in the territory of Gallgoidil. Thomas Clancy has argued that this record dates from the early tenth century. A broader date range is nonetheless possible, as the entry on St Bláith may be a later addition to the text. The earliest manuscript of the martyrology dates from the second half of the eighth century. If the Gallgoidil were being referred to in Bute within living memory of the recorded activity of Gallgoidil in Ireland, this raises the chances that Irish authors had the same group in mind. Given the limitations of the evidence, however, this argument is inconclusive. The onomastic evidence for Viking activity on Bute has recently been explored by Gilbert Markis and the archaeological data have been summarized usefully by Barbara Crawford. Their conclusions support the theory that a Gaelicized Viking community dwelt on the island in the late ninth and tenth centuries.

One idea put forward repeatedly by Jennings and Kruse was that Caithil Finn, who is identified as the leader of the Gallgoidil in Ireland in 877, is the same individual as Ketill Flatnæs recorded in much later Icelandic saga. They suggest from their interpretation of the saga material that Ketill was the conqueror of Dál Riata. This explanation of the evidence is difficult to accept. Their case builds on the work of earlier scholars, but the matter has long been contentious. There is no evidence for unified leadership across the former lands of Dál Riata at this stage and there is nothing in the sources that explicitly connects the leader of the Gallgoidil with the hero of Icelandic saga.

In 1034 the death of Subne son of Cínied, king of the Gallgoidil, is recorded in the Annals of Tigernach and the Annals of Ulster. This record may reflect the growing power of Gallgoidil in Britain; the death of their king was significant enough to excite the interests of Irish chroniclers. Furthermore Gallgoidil gain mention in the saga-chronicle embedded in section four of the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland, which is thought to have been composed during the reign of Donnchad of Oesraige (1003–39). The political development of the kingdom of Gallgoidil may have caused unease across the Irish Sea and that may have influenced contemporary historical writing. The text embedded in the Fragmentary Annals of Ireland celebrates the deeds of Cercbell mac Dúinlange (842–88), the ancestor of Donnchad of Oesraige. I have suggested elsewhere that the particular portrayal of different ninth-century Viking groups (Finnigall and
The break-up of Dál Riata and the rise of the Gallgoidil

list of Óláf’s possessions in Vita Gruffi ni may be exaggerated. It includes places that Óláf had ruled only temporarily or to which he merely held a claim. The assertion that Óláf ruled Galloway conflicts with the evidence of Suibne’s power there, given that the men were contemporaries. Both died in 1034. If the sources can (or should) be reconciled, one might argue that Suibne mac Cinéada took some or all of Galloway from Óláf. It may have been at this point that the kingdom of the Rhins was separated from the kingdom of Gallgoidil and was held by kings of the Isles until the death of Echmarcach Rognvaldsson. The obit of Mac Congall provides a terminus post quem for the incorporation (or reincorporation) of the Rhins into Galloway.

Little is known about the political history of Galloway prior to the accession of Fergus to rule there. This leader is first mentioned in the 1120s, at a time when the kingdom was being drawn under the increasing influence of Scottish kings. Fergus’ lands did not include Bute or Ailsa Craig. His focus of power seems to have lain in the lower Dee valley, centred on Kirkcudbright. Carrick (southern Ayrshire) was detached from Galloway in the late twelfth century, as rival lines emerged from the offspring of Fergus. Thus Galloway’s northern territory, looking out over the Firth of Clyde, was removed. Nevertheless, Fergus’ Galloway included the Rhins and there is evidence that Galloway also extended its eastern boundary from the River Urr to the River Nith during the twelfth century. As Clancy has convincingly demonstrated, there was a significant change in the territory of Gallgoidil over time. Gallgoidil in the late twelfth century became a fairly compact territorial unit that extended across the north Solway coast. The earlier territory of Gallgoidil had a maritime orientation that included strategic coastal areas around the Firth of Clyde.

VIKING SETTLEMENT FROM THE FIRTH OF CLYDE TO GALLOWAY

The settlement of mixed Gaelic and Scandinavian groups along the southern coast of what is now Galloway may have proceeded from the lands of Gallgoidil around the Firth of Clyde, in the inner zone of Viking settlement discussed by Jennings and Kruse. The name Galloway would naturally have extended to the newly founded settlements. This posited southern expansion of Gallgoidil territory in Britain followed their failure to maintain a foothold in Ireland.

The break-up of Dál Riata and the rise of the Gallgoðid

date have also been recovered: one from St Cuthbert’s churchyard at Kircudbright, including a sword, ring-pin and bead; and another from Carnbrooke with a sword, penannular brooch and sicle. The brooch recovered from the Carnbrooke burial is of northern British style. It may be that elite groups from Carnbrooke set sail westward and established the name Galloway prior to the arrival of contingents from Dublin.

The strategic location of Galloway in the Viking Age brought it into contact with a wider world of traders and settlers from northern England and from Dublin. The onomastic evidence from Galloway presents the region as a cultural crossroads. The appearance of airíg names in Galloway may hint at the influence of Gallgoðid from the Firth of Clyde and Ayrshire. A number of surname forms are suggestive of the former Brittonic-speaking region, the coastal parts of Ælfric’s ‘eastern Galloway’.

Conventionally, the Gaelic-Scandinavian colonization along the north Solway coast is dated to the early tenth century. This is, however, evidence of ninth-century Viking activity in the area. This includes the hoard deposited at Tainonie in Kircudbright around 975, whose contents include two fragments of Kufic coins and a fragment of a Frankish denier that had probably passed through Viking hands.49 A cremation burial of uncertain date, including part of a silver arm-ring and an amber bead, was discovered in Blackerne cairn in Crossmichael parish in the eighteenth century.50 Two warrior burials of ninth- or tenth-century

92 The former Brittonic-speaking region explain the shift in pronunciation of the name Gallgoðid to Galloway.
95 J. L. Glencoe, *The Myrdal find from the forth (Firth of Clyde)*, 38 (2007), 77.
of Whithorn in the eleventh century. This complements the historical evidence for the ambitions of kings of Dublin in the region.

Clancy has suggested that, in the eleventh century, the term Gallgoeldil did not extend to the territory now called Galloway. I would be inclined, however, to argue that modern Galloway was settled by Gallgoeldil from the north before the eleventh century and that their name travelled with them to the new area. The Rhinns, which we find referred to separately, may have been a politically detachable part of this hypothetical greater Galloway extending north and east from the Solway Firth towards the Firth of Clyde. The existence of a greater Galloway is hinted at in twelfth-century charters, as has been demonstrated by Geoffrey Barrow: points stretching from Kyle to Annandale are identified within the lands of Galloway. It would nevertheless be unwise to project this twelfth-century terminology back to the political situation of the eleventh century with any precision. Rather than posit complete dislocation in the usage of the territorial name, it is possible to suggest that the expansion and contraction of Gallgoeldil over time may have left the final result (modern Galloway) looking very different from its original territories.

CONCLUSION

The arguments presented above are hypothetical. They represent the exploration of possible scenarios in an area where the spread of historical data is limited and eludes conclusive interpretation. It is perhaps the inscrutability of such historical conundrums that makes them more interesting; they are continually open to new debate. Recent scholarship has challenged many assumptions about early Viking settlement in western Scotland. This encourages reconsideration of the primary evidence through the filter of new interpretations.

I have argued that, as the lands of former Dál Riata were divided up in the mid-ninth century, most of the Hebridean islands became heavily scandinavianized. Gallgoeldil appear briefly in a ninth-century context in Ireland, but they seem to have failed to maintain a foothold there. Gallgoeldil then emerge as a people holding some of the former lands of Dál Riata in Bute and potentially around the Firth of Clyde. From these territories they may have extended their power around the Ayrshire coasts and then intruded into the area that is now called Galloway. A continuing southern shift in the focus of the lordship of Galloway can be discerned in the twelfth century.