

At the crossroads of power and cultural influence: Manx archaeology in the high Middle Ages

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Introduction

It is in the nature of archaeological evidence that only rarely at a given site will the events which constitute political or dynastic history be verifiable. The quality of the dating evidence available to archaeologists, often expressed in terms of plus or minus 50 years for pottery for example, means that even if a great fire deposit is located, or the foundations of a prominent building are investigated, the archaeologist will often be unable to support or deny the evidence of documentary sources which apply to the case. Indeed, it is much more common for excavators of medieval structures to rely entirely on documentary sources for dating, not only the sites, but also the association of artifacts which go with them. Thus, for Manx medieval history the story told by *The Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles* - from the foundation of a local Norwegian dynasty by Godred Crovan through to its demise at the Treaty of Perth in 1266 - cannot be verified by archaeological evidence, despite the considerable amount of new research which has been carried out during the last 15 years. Even such a major monument as Castle Rushen, which figures prominently in 13th and 14th century accounts of the Island, cannot be dated archaeologically even to the nearest one hundred years. Events such as the attack by Robert the Bruce in 1313 (Broderick 1979, f.50r; McNamee 1997, 58) and later Scottish efforts to control the Island, for example in 1456 (Megaw 1957), are invisible to archaeology.

The aim of this chapter is to suggest ways in which the new evidence from excavations at Peel, Castletown and Rushen Abbey in particular can, despite its chronological inadequacy, contribute to a better understanding of Man in the medieval period. A number of subject areas will be discussed: evidence for economic activity, for

urbanisation, for external trade or political relations and for the internal dynamics of Island life. The questions which underlie the discussion include the degree to which the Island was isolated from contemporary developments, the backwardness or otherwise of Manx social and economic life, the coherence of insular political and social institutions and the evolution of a distinctively Manx identity during the medieval period.

Economic activity

The archaeological evidence for economic activity on Man during the high medieval period is largely confined to three sites which can hardly be described as representative of the wider state of affairs in the Island as a whole - Peel Castle (Freke 2002), Castle Rushen (Davey *et al.* 1996) and Rushen Abbey (Butler 1988; Butler in press; Davey (ed) 1999a). With the notable exception of the metal-working sites at Braddan Vicarage (Cubbon 1982-84), and Ronaldsway smelt (Stenning 1935-37), there has been no serious attempt by archaeologists to investigate the nature of settlement or the quality of life beyond. In particular, none of the 700 or so quarterland farms - the backbone of Manx social and economic life from the Norse period - has been excavated.

The level and quality of medieval economic activity on Man, as evidenced by the Castles and Abbey, can be partially assessed by looking at the evidence of artifacts such as pottery, metalwork, glass and coins which have been recovered from recent archaeological excavations. Questions of diet and food supply and, therefore, resource management, can also be addressed.

The ceramic evidence has been discussed at length elsewhere (Davey & Johnson 1996; Davey 1999b; Davey 2000; Davey 2001; Davey 2002).

In brief, with the exception of a handful of early medieval imports and the use of pottery crucibles in the later Iron Age and Early Christian periods, the Island was a-ceramic from the middle of the Bronze Age (*c*1000 BC) until the 11th or 12th century. With the establishment of Norse rule the production of local hand-made cooking ware, characterized by being grogged with freshly crushed Foxdale granite, was initiated. This "granite-tempered ware" continued in production until late in the 16th century. For the first two or three centuries of local production a "granite-free" ware was also in use for the production of jugs and other table wares. Associated with these insular wares, the Island was in receipt of considerable quantities of imports from Britain and the continent. The very limited evidence from other, lower status sites - such as the metalworking complex at Braddan or the small farm at Kerrowdhoo (Davey 1995) suggests that, although imports were in general circulation on the Island, they were present in only very small quantities outside the major centres.

Metalwork, whether of iron or copper alloy, does not survive well in Manx soils. Even at Peel Castle, outside the Norse grave groups, only small numbers of metal artifacts survived. The copper alloy finds consist for the most of wire pins and needles, lace chapes and dress accessories such as strap ends and belt fittings (Freke & Graham-Campbell 2002). Castle Rushen produced a similar though much smaller range of items which included metalworking evidence in the form of several cut fragments of sheeting and folded rivets for repairing bronze vessels (Egan 1996). At Rushen Abbey, whilst

a majority of recent finds are from Dissolution demolition deposits, small numbers of medieval copper alloy lace tags, studs, needles, dress fittings and repaired bronze vessel fragments have been found (Davey 1999a).

Iron artifacts occur even less frequently. At Peel, apart from some 754 nails and rivets, and with the extensive use of X-ray photography, only seven items were recovered - a knife, a spur, a flesh hook, a fish hook, a projectile point and two chapes (Freke 2002) - which must represent a very small proportion of the iron objects actually in use at any time in the medieval period. At Castle Rushen no medieval iron objects were recovered (Johnson 1996).

These assemblages of metal artifacts, although extremely vestigial, do establish that at the main sites, metal was in widespread use for a range of purposes. The Manx finds exhibit no particularly insular features. They lie within the mainstream of the available technologies within the British Isles.

In addition, the presence of a smelt for lead and possibly silver, owned by Furness Abbey and located on the coast at Ronaldsway together with a number of ironworking sites such as the one excavated by Cubbon at Braddan Vicarage and that located by Larch Garrad (1984) at Ballavarry, Andreas, show that the mineral resources of the Island were certainly being widely exploited.

Medieval glass is even more rarely found. Four sherds from a crumbling potash glass vessel were found at Peel (Hurst-Vose 2002), together with some 220 sherds of extremely weathered window glass, including ten with traces of grisaille decoration. Many fragments of window glass, fragments of a urinal and a lamp were recovered from Rushen Abbey, the latter within a burial (Butler 1988, 99, Fig 17, No 4). There was no medieval glass from Castle Rushen.

To date five coin hoards, one of the late 12th and the others of the early 14th century have been found on Man, together with 36 single coin finds. In her recent study Bornholdt (in press), has commented:

"The total number of single finds from Man is suspiciously low for a population apparently familiar with coinage, but Man's excavated site totals are not out of keeping in a British Isles context".

The paucity of rural finds, compared with England, has led her to conclude " ... that currency was not used regularly by the majority of folk in Man during the middle ages." A number of factors suggest that this statement is rather too extreme. First, unlike England, medieval Man had no villages and therefore no deserted medieval villages. There has been no local tradition of field-walking for medieval finds; indeed the numbers of sherds of pottery found outside formal excavations is also very small - a handful of sherds from 11 sites (eg Garrad 1977). In addition, the 13th and 14th-century synodal statutes (Cheney 1984) show that tithes, payable by the majority of the 700 or so quarterland farms, were valued in monetary terms. Although payments in kind were also acceptable, it is clear from the records of episcopal payments of Papal taxation, via Nidaros, that commodities such as sheep, honey or grain must have been cash convertible, as Sodor and Man's valuation, at 660 Florins for an incoming bishop, was a significant one in regional terms. The money was generally paid late, and in instalments, but it was paid (Storm 1897).

The few surviving medieval buildings on the Island also give some indication of economic activity. With the exception of the residence of the bishop at Bishops court, no domestic buildings survive. Of the ecclesiastical buildings, the Cathedral of St German at Peel is pre-eminent. The construction of the crossing arch, vaults and chancel exhibit very good quality workmanship using varieties of Peel Sandstone. Similarly, fine sculptured capitals are in evidence at St Trinians and decorated jams at St Runus Church, Marown with local granite being exploited (Kermode 1910). Although at Rushen Abbey most of the architectural fragments recovered from the excavations appear to be using imported sandstones, the principal walls of the cloistral buildings were constructed using large blocks of finely dressed local limestone (Coppack & Johnson in prep.). In all of these cases it is possible that masons were brought in specially, from Furness or Whithorn (in the case of St Trinians). Even so, both Rushen Abbey and St German's Cathedral show a number of phases of workmanship and alterations in windows and doors which imply resident skills in the Manx population. The wide timespan over which major phases of work were carried out at Castle Rushen and at Peel tend to confirm this. All of these buildings have produced evidence for competent lead working, slating, carpentry and glazing of a quality equivalent to their architecture and status. Given the lack of fieldwork, how far these skills were available or appropriate to the wider population of the Island remains unclear.

Recent archaeological excavations, especially those at Peel Castle have provided a wide range of information about the exploitation of natural resources, especially animals, birds and fish (Tomlinson 2002; Crellin 2002; Fisher 2002; Hutchinson & Jones 2002; McMillan 2002). Over 50,000 fragments of large mammal bone were recovered from the excavations. In the medieval period cattle form by far the largest group, followed by sheep and pig. A few horse, deer and dog bones were also recovered. Apart from rabbit which occurred in a number of genuinely medieval contexts, most of the small mammal bone was found in bulk sampling and represents elements of the contemporary fauna of St Patrick's Isle rather than human food. In contrast, of the 45 species of bird recovered, only five were of domesticated varieties (chicken, greylag goose, mallard, rock dove and peafowl), yet there was evidence of at least 38 of them forming part of human diet. Many of these latter were seabirds such as shag, shearwater, kittiwake, cormorant, goldeneye, long-tailed duck and tufted duck, some of which may also have been obtained for oil. Fish also formed an important element in the assemblage from Peel. Of the 28 species confidently identified in the 6,373 bones collected, some implied the organization of deep sea fleets, others inshore fishing, possibly with hand lines. There was very little evidence of fresh-water fish. Limpets, dogwhelks and winkles were also consumed in quantity, as were oysters which also formed part of a small medieval assemblage at Castle Rushen (Davey 1996). These results from Peel show that Manx medieval society not only relied on domesticated animals and birds, but exploited local populations of wild birds, fish and shellfish to a much greater degree than previously thought.

Because of lack of organic preservation within the sieved deposits, no medieval plant remains were recovered from either Peel or Castle Rushen. At Rushen Abbey two

of the trial trenches produced charred grains of wheat, barley and oats (Tomlinson 1999). Documentary sources suggest that cereal production, especially of wheat, was an important element in Manx medieval agriculture.¹ It remains for the right deposits to be examined to confirm this.²

Urbanisation

Papal decrees, for example on the election of a new Bishop of the Isles, often contained a phrase in greeting or direction to the people of the diocese such as: *In eundem modo populum civitatis et dioecesis Sodorensis*.³ This formula, used in many papal promulgations, presupposes that a diocese would have an urban centre at its core. Recent archaeological research has failed to find any settlement evidence on the Island which could be construed as urban until the end of the 15th century, at the earliest.

In Peel itself extensive sampling excavations retrieved medieval evidence only from a very small area on the harbour edge, immediately opposite the castle (Philpott & Davey 1992). Recent excavations just to the south of the promenade have located urban-type deposits of 16th-century date, with a few possible 15th century residual artifacts (Johnson forthcoming).

These finds echo those recovered in 1992 from the silting up harbour. In the historic core of Castletown much larger groups of 16th-century artifacts have been found, in association with what appeared to be an organised phase of town planning, only some 35m from the outworks of the castle (Higgins 1996). In 1506 there were 86 'cottages' in Castletown (Roscow 1996). There is no sign of typical urban structures or organisational features such as defensive walls, gates, markets, burgage plots, or town officials. The same is true at Peel. The papal instructions were directed at a rural population who happened to have the seat of a bishop located in their midst.

External trade and political relations

Although not easily susceptible to close dating, the archaeological evidence may, with caution, be used to suggest something of the nature of external links and trade. In the case of the Isle of Man, how was the Island seen by its neighbours?

There are two elements in its natural position which together need to be given due weight in any assessment of the Island and its role in regional political, economic and social history (Figure 1). First, the Island proved a serious hazard to navigation through the North Channel. Its long axis lies almost perpendicular to the channel and, with a huge tidal range (more than 10 metres) and ferocious tidal streams its presence could not be ignored. It lies on a direct southerly route from the Western and Northern Isles

¹ eg *De granis decimalibus* in Bishop Simon's Synodal Ordinances, Manx Society, xviii, 51. The implication of this is that each rector had his own store in which to receive the grain tithes, 'for the greater convenience of the bailiffs'.

² Grain production on the Island began early in the Neolithic; a recent C¹⁴ date for cereal pollen at Ballachrink, Jurby is one of the oldest in northwest Europe. At Peel Castle a huge Iron Age grain store which had been destroyed by fire was uncovered (cf Tomlinson P R 'The charred cereal deposit' in: Tomlinson P R, Allison E P, Innes J B and Kenward H K, 'Environmental evidence from the prehistoric period' in: Freke 2002, 231-247.

³ In the same way to the people of the Sodor city and diocese.

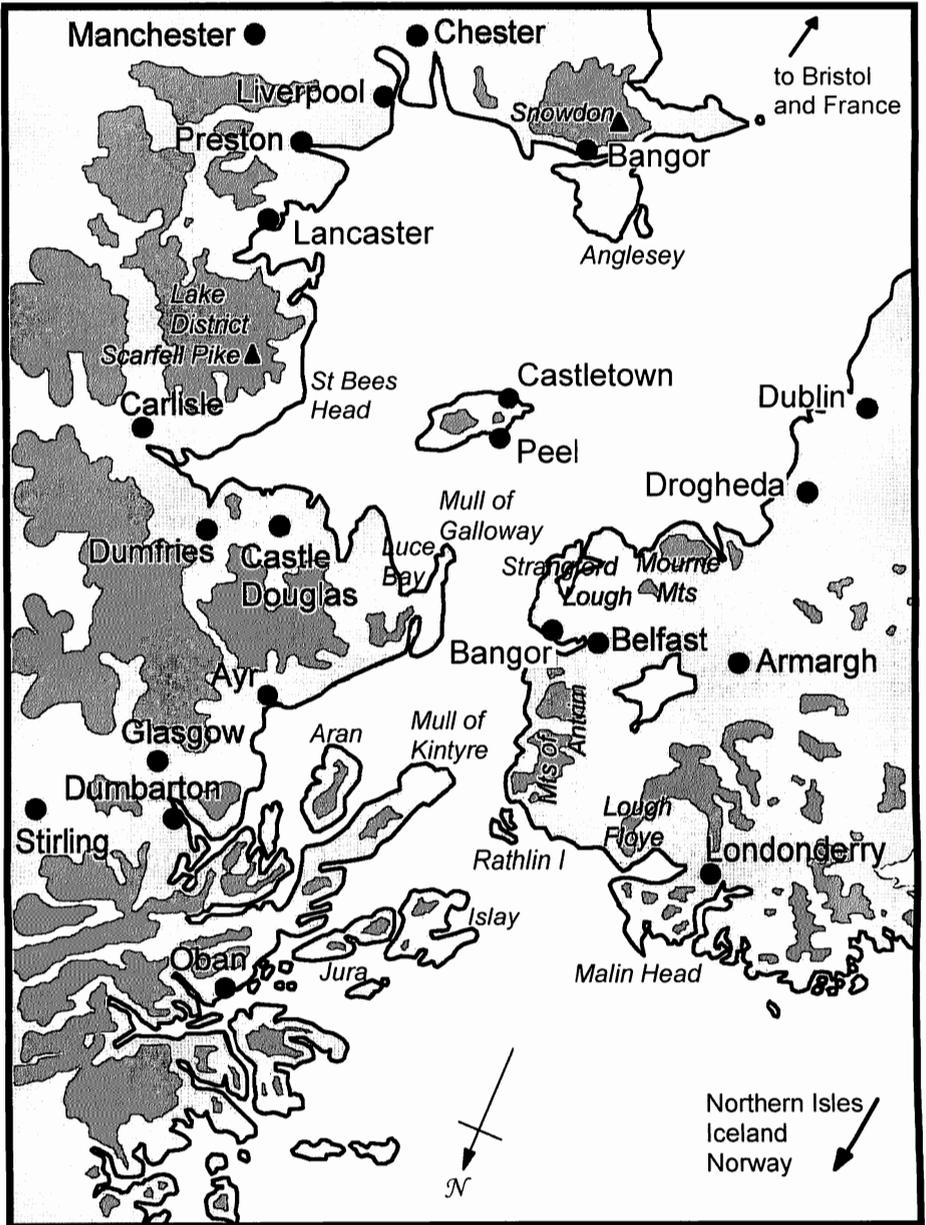


Figure 1: Position of the Isle of Man from a “northern” perspective.

and Scandinavia to south-west Scotland, Cumbria, north-west England, north Wales, Ireland and France. It also lies across the more "internal" routes from the Solway and Cumbrian ports to Dublin and southern Ireland. Its strategic significance in the fluctuating power struggles in the neighbouring lands is self-evident.

Secondly, compared with other small islands in the west it is extremely fertile. It has an equable climate for its latitude with relatively low rainfall, good sunshine records and very little frost. In 1500 some 50% of the land surface was under the plough. The most recent soil map shows a range of productive agricultural soils, particularly those based on limestone in the south-east and glacial deposits in the north (Figure 2) (Harris *et al.* 2001). The Island boasts a proportion of Grade 1/11 and Grade 11 soils which is unparalleled in an equivalent area in the west of Britain and Ireland. Even today, with a population of over 70,000, Man is self-sufficient in grain - surplus barley being exported to Bushmills in Ulster - and a serious exporter of beef and lamb to Britain, Ireland and France. In addition, there is a good range of minerals such as lead, copper, silver and zinc, some of which have been exploited from earliest times. As an economic, as well as a strategic prize, the Island had real value.

The trade and external relations

At Peel some 60% of all medieval ceramic finds were British in origin. It has proved difficult to establish the actual centre of production for almost half of this material. The main sources are Cumbria and Cheshire, with sizable groups from the Bristol region and Somerset. No certain Scottish or Irish pottery has yet been identified (Davey 2002, 365).

The continental wares derive mainly from France, with smaller groups from Iberia, the Low Countries, Germany and Italy (Davey 1999b). The source of the French material, in common with the pattern from southern England, appears to be focused on the north in the 11th and 12th centuries, whilst during the 13th century exports from the Saintonge area becomes paramount. The reasons for this change are complex. The marriage of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152 which united England and Gascony, the loss of Normandy in 1204 and the apparent decline of English vineyards, probably due to climatic deterioration, all played their part (Clarke 1983). The main interest in the Manx finds is their quantity. At Peel Castle, for example, medieval continental imports formed some 12% of the total assemblage (Davey 1999b, 246) - a much higher proportion than in English ports such as Carlisle, Chester, Bristol, Newcastle or Boston (Davey 2002). There are also a number of ware types, for example Beauvais Red Painted and Normandy Gritty which are not normally found so far north. The latter has been found on Man at four sites and in some quantity (Davey 1999b, 243-5).

There are a number of possible explanations for the apparent dominance of British and southern wares in the Manx assemblages. The Norse kings of Man may have retained closer contacts with equivalent settlements in Northern France, than did their English counterparts which might explain the quantities of Normandy products, some of which may be as early as 10th century.⁴ The high proportion of imports generally is

⁴Davey P J 2002, cf Ailsa Mainman's identification of the red-painted ware as 10th century Beauvais.

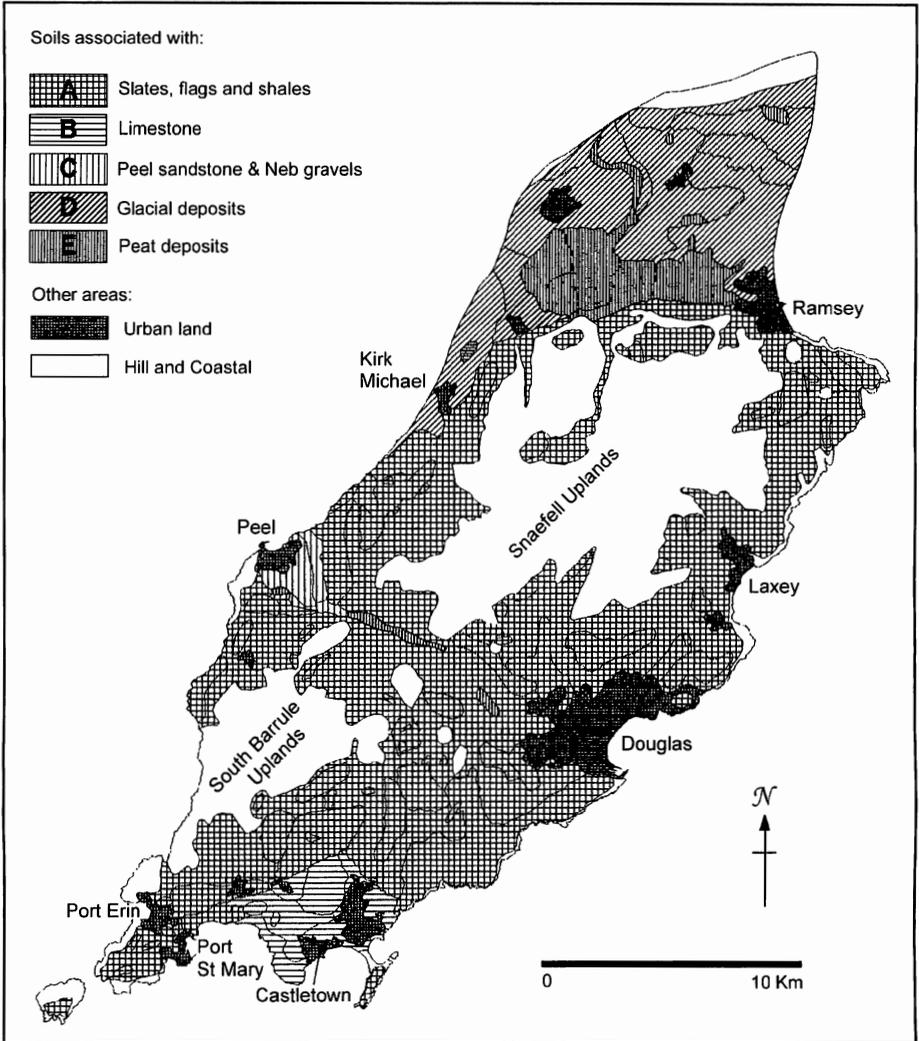


Figure 2: Simplified agricultural soil classification of the Isle of Man.

is probably due to the relatively primitive nature of the native hand-made pottery. At sites such as Peel, Castle Rushen and Rushen Abbey British and continental products provided much higher quality wares, appropriate to the status of those sites.

The larger southern component in the Manx medieval ceramic assemblages may also be due to some common factor which is not directly related to the pottery itself. For example, ceramic products might be used as ballast by vessels coming to the northern Irish Sea to collect their principle trading commodity such as butter, grain or leather, a pattern well established for north Devon wares in the post-medieval period (Grant 1983). Further detailed study of production centres throughout the Irish Sea area will be required before the ceramic evidence can be used more precisely to define the chronology and geography of external trade.

From the evidence of hoards and stray finds the medieval coinage in circulation on Man is dominated by English issues. Although the earliest hoard of c1174, discovered in 1769, included one English and four Scottish coins, of the remaining four hoards containing a total of 876 coins, only 38 were Scottish. All of the 36 single finds are English. Bornhold (in press) comments: 'The hoards and the significant peak in English finds in the first decades of the fourteenth century reflect a dramatic shift in Man's political orientation and economic connections'.

With so few surviving medieval buildings it is difficult to generalize about their sources of inspiration, especially as, with the exception of the Lord's domestic quarters at Peel Castle, no recent architectural studies have been carried out. The suite of buildings to the north of the Cathedral at Peel contain no geographically diagnostic styles and, in any case, were constructed by the Stanleys (Slade 2002). Bishopscourt and the tower-houses around the perimeter of Peel Castle appear similar to contemporary buildings in northern England and Scotland; the extensive, unfocused, nature of Peel is difficult to parallel in England, unlike Castle Rushen whose concentric, concentrated plan seems to follow English proto-types.

Religious buildings fare a little better. St German's Cathedral boasts good examples of Early Gothic (in the crossing) and Early English (chancel). The carved capitals at St Trinians are classic Romanesque. At Rushen Abbey the surviving Romanesque arch in the North Transept is, as might be expected of a reforming order, extremely simple in design. Equally, most of the architectural fragments from the recent excavations although exhibiting good quality workmanship have little decorative detail. The surviving east window of the Chapel at Ballabeg is similarly uninformative, even though the Friary was founded from Dublin. Although these examples show that the island was not remote from the stylistic developments of the time, they do not give any clear idea of the specific sources of influence.

Thus, the ceramic finds, the coins and the surviving and excavated architecture show that the Isle of Man was not isolated from trends in the rest of the British Isles. Its major economic orientation appears to have been towards England. At the time of Godred Crovan, the Island looked to Norway for its political and economic direction. But as the Norse kings became more thoroughly assimilated into an Irish Sea world, so the importance of the native peoples and the power of the English came to the fore. One outcome of this was possibly the fusion of granite tempering technology brought from Scandinavia with the everted-rim wares encountered in Ulster, resulting in the

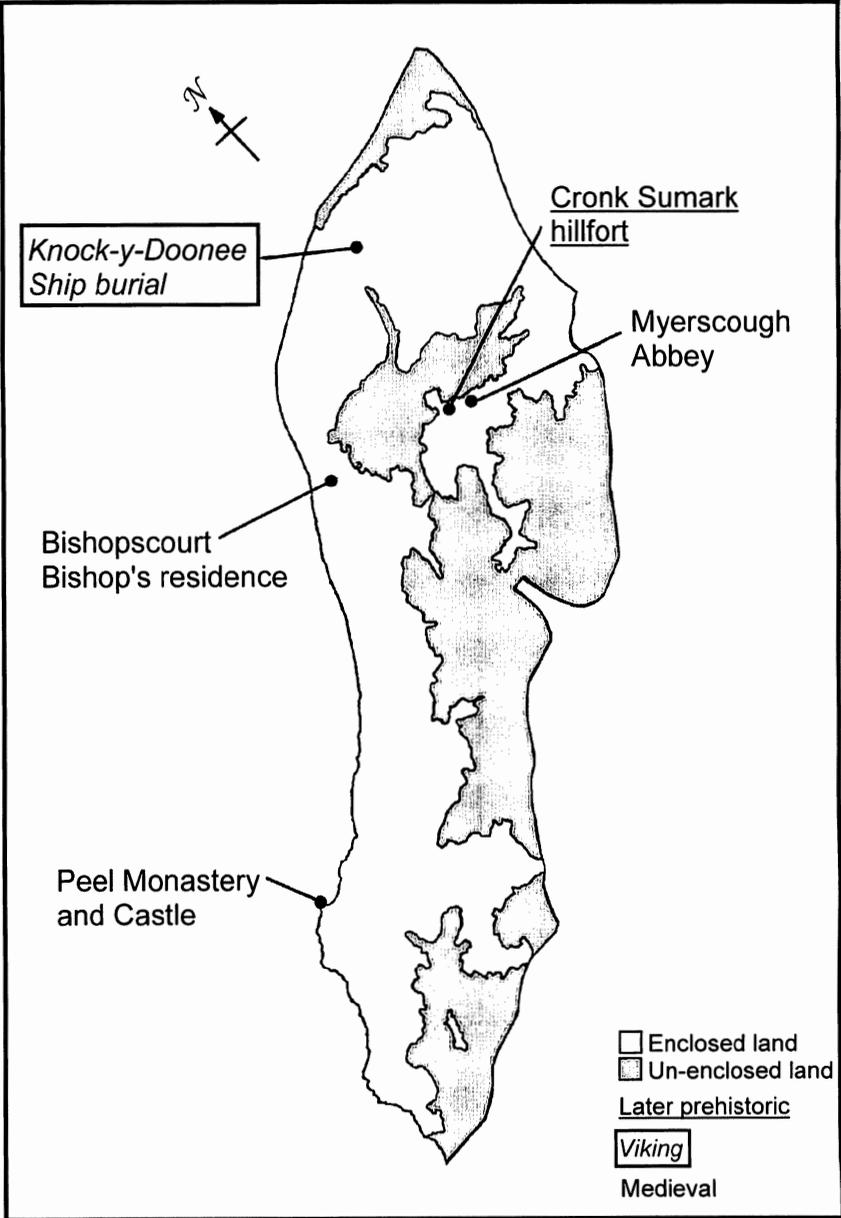


Figure 3: North Mann

distinctive Manx Granite Tempered Ware (Davey 2000, 109). Although the creation of a north-facing bishopric maintained Scandinavian and Scottish links long after the Treaty of Perth in 1266, the transfer of real influence to England seems to have begun with the reforms of Olaf I. He invited two English Abbeyes (Furness and Rievaulx) to found daughter houses, established the modern parochial system and maintained close contact with the English court where he had been brought up. Under his successors a dependent relationship was further developed when, in 1212, Reginald became a liegeman of King John and was paid a knight's fee for the protection of the English coastline (Oliver 1861, 25-37). The construction of Castle Rushen – the Manx equivalent of the Anglo-Norman stronghold of Trim – and the reversion of Peel to an ecclesiastical function began an Anglo-Manx journey which was later formalized in the placing of the kingship into the hands of an English family. The archaeological evidence, particularly that of the pottery and the coins suggest that this transfer of influence was well in place by the 13th century.

Internal dynamics: two islands?

In considering the relationships between medieval Mann and its neighbours, especially with respect to such questions as autonomy and identity, recent trends in the perceptions of the peoples of the adjacent islands are not without relevance. In Ireland, over the past two centuries, the dominant psychological and physical pressures have been to establish that island as a single political and cultural entity. In contrast, in Britain, recent constitutional changes have given Wales, and especially Scotland a considerable degree of self rule. In Man an independence movement has continued to grow despite the rapid emergence of a high degree of self-determination during the 20th century. As a relatively small island, there has always been an assumption in recent times that the Isle of Man and its people were to be considered as a singularity. The thesis of the final part of this paper is that, in the medieval period at least, much of Manx archaeology and history is best seen as reflecting a dual historic identity, - North Mann and South Mann - which the documentary sources refer to as Northside and Southside.

The duality of Manx medieval identity is a product both of its location and environment, and of its previous history. The central spine of upland running from North Barrule to Cronk ny Eerie Laa divides two very different landscapes. To the north and west, in North Mann, low-lying glacial deposits predominate with extensive Holocene wetlands; a small down-faulted area of Old Red Sandstone forms the Peel Embayment (Figure 3). To the south and east, in South Mann, glaciated landforms are covered with mainly clay-based diamicts with an important cluster of drumlins around Ballasalla and a few later wetlands. In the south-east a significant area around Castletown is underlain by down-faulted Carboniferous limestones which create a distinctive topography and ecology (Figure 4).

In North Mann, the extensive outwash gravels have developed light soils, easy to clear and plough, with evidence from recent pollen analysis for cereal production as early as 4,000 BC. The Northern Plain was densely settled throughout earlier prehistory, from the mesolithic to the Bronze Age. It still provides the principal cereal producing area on the Island. In South Mann the heavier soils are more difficult to clear and work.

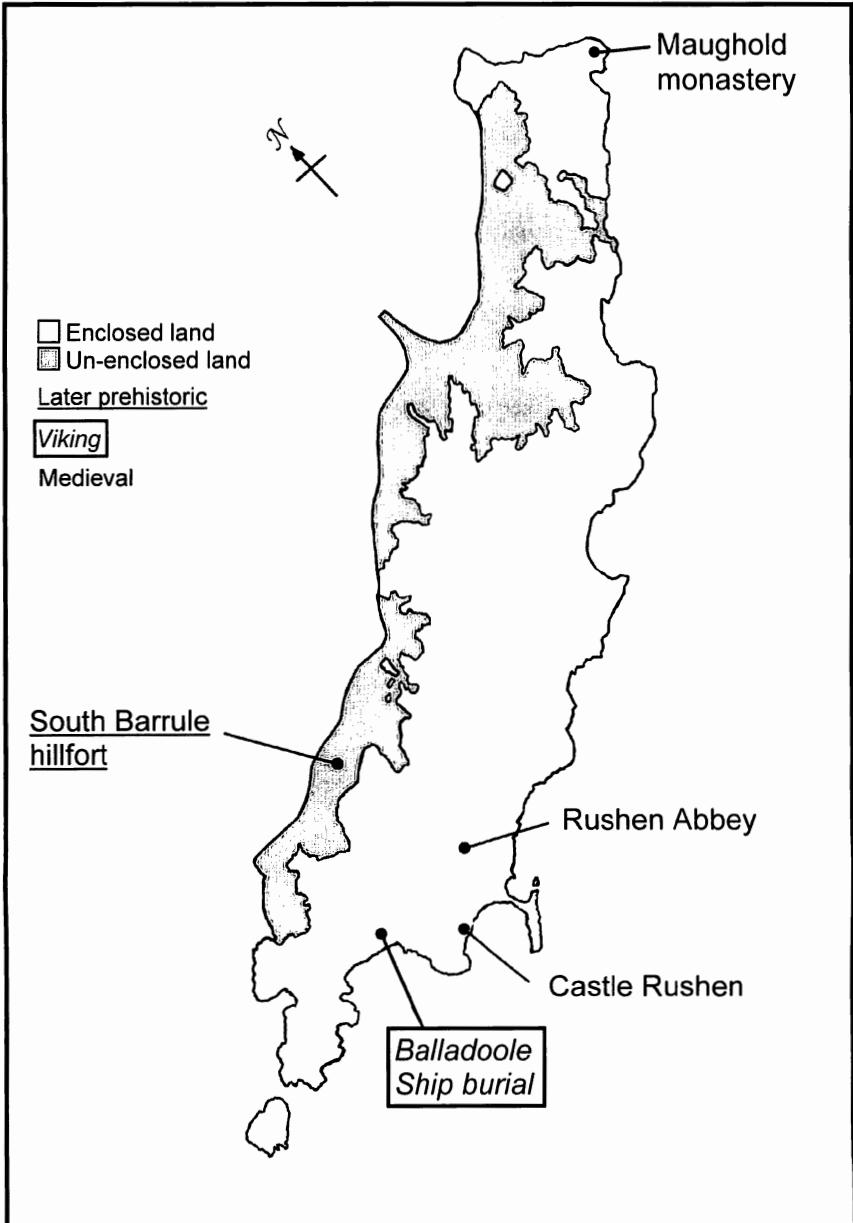


Figure 4: South Mann

On the limestone, however, mineral retention is good and prehistoric peoples thrived, especially in the area around Billown which has been the subject of major research and rescue excavations by the University of Bournemouth over the last six years. The same area still boasts the highest soil productivity in the whole Island. Despite these physical and environmental differences there is no convincing indication in earlier prehistory of any major differences between the human cultures which developed in the two parts of the Island. All but one of the megalithic tombs are located in the South and are mostly standard Court/Clyde cairns. The site at the Kew, Liaght ny Foawr, which is just in the North (above the eastern edge of the Peel Embayment), although damaged, was clearly some form of passage grave. But for the rest of the Neolithic and Bronze Age the same pottery and lithic types, some of them uniquely Manx, occur throughout the Island.

In many ways the Iron Age has proved the most enigmatic and elusive of periods in Manx prehistory. Peter Gelling, in a lifetime of work, examined many sites which belonged typologically to the period, such as round houses, hill- and promontory forts, upland mounds, only to find that at least half them belonged to other times. Many of the promontory forts, for example, only produced Norse finds and structures. Despite the elusiveness of Iron Age sites, there are two classic hillforts; one in the North at Cronk Sumark, the other in the South on South Barrule (Figure 5). The contrast between these two forts is very marked. Cronk Sumark consists of a very small enclosure on top of an isolated rocky boss situated just to the north of the main line of hills in Lezayre. At a lower level two larger earthworks, in part vitrified, surround the hill. Until drainage in the 17th century it dominated a large wetland - the Curragh - to the north. It is reminiscent of many Scottish vitrified forts; in particular its siting, size and levels are similar to the site at Dunadd, in Argyle. South Barrule, on the other hand, is set on the summit of the southern uplands of the Island, encloses a large area and contains at least 80 round-houses within two, wide-spaced ramparts. In this case comparisons are most easily made with forts in southern Britain, especially Wales - for example the groups of large forts on the Lleyn Peninsular.

Do the stark differences between the principal forts in North and South Mann represent changed political or cultural allegiances over time or do they imply two contemporary separate entities? Whichever is the case, it seems unlikely to be accidental that the site in the North is Scottish in character, whilst that in the South is Welsh.

A similar line of argument can be applied to the two main sites in the early medieval period - the monasteries at Maughold lying at one end of South Mann and Peel at the opposite end of the North. Maughold with its tradition of links with the British church lies in sight of Cumbria, whilst Peel with its dedication to St Patrick and its Round Tower lying opposite to County Down has distinctly Irish associations. Did these monasteries exist in separate political and cultural environments? Is it a coincidence that when Viking incomers first buried their dead, the two ship burials - at Knock y Doonee in the North and Balladoole in the South should be at opposite ends of the Island? Although both sites are located quite close to the sea, their common feature is to have been placed on the highest point within the fertile lowlands from where the whole of the arable lands of North and South Mann respectively could be seen - from Knock y Doonee the whole sweep of land from Bride to Cronk ny Arrey Laa and from Balladoole the vista from Mull Hill to North Barrule. The sites seem to be territorially

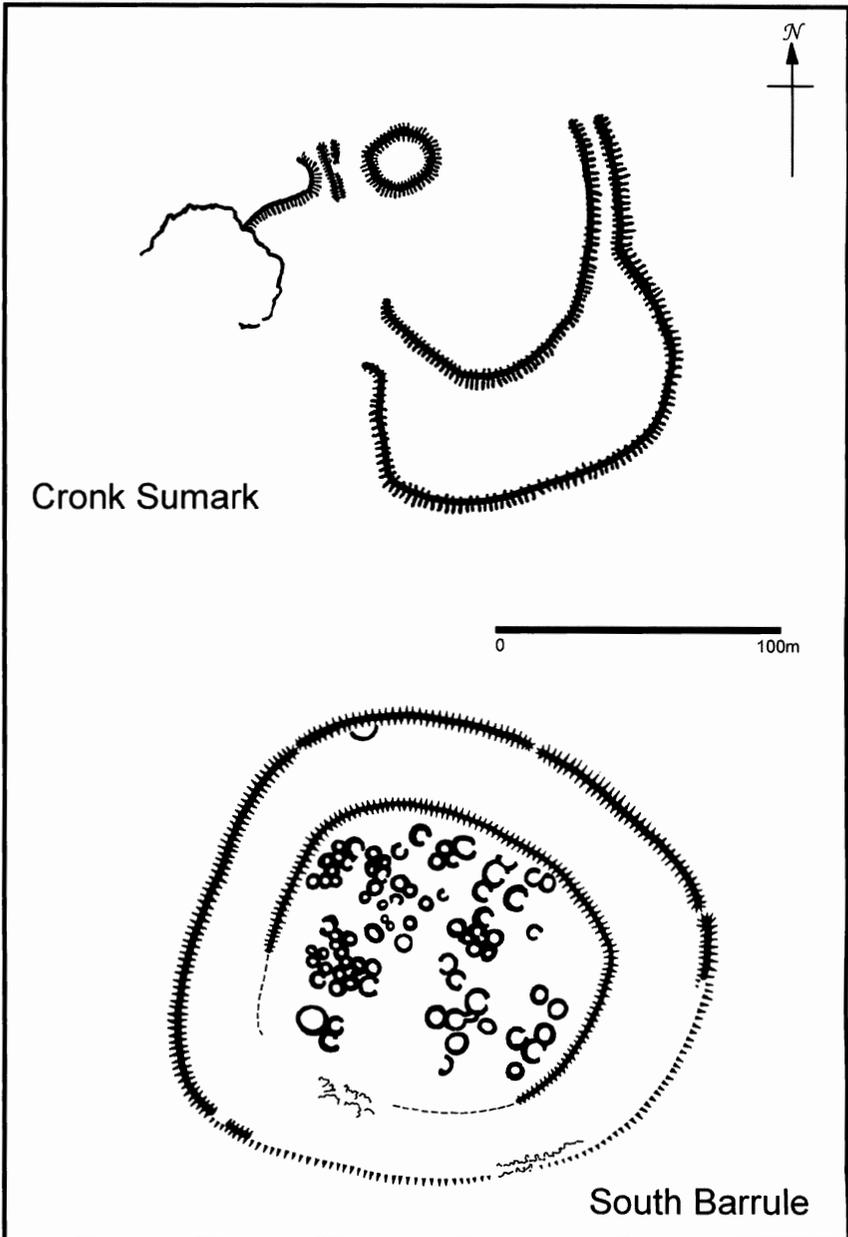


Figure 5: Comparative plans of Cronk Sumark and South Barrule hillforts.

placed. Did the early Viking settlers rule Man as two kingdoms? Did they respect existing divisions? The existence of a multiple estate land tenure system has recently been proposed by Moore on the basis of field evidence and the detail contained in Rent Rolls which, by the early 1500s, give a complete account of the agricultural land surface of the Island (Moore 1999). He has argued persuasively that Man was thought of and administered as two such estates, the internal organization of which bears a close resemblance to that known in early medieval Wales. The parish and sheading system also adhere to a dual division.

There is some medieval documentary evidence which supports the idea of the two estates of Mann. According to the Chronicles, after the Battle of Sky Hill in 1079, Godred Crogen:

'... granted the southern part of the island to the few islanders who stayed with him and the northern part to the remainder of the Manxmen, on such terms that none of them should at any time dare usurp any part of the land for himself by right of inheritance.' (Broderick 1979, f.33r.)

The persistence of serious political division in the island, possibly as a result of this attempt to separate the rival contenders is apparent from the subsequent description of the visit of Magnus king of Norway to Man in 1098:

'When he landed at St Patrick's Isle he came to view the place of battle which the Manxmen had fought a short while before between themselves, because many bodies of the slain were still unburied.' (Broderick 1979, f.34v.)

Although under the 40-year rule of Godred's son Olaf these factional divisions seemed to have been kept under firm control, the Chronicles account of the aftermath of his assassination in 1152 raises further issues about the geography and ethnicity of the medieval settlement of Man:

'After the perpetration of so grave a crime they (the sons of Harold, Olaf's brother) immediately divided the island between themselves. A few days later a fleet was assembled and they sailed over to Galloway wishing to subject it to their rule. However the people of Galloway massed together and after a great onslaught joined battle with them. They straightway turned tale and fled amid great confusion back to Man. All the Galloway men living in Man they either slaughtered or expelled' (Broderick 1979, f.36v.).

It is clear, for example, from the first written law code of 1422 that there remained some differences of customary law between the two estates each of which had its own designated deemster. Many aspects of Manx administration, for example, the collection of rents and the operation of the legal system remained separate until quite recently. Fleure and Davies' physical anthropological studies also appeared to show that distinctively northern and southern types survived into the 20th century (Davies & Fleure 1936, Fleure & Davies 1937).

Castles

The Castles too are remarkably different from one another, as contrasting as the Manx hillforts (Figure 6). At Peel a series of super-imposed structures, some religious, some

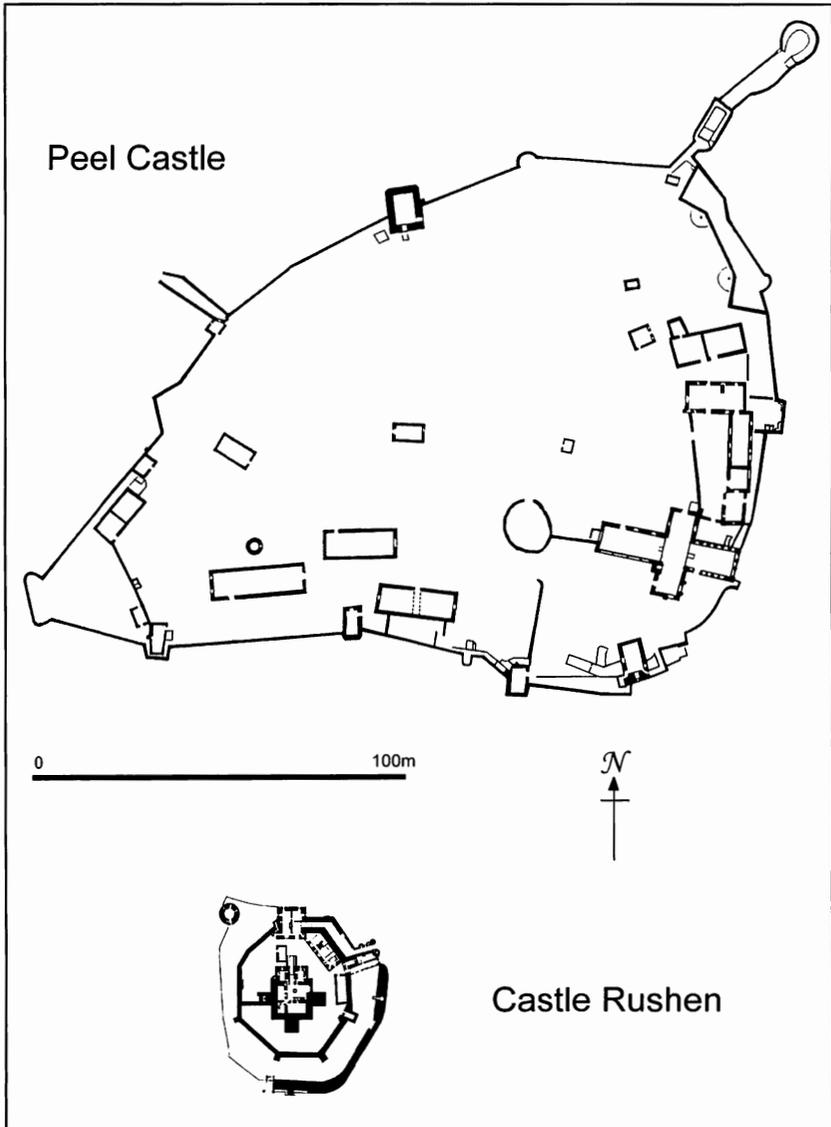


Figure 6: Comparative plans of Peel Castle and Castle Rushen.

military, can still be discerned. Their orientation and style is definitely to the north, reflecting interests and power base of the earliest Norse kings and the bishop. Castle Rushen is very much a single concept structure. Whether its origins are in the late 12th century or in the 13th, and whether the visible breaks in building lines represent a shorter or longer constructional history, the Castle represents a singular statement of royal power.

Monasteries and baronies

When Olaf and his successors began a programme of modernisation in the early part of the 12th century, it is noteworthy that two monasteries were founded on the Island, one in the south at Rushen, in 1134, and the other in the north at Myroscough in 1176. The former was a daughter of the Savignac house of Furness and the latter of the Cistercian Abbey of Riveaulx (Davey in press). The provision of land for these new orders was one aspect of Olaf's reformation of religion on the Island. The choice of site was probably also intended to keep the influence and activities of the two abbeys separate from one another. Given the relatively small area of land provided for Myroscough in Lezayre it seems possible that Rushen Abbey's later property in German (in the North) might have formed part of the original endowment for Myroscough. There are no extant charters which explain how this land was acquired by Rushen. A larger original land holding for Myroscough would make sense in economic terms; it would also maintain the territorial division between Rushen in the South and Myroscough in the North.

The location of the remaining monastic holdings on the Island is largely geographically determined (Figure 7), though there is less apparent concern with any north-south division. The land belonging to the Irish Augustinian houses at Bangor and Sabal lie together on the west coast of the Island, south of Peel, within sight of Downpatrick. Similarly the dispersed properties of the Benedictine Cell of St Bees in Cumbria are situated on the east coast, south of Maughold, immediately opposite the mother house. Whithorn, in addition to holding the vicarage of Lezayre owned a small barony centred on the medieval hospital of St Leonard in Marown, where it also had the vicarage. The form of wording of its earliest charter refers to the hospital in such a way as to imply that the connection was of long standing. St Trinian's chapel, at the focus of the Whithorn holding, still retains a number of fine Romanesque features.

Both the Cistercian nunnery at Douglas and the Dublin Order of Friars Minor's house at Bymaken (Ballabeg) were also in South Mann, together with a small holding of Furness at Ronaldsway where, it is thought, Rushen's mother house had located a mineral smelt.

The assimilation of Myroscough by Rushen is one element in a growing dominance of the South over North Mann which began, perhaps with the rise of Castle Rushen and the growth of English, as opposed to Norwegian power in the northern Irish sea, the transfer of the Island's capital from Peel to Castletown. Under the Stanleys whose home base was in Lancashire the Island became more closely dependent on its relationship with the north-west of England. The power and influence of South Mann, over the North continued to grow. The transfer of administration to Douglas and the growth of the Douglas/Onchan conurbation, stimulated initially by the English oriented tourist

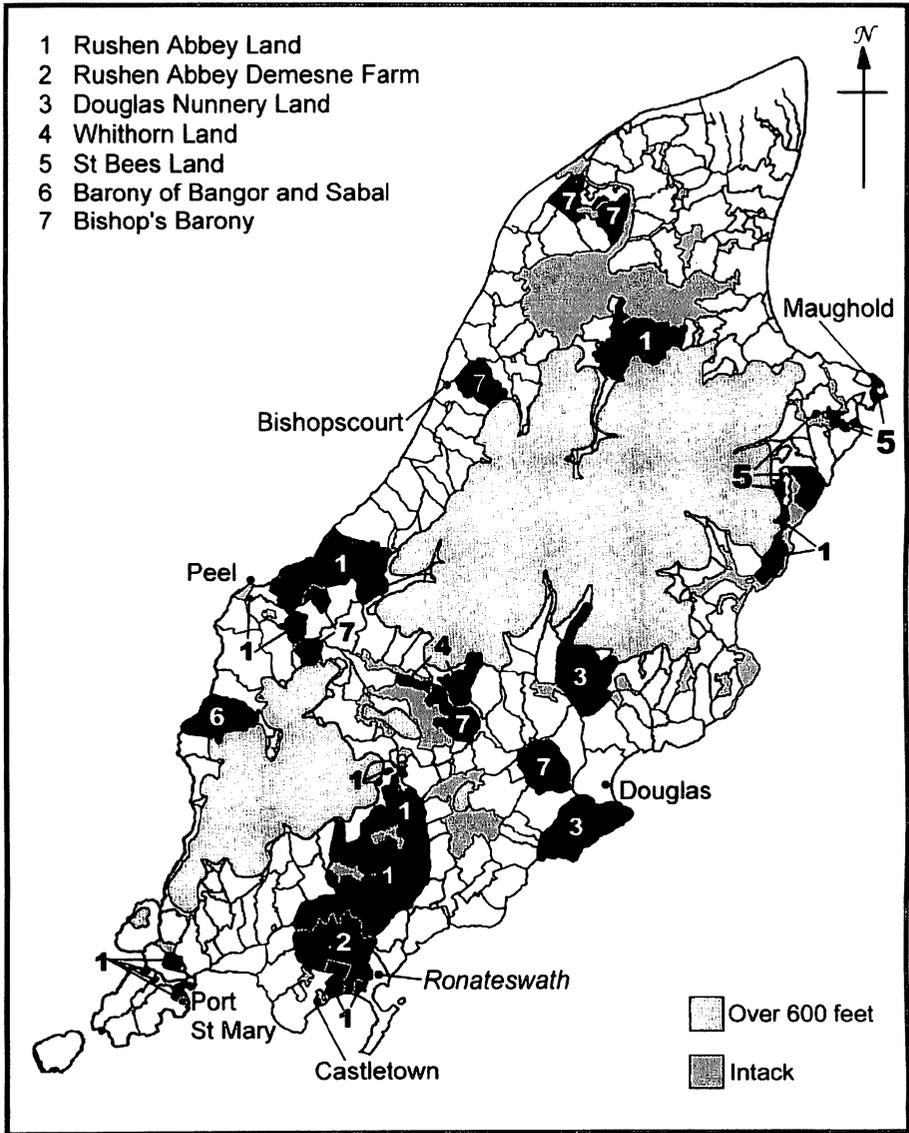


Figure 7: Location of the medieval baronies of the Isle of Man (colour version inside front cover).

trade and more recently exacerbated by the finance industry, has resulted in the almost complete dominance of the South. After the Second World War the decision to place the airport at Ronaldsway, as opposed to Jurby which has better weather and visibility records, was symptomatic. Since Olaf created the links with Furness in 1134 and his successors cemented financial and political ties with England in the decades which followed his death, South Mann has almost always been strategically, politically and socially dominant.

Summary

The archaeological evidence, strongly biased towards high status sites as it is, paints a picture of a well-organized society with a successful economy. There is little direct evidence for grain production, but animal husbandry was well advanced, as was the exploitation of a very wide range of birds, fish and shell-fish provided by the maritime environment. The inception of large-scale building projects such as Castle Rushen and Rushen Abbey involved the exploitation of the Island's mineral and rock sources to a high degree. A skills base in masonry, plumbing, glazing, carpentry and the organization needed to acquire the relevant raw materials must have developed among the wider population, though the absence of any surviving vernacular buildings of the period make it impossible to verify this.

Manx medieval society was essentially rural. Urban-like settlements around Castle Rushen and opposite Peel Castle only developed in the 16th century. The archaeological evidence for the nature of social and economic life beyond the castles and abbeys must reside in, under or around the 700 or so quarterland farms, none of which have been excavated.

In terms of external relations and trade the Island appears to have looked much more towards England and the continent than to Scandinavia and Scotland for its inspiration and trade, from at least the 12th century.

Within Man itself, the ancient division between North and South, which probably has its origins in prehistory, remains a significant element in social, economic legal and political life throughout the Middle Ages. The increasing dominance of the English connection emphasized and stimulated the growing dominance of South Mann over North Mann, a process which has continued to this day.

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