

‘... and they won land among the Picts by friendly treaty or the sword’:

How a re-examination of early historical sources and an analysis of early medieval settlement in north Co. Antrim confirms the validity of traditional accounts of Dál Riatic migration to Scotland from Ulster

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ABSTRACT

Much recent scholarship has been critical of the concept of a Dál Riatic migration to, or colonisation of, Argyll. Scepticism of the accuracy of the early medieval accounts of this population movement, arguing that these are late amendments to early sources, coupled with an apparent lack of archaeological evidence for such a migration have led to its rejection. It is argued here, however, that this rejection has been based on too narrow a reading of historical sources and that there are several early accounts which, while differing in detail, agree on one point of substance, that the origin of Scottish Dál Riata lies in Ireland. Also, the use of archaeological evidence to suggest no migration to Argyll by the Dál Riata is flawed, misunderstanding the nature of early migrations and how they might be archaeologically identified, and it is proposed that there is actually quite a lot of evidence for migration to Argyll by the Dál Riata, in the form of settlement and artefactual evidence, but that it is to be found in Ireland through the mechanism of counterstream migration, rather than in Scotland.

The question of the origins of Scottish Dál Riata has taxed historians for centuries. Traditionally two main origin traditions of the Dál Riata in Scotland, both of which have a number of variants, have existed. Each of these traditions take as their starting point the concept of a migration from Antrim to Scotland. In recent years, the Irish origin of Scottish Dál Riata has been questioned. The medieval narratives of this migration have, rightly, been subjected to scrutiny and many have been dismissed as being much later than

the actual events they recount, the product of pseudohistorical speculation connected with the dynastic intrigues of the 10th to 13th century (Campbell 2001). However, even when all the later, reworked and rewritten accounts have been peeled away, there remains a solid body of early material which is compatible with the concept of a settlement of Scottish Dál Riata, from Ireland, in the mid-1st millennium AD. Archaeological evidence, or rather its absence, has also been invoked as an argument against migration from Antrim

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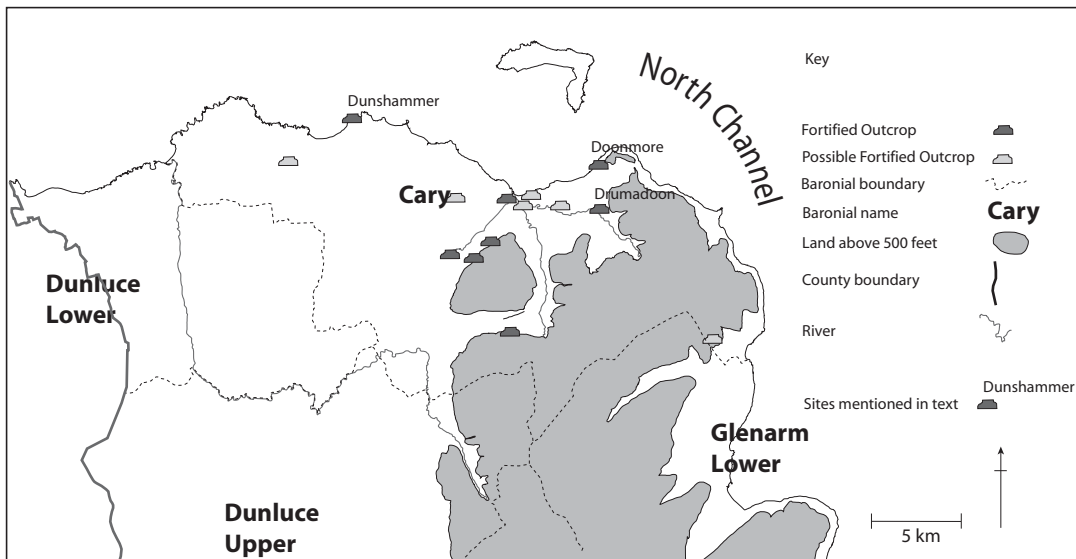
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to Argyll, with the converse argument, that there was settlement of Antrim from Argyll, being proposed by Campbell (*ibid*) based on the distribution of some artefact types. It is suggested here, however, that this is based on an incomplete understanding of how migrations functioned in early societies and it is proposed that the presence of a new class of monuments – Fortified Outcrops – which are found within a narrow area of north Antrim, and similar in many respects to Scottish duns, are evidence of an influence on the settlement pattern of Co. Antrim caused by Dál Riatic migration to Scotland.

One tradition of Irish migration to Argyll, the ‘Reuda Tradition’, recounted at an early stage by Bede, attributes this migration to a leader from which the Dál Riata took their name: ‘They came from Ireland under their leader Reuda and won lands among the Picts either by friendly treaty or by the sword. These they still possess. They are still called Dalreudini after this leader’ (Colgrave & Mynors 1969: 19). It is suggested that Bede

must have had a Gaelic informant (Dumville 2002: 185) and he was personally acquainted with Adomnán, Abbott of Iona and biographer of Colm Cille (Colgrave & Mynors 1969: 255n). In time, this tradition accrued various extra dimensions with later documents detailing an origin of the Dál Riata in Munster (Gwynn 1912) but the essential migratory core of the story remained unchanged.

A second origin tradition, the ‘descendants of Erc’ tradition, while accepting the name of the kingdom as Dál Riata, and by implication the existence of the eponymous ancestor, promotes the sons of Erc, specifically Fergus, as the main actors in the Dál Riatic settlement in Scotland. This story is recounted in numerous texts, including the *Annals of Ulster*, *Annals of Tighernach*, *Senchus Fer nAlban* and the *Tripartite life of St Patrick*, which collectively recount the story of the personage of the king of Irish Dál Riata, Fergus Mac Erc, and his success at taking and holding land in Britain late in the 5th century AD (Bannerman 1974: 74–5).



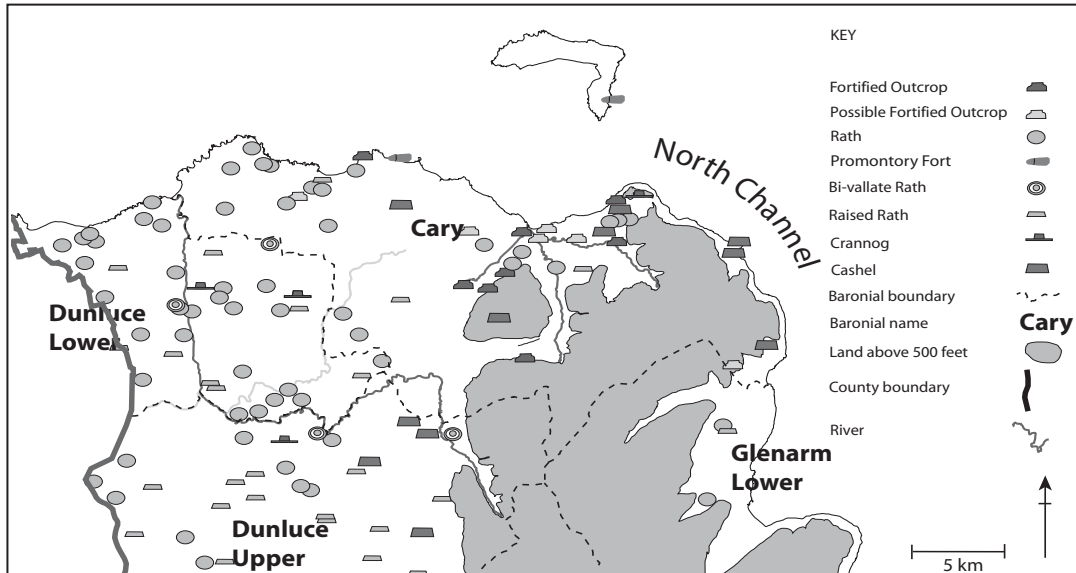
ILLUS 1 Fortified Outcrops in north Co. Antrim

This traditional view of the movement of the Dál Riata from Antrim into Scotland has, in recent years, been challenged by Ewen Campbell (2001). He postulates that the historical sources implying an Irish origin for Dál Riata reflect the political concerns of Ireland and Scotland in the 10th to 13th centuries and are an invented origin myth for certain lineages in competition for the Scottish kingship (Campbell 2001: 288). Campbell suggests that there is a lack of archaeological evidence for a migration to Argyll from Ireland. He proposes that what little archaeological evidence for migration there is, points in the other direction and that a Dál Riatic colonisation of Scotland did not happen but that instead there was a Gaelic-speaking kingdom of Dál Riata in Argyll emerging in the early centuries AD and that it extended its influence into Ireland, creating Irish Dál Riata, rather than the other way around. There is some merit in Campbell's analysis; he takes a long-standing tradition, subjects it to scrutiny, and comes to different conclusions about the nature and sequence of events. He correctly emphasises, as have writers since Kelleher (1963), the difficulty of using early medieval texts, noting that many references to a Dál Riatic settlement in Scotland, including some of the most explicit, are late (Campbell 2001: 288). There are, however, key aspects of Campbell's historiographic analysis and archaeological reasoning which weaken his argument to the point of making it untenable.

Central to an analysis of Campbell's thesis is the dating of the various elements of the accounts of Dál Riatic settlement in Scotland; and while some variants of the traditions of Dál Riatic migration story can be demonstrated to be late, there still appear to be core elements which can be shown to have existed in, at least, the 7th and 8th centuries.

Early Irish and Scottish histories and genealogies were, as with modern history, competing narratives written within a political context. There were certainly competing narratives even with the earliest accounts of the Dál Riatic migration. The 'Reuda tradition' can be demonstrated to have been in circulation at an early stage. Bede, that early promulgator of the 'Reuda tradition', was writing in the early 8th century. Also Adomnán, while not directly discussing colonisation of Scotland, in an aside, implies that the tradition of a leader called Reuda is an ancient one. In his *Vita Sancta Columbae Tripartita* Adomnán (as we have seen above, a contemporary and acquaintance of Bede) refers to a prophecy made by Colm Cille about a peasant who lived amongst the 'people of the Korkureti'. This tribal name is essentially the same as Dál Riata, Korku being a synonym for Dál and *reti* a 7th-century form of the genitive of Riata (Dumville 2002: 186). Adomnán, by using the 7th-century form of the name *reti* in the tribal name 'Korkureti', indicates that in the 7th century a certain Riata (Reuda) was remembered as a person of significance, after whom a tribal grouping was named.

The most satisfying and complete accounts of the alternative 'sons of Erc' tradition of colonisation of Scotland are, as Campbell has noted, problematic. He correctly points out that the entry in the *Annals of Tighernach* stating 'Fergus Mor, macErc, with the nation of Dal Riada, took (or held) part of Britain, and died there' was composed in the 10th century and therefore cannot be relied upon as an account of late 5th- or 6th-century events (Campbell 2001: 208). He also notes difficulties with the *Senchus Fer nAlban* suggesting, in general agreement with Bannerman (1974: 130–2), that it likewise had been subject to 10th-century rewriting (*ibid*). However, there are several much earlier, if rather more laconic,



ILLUS 2 Early medieval secular settlement in north Co. Antrim

references to the ‘sons of Erc’ tradition which demonstrate that it is one of great antiquity, and is not simply the product of 10th-century pseudo-historians.

The earliest reference to Erc in the context of Scotland is a brief reference in the *Tiugraind Bhécáin*, a poem about Columb Cille which, while only existing as a 16th-century copy, can be solidly dated on linguistic grounds to the 7th century (Kelly 1975: 66). In it, Columb Cille’s journey is described as: ‘the course in which the hero ran reaches the darkness of the place of Erc’ (Kelly 1975), a clear reference to Columb Cille leaving Ireland and going to Scotland.

Also, while the *Senchus Fer nAlban* has been correctly identified as having been subject to much re-writing (Bannerman 1974: 130–2 and Campbell 2001), there do appear to be elements within it which can be demonstrated as earlier in origin and it may be possible to identify hints of an early version of the ‘sons of Erc’ tradition. Dumville has shown that the

Senchus is a bilingual piece which is based on one, or more, earlier works in Latin, some as early as the 7th century, which have been subject to piecemeal translation and revisions in the 10th century, essentially changing a 7th-century genealogical document into a 10th-century political document of the Cenél nGabráin (Dumville 2002: 205). Dumville, in his subtle examination of the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, has also found within the document indications of what may have been erased by the 10th-century reworking of the piece. He notes the assertion in the *Senchus* that ‘Fergus mór mac Eirc is another name for mac Nisse mór’ (ibid), an assertion taken uncritically by Bannerman (1974). This is an interesting statement and may be an attempt to obscure an earlier variant of the ‘sons of Erc’ tradition which significantly predates the 10th century. There is an individual, Domangart mac Nisse, who was an early 6th-century king of the Dál Riata. His death is recorded in the annals of Tighernach and Clonmacnoise who refer to

him, in both instances, as King of Scotland. The death of ‘Domangart mac Nisse Reti’ is also recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* for 506 (MacAirt & MacNiocaill 1983), however, in this account he is confused with (or possibly deliberately merged with) his near namesake, Mac Nisse, the Bishop of Connor. All of these annals can be demonstrated to have been of the 10th century or later (Dumville 2002: 192), although much of their content is based on earlier manuscripts. What makes Domangart mac Nisse interesting, however, is the addition of *reti*, a 7th-century genitive form of *riata* (ibid: 186) in his death entry in the *Annals of Ulster*, indicating that a 7th-century text was the ultimate source for this entry. In the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, Domangart is a son of Fergus mac Erc, the patronymic mac Nisse being explained by Fergus and mac Nisse being the same person, an assertion queried by Dumville (2002: 205).

Another text which discusses ‘mac Nisse’, Fergus mór and the success of Fergus’ line in Scotland is the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*. In the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* there are a number of paragraphs dealing with St Patrick’s activities in Dál Riata.

Three main incidents are recorded.

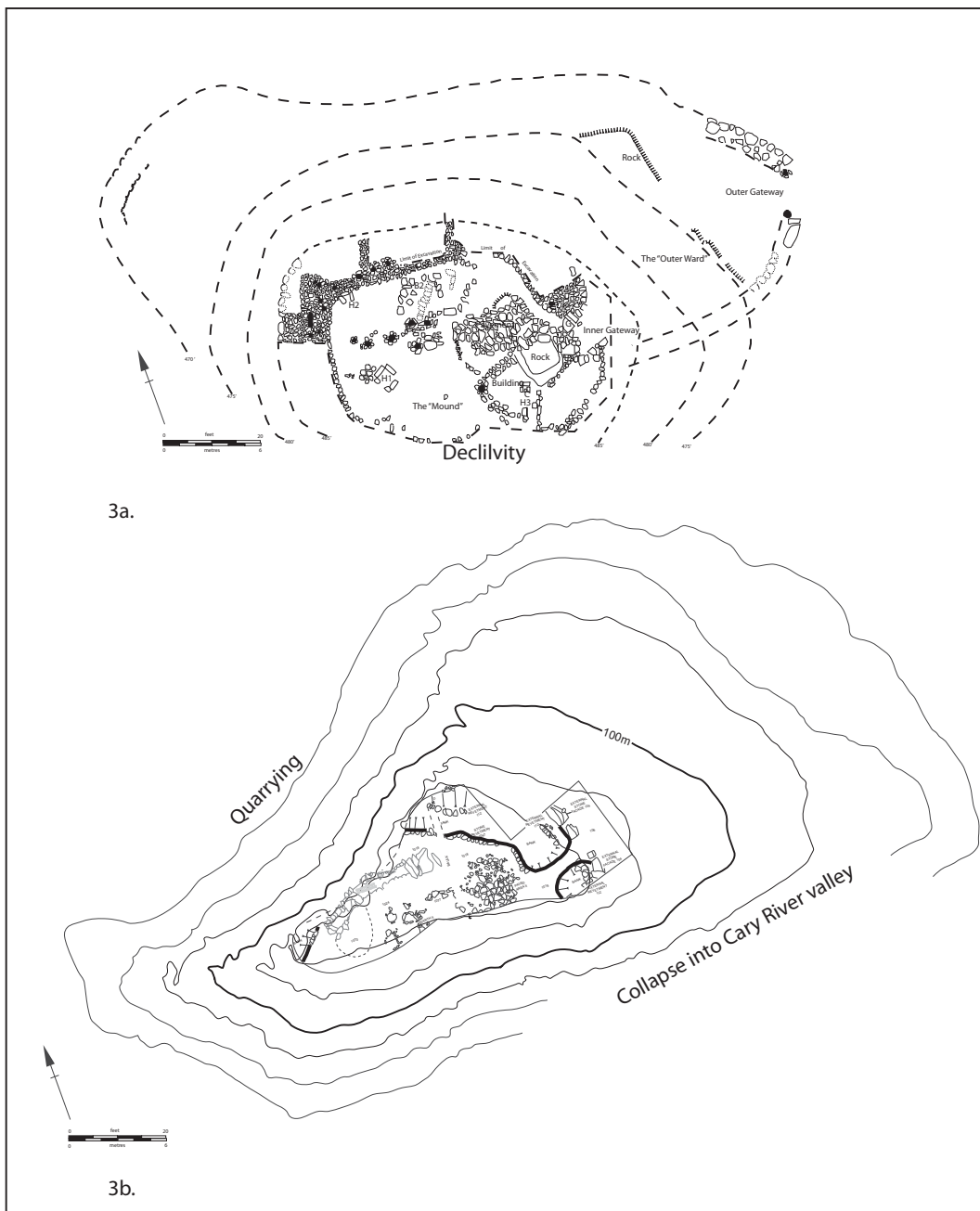
First there is Patrick’s crossing into Dál Riata and his meeting with a king, Doro of Carn Sétni, where the assembled party heard cries from the earth and opened a tomb to find a baby beside the dead body of his mother. The baby was named Olcan by an accompanying druid and was baptized by Patrick. He was mentioned as later being Bishop of Airthir Maigh (Armoey) in Dál Riata (Stokes 1887: 161–2).

After this there is a record of St Patrick praying and reading Psalms with Mac Nisse of Connor (this time it actually does seem to be the bishop). The original Latin in the *Tripartite Life* is described as ‘hopelessly corrupt’ by Stokes but he suggests that it

refers to an incident between Patrick’s sister or cousin and ‘Mac Nisse’ and the subsequent prayer by Patrick that the Mac Nisse’s hand may be cut off (Stokes: 163).

Next, the *Tripartite Life* mentions that Patrick receives a good welcome in Dál Riata from the 12 sons of Erc and a meeting is recorded between Fergus – ‘the Great, son of Erc’ – and St Patrick, at which Fergus offers land to Patrick ‘if my brother respects me in dividing his land, I would give it to thee’ (Stokes 1887: 183), upon which the church at Armoey is later constructed. Patrick prophesied that Fergus would eclipse his brother and become king of Dál Riata ‘... thou that shalt be king. The kings in this country and over Fortrenn shall be from thee for ever. And this was fulfilled in Aedan son of Gabran, who took Scotland by force’ (ibid). Bannerman notes that Fortrenn was initially a name given to one of the provinces of Pictland, which was later used to mean all Pictland (Bannerman 1974: 86). The enigmatic reference to a brother from whom Fergus might need permission to dispose of land to the church is not completely congruent with the Fergus mór of the later annals and the *Senchus Fer nAlban*.

The actual date of the composition of this piece of the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* is a complex question. Bannerman indicates that this episode in the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* is mid-9th century or later, although with a knowledge of earlier traditions (Bannerman 1974: 86). Bieler (1942: 36) goes further, suggesting that the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* is compiled at the very end of the 9th or in the 10th century. This is late enough to fit in with Campbell’s theory, however there is compelling evidence, not just the hanging statement about a more senior brother to Fergus, that this section of the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*, dealing with Patrick’s work in Dál Riata, is based upon an earlier work or works.



ILLUS 3 (3a) Plan of Doonmore, Co. Antrim (after Childe 1938) showing stone bank and excavated internal features and (3b) Plan of Drumadoon, Co. Antrim (after McSparron & Williams 2009) showing stone-faced bank and excavated internal features

There is a list of very brief jottings in the *Book of Armagh*, which are called the *Notulae*. The *Notulae* are a highly abbreviated list of one line entries, which appear to be a set of notes referring to the content of an earlier work (Bieler 1979: 50–1). The *Book of Armagh* was compiled about 807 and Bieler states that the linguistic style of the *Notulae* dates them to the mid- to late 8th century.

They conform closely in places to the order of the events in the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*. Three phrases, across two entries, are of interest to the study of Dál Riata and have direct parallels in the *Tripartite Life*.

Doro Carn Sétni. Xii
 (maicc) Eirc. Fergus Mór (macc) Nise
 Xii Olcan filii ... eps(cop) Ném iTelich Ceniuil
 Oingos(so)

The first phrase, ‘Doro Carn Sétni’, refers to the story of the discovery and naming of Bishop Olcan when Patrick meets Doro at Carn Sétni. The second phrase, ‘(maicc) Eirc. Fergus Mór M(acc) Nise’, in the context of coming shortly after the finding of Olcan, must refer to the meeting of Patrick and Fergus Mór in the *Tripartite Life*: but what of the ‘(macc) Nise’? Dumville rejects the possibility that the ‘(macc) Nise’ in the *Notulae* could be either a patronymic or the alias of Fergus, as suggested in the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, suggesting instead that it is a reference, once more, to Bishop Macc Nise of Connor (Dumville 2002: 189), however, in the context of the very brief *Notulae* and given the above noted tendency to confuse these two characters, is it possible that this may actually mean Fergus’ brother, mac Nisse, whose presence was obscured in the 10th-century rewriting of the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, possibly the unmentioned brother from whom Fergus must seek approval to give land to Patrick? The third phrase, ‘Olcan filii ...’, presumably refers to St Olcan, the

genitive or plural form of filius (son), ‘filii’, being of uncertain meaning. The final phrase, ‘eps (cop) Ném iTelich Ceniuil Oingos(so)’, refers to the consecration of a bishop, Nem.

The significance of the *Notulae* lies in the similarity they have to the *Tripartite Life*. They show that the tradition of St Patrick meeting Fergus Mór is not entirely an invention of the 10th century or later. Rather, these traditions of Fergus, and possibly Mac Nise too, are much older. The *Notulae* are mid- to late 8th century; but, as they themselves are probably based on an earlier work, they relate to traditions which must be 8th century or earlier, several centuries earlier, at least, than the medieval genealogists proposed by Campbell.

In summary, it is possible to extract from these documents a series of early statements upon which further inference can be based. It seems that there was, in the 8th century, evidenced by Bede, a tradition of the taking of land in Scotland by a leader, ‘Reuda’, and his people. It can be shown from a story collected by Adomnán in the 8th century, but using 7th-century language, that by the 7th century at least, the Dál Riata were named after this eponymous ancestor.

It also seems that while there is clear evidence of re-writing of documents like the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, in the 10th century and later, as well as the compilation of annalistic sources at this time, there also seems to be evidence that aspects of this ‘sons of Erc’ story, recounted in these sources, are earlier and reflect a Dál Riatic past quite compatible with the concept of a Dál Riatic migration. There are also indications of the shadowy presence of an earlier story, the story of a brother of Fergus Mór, mac Nisse, who may have been very important in the early history of Scottish Dál Riata but whose role and descendants have been obscured from history in favour of other Dál Riatic lines. Perhaps

most crucially, there is evidence, from a 7th-century poem about the life of Colum Cille, that Scottish Dál Riata was being referred to as the 'land of Erc' at this early date.

There are a numerous possible models which could serve as explanations of these statements. It has been suggested by some writers that the movement of Reuda was an earlier migration, with the 'sons of Erc' making the crossing some centuries after (Duncan 1992; Werner 2007) It is also possible that what we see in the brief 7th- and 8th-century accounts of Erc and Reuda are actually the competing origin traditions of rival scions of the Dál Riata, with the supposed descendants of Erc and his sons emerging victorious, only to go through a similar paring of the family tree, with the occlusion of mac Nisse, by the 10th century. However, whatever way the different strands of the origin story are mixed up, there is one constant: Ireland. Each of these origin stories, over many centuries, from at least the 7th century, is consistent in their assertion that the Dál Riata came from Ireland to Scotland. Given that the earliest 7th-century documentary references to Erc and Reuda could be as little as three generations after the events being described, it is perhaps better to weigh up the evidence carefully before being overly dismissive of these sources.

A key question, which has been addressed by a number writers including Campbell (2001) and Alcock (1970), is the material cultural evidence of Irish settlement in Argyll. Both of these writers correctly note the absence of significant material culture or settlement evidence of clearly Irish origin in Argyll, and Campbell (although not Alcock) cites this as evidence to suggest that there was no Dál Riatic colonisation or migration from Ireland. He goes further and suggests, citing the example of Type G penannular brooches, which are apparent in Scotland from the 7th century but which only appear in Ireland in

the 8th century (Campbell 2001: 287), that what evidence there is indicates population movement from Argyll to Antrim, rather than in the other direction.

Both Alcock and (especially) Campbell are taking a very traditional view of migration, making the assumption that there is a direct link between a migration event and the finding of material culture from the origin region in the destination region. This, however, does not seem to be the case. It may be that modern migration may lead to a transplantation of material culture, settlement type, institutions and cultural values but this is not the case for all, or possibly even most, migrations in earlier times undertaken by different types of societies.

David Anthony has examined the mechanisms of migration and its archaeological signature in detail (1990). He suggests that it is impossible for archaeologists to correctly identify migrations from an examination of the archaeological evidence alone, without an understanding of how migration works (Anthony 1990: 897). He has established that migrations are caused by 'push' and 'pull' factors between homeland and place of migration. They are mediated by a number of factors, such as the difficulty in travelling between homeland and destination or technical advancements which may facilitate travel. He notes that information flow is vital in establishing a stream of migration with migrants who, for example, have families settled in an area or are hearing stories of an area, being much more likely to migrate there. Anthony identifies the role of scouts (1990: 903) who provide information on an area before the commencement of a larger scale migration and then, most importantly, a counterstream of migration, migrants returning from the colonized area back to their homeland or the homeland of their ancestors.

The concept of counterstream or return migration (Anthony 1990: 904) is a powerful one: which may go a long way to explaining the contradictions in the archaeological and historical evidence regarding Argyll and Antrim's interaction in the early medieval period. It suggests that migration is very rarely a one-way process and that there will be continual movement of persons and goods, not just potentially to the new lands, but back to the homeland also. In the case of a migration of a small group of warrior-aristocrats and soldiers from Ireland to Argyll, the archaeological signature of Irish material culture in Scotland might be very small, effectively swamped by native material. The visible physical evidence for this migration is more likely to be seen in Antrim.

One area which has not been discussed before in detail, but which may indicate evidence for counterstream migration is settlement. There are a number of early medieval settlements in northern Co. Antrim, within the boundaries of the kingdom of Dál Riata, which seem, in many ways, to be similar to early medieval settlements in Argyll. These settlements are different to the more common 'rath and cashel' early medieval settlement types known from Ireland and are collectively called Fortified Outcrops in this paper. The definition of a Fortified Outcrop used here is a defended settlement site of early medieval date, constructed on top of a pre-existing natural eminence, enclosed by either a stone wall or an earthen wall with a stone façade. These sites are small with their long axis typically less than 20m. Few sites are perfectly circular and are generally oval or sub-circular shape, their form, at least partly, being determined by the shape of the existing mound upon which they were constructed. Although constructed on natural vantage points, they are not present in genuinely upland areas, all being found at or below 150m (500ft). Although several of

these monuments have been excavated the rest have not been surveyed in detail, although they have been visited, measured and described by archaeologists from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and recorded in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record.

An examination of early medieval settlement sites in the north Antrim area recorded in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record suggests that there are probably eight (and possibly as many as 14) sites of this type (illus 1 and Table 1). It appears to be significant that they are all located within the boundaries of the current Barony of Cary. There are by contrast, counting only surviving, upstanding, secular sites and not including souterrains (which frequently have church associations), one crannog, three cashels, five raised raths and 10 single-vallate raths in the Barony (illus 2), fewer than in any of the adjacent areas.

Several of these Fortified Outcrop sites have been excavated. Gordon Childe excavated at Doonmore, Co. Antrim (Childe 1938) (illus 3a). His excavations revealed the presence of footings of buildings, paved areas and hearths within a stone bank, surmounted by a palisade, located on a rocky outcrop rising 20m above the surrounding farmland. The stone bank enclosed an area measuring 12.4m × 17m. It was accompanied by a much larger enclosure, which Childe called the 'Outer Ward', which was a terrace beneath the main enclosure, partially defined by surviving stone walls. Childe believed the site to be a Norman fort. More recently, excavations at Drumadoon, Co. Antrim (McSparron & Williams 2009), located 2km south-west of Doonmore, have revealed a similar occupation site, located on top of a gravel rise, enclosed by a stone-faced earthen bank, overlooking the Cary river valley (illus 3b). These excavations have shown it to be a multi-phase structure,

TABLE 1
Fortified Outcrops in Co. Antrim

<i>NI sites and monuments no</i>	<i>Site type</i>	<i>Townland (site name)</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Barony</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Irish grid reference</i>
004:015	Fortified Outcrop	Balintoy Demesne (Dunshammer)	Balintoy	Cary	20m × 35m – only end occ.	D0312045010
005:007	Fortified Outcrop	Cross (Doomore)	Culfeightrin	Cary	17m × 12.5m	D1724042630
008:007	Fortified Outcrop	Cloghanmurry	Ramoan	Cary	8m × 5m at summit	D0838037450
009:001	Fortified Outcrop	Townparks, Ballycastle	Ramoan	Cary	20m × 16m base, 10m diam. top	D1206440834
009:042	Fortified Outcrop	Drumadoon	Culfeightrin	Cary	In excess of 14m × 5m	D1672040420
008:020	Fortified Outcrop	Broom More	Ramoan	Cary	18m × 14.5m	D0993038300
008:021	Fortified Outcrop	Broom More	Ramoan	Cary	14.5m × 13.1m	D1017038630
014:034	Fortified Outcrop	Breen	Armoy	Cary	14m × 16m	D1215033700
003:017	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Lisbellangroagh More	Balintoy	Cary	17.5m × 21.2m	C9979042680
008:110	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Carnsampsion	Ramoan	Cary	Uncertain	D0810040620
009:002	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Ballycastle	Culfeightrin	Cary	25m diam.	D1262040740
009:004	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Bonamargy	Culfeightrin	Cary	16m × 40m – 16m × 20m occupiable	D1309041190
009:007	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Ballynaglough	Culfeightrin	Cary	14m diam.	D1472040660
015:016	Poss. Fortified Outcrop	Ballycleagh	Culfeightrin	Cary	12.5m × 10.8m	D2440034220

constructed and initially occupied sometime between the 8th and 10th centuries AD, most likely in the 9th century, with, after a period of abandonment, a later phase of reoccupation in the later half of the 13th or 14th century. The size, shape, internal architecture and topographical situation of these two sites is very similar, although only part of the Drumadoon site had survived, at least half had collapsed through subsidence into the river valley. The enclosed surviving area at Drumadoon measured 14m east/west by 5m north/south, meaning that the structure could, potentially, have been roofed. It seems likely that Doonmore, like Drumadoon, was initially constructed between the 8th to 10th centuries AD and re-occupied in the later Middle Ages. Another early medieval settlement of similar situation and date, Dunshammer, is located approximately 14km north-west of Drumadoon and 14km west-north-west of Doonmore and was built upon a rock stack overlooking the sea. It was excavated by J. Wilfred Jackson, of Manchester Museum, in the 1930s. He did not publish his account and the location of most of the archive is unknown, although the artefacts from the excavation are in the care of the Ulster Museum. Jackson found both early medieval and later medieval coarse pottery as well as animal and fish bones and broken quern stones. This is a similar artefact assemblage to both Drumadoon and Doonmore. It seems probable that this also is an early medieval settlement site which, like Doonmore and Drumadoon, was later reused in the 13th century.

By extrapolation from the three excavated sites, it seems likely that the Fortified Outcrops of the Barony of Cary are in origin early medieval, probably dating to between the 8th and 10th centuries.

The siting of these settlements on natural eminences, mounds of gravel and rock stacks, with good views of the surrounding

countryside, is reminiscent of the location of many of the monuments grouped together under the classification of duns in Argyll. Likewise their size and general morphology is closely comparable with certain aspects of Argyll settlement.

In recent decades, this dun classification has been called into question by Scottish writers with the realisation that a number of monument types had been subsumed into a catch-all type (Harding 1982: 218–19). Several different schemes for subdividing the dun class have been proposed. Some of the more recent have emphasised how architectural features – such as the use of dry stone for construction or the presence of intramural galleries – may have persisted for very long periods of time and may not of themselves be appropriate for developing a typology of building types (*ibid*). Instead, size of enclosure has been focused upon as a method of dividing the traditional dun classification with an arbitrary 375m² being taken as a limit for the area of the now redefined dun class and with larger enclosures described as forts (RCAHMS 1971). In addition, it has been noted that the smaller duns are frequently more symmetrical than their larger counterparts (Maxwell 1969) and it has been suggested that many of these structures may have been roofed. Harding (1982) has proposed a further subdivision of the dun class into smaller, more circular, *dun houses*, which may be roofed and larger, oval, *dun enclosures*, which are unroofed but may contain roofed structures within them.

The dating of these monuments is quite complex, there are relatively few excavated examples of a numerous site type and it is indeed likely that many have late prehistoric origins (Harding 1997: 132) but what is important for our discussion is the fact that there is convincing evidence for construction, use and re-use of many of these monuments

in the early medieval period (Alcock 2003: 186–7)

It has been suggested that the nature of early medieval settlement in Argyll was ‘landscapes of small stone-walled enclosed settlements and crannogs interspersed with a smaller number of larger, Nuclear Forts, which represent the residences of the upper echelons of Dalriatic society’ (Armit 2008: 2). The term Nuclear Fort was first used by Stevenson (1949), who defined it as a central enclosure located on a hill with ‘outworks loping out from the central area’ (ibid: 186–7). It has been established that these forts began their lives as smaller single enclosures or *dúns*, which were added to with the construction of further enclosing walls (Alcock 1987: 239). Alcock suggested that the location of the sites on hills, with a central elevated portion and numerous lower terraces, was specifically selected to reflect a hierarchical organisation of space.

The Fortified Outcrops of north Antrim, with the possible exception of the more developed Doonmore with its central enclosure and outwork, seem to conform quite closely to the definition of the dun enclosure with internal areas less than the 375m² threshold – with some possibly small enough to be dun houses. They also seem to conform to the pattern of settlement in Argyll suggested by Armit (2008). Alcock noted the similarity between Doonmore, Co. Antrim, and Nuclear Forts in Scotland (ibid). In the barony of Cary, in north Antrim, although there are raths, and cashels, they are few in number, much fewer than in adjacent areas of Co. Antrim (illus 2). Instead there is one large Fortified Outcrop, with an outer enclosure, Doonmore, which may be the Irish analogue for a Nuclear Fort, a crannog at the nearby Lough na Crannagh and then several other smaller enclosures such as Drumadoon and Dunshammer, similar in many ways to dun enclosures and dun houses.

A traditional view of migration might look at the evidence for the presence of dun-type structures in Irish Dál Riata and assume that this was evidence for Dál Riatic colonisation of Antrim from Argyll, as Campbell has suggested for other aspects of material culture (Campbell 2001), however Anthony (1990) has demonstrated that this is too simplistic an assertion to be accepted. Also, if Drumadoon, with its 8th- to 10th-century date range for initial occupation, can be utilized as the dating ‘type site’ for the Fortified Outcrops of north Antrim, and this seems reasonable given the similarity of artefacts found there and at Dunshammer and Doonmore, then they seem too late to represent migration from Argyll giving rise to Irish Dál Riata.

Rather, it is more likely that the presence of dun-type structures in Irish Dál Riata, modified slightly to take account of local conditions, such as the use of stone-faced earthen banks in some cases, reflects counterstream migration, the bringing of ideas and material culture back home. If the migration of the Dál Riata to Argyll was one of a small group of warrior-aristocrats and soldiers, as speculated by Lane and Campbell (2000), without necessarily a large population shift, it is likely that they would have taken and utilized the settlement architecture, settlement patterns and material culture of the community in which they found themselves, rather than building anew. We know already that the Dál Riata certainly adopted the settlement architecture typical of early medieval Scotland, for in 736, the Picts are described as laying waste Dál Riata and seizing Dunadd (MacAirt & MacNiocaill 1983: 148–9), implying that at that time the Dál Riata were occupying Dunadd, a Nuclear Fort. The likely direction of ‘cultural influence’ in such a scenario would be, as suggested by Campbell, east to west, but not through settlement of Antrim *from* Argyll but rather the returning counterstream of settlement of

Argyll *from* Antrim. This would explain the mixed nature of the settlement evidence from the Barony of Cary, the – possibly earlier – settlement evidence in the form of typical Irish raths and cashels, the later settlements influenced by Scottish forms and patterns, conforming more to an Argyll template. The mechanism for this influence is likely to be the symbolism of aristocracy and kingship. Once the king of Dál Riata and his nobles occupy Nuclear Forts and duns in Scotland, the appropriate type of dwelling for a Dál Riatic notable in Ireland will also change away from the rath and the cashel towards sites that resemble those of their kin in Scottish Dál Riata.

The dating of the emergence of Fortified Outcrop sites in Irish Dál Riata, based as it is on only one site so far, is intriguingly compatible with the dating of the emergence of the Type G brooch, used as evidence of Scottish migration to Ireland by Campbell 2001. Could it be that along with the adoption of Scottish residential symbols of aristocracy and kingship, high-status jewellery was also making its way to Ireland by the same route?

While there have been intrigues, both within the Dál Riata and the wider Scottish and Irish medieval worlds, which have led to a proliferation of origin myths for Scottish Dál Riata, there is, at the core of all versions of the story, a basic concept of a migration from Antrim to Argyll. This migration was not necessarily large, it may have been simply a warband, and it need have left few physical traces in Scotland. But it would have led these migrants into new lands with new customs, material culture, concepts and ideas which the settlers would have absorbed and introduced, through counterstream migration (Anthony 1990) to Irish Dál Riata. Perhaps foremost amongst the adoptions of the Scottish Dál Riata would have been the Scottish type of high status residence, places such as Dunadd,

and the duns of Argyll. This would have influenced settlement architecture in Irish Dál Riata, leading to the erection of the Fortified Outcrops, an Irish variant of the dun, in north Antrim.

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