

# Constructing Later Mesolithic Landscapes

*Killian Driscoll*

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*This paper looks at the Irish Later Mesolithic as comprised of constructed landscapes. This involves looking at how we construct these past landscapes, and also at how the landscape was actively constructed and reconstructed in the Mesolithic. There is a growing body of evidence for various types of constructions in the Later Mesolithic landscape and, using the example of platforms, I will discuss how we can interpret these in terms of personalities, and what the implications of this are. I will then move from the constructions to the constructed spaces in the landscape; using the example of fieldwork carried out on the shores of Lough Allen, I will discuss the taskscape on the lake and how this fieldwork can lead to a truncated sense of the Mesolithic landscape.*

## Introduction

From the mid-twentieth century archaeologists began using the concept of the 'landscape' as an analytical tool. Subsequently, it has been noted many times that the term landscape is inherently ambiguous, and therefore readily malleable to divergent methodologies; Sherratt (1996) has argued that the differing influences of the Enlightenment and Romanticism on archaeology have led to the divergent paths of landscape archaeology, between the former studying the landscape as a signature of settlement patterns and the latter studying the landscape for the sake of the landscape. In comparing an early nineteenth century account of a prehistoric landscape and a TAG (Theoretical Archaeology Group)

paper abstract, Sherratt (1996, 143–146) highlights the Romantic inheritance of the phenomenological accounts in archaeology; in contrast he argues that the Enlightenment view of the landscape, the settlement pattern, is exemplified by an invasive approach to the landscape. As will be clear, my approach to interpreting Mesolithic landscapes would probably be described as that of a subjective Romantic. I regard this as neither a term of abuse nor a badge of honour; rather, it is a recognition of how my understanding of the archaeological record has been influenced, and thus how my interpretations reflect those influences.

This article will initially look at the evidence available for various types of constructions

in the Later Mesolithic landscape; using the example of the platforms, I will discuss the interpretation of these as signs of monumentality, and suggest that to view these as personalities in the landscape can be more instructive. I will then discuss my surface collection fieldwork on the shores of Lough Allen, Co.s Leitrim and Roscommon as an example of investigating constructed spaces. The use of the term constructed spaces here follows McFadyen's (2006) critique of a current research occupation with investigating place as opposed to investigating the processes involved in making space in the Mesolithic. MacFadyen argues that this focus on place has limited the research potential of the archaeological record, as it can entail that the landscape is seen as ready-made and maintained rather than made and open to change; instead attention should be turned to understanding the creation of architectural space and to understanding mobile space. Nevertheless, I would suggest that space should be made for interpreting place in the Mesolithic as well.

### Constructing landscapes

Mitchell and Ryan's (2001, 115 emphasis added) exposition of the Irish Mesolithic posits the communities as '*restricted* by their inability to clear large areas to *roaming* along the shores of lakes and rivers and along coasts, catching fish and collecting nuts and seeds as seasonal *opportunity* offered'. The sense here of people roaming conjures up images of people aimlessly moving across the landscape; a landscape as backdrop, devoid of soul and meaning – not of a knowledgeable people in a lived-in landscape, a landscape which was intimately known, with locales named, and stories told of. The sense of restriction suggests that the Mesolithic communities were unsophisticated pawns in their environment, rather than at home in their landscape – they lacked the common sense and know-how to clear land, to settle down, and to progress. Ultimately, the sense of opportunism alluded to is suggestive of a lesser people than the impending Neolithic farmers (*our* ancestors) – the Mesolithic peoples were on a lower rung of humanity; unable to provide for themselves, they were at the mercy of the seasons to provide them sustenance.

However, a different picture can be constructed of Later Mesolithic landscapes. Rather than at the whim of nature, we can see the Mesolithic communities as actively involved in their landscape, indeed in transforming it in the process: what we have are signs of Mesolithic communities creating social arenas in the landscape. There is a growing body of evidence from around Ireland for various types of constructions, such as a pine log trackway (Brindley & Lanting 1998), platforms (Bradley 1991; Fredengren 2002; 2007; Little 2005; Massop 2008), fishing traps and weirs (McQuade & O'Donnell 2007), and dwellings (Prudames 2003). These constructions in the landscape are to be viewed on a continuum with the more abundant constructed spaces (*sensu* McFadyen 2006) of the Mesolithic record, our 'findspots' of lithic scatters or single finds, as well as the evidence for the reuse of various locales for burial (Collins & Coyne 2003; Woodman & O'Shaughnessey 2003), and for coppiced woodlands (McQuade & O'Donnell 2007).

### Platforms

The possible link between the Mesolithic and platforms – or crannogs – was first made in the 1950s after the drainage of Lough Gara, Cos Roscommon and Sligo (Fig. 11.1) revealed almost 3000 predominantly Mesolithic lithics on the post-drainage shoreline, as well as hundreds of crannogs; dozens of the crannogs had lithics on the surface, many with single finds but one with over 500 (Driscoll 2006, 226). While Raftery and Cross argued for a Stone Age date for many of these crannogs (for discussion see Fredengren 2002), Woodman (1978, 322) countered that the relation between the lithics and crannogs was spurious and that the lithics probably arrived there from erosion from a higher spot on the shoreline. During Fredengren's (2002, 120) research on the crannogs of Lough Gara (which examined the lake from early prehistory to the modern period) one of the timbers on Inch Island returned a Later Mesolithic date ('4230–3970 BC': not stated if calibrated); while she maintains that these, and the possibly related traces of a stone causeway, cannot be specifically described as crannogs, she argues that the 'new results show that there is more to the Lough Gara material than eroded deposits from earlier shorelines'

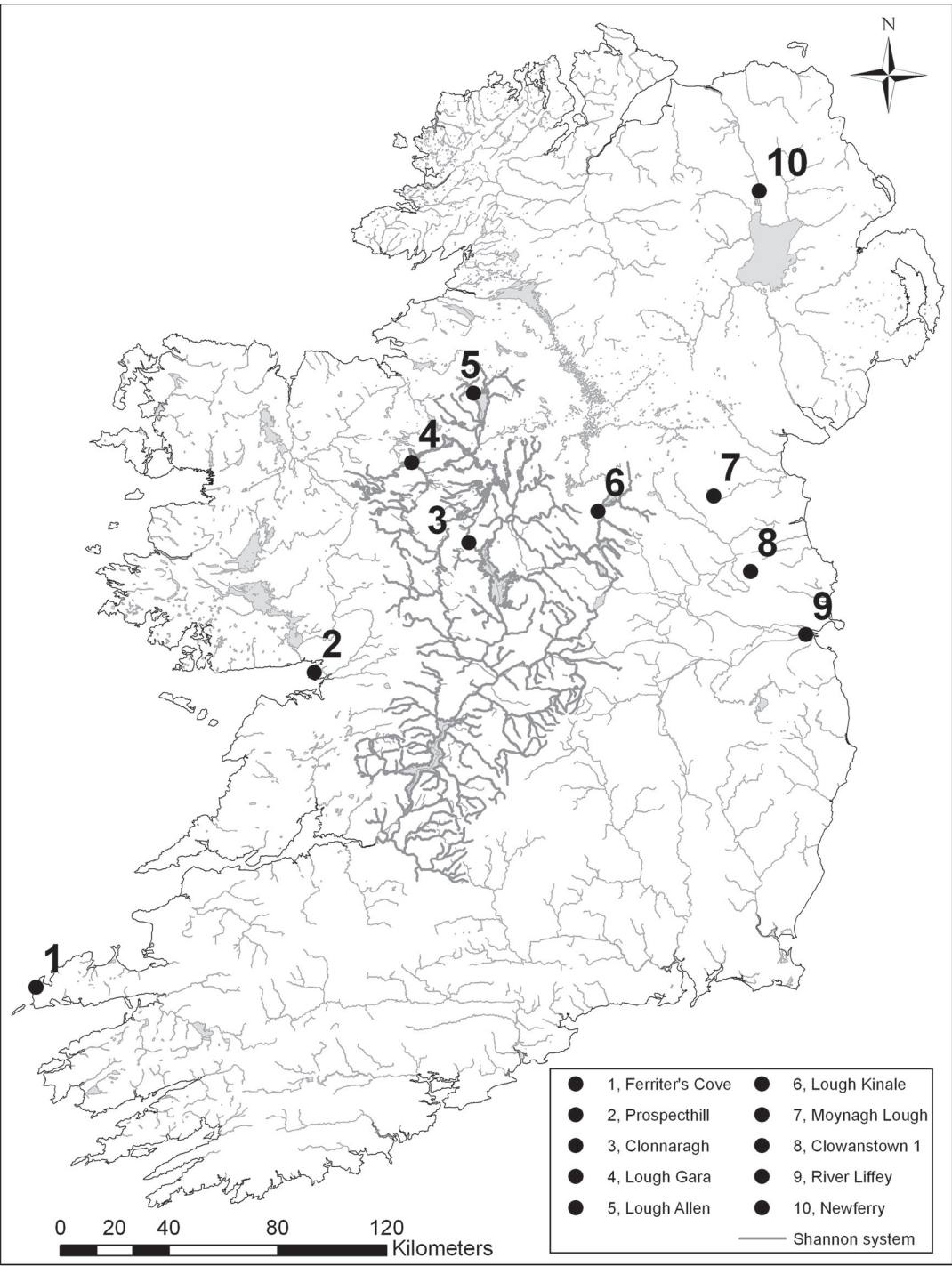


Figure 11.1: Areas mentioned in text, with Shannon system highlighted

(*ibid.*, 121). The relation of the lithic scatters and the platforms/crannogs on this lake awaits further research, as none of the crannogs with numerous Mesolithic finds have been excavated.

Three excavated platforms (none of which are fully published) from elsewhere, however, have provided Later Mesolithic dates (Fig.

11.1). At Clowanstown, Co. Meath, a natural platform on a lake edge was consolidated by a thick layer of burnt timber; amongst other finds and features – including a possible mooring site – a series of conical woven baskets were excavated, which provided ‘dates ranging from ... 5300–5000 cal BC ... to ... 4990–4720 cal BC’ (Masson 2008). At Lough Kinale, Co. Longford

an artificially heightened natural island, constructed with layers of stone, peat, timber and brushwood, had activity 'from around 5500 cal. BC which was being re-used and re-built until c. 4000 cal. BC' (Fredengren 2007). Excavations at Moynagh Lough (Bradley 1991) showed evidence of the construction of island platforms; here, two knolls in the lake were heightened with a layer of white marl, stones, and brushwood, with charcoal in the layers dated to 4250–3970 cal BC (5270±60 BP, GrN-11442; OxCal v. 4 Bronk Ramsey (2008); IntCal04 Atmospheric curve Reimer *et al.* (2004)).

Little (2005, 91) has suggested that the use of the marl at Moynagh Lough would have created 'white islands' and these 'would have made a profound visible impact on those approaching the structures'. Fredengren (2002, 135, 139) has argued that these constructions can be seen in the light of monumentality, whereby they were 'important in the creation and maintenance of the identities of these small groups in their yearly cycle'. While substantially applauding Fredengren's thesis on these constructions, Little (2005, 91) is hesitant of using the term monumental:

'just how useful a term *monumental* is in describing the role of these artificial islands within the wider landscape is a whole new debate...rather than seeking to identify acts of monumentality – where interpretations often work at such a grand scale that they exclude the possibility of distinguishing other smaller or 'intimate' social exchanges, such as would be necessary in the construction of a platform – it is more productive to engage with the *specifics* of the material.'

I think Little's unease with the term monumentality may also stem from the clear appropriation of the term by archaeologists of the Neolithic and later periods. To bring the term into Mesolithic studies brings a lot of baggage. While *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (Darvill 2002, 270) describes the term monument as 'in common usage the term is taken to mean any large artificial structure of archaeological interest', it is clear that in the case of early prehistory a monument, or monumentality, conjures up certain images. Of course, a standard dictionary (Anon 1961, 1466) reference shows that a monument can be something artificial or a natural landscape feature, and Bradley (1998; 2000) has discussed the archaeology of 'natural places' as a useful line of inquiry, and also raised the issue of

whether or not Mesolithic people thought 'monumentally'. I also share Little's unease with the term monumental, and agree that the material specifics of these should be engaged with. Nevertheless, I suggest that by viewing these constructions as personalities in the landscape, we can interpret them while keeping social exchanges firmly in sight, and also investigate their currency beyond their initial construction.

## Personalities

Initially, this idea of personalities in the landscape is based on the clarification of the notions personhood and individuality as conceived in the modern west. Taylor (1992, 112) has commented that the modern idea that a self is something that comes from within a single individual is a peculiar, historically contingent understanding, and a difficult one to see beyond: 'who among us can understand our thought being anywhere else but inside, 'in the mind'? Something in the nature of our experience of ourselves seems to make the current localization almost irresistible, beyond challenge'. Fowler (2004) has outlined various differing anthropological studies of individuality and dividuality, such as the concept of partible people and multiple authorship, and also of permeable people. He elaborates how these differing ways that people conceive of themselves in the world do not stand in clear distinction from the current modern western idea of the individual, but rather each person negotiates a tension between dividual and individual characteristics, and, in all societies, personhood emerges from the constant reconciling of one with the other. In some contexts, like modern Europe, individual features are accentuated, while in others, dividual features are accentuated – but these are *dominant* features, not factors which completely repress or override the other (*ibid.*, 34).

Taking one part of one example used by Fowler, the Malagasy house is built following a marriage, and initially it is a flimsy structure made from green wood, apart from the central posts. Over the years it is consolidated, being replaced with more durable wood – this 'hardening of the Malagasy house emphasizes [sic] the gradual fixing of an identity which originates in coming together of two or more sources', and is also related to their concept of



the body being wet when young and drying and hardening with age; after death 'stones may be raised in memory of the ancestral dead; they stand not only for the dead individual but for the firmness of the relations that produced that person'. Consequently, 'the Malagasy house is a material condensation of a relationship, not a passive metaphor for the body. Equivalent substances constitute people and houses, so that hardwood house posts are called bones, and the house has grown' (Fowler 2004, 110–1).

Finlay (2003a) has approached the 'entity' of the microlith from this perspective of the partibility of people and things; using Strathern's work on the concept of multiple authorship, she highlights how the composite nature of the making and use of the microlith epitomises this idea. She has suggested that with the transformation from microlith to macrolith in the Irish Mesolithic, 'collectivity was [then] expressed in the ownership of places and resources' (Finlay 2003b, 92). The use of the term personalities in the present context does not denote ownership of places alone, or denote that these constructions held just characteristics of personhood, but rather that these places constituted personhood together with their creators and occupiers.

Viewed from a dwelling perspective (*sensu* Ingold 2000), these various types of personalities – the platforms, fishing stations, trackways, and dwellings – can be seen as substantially more than functional attributes of the Mesolithic society: by describing these as personalities we can see people situated in an intimate landscape, a landscape of persistent use and recreation – a thought-out landscape whether consciously or unconsciously. These personalities built by Mesolithic communities included themselves in the construction; partly, they acted as mnemonic devices in the landscape, and, as persistent elements, if only visible seasonally for some (as Fredengren (2002) has suggested), they both enabled and constrained a manner of use of the landscape. Consequently, these personalities were involved in the social reproduction of the communities; they made space for the elaboration of the dynamic traditionalism (*sensu* Gosden 1994) of the communities. They were renowned locales, named places. These were persistent places, but they were modified and elaborated over time; they were continually created and

recreated through use, and they can be viewed as having altered their meanings over time; as generations passed, differing groups (based on gender, age, or kin) with differing agendas appropriated them in their own ways.

Discussing these constructions as personalities in the landscape can move us away from the idea of an artificial basis for a monument, and that natural cannot be cultural. Commenting on the menhirs of Breton, Tilley (2004, 33 emphasis added) states that 'these stones were the first *culturally* fixed and enduring points in the landscape and are closely associated with its post-Mesolithic transformation', and he raises the critical question of 'why were huge ancient trees, wooden posts, rock outcrops or the large stones that would have served as physical markers of place and identity during the Mesolithic deemed no longer sufficient?'. From this we can get a sense of a division between the 'natural' rock and the 'artificial' monument implicitly and explicitly. As personalities, the 'natural' trees and rocks can be seen on the same scale as these 'cultural' constructions, therefore obviating the dichotomy between them; without needing to invoke monuments in the Mesolithic, we can see these personalities as enduring points in the landscape. Consequently, to see these as personalities bridges the gap between humans and the environment (Fig. 11.2): the constructions that the Mesolithic communities undertook were part of themselves as much as they were part of the landscape.

### Lough Allen: a partial case study

After discussing how we can interpret con-

Figure 11.2: A 'natural' platform – swan's nest



structions such as platforms, fishing stations and trackways of the Mesolithic landscape as being personalities, I will now outline the surface collection fieldwork carried out on Lough Allen (Figs. 11.1 & 11.3) as part of a review of the Mesolithic in the west of Ireland in 2005–6 towards an M.Litt. thesis. This is a partial case study – the survey consisted of only walking the lakeshore itself: no survey was carried out on the hinterlands of the lake (which today consists of permanent pasture or bog) in what would have been the woodlands in the Mesolithic. This is therefore biased towards the lakeshore against the once wooded environs of the lake, and only consisted of the surface collection of material.

The extent of the Mesolithic evidence housed in the National Museum from Lough Allen has been overlooked in the recent literature (eg, Fredengren 2002, 114; Gibbons *et al.* 2004, 5; O'Sullivan 1998, 55); while two findspots are usually cited, there are six from the lake and this fieldwork survey has added an additional 98 findspots from the shores of the lake (Fig. 11.3), almost all of which are Mesolithic. O'Sullivan (1998, 54) has noted that Raftery, who surveyed the post-drainage shores of Lough Gara a half a century ago, also did a quick survey of the post-drainage shores of Lough Allen and noted 20 examples of the crannogs or platforms, which he described as metallurgy sites; Raftery did not appear to examine these sites in any detail, and it is uncertain as to whether any lithics were apparent on these as on some in Lough Gara. During this present fieldwork, a number of possible traces of stone platforms were noted but these did not appear to contain any lithics; a few artefacts were found beside a circle of stones, and in another area lithics were found on a possible wooden structure consisting of transversely laid timbers (Driscoll 2006).

Today, the low summer lake level exposes large areas of submerged forests, presumably of early prehistoric date. The tree trunks from this submerged forest are visible at nearly all spots of the lake visited. In the southwest section of the lake, a cut away bog shows the growth of trees at various levels in the bog's history. Unfortunately no palaeoenvironmental work has been carried out in the area, and it is not clear how the lake levels differed during the Mesolithic. Therefore, only a generalised picture of the palaeoenvironment for the

period can be surmised, as outlined by Mitchell and Ryan (2001). Lough Allen lies close to the northern source of the River Shannon and is the first large lake of the system; the upland lake is nestled between three separate high hill ranges to the north, east, and west, with the river valleys running northeast and northwest. The southern end of the lake opens out onto the undulating central lowlands. Today, the environs of the lake are permanent pasture and bog, with a minor amount of conifer plantation woodland, and scrub and trees along the shores.

As at Lough Allen, much of the evidence we have for the Mesolithic does not directly suggest constructions like platforms as such, but instead fleeting glimpses of part of the Mesolithic taskscape, predominantly available to us through single finds or small scatters of lithics, which can be viewed as evidence for constructed spaces (*sensu* McFadyen 2006). Ingold (2000, 198–9) has described the taskscape as being the interactivities of all aspects of life; importantly, the taskscape is not limited to humans but encompasses plants and animals as well as inanimate entities. From this understanding of the taskscape, he describes the landscape as 'a pattern of activities 'collapsed' into an array of features', and therefore the landscape is the congealed form of the taskscape. Consequently, the findspots of lithics that we seek, and the lithics that we collect, are the remnant features of the interactivity of life, an interactivity which enmeshed people with the plants, animals, and the movement of the waters and the changing of the seasons.

The 98 findspots identified are scattered all along the lake, and almost all areas surveyed turned up some lithics (Driscoll 2006). Along with the over 400 Later Mesolithic finds, a small number of Neolithic and possible Early Mesolithic artefacts were also collected (this 400 represents a minimum count as a number of the scatters around the lake were sample collected). The lithic raw material used was predominantly chert, along with tuff, other unspecific volcanic types, siltstone/mudstone, flint, and a non-carboniferous chert; an axe of shale and one of basalt were also identified. Half of the survey's collection remains geologically unidentified, and this may well highlight other raw materials, but a pattern does emerge of the predominance of chert, followed by tuff and other volcanic

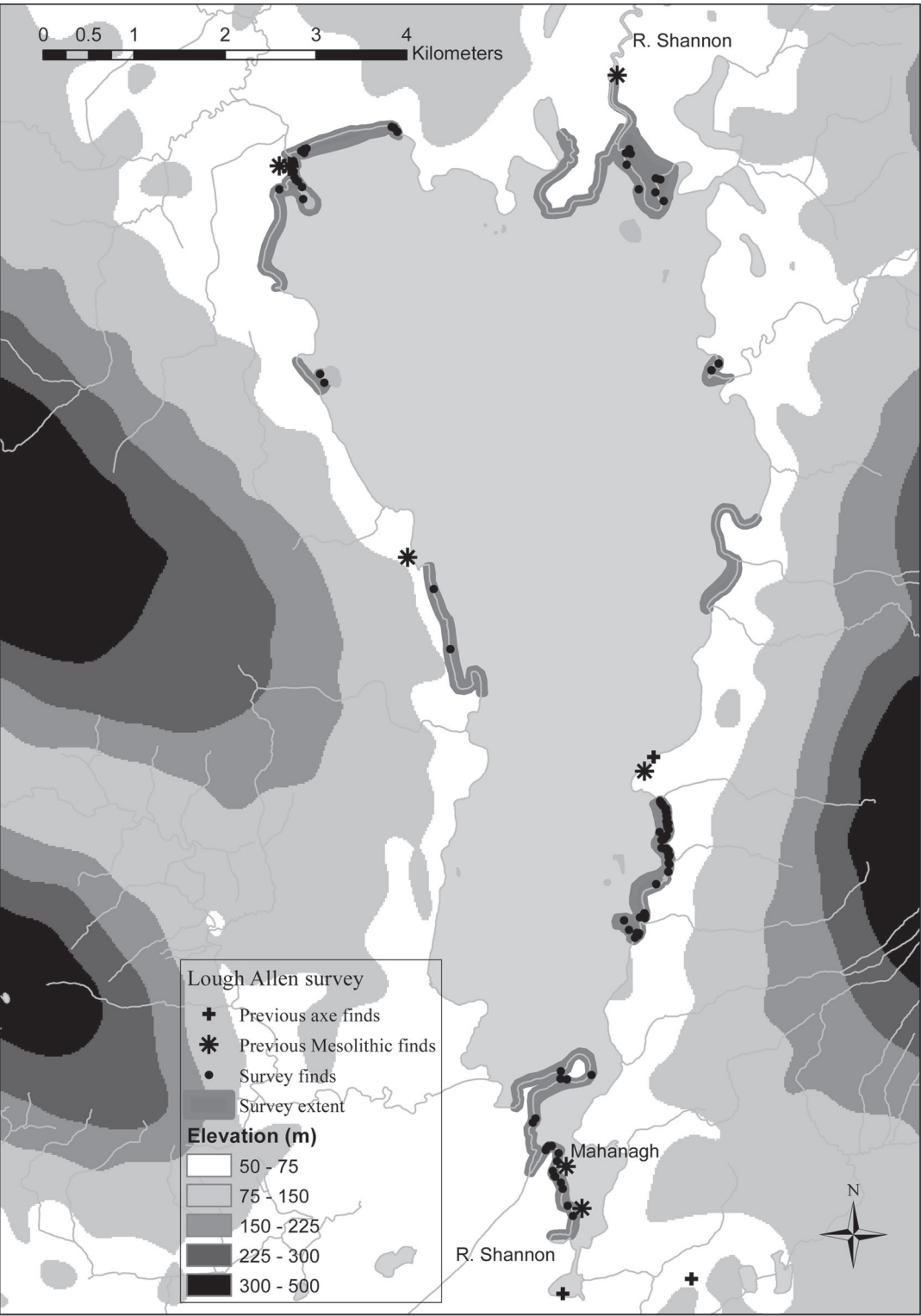


Figure 11.3: Lough Allen

material. In a general sense, the chert, siltstone, and volcanic rocks can be considered ‘local’, while the flint and non-carboniferous chert can be considered non-local. At this stage the provenience of these materials is unclear and

how local the ‘local’ rock actually is needs to be investigated (for a discussion on the ‘localness’ of stone and Mesolithic quarrying in the midlands, see Little, this volume).

The exit point of the lake, at Mahanagh



(Figs 11.3 & 11.4), produced the most extensive scatter, as well as numerous other scatters and isolated finds. The greatest density of lithics came from the along the shore of the river as it exits the lake; at this point a small peninsula is formed by the Shannon running along the west, and Lough Allen continuing southwards on the east; the peninsula is a knoll *c.* 150 m wide. Walking around the peninsula, the lithic scatters drop off and pick up again from the westernside, forming discrete scatters intermittently for over a kilometre, with the scatters becoming further apart from each other with distance from the peninsula. At the exit of the River Shannon, the lithics are apparent on the shore where the water runs from right to left when facing the water, with none at all from the opposite shore; lithics are not apparent on that shore until further west away from the river. A similar pattern of lithic deposition emerged from the finds from the entry point of the River Shannon on the lake.

While there would seem to be an emphasis on the mouths of watercourses on the lake, as is usually suggested for Later Mesolithic finds (for discussion see Little 2005), a lot of the material does not come from these locales, but from the shoreline in general, as in

the case of finds from the eastern portion of Mahanagh mentioned above, and also from the eastern shore of the lake where 47 single finds or scatters were identified over a 2 km stretch. A conventional reading of these finds would be that they represent either the casual discard of tools, the remnants of knapping episodes on the shore, or the erosion of caches of material. However, these pragmatic, naturalistic explanations may not be considering the complexity of the deposition of material – a complexity not fully understood but usually glossed in terms of subsistence activities.

This complexity of lithic deposition was undoubtedly tied in to the world view, and ritual practices, of the communities involved. For a long time archaeologists dismissed this aspect of lithics:

‘To make a D scraper, collect a flint nodule (1) at full moon, (2) after fasting all day, (3) address him politely with ‘words of power’, (4)...strike him thus with a hammerstone, (5) smeared with the blood of a sacrificed mouse...Technical and scientific progress has of course just been discovering that (1), (2), (3), and (5) are quite irrelevant to the success of the operation prescribed in (4). These acts were futile accessories, expressive of ideological delusions. It is just these errors that have been erased from the archaeological record.’ (Childe, cited in Lucas 2001, 93).

While the asperity of Childe’s remark probably

*Figure 11.4: Mahanagh, with R. Shannon exiting to left*





stems somewhat from his general iconoclasm, it mainly follows from the dominant modern belief that the making and use of things can be stripped of their social context: that technology can be analysed in terms of its use in subsistence and the economy with the social side of life analysed separately. In the same vein, Hawke's (1954) ladder of inference maintained that technology is on a low rung of the ladder and hence a straightforward topic to analyse and describe. Childe states that the 'futile accessories' have been erased from the record. However, it is argued that they have actively shaped the patterning of the archaeological record: for example, in the caching of lithics in Mesolithic Ireland (Finlay 2003b; Warren 2006), and I would argue the deposition of lithics elsewhere in the landscape.

The interpretation of this caching of material highlights opposing views on technology: whereas Woodman *et al.* (1999, 79) have suggested that the cache of axes found at Ferriter's Cove (Fig. 11.1) represents the economic, embedded procurement strategies of the community, Warren (2006, 27) has suggested that this and other caches represent the community's relationships with the stone working material, with the landscape, and with one another. The sense of a ritualistic taskscape, being played out in a ritualised landscape, should be considered on equal terms to the economy to which it is ineluctably fused. Therefore, from this perspective these scatters that we find on Lough Allen and elsewhere have a more complex history of deposition rather than casual discard, or economically motivated caching, and the lithics account for more than their functional attributes:

'The sorts of knowledge, understandings, and awareness that derive from one's encounters with their material world are neither neutral nor 'merely' practical; they also reconfirm one's understanding of the world and how it should be worked. Technological knowledge, then, has both a transformative and political potential. Technology always has the possibility of being about relations of power... Technological practice...is not simply the activities and physical actions of artifact [sic] production and use, but the unfolding of sensuous, engaged, mediated, meaningful, and materially grounded experience that makes individuals and collectives comprehend and act in the world as they do' (Dobres 2000, 5).

In contradistinction to the views of a dis-

embodied technology, this quote from Dobres highlights the grounding of technology in the social arena – whereas Hawke's ladder analogy separates social relations and technology, and Childe divorces production from its social context, it can be countered that these are inseparable.

Indeed, Ingold (2000, 314) has stated polemically that 'there is no such thing as technology in pre-modern societies'; by this he refers to the fact that, as the modern concept of technology is perceived – as a sphere of activity separated from social relations, and as a means of mastery over, and distance from, nature – it did not exist until relatively recently. The remains of lithic technology we find as scatters of stones such as at Lough Allen were part of the communities' relations with the world and with themselves. How they used and deposited the stones was contingent on their understandings of their world view, rather than an ahistorical pragmatism. The difficulty is in relating the patterning available to us to a historically contingent society.

At Lough Allen the taskscapes at the lakeshore would have involved different scales of movement, and the combining of differing nodes of the landscape together, such as through the use of local and non-local raw material for the lithics mentioned previously. The different scales of movement of the taskscape ranged from the gesture of an arm while knapping, to a short walk to the water, to a longer jaunt to set and check traps, to a much longer excursion to visit neighbouring communities. These small-scale movements are set in context of the debates as to the scale and patterning of the longer-term mobility of the communities (eg, Cooney & Grogan 1999; Woodman 2003), and the debates as to the relevance of such economically interpreted issues (eg, Conneller 2005; Engelstad 1990).

The differing tasks, and ages, of the communities of practice (*sensu* Dobres 2000) would have necessitated an adjustment of the scale and pace of movement, as would the different seasons. Some areas of the lake may have been visited and revisited regularly for a millennia – others less so. Woodman (2003, 15) has suggested that where a plethora of lithics have been found, such as at Newferry (Fig. 11.1), these could be signs of a multitude of repeated, short visits to the same place over long periods of time, as opposed to evidence

for sustained, long term settlement. These can be seen as persistent places (Pollard 2000) in the landscape. This sense of a persistent place does not need to imply a repetition of function (cf. Conneller 2005, 45), but can allow for the elaboration of a place; from a taskscape perspective – where both the animate and inanimate are involved – a persistent place is not typified by isolated activity, but rather interactivity which implies that a single place can have multiple functions and meaning. Moreover, a persistent place does not remain static in its constitution, but is persistently modified through the taskscape.

### The woodlands – the missing part of the case study

As I mentioned, what is missing from this case study was an examination of the hinterlands of the lake, of what would have been the woodlands at the time, with the surface collection focusing on the post-drainage shoreline. The Mesolithic period, however, has long been linked with the development of the post-glacial forests: while it is clear that the Mesolithic communities in Ireland were in fact woodland dwellers, the woods have usually been treated as simply an *a priori* ecozone (Kimball 2000; Woodman 1978) or an inhibiting factor of the inhabitants' settlement (Mitchell & Ryan 2001), as opposed to a lived-in environment. The consistent pattern in the distribution of Irish Mesolithic material is the dominance of waterside locations when compared to post-Mesolithic material. While the Mesolithic material is undoubtedly gravitated towards water, research in the south (Zvelebil *et al.* 1996), the northwest (Kimball 2000), and the northeast (Woodman *et al.* 2006, 266–7) have shown that Mesolithic material is not restricted to the water's edge. In terms of the west, the finds from Clonnaragh, Co. Roscommon and Prospecthill, Co. Galway (Fig. 11.1) (Driscoll 2006, 291) are a couple of kilometres from the water – in other words in the woods. In a wooded environment, we can suggest that the Mesolithic communities understood the woods intimately, in terms of both the physical and spiritual properties of the woods, properties not straightforward to separate analytically. The excavations of the fishing traps on the River Liffey (Fig. 11.1) have provided evidence for the coppicing

of trees (McQuade & O'Donnell 2007). The evidence for coppicing does not need to be portrayed in terms of woodland management – of a distinction between the cultured woods and the natural woods – instead, the coppiced woodland highlights the enmeshment of the Mesolithic communities' in the landscape. As the communities created space for the woods to flourish, and flourish in a manner aptly suited to their needs, the constructed woodland in turn structured the inhabitation of the communities in the landscape – these constructed spaces were returned to over generations, long after the initial creators had passed.

### Piecing together the fragments

I began this paper by looking at the platforms and other constructions of the Mesolithic landscapes as personalities, arguing that to view them as such can obviate the necessity to interpret them in light of monumentality or economic functionality. Rather, as personalities, and from a taskscape perspective where the animate and inanimate are inextricably linked, the division lines between persons, objects, and places are blurred; the construction of all these unfold in a continual process of creation and recreation. I then turned to fieldwork carried out at Lough Allen, where the evidence for platforms is uncertain, and no other constructions have been identified. Instead, my fieldwork noted dozens of lithic scatters along the shore, which have been interpreted as constructed spaces and places in the Mesolithic landscape – as evidence of the communities of practice, with signs of local and non-local lithic raw materials being used. Looking at the taskscapes at the water's edge at Lough Allen, we can see that the waters and the woods are not two diametrically opposed parts of the landscape, as my fieldwork survey could have implicated. Rather, together they were the dwelling place of the communities. Not only are the woodland and waters not opposed, but the Shannon system would have consisted of floodplain forests (Brown 1997), with the division of the land between the troughs of wetland and the peaks of dryland, and the seasonal fluctuation of the water levels changing the border zone, as well as the longer term fluctuations of the water levels over the course of centuries. I have argued that the Mesolithic communities

were actively involved in the construction of their landscapes, and this in turn enabled and constrained a use of the landscape. These two aspects, the constructions and the constructed spaces, formed a continuum in the Mesolithic landscape and only appear truncated in our landscape.

This brings us back to Sherratt's comments cited earlier, of the Romantic and Enlightenment influences on landscape archaeology. Sherratt noted that the Romantic tradition studies landscape for the sake of the landscape, whereas the Enlightenment tradition takes an invasive approach. While I aligned myself with the Romantic tradition, I suggest that in dealing with the Mesolithic archaeology a landscape approach without an 'invasive' element limits what can be said. In the case of Lough Allen, what is needed is a long term, multidisciplinary project involving geological and palaeoenvironmental research coupled with surface and geophysical surveys, and targeted excavations which would bring together the evidence from the shores and hinterland of the lake. This would allow the apparently truncated landscape to be seen holistically at both a micro and macro scale.

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