In the townland of Drimmeen, about two miles north of Broadford on the west side of the road to Ballyke, is a field known locally as 'The Castle Field.' An archaeological feature in this field is referred to on the relevant Ordnance Survey sheet as 'Drimmeen Castle (in Ruins). The feature consists of an irregular mound with an irregular central depression. It rises to a height of 2.50 m. and covers an area approximately 15 m. in diameter (this is difficult to inspect due to the presence of coniferous trees and dense undergrowth). The field level, on all but the western side of the mound, is somewhat irregular for a distance of 12 m. from the base of the mound. The mound itself does not provide any obvious surface indication of the former existence there of a castle, though archaeological evidence for such does exist in the presence of two structural stones, one from a window, the other from a doorway, lying on the site.

The maximum dimensions of the stone from the window are 77 cm. in length, 30 cm. in width, and 21 cm. in thickness; the window ope is 18 cm. wide (Fig. 1, A-B). From the inner face of the opening, the stone slopes down 1.5 cm. in 11 cm., from which point it splay to a maximum width of 33 cm. on the outer face and downwards another 7 cm. On the inside the flat sill, which slopes ever so slightly, is 3.5 cm. below the level of the window opening. The sill widens from 20 cm. to 37 cm. at the edge of the stone. There is a hole 2 cm. deep and 2.5 cm. in diameter for the pivot of the shutter, at the left inner angle of the sill.

The maximum dimensions of the doorway arch-stone are 1.15 m. by 35 cm. by 30 cm. (Fig. 1, C). The curvature of the stone is such that the planes of the springing and apex ends of the stone are at right-angles of each other; the line of intersection of the planes of the springing and apex ends of the stones is 48 cm. from the former and 63 cm. from the latter. The maximum dimensions of the springing end are 35 cm. by 28 cm., while the apex end measures 25 cm. by 16 cm. The would-be exposed face and the soffit of the stone are smooth, but the other two sides of the stone (which were in contact with the wall) are rough-surfaced.

If, in fact, these two stones were at one time part of the castle at Drimmeen, and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise, we can learn from them something of the type of building it was. The window-stone is the bottom stone of a window that had an ope 18 cm. wide and an internal shutter. The stone is almost identical with one

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1 I am indebted to Mr. John Moloney of Broadford, Co. Clare, who informed me of this when I was inspecting the site.
2 O.S. 6-inch sheet 36 (15 cm. from S.; 21.5 cm. from W.); it is indicated by a small rectangle surrounded by hachuring on the 1920 edition of this map O.S. 1-inch sheet 17, marked 'Cae.' at Nat. Grid Ref. R.570.762.
3 The two stones have been moved in, beneath the undergrowth of the mound.
Fig. 1. ‘Móin na gCaoineach’ Tower-House. A: window sillstone from above and with cross-section (pivot hole projected); B: window sillstone, frontal view; C: doorway archstone, with end-views.
in situ in the north-west wall of a tower-house at Lissofin, near Tulla, Co. Clare. The latter window is ogee-headed and is approximately 70 cm. high. The stone from the doorway is from the right-hand side of an obtuse-pointed arch which was 96 cm. wide and 63 cm. high. The doorway in question may well have been an internal one since it lacks even the most rudimentary decoration, and may be compared to the internal doorway leading to the stairs at Roodstown tower-house, Co. Louth. In all probability, then, the ‘castle’ at Drimmeen was a tower-house. The mound that remains in ‘The Castle Field’ is approximately the same area as would be the base of a tower-house. The irregularities of the surrounding field may indicate the position of some features of out-buildings or of a bawn.

Tower-houses are a product of the Irish-Gothic school of architecture in the period 1450 to 1650 A.D. They are really fortified houses, the ordinary and typical residences of the Irish and Anglo-Irish gentry.” Examples of these multi-storied structures, which are very common in south-western Ireland, are to be seen at Teerovanana, Tuamgraney, Lissofin and elsewhere in the vicinity of Drimmeen. The full description of the tower-house at Clara, Co. Kilkenny, as given by Leask, indicates the external and internal appearances of these structures before they suffered the ravages of time.

We are fortunate that historical record exists concerning the tower-house at Drimmeen. The late Robert William Twigge, has compiled some facts concerning the site in question, which he discusses as follows when dealing with the castles of the parish of Killuran:

Móin na gCaoineach, in the north-east corner of Druimin townland was standing in 1790, but has since been levelled to the ground. Its site on the O.S. maps is wrongly named “Drimmeen castle.” It was built about 1590 or earlier by Maccon Mac Connara.

In the return of 1570—“Moyneogenagh garded to the quenes use by th’erle of Ormond.” Ormond wrote on 4 June 1570 to the Lord Deputy announcing its capture and adds “Moyneogenagh belongeth to one of the Marbymiers (sic) who latlie murthered a gentleman of the country of Lynerike, and thereupon did shonne me at my goigne to the west parte of his contrie.”

* (S.P.I. Eliz. XXX 5b. iii)

In the list of 1574. “Shida Mac Rory” (Mac Connara) is given as holding “Moyeugeenanagh.” It passed to his cousin Tadhg, in whose line it continued until confiscated by the Cromwellian Commissioners. Eventually it was granted to Henry Bridgeman.

The name Móin na gCaoineach derives from the name of the townland adjacent to Drimmeen which is now spelt Moanogeenagh; the distance from the tower-house to

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4 Td. Lissofin; Par. Tulla; Bar. Tulla Uppr; Co. Clare; O.S. 6-inch Sheet 35 (27.15 cm. from S.; 35.3 cm. from W.); Nat. Grid Ref. R.480.784.
6 Peter Harbison, Guide to the National Monuments of Ireland, Dublin 1970, p. 166 and figs. 16 and 17 (bottom left of section).
6 Harold G. Leask, Irish Castles and Castellated Houses, Dundalk 1964, p. 70.
6 Ibid., pp. 79-86 and figs. 48-51.
7 Robert William Twigge, “Materials for a History of Clann-Cuilein” (the eastern division of County Clare). British Museum Additional Manuscript 39261, f. 386. I am indebted to Miss Frances Crowe, B.Sc., H. Dip. in Ed., and Miss Eileen Kelly, of Porte, Ruan, Co. Clare, for informing me of the existence of this unpublished work, and to the staff of the British Museum, Department of Manuscripts, for their assistance while studying the manuscript in their charge.

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Moanogeenagh townland at its closest point is about 300 metres. There is no evidence for the existence of any castle or castle-like-structure in the townland of Moanogeenagh. Other versions of the spelling of the name of the tower-house are ‘Moinogianach’¹⁰ and ‘Monegona.’¹¹

Local tradition, archaeology and history give us the following summary:

Main na gCacineach tower-house in the townland of Drimmeen, Co. Clare, was built about 1500 by Maccon Mac Conmara. The building was inhabited for over a century and a half by various owners mainly the Mac Conmara and Bridgeman families.¹² The date of its abandonment is not recorded but it certainly post-dates the mid-seventeenth century. It was destroyed between 1790 and 1839. All that now remains in ‘The Castle Field’ is an overgrown mound and two structural stones from the tower-house.

Postscriptum: While this article was in the press, it became possible to inspect the top of the mound beneath the above-mentioned undergrowth. A length of mortar-bound rubble-filled wall, 5 m. long and 1.70 m. wide, now lacking both inner and outer facings, can now be seen. At right-angles to this are traces of a narrower (partition?) wall and along the south side of the mound a heap of rubble appears likely to contain a short length of wall.

¹⁰ This spelling is given by Eugene O’Curry in a letter dated 6th December, 1839 (Ordnance Survey Letters, Co. Clare). O’Curry states that it was “nearly destroyed” and gives its owner at an unspecified date, as Sioda Mac Róy.
¹¹ This spelling is that given by S. Lewis, Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, Vol. II (K-Z) 2nd edition, London 1847, p. 157, under Kilmurray.
¹² The Bridgeman family originally lived at Hurlestown House, near Broadford, until ejected by the Bentley family in 1649. T. J. Westropp, “The Bridgmans of County Clare,” J.R.S.A.I., 32 (1902), 100-182, states that John Bridgman of Great Dene, Gloucestershire, who was alive during the reign of Henry VIII, was a direct ancestor of the Bridgeman family of Co. Clare. According to E. MacLysaght, More Irish Families, Galway 1960, p. 92, the Bridgeman family were of Gaelic origin, the name deriving from the Gaelic family name O Droichid. However, in a letter dated June 22nd, 1973, Dr. MacLysaght states “The Westropp reference is supported by a number of others I have now found. I think it can be accepted that the Bridgeman of 20th century Co. Clare are the descendants of those who came from England in the 17th century.”