Miscellanea

Pygmy Cup from near Ballingarry, Co. Limerick

Registered as no. 264 in the collection of the Department of Celtic Archaeology, University College, Galway, is an unusual pottery vessel of Pygmy Cup type. Until recently details of its provenance and circumstances of its finding were unknown. However, the discovery of a typed note among the papers of the late Mgr. P. Hynes, who had been Professor of Celtic Archaeology in University College, Galway, at the time of the vessel’s acquisition (1939), showed that it had been presented to the collections by Micheál de Búrca, Achadh Lín, Baile an Gharrdha, Co. Luimní, thus indicating a find-spot somewhere near Ballingarry, Co. Limerick. Subsequent correspondence with an Mr. de Búrca provided more detailed information.

The vessel had been found early in 1939 during quarrying in a gravel-pit belonging to Patrick Mulcaire near Glenwilliam Castle, in the townland of Frankfort, two and a quarter miles south of Ballingarry, Co. Limerick. The finder was the late Denis Danaher, of Tiernakilla, Ballingarry, but unfortunately it was not until almost six months later that he brought the discovery to the notice of Mr de Búrca, by which time all traces of the find-spot and its surroundings had been destroyed. Apparently a shallow cist constructed of four (or perhaps five) flagstones had been found at a

![Pygmy Cup](image)

Fig. 1. Pygmy Cup from Frankfort, near Ballingarry, Co. Limerick.

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2 O.S. 6-inch sheet 37 (10 cm. from E.; 24.6 cm. from S.); Nat. Grid Ref. R.407.322; between 350 and 400 feet above O.D.
depth of about three feet when cleaning the gravel-pit (i.e. removing the topsoil before reaching the top of the gravel). The cist was broken up and the stones used as road-metalling, but it was reported to have measured about three feet by two feet. There was, by all accounts, nothing found in the cist other than the Pygmy Cup.

The Pygmy Cup (Fig. 1; Plate VII) was in perfect condition when found, but got accidentally broken shortly afterwards; it has, however, been expertly repaired. It is biconical in shape, the angle of the 'shoulder' being slightly nearer the rim than the base. Of hard, well-fired, heavy ware, the exterior of the vessel has a reddish, burnished surface and the interior a greyish surface. The plain rim has a very slight internal bevel. Below the rim are scored two deep and wide grooves around the vessel, and there is another such groove around the vessel's widest part. The base is very small and is concave externally. The upper and lower portions of the vessel's wall are both slightly convex externally. 5.9 cm. in height and 9.2 cm. in maximum diameter, it is 4.7 cm. in internal diameter at the mouth and 2.5 cm. in diameter at the base; the ware is 8.5 mm. thick at the rim and at the centre of the base.

Although clearly a Pygmy Cup of the biconical class, this vessel is unusual in many ways, not least in the simplicity of its decoration. Oddly enough, the closest parallel would appear to be a much larger vessel, apparently of the Food Vessel class, which was found with a cremated burial in a cairn-covered, stone-lined chamber at Annaghkeen, Co. Galway. With this strange globular vessel was a pottery disc (apparently a lid and perhaps made for a different vessel?) decorated in a more typically Food Vessel manner and of thicker, coarser ware, and also a small bronze dagger, a small plain Pygmy Cup with everted rim, a bronze awl and a small quartz pebble. The dating of this strange assortment of grave-goods is difficult, but the most recent suggestion seems to be that it dates to very early in the Early Bronze Age, perhaps to about 1600 B.C. Biconical Pygmy Cups, however, are generally dated somewhat later, having probably been introduced into these islands towards the end of the fifteenth century before Christ, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age.

The absence of any associated burial or artifacts with the Frankford Pygmy Cup is unusual, though not unique. A biconical Pygmy Cup discovered in March 1904 near Glenfies, Co. Donegal, was likewise found on its own, while other funerary pottery types found in Ireland, such as Food Vessels and Cinerary Urns, have also sometimes been found unaccompanied by burials or grave-goods. Such discoveries are sometimes thought to have been ritual deposits, although such an interpretation must generally be regarded as one reached faute de mieux.

Etienne Rynne

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4 P. Harbison, ibid., where the Annaghkeen finds are held to be "roughly contemporary with the Frankford hoard" which he elsewhere (Co. Louth Archaeol. J., 16 (1965-68), 90) dates to "the Copper or Early Bronze Age in Ireland"—see also P. Harbison, Prähistorische Bronzefunde, IX, 1, München 1969, table on p. 82 for dating of the Frankford phase of the Early Bronze Age in absolute terms.
6 J. Abercromby, Bronze Age Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. II, Oxford 1912, pp. 34 and 120, fig. 343—now in the Ulster Museum where it is registered as 531-1924 and is accompanied by a label in the handwriting of its former owner, W. J. Knowles, stating that nothing was found with it.

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“Kilmoe in Ye Barony of Inchiquin....”

The survey of churches in County Clare\(^1\) is a fine monument to the indefatigable industry of Thomas Johnson Westropp. In it he did not confine himself only to those ruins of which a written record remained, but also endeavoured to identify every site where a definite tradition pointed to the existence of a church. It is surely sufficient comment on this aspect of his work to note that when he finally laid aside his pen only fourteen of the numerous church-sites mentioned in the records remained to be identified.

The records used by Westropp were, for the most part, the Taxation of 1302-06 and an account of the parishes in the baronies of Clare in 1584(?) from MS. E.2.14 TCD. In the latter record he noted a reference to the church of Kilmoe in the barony of ‘Tullagh Idea’ (now Inchiquin), but he failed to identify the site.\(^2\) He expressed an opinion, however, that this church might have been either Temple na deirka (Kilkiedy parish) or Correen (Killinaboy parish), but it is to be suspected that his opinion was based on the circumstance that it was listed next to Kilkiedy in the record.\(^3\) In this instance record and tradition show both his guesses to be incorrect and indicate instead that the ancient parish of Kilmoe was almost certainly within the boundaries of the present parish of Rath, in Inchiquin barony, which together with Killinaboy, in the same barony, comprises the modern parish of Corofin. It could perhaps be described as one of those small parishes which were founded on minor civil divisions like iudha, or even townlands.\(^4\)

The ruins of Kilmoe church can be seen to this day in the townland of Maghera, a little distance to the north of the road from Corofin to Ennistymon.\(^5\) Here the road rises steeply at a moderate bend about half a mile to the east of Willbrook School. The ruins are indicated on the recent editions of the Ordnance Survey 6-inch maps, though the earlier editions indicate it as Magherry Castle.\(^6\) It is the Temppall A Chreagain-Bhusidhe mentioned by John O’Donovan in his Ordnance Survey letters on Rath.\(^7\) The townland of Kilmoe does not survive in the modern Ordnance Survey arrangement, but it is given a local habitation and a name in a petition presented in 1673 to the Commissioners for carrying into effect the Act of Settlement.\(^8\) The petition states that Conor O’Brien of Lemanagh, husband of the celebrated Maire Rua, was owner, in his lifetime, of Kilmoe, Cregganboy (Willbrook), Tonelegee, Gortnaglo, and Maghera, amongst other lands. It also places the ancient district of Kilmoe in a definite geographical perspective.

There is almost a total absence of information on this ancient parish. The earliest list of parishes which has survived dates to 1302, and it is not mentioned therein.

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\(^1\) *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 22 (1900-02), 160-180.
\(^4\) O.S. 6-inch sheet 24 (8 mm. from N, and 16.7 cm. from E.); Nat. Grid Ref. R. 239.877.
\(^5\) It is marked as a castle on the current 1-inch map.
\(^7\) J. Frost, *History and Topography of the County of Clare*, Dublin 1893, p. 394.
Apart from the 1584 list referred to above, it is not until 1622 that it appears, in an account by Bishop John Rider of Killaloe of "ye temporall lands 'anciently belonging to ye bishopricke and now made away in lease or fee farme by ye former bishops, or at least withheld from me by others: Kilmore in ye barony of Inchiquin." We learn from Bishop Rider that the church held one ploughland, yearly value £6, and that this was withheld from the bishop by "one of ye Bricns."

The burial ground belonging to Kilmore is located a short distance to the west in the townland of Craggaunboy and is listed amongst the exemptions under that townland in the Griffith Valuation of 1855. Unbaptised children were buried there even within living memory. We mention with regret that the Clare County Council used portion of this hallowed spot as a stone quarry during the 1940s, and the whole general area is now totally defaced, without a single item remaining to testify to its ancient usage. One might partly excuse this 'desecration' for the reason that the history of the place had long previously faded from local memory, for as early as 1839 O'Donovan discovered that many local people did not look upon the ruins in Maghera as of a church, despite the fact that some of them called it Teampall A Chreaigain-Bhidhe. Recent editions of the Ordnance Survey maps show the burial ground to the south of the present Ennistymon road, though the older editions accord with local tradition in placing it on the northern side of the road, in the area referred to locally as 'The Kyle.'

Judging by O'Donovan's account, the church ruins would appear to have altered but little since 1839. I have been informed, however, that some stones were recently removed to provide building material for a local farmer. The eastern gable, containing a fine semicircular arch, is still for the most part intact, though extensively overgrown with ivy. The northern and southern walls are now so severely breached as to make it impossible to fix the location of the doorway. O'Donovan's description of the ruins is as follows:

"It measures forty four feet three inches in length and thirteen feet ten inches in breadth having a breach like a broken doorway in the North side, a broken window near the east gable in the south side and a window in the east gable seven feet high and three feet eleven inches wide, square at top inside, but having its top and sides broken on the outside, so as to render it impossible to ascertain what its form might have been. There is a semicircular arch of well cut stone springing from both the angles at the east end, about five feet from the ground and closing over the window at a height of about fourteen feet. The side walls are about 15′ high and three feet three inches thick, built of small square stones."

MICHAEL MACMAHON

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3 P. Dwyer, Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the Close of the Eighteenth Century, Dublin 1878, p. 137.
An Ancient Cross at Askeaton?

In the series of papers which that remarkable antiquarian, Thomas Johnson Westropp, has published under the title "Notes on Askeaton, County Limerick," there is reference to the monument surmounted by a cross which is shown in the sketch (Plate VIII, 1) of Askeaton Castle and 'Abbey' included by Thomas Stafford in *Pacata Hibernia*. Although published in 1633, Westropp attributed a date "before 1599, probably before 1584"" for this old drawing. He also stated that the monument had disappeared and that "it probably marked the southern limits of the convent lands." But, in his account of the Franciscan Convent ('The Abbey'), he mentioned that "a bull had 'horned up' the graves in every direction" and that "the place was in a ghastly state of neglect." Possibly, in seeking the monument, he looked for a massive structure and, being preoccupied by the presence of the bull in 1886, failed to notice a very similar monument, perhaps then buried under brambles and furze bushes, at the very place which he had suggested as the site.

This latter monument is situated beside the stile which leads into the 'new graveyard' at the southern end of the convent grounds. The photograph (Plate VIII, 2) has been taken from the West and it has consequently the same orientation as the *Pacata Hibernia* drawing. The cross is erected on three tiers (the extreme limits of the lowest tier, the top of which is now at ground level, have been indicated in the photograph by two pieces of white cloth, and measure approximately nine feet across). The height, from the present ground level to the top of the cross, is approximately six feet. The cross itself measures 33 inches in height and 27 inches in width. The tiers, or steps, are roughly semicircular in their horizontal section, and the whole structure presents an approximately vertical surface on its eastern side. At ground level, overgrown by grass, there appear to be two walls extending eastwards, one on each side of the structure, and the space between them has been used as a burial place within recent times. The whole surface of the monument has apparently been plastered with a cement-like mixture, and it has developed cracks which suggest a masonry construction beneath. The cross has been painted to adapt it to its present function as a headstone on a grave.

Assuming that this structure is, in fact, that depicted by the unknown artist of *Pacata Hibernia*; and that the lower part has been buried as the level of the graveyard rose during centuries of use, its purpose presents a question. It seems over-elaborate to have served merely as a boundary-mark between the land of the friary and that of the Desmond Castle nearby, since an ancient wall already serves that purpose. If the adjoining side-walls extend to the same depth as does the monument (as indicated in the *Pacata Hibernia* drawing), then one might argue that they belonged to a small building such as a baptistry. Westropp cites the Four Masters for a statement that the Fourth Earl of Desmond founded the friary and erected a tomb in it for himself and his descendants. He was himself buried at Youghal, and it is possible that this

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was his proposed tomb, although one would expect to find it inside the church. On the other hand, the monument may have provided a mark, with a possible shelter, for travellers awaiting the ebb of the tide to cross the adjacent ford in the estuary of the River Deel. Local tradition tells of this ford ante-dating the Norman bridge which is still in use below the Castle. The pathway leading from it has only recently been resurfaced to provide a short roadway to the northern end of ‘The Green,’ on the west bank of the estuary.

DONAL T. FLOOD

Preserving the Round Tower on Inis Cathaigh

In 1816 Rev. John Graham, formerly Protestant curate at Kilrush, described the round tower on Inis Cathaigh as follows:¹

This tower was struck with lightening [sic] many years ago, and split for several feet from its top; it is however, not likely to fall for some time, and when it does, it is to be hoped it may be rebuilt in a permanent manner.

When John O’Donovan visited the island in 1839 the condition of the tower had deteriorated further:

At present there is a large breach in the north east side apparently made by lightning, and a split (rent) extending from bottom to top . . . . It is also split on the west side from within a few feet of the bottom to the top window.²

By the early 1850s it looked as if the tower would soon fall and the area would lose its most familiar landmark. Fr. Patrick Moran, Catholic curate at Kilrush, has described the severe damage which, it seemed, would shortly bring about its collapse:³

One side of it was rent asunder almost from top to bottom, tradition said, by lightning. The breach, three feet in breadth, went up nearly the entire height. Both stone and mortar were swept away. The top of the Tower also was much impaired—some of the foundation stones were displaced, and the general impression was that it could not stand another winter.

Fr. Moran decided that something should be done to save the tower and proposed to collect for that purpose in Kilrush. He also approached the Corporation of Limerick, who had some claim on the island. The Corporation, having discussed the request at a meeting, turned it down. However, an approach to Limerick Harbour Board yielded better results with a generous donation of £40.⁴ The motives of the Board in doing this were, in all probability, mixed—the tower was, after all, a valuable landmark to sailors in the mouth of the Shannon Estuary.

The repair work could now begin, and Mr. M. Morrissy of Kilrush was declared

² Letters containing information relative to the Antiquities of the County of Clare. Collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1839, Vol. II, p. 7, of the typescript copies produced in 1928.
³ Munster News, 26 August 1867.
⁴ Ibid.
contractor. According to Fr. Moran, Morissy “repaired the breach, finished off the top, and cemented and consolidated the entire structure.” In doing this work he used local stone which blended well with the older material.

Not all the repair work on the tower should be attributed to this period. In 1859 John O’Donovan wrote: “It is my opinion that the greater part of this [east] side of the tower was rebuilt, or at least, breaches made in it by lightning, patched up.”

Revd. Ignatius Murphy

William Smith O’Brien and the Teaching of Irish in West Clare

On 24 August 1844 the Limerick Chronicle reported that William Smith O’Brien had commenced studying the Irish language “in the original character.” It is clear that this was not a passing fancy because, towards the end of his life, we find O’Brien encouraging the teaching of Irish in some National Schools in West Clare which were under the management of Fr. Michael Meehan, P.P., Moyarta and Kilballyowen, and Fr. Timothy Breen, P.P., Kilkee, each of whom had a deep personal interest in the language. In a letter written in September 1862 Fr. Meehan outlined what had happened in his schools:

I have seven schools in connexion with the National Board of Education. In these schools, about two years ago, William Smith O’Brien, Esq., got up, under his own special patronage, Irish classes for the advancement of the old tongue. We all speak the Irish language as our mother tongue in this parish; this, coupled with the fact that the English is well taught in the schools (and, therefore, the pupils know grammar well), induced Mr. O’Brien to think that he would have some good Irish scholars very soon in this parish, and I, of course will, heart and soul, cooperate with this illustrious, noble patron, whose heart is as Irish as his ancient and royal name. He has sent me from time to time very many books as premiums for the pupils who are most zealous in their study of their native tongue. My dear departed friend, Eugene O’Carry, was delighted at this plan of ours to make the Irish a regular grammatical study amongst pupils who speak the Irish language well, and he sent me some elementary books to further the good work.

In Kilkee the Irish classes were taught by Fr. Breen, P.P., and one of his curates, Fr. Sylvester Malone, author of A Church History of Ireland. William Smith O’Brien went to West Clare in August 1863 to inspect the classes and see for himself what progress had been made in the previous twelve months. Preparations were being made for another visit when he died in June 1864.

Revd. Ignatius Murphy

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2 Munster News, 25 June 1864.
3 Munster News, 12 August 1863.
Pygmy Cap from Frankfort, near Ballingarry, Co. Limerick.

(Photo: National Museum of Ireland)

2. Large cross in graveyard, Franciscan Friary, Askeaton, Co. Limerick.

(Photo: D. T. Flood)