Miscellanea

TWO FLAT BRONZE AXEHEADS FROM KNOCKANINAUN, CO. CLARE

In 1971, Mr. James Hickey of Ivy Hill, Inch, Ennis, Co. Clare, discovered a pair of flat axeheads of bronze under a large boulder on his land at Knockaninaun.[1] The boulder, which was incorporated in the base of an old stone field-wall, was described by him as being huge, having a hollow on its upper surface and as taking "days to remove". The axeheads were found lying flat, side by side, under the stone and presumably constituted a small hoard. No measurements of the boulder were made at the time of discovery and whether the rock occurred naturally or whether it was a collapsed standing stone is a matter for conjecture. If the former, the axes may merely represent personal possessions concealed for safety, if the latter, then it might be argued that the hoard represented some form of ritual deposit. The lack of evidence on this point emphasises once again the necessity for prompt reporting of all archaeological discoveries to allow of scientific recording.

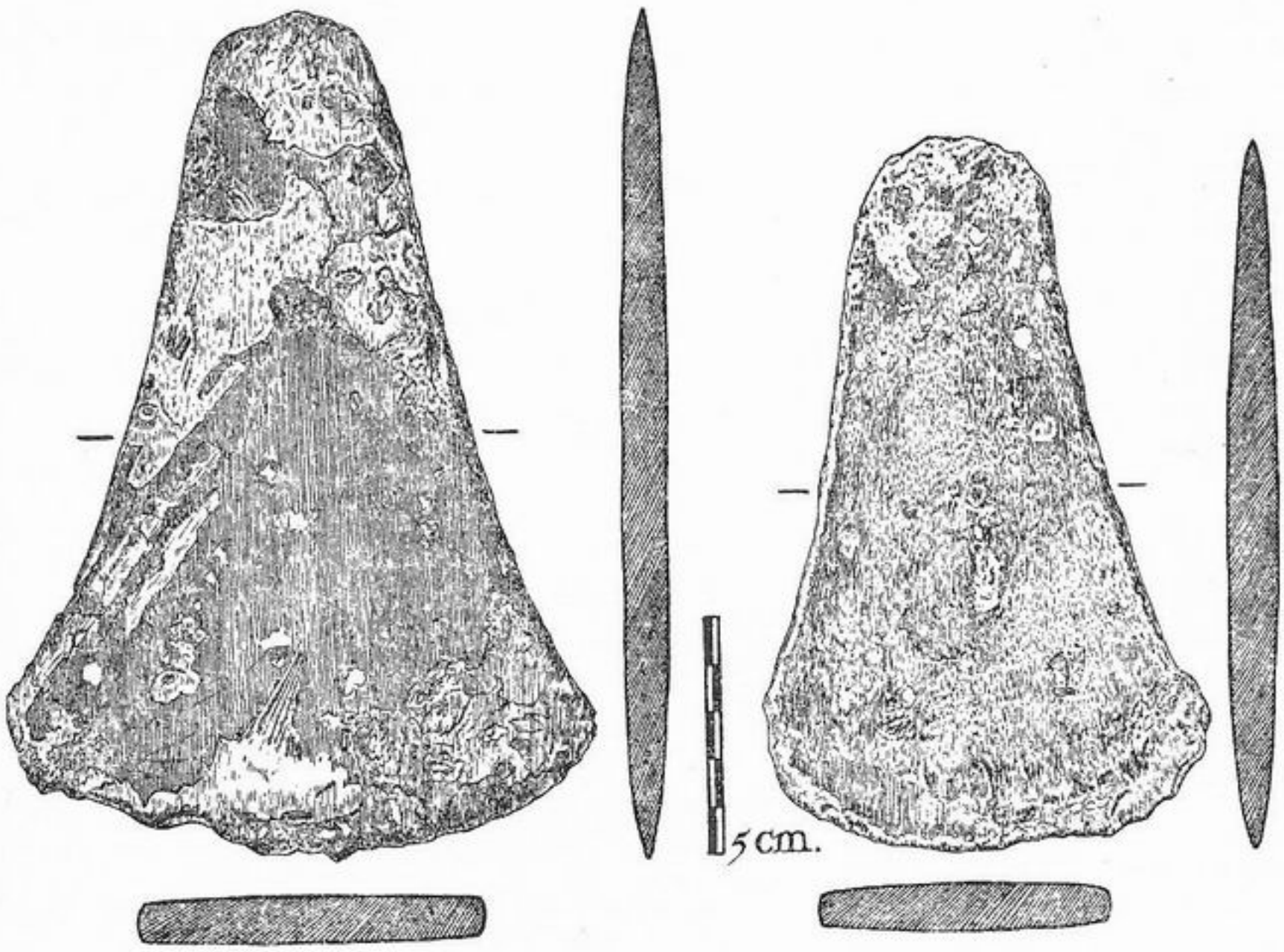

Fig. 1. Bronze axeheads from Knockaninaun, Co. Clare.

[1] Td. Knockaninaun; Par. Drumcliff; Bar. Islands; Co. Clare; O.S. 6-inch sheet 41.

The axeheads were retained as curios by Mr. Hickey until, four years later, they were acquired by the National Museum of Ireland where they are registered as 1975: 227 and 228. When received by the Museum the axeheads were suffering from advanced metal disease, the cutting-edges were severely indented by pitting and few patches of the original surface survived. Corrosion was active under the patina. The specimens were drawn (Fig. 1), recorded and subsequently cleaned and stabilised in the Museum laboratory.

The larger of the two axeheads (1975:227) is thin-butted with slightly concave sides and somewhat asymmetrical, convex cutting-edge. It is roughly rectangular in cross-section and thin, pointed-oval in long-section. The cutting-edge is damaged as a result of metal disease as described above. It measures 17.7 cm. in length; 12.5 cm. in width at the cutting-edge, and 3.2 cm. at the butt; 1.0 cm. in maximum thickness. The smaller axehead (1975:228) is similar in shape and proportions to the former, except that the cutting-edge is not as widely splayed and even less of the original surface survives. In addition to heavy pitting, occasional concretions occurred bonded to the surface with corrosion products. It measures 15.1 cm. in length; 9.49 cm. in width at the cutting-edge, and 3.7 cm. at the butt; 1.0 cm. in maximum thickness.

Samples of metal from each axehead have been analysed in the State Laboratory and the results may be tabulated as follows:

	Cu (Copper) %	Pb (Lead) %	Sn (Tin) %	As (Arsenic) %	Zn (Zinc) %	Ag (Silver) %	Sb (Antimony) %
1975:227	86.00	0.12	3.10	3.75	0.013	0.23	0.36
1975:228	91.00	0.17	3.50	0.35	0.03	0.29	0.40

There seems no doubt that tin was deliberately added to the metal to improve hardness; the relatively high concentration of arsenic in the larger axehead (3.75%) need not, however, have been deliberately contrived, although the presence of that element also has a hardening effect as well as enhancing the casting properties of the alloy. Arsenical ores were widely used in the Irish Early Bronze Age.

The thin-butted flat axeheads from Knockaninaun are of a general type[2] relatively common in the Earlier Bronze Age in Ireland—they belong to the sub-group termed "Type Killaha" by Harbison.[3] A small number has been found in association with other material—most notably in the Killaha hoard with a dagger and a halberd of Harbison's Type Breaghwy—suggesting a dating in a developed phase of the Earlier Bronze Age in Ireland.[4] In older conventional chronologies this would have been regarded as shortly before the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C., though modern developments in radiocarbon dating suggest that these estimates may be too young.

Although a hoard, the Knockaninaun axeheads add relatively little to our knowledge of Bronze Age chronology since both axes are of the same type. Hoards containing nothing but axes are fairly common in the Earlier Bronze Age in Ireland—

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[2] H. Case, *Palaeohistoria*, 12 (1966), 150-152.
[3] P. Harbison, *The Axes of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland*, Munich 1969, p. 24.
[4] Harbison, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78, with refs.

upwards of twenty are known--and the Knockaninaun find is a welcome addition to this list.

* * * *

The National Museum is indebted to the State Chemist, Mr. P. C. Walsh, and to Mr. Michael Norton, Analyst, State Laboratory, for the analyses of the axeheads.

MICHAEL RYAN

SOUTERRAIN IN THE TOWNLAND OF AHENNY, CO. TIPPERARY

The souterrain (Fig. 2) is situated in a field immediately west of the village of Ahenny, about 200 metres NNW of the well-known high crosses (O.S. 6-inch Sheet 79, 14.5 cm. from the northern margin and 43.5 cm. from the eastern margin). It is orientated on a SSE by NNW axis, and slopes downwards slightly from north to south.

Entry was gained to the souterrain by the removal of one of the large roof-slabs which was exposed immediately under the level of the top-sod. It has two chambers visible with connecting passages. There is no collapse in either chamber and both are in very good condition and extremely well constructed. The walls of the entire structure, except for the passage between Chambers I and II, are built of orthostats with dry-stone walling which is corbelled inwards and roofed by large slabs.

Chamber I is 1.70 m. high at its highest point, and is about 2 m. wide by 3.50 m. long. At the west end of the chamber, about 1 m. above the present floor level, there is a small blocked passage about 45 cm. high and 50 cm. wide. This passage appears to run slightly upwards towards the ground surface, and could possibly be some type of storage recess. The entrance to the passage from Chamber I to Chamber II has a lintel which rests on a jamb-stone at the west side and on an orthostat at the east side. The passage itself has been hewn through rock outcrop. At each end of the chamber there are flagstones which rise from the lintels over the passages to meet with the lintels of the roof. Chamber II is constructed in a similar manner to Chamber I. It is just less than 2 m. wide at its widest point and is 3.50 m. long and 1.25 m. high. A further passage leads southwards from Chamber II. This passage consists of two pairs of jambs and lintels with an unlined area of boulder clay between. The roof of the passage is covered with a slab which overlies the lintels. This passage leads to a wider and more extensive gallery which is now completely blocked with collapse.

There are no visible signs of an earthwork or other type of enclosure around the site; it is just possible that the souterrain may have had some connection with the nearby monastic settlement at Ahenny.

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We would like to thank Mr. Louis Feeley and Mr. James Wall, Clerks of Works, Kilkenny, for having shown us the site and for reporting its discovery to the National Parks and Monuments Branch, Office of Public Works, Dublin.

P. DAVID SWEETMAN and MUIRIS DE BUITLÉIR

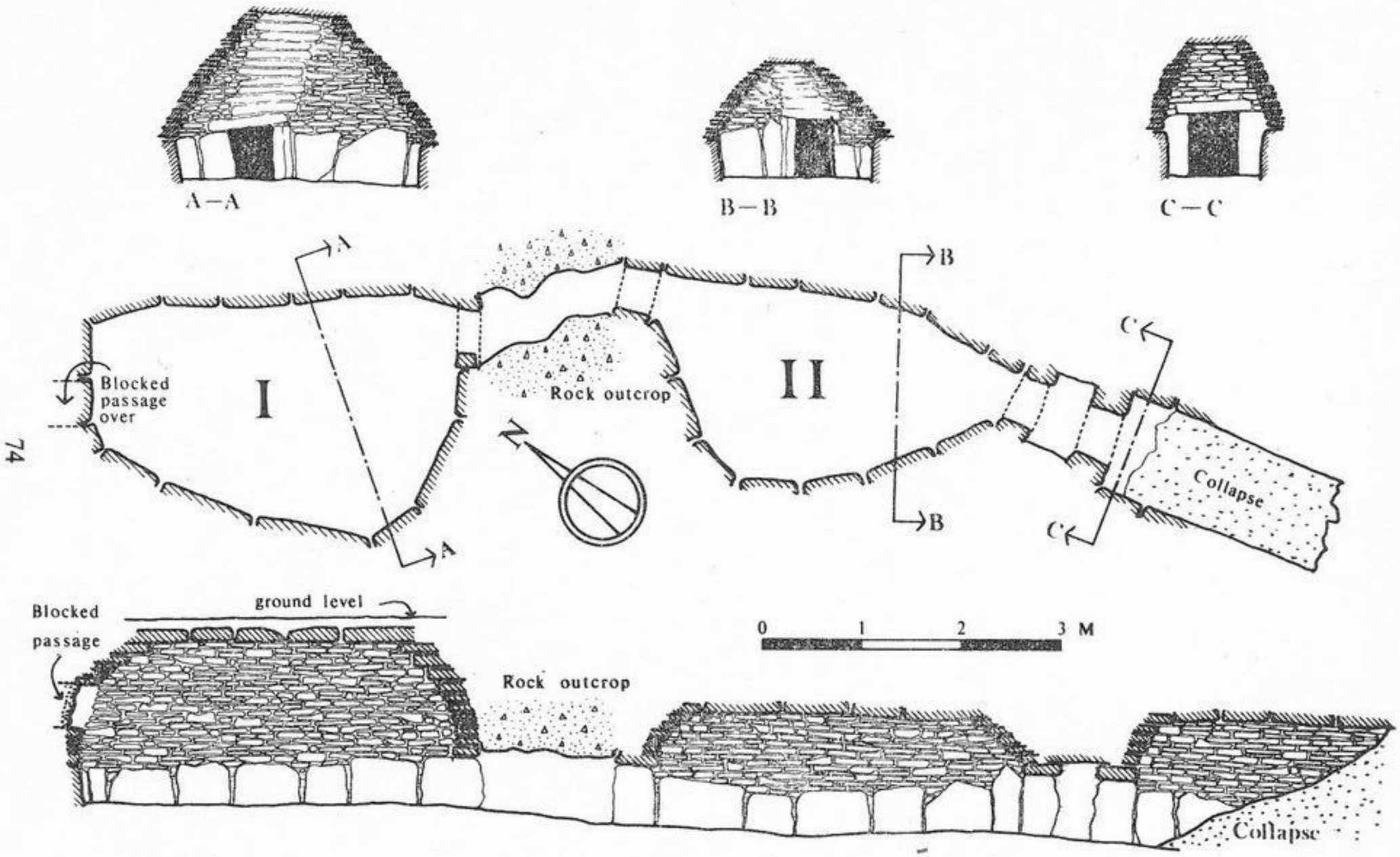

Fig. 2. Souterrain at Ahenny, Co. Tipperary

SHEELA-NA-GIG AT CLENAGH CASTLE, CO. CLARE

An Irish Sheela-na Gig that has been published,[1] but never illustrated, is the figure found on a quoin-stone in Clenagh Castle, Lower Bunratty, Co. Clare. The castle,[2] an enormous Tower House of 15/16th century appearance, now forms part of a large farm behind Shannon Airport, but the Sheela, although set only a few feet (85 cm.) above the ground, never seems to have been interfered with, and it has suffered nothing from the addition of a shed or lean-to, now adjoining the castle and used for storing farming implements. Judging from its position on a quoin it is likely to be original in its setting, and thus contemporary with the castle.

A number of Sheelas in Ireland are inserted sideways—standing figures are generally employed horizontally—but the Clenagh Castle quoin shows a squatting figure in vertical position, a female of very curious appearance with thin, spindly legs widely splayed and set at right-angles to the body before bending at the knees, and with the feet pointing outwards (Plate VI). The arms are joined, without any clear indication of hands, around a depression of almond shape indicating the genitalia. The breasts are barely discernible. The whole is more like a "sign" than a representation of an actual woman, but whether this is due to poor craftsmanship, or—perhaps more likely—may be explained from the date suggested by the setting, during a period when medieval beliefs in Sheela-na-Gigs may have been on the wane, is uncertain.

A wide groove-like depression outlines the face and neck, growing shallow by the shoulders and continuing into the merely incised outline of body and legs. This hood-like contour occurs elsewhere in connection with Sheela figures: for instance, it is very characteristic of a carving by the door of Blackhall Castle, near Calverstown, Co. Kildare.[3] The measurements of the Clenagh figure are 50 cm. in height and 37 cm. in maximum width.

A parallel to the Clenagh figure, as pointed out already in its original publication in 1937, is near to hand. It is the Sheela-na-Gig set in the casement of a south window in the Great Hall of Bunratty Castle, inserted there some years ago during restoration of the castle, after removal from the inner reveal of a window at the top of the SW tower.[4] Like the Clenagh figure, the Bunratty Sheela is squatting, with widely splayed legs and with arms making up a near circle as they pass behind and below the thighs to join in a gesture towards the genitalia, indicated by a slit. With its eyes set in hollow sockets, and a grim row of incised teeth, the Bunratty Sheela is the more serious conception, but the figures are alike in the unusual right-angled arrangement of the legs in relation to the body. In both cases there seems to be a tendency towards abstraction in the handling of the motif, perhaps agreeing with the late dates of the settings. An English figure may be cited as showing the same inclination towards

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[1] Dermot F. Gleeson, *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland,* 67 (1937), 128.

[2] O.S. 6-inch, sheet 51 (12.8 cm. from western margin; 29 cm. from southern margin.

[3] E. Guest, *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland,* 66 (1936), 111, Pl. X, 8.

[4] Information kindly supplied by the late Mr. John Hunt: "The Bunratty sheela was placed in its present position at my suggestion during the restoration of the castle . . . As it was re-used as building stone, and the tower it came from is first half seventeenth century, it might be any time before this date. Myself I lean towards a date between 1300 and 1500" (Letter to the author, Sept. 1972).

pattern-making; it is found on a slab above the entrance to the Elizabethan stables (now tea-room) of Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, and it appears like a humorous distortion of a female with her legs raised behind her ears and her arms seemingly growing out of her legs and joined in a gesture towards the genitalia, the whole forming a horseshoe-like pattern. Once again pattern-making seems to be associated with a late date and a lack of serious belief in the employment of the Sheela motif, something which could also be said for the alleged Sheela on Bishop Wellesley's tomb from Great Connell Abbey, Co. Kildare, which can most probably be dated to about 1526-28.[5]

It seems reasonable to regard the Clenagh Sheela-na-Gig as having been modelled upon the Bunratty figure, a somewhat more naturalistic conception. The similarity, however, is so striking that the figures are hardly far apart in time, probably separated by less than a century.

The Clenagh Castle Sheela belongs to a series of no less than nine examples, Irish and English, which can be assembled from among carvings still existing *in situ* to show how consistently Sheelas for some centuries were employed on quoins.[6] Possibly one could deduce a purpose for Sheelas from such a consistent practice, presumably a protective one, perhaps to do with the guarding or "blinding" of a building at a vulnerable point. It is clear, furthermore, that whatever role the Sheelas played on buildings their function did not depend upon their height above the ground: a number of castle Sheelas have been inserted surprisingly high up, but, as the Clenagh figure demonstrates, whatever powers may have been attributed to Sheelas could equally well be exercised from near the ground.

JORGEN ANDERSEN

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[5] Now preserved in Kildare Cathedral, *cf.* J. Hunt, *J. Kildare Archaeol. Soc.*, 15:5 (1975-76), 490-492, Pl. 4.

[6] See chapter X, "Figures on Quoins", in the author's forthcoming book, *The Witch on the Wall,* for further discussion of this use. Other Irish examples on quoins are at Ballyfinboy Castle, Co. Tipperary; Doon Castle, Co. Offaly; Clomantagh Castle, Co. Kilkenny; Kiltinane Church, Co. Tipperary; Malahide "Abbey", Co. Dublin; Tullavin Castle, Co. Limerick. Even the carving from Lavey, Co. Cavan, appears to have had this function, although that is obscured by the way it is often reproduced (see, for instance, fig. 51 in Helen Hickey, *Images of Stone,* Belfast 1976, where a large portion of the right half of the stone is left out and the figure only illustrated). From English churches may be added examples at Fiddington Church in Somerset, and Copgrove, in West Riding, Yorkshire.

STONE HEAD FROM KILLILAGH, CO. CLARE

Lying loose for many years in the old churchyard of Killilagh, near Doolin, Co. Clare,[1] was a most unusual and particularly fine piece of sculpture (Plate VII). Of limestone, this carving consists of a full-relief cleric's head projecting from a large rectangular-sectioned block of stone (Fig. 3). The head projects 12 cm. from the block which itself measures 30 cm. in length, 19 cm. in width, and 20.5 cm. in height.

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[1] Td. Killilagh; Par. Killilagh; Bar. Corcomroe; Co. Clare; O.S. 6-inch sheet no. 8 (13.2 cm. from the eastern margin; 28.6 cm. from the northern margin).

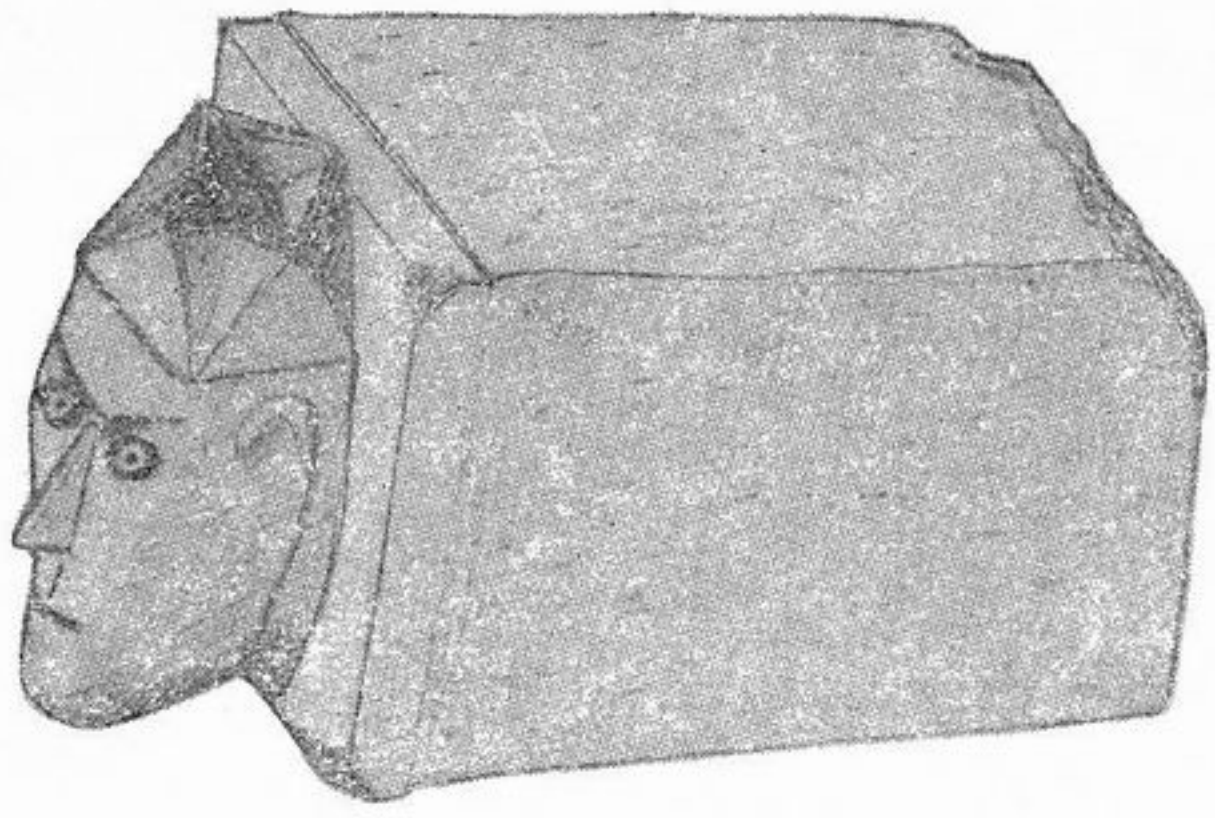

Fig. 3. Stone head from Killilagh, Co. Clare.

The head is 25.5 cm. high when the 8 cm. high headdress, a biretta, is included, and it measures 12.5 cm. in width from ear to ear. It has an almost straight, sharp nose (with nostrils), circular eyes with pupils indicated, straight eyebrows at a slight angle to one another, a thin straight mouth, a long upper lip, ears that are represented by projecting C-shapes placed on their sides, and what may be intended to represent a collar (particularly if viewed from below) around the neck.

The background to the head is smoothly finished, as also is the first 2.5 cm. immediately behind it; otherwise the block is but roughly dressed. The flat top of the block is rabbeted to a depth of 2 mm. and a width of 2.5 cm. behind the head, while the bottom, again for a width of 2.5 cm. behind the head, projects downwards for a depth of 4 mm. From this it would appear that all but 2.5 cm. of the block was originally set, corbel-like, into a wall, with carefully-fitted dressed stones both above and below it.

Neither the very striking appearance which the tightly closed mouth, thin straight nose, severe eyebrows and staring eyebrows lend this head, nor the use of this type of biretta[2] as headdress, can be paralleled elsewhere in Irish sculpture of the period. The circular eyes with their pupils represented by deep depressions (thus giving the eyes a ring-like appearance) can be paralleled in a few instances, most notably on a carving of Our Lady in a crucifixion scene from a tomb-chest now in the Carmelite Priory, Kildare, which has been dated to the second half of the sixteenth century;[3] less close parallels are the eyes of the bishop incised on a slab in the Cathedral at

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[2] The biretta worn by a cleric carved over the gateway next to the Franciscan Church, in Galway, is of a slightly different (flanged), probably later type—the carving probably can be dated to 1649.

[3] J. Hunt, *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture, 1200-1600*, 2 vols., Dublin 1974, no. 83 (p. 160 and plate 233).

Kilfenora, Co. Clare, for which a date in the late 13th/early 14th century has been given.[4]

The church at Killilagh seems to date mainly from the second half of the sixteenth century,[5] and such a date would appear reasonable for the head.[6]

* * * * *

Some time in 1971 this important carving disappeared from the old churchyard. Enquiries made locally failed to reveal any knowledge of its whereabouts, and in an effort to bring the ever-present danger of such thefts to public notice and also as a possible means to recover the head, the present writer showed a photograph of the carving on "The Late Late Show" television programme on Easter Saturday, 1975, and also had a photograph of the head published in the *Clare Champion* of the 18th April, 1975. Shortly afterwards word filtered back that the carving was in the North of Ireland, and by December 1975, through the good offices of some members of the Antiquities staff of the Ulster Museum, the piece was safely recovered.

Rather than replace it in Killilagh graveyard where it would once again be liable to theft or other forms of vandalism, it was decided to put it on exhibition in The Burren Centre, Kilfenora, where it now occupies a place of honour.

ETIENNE RYNNE

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[4] *Ibid.*, no. 10 (p. 128 and plate 77).

[5] But see T. J. Westropp, *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 30 (1900), 287, where he dates it to the late fifteenth century.

[6] But see Helen M. Roe, "Faces in Stone", *Ireland of the Welcomes*, 12:2 (July-August 1963), 20-21, where in a caption to a photograph of the head (its only previous publication) it is dated to the fourteenth–fifteenth century, and a misprint ascribes it to "Killala Church, Co. Clare".

SOME FORGOTTEN CLARE FINDS

In reading through nineteenth century North Munster newspapers I have come across notices of finds which have possibly not been noted elsewhere. I have not however, done further investigations to find out if any of these objects found their way into museums.

QUIN 1862

We have not hitherto had opportunity of stating that a silver cross, beautifully modelled, of great religious and antiquarian worth, has been found in the ruins of Quin Abbey, Clare; and obtained as a favour, from the Jeweller in this city to whom it was sold by the finder, a youth who was employed in the care of cattle in the fields around. Digging or poking among the ruins he espied it in the debris below the ancient walls, and brought it into Limerick where it was cleaned, and ascertained to be a product of ancient manufacture, demonstrative of great excellence in metallurgical, medieval art. . . . It is silver gilt, perfectly solid, of much weight in proportion to its

size, and bears an exquisitely carved figure of the crucified Saviour, the prominent features partially worn, evidently by constant attrition. . . . The Cross, which is now in the possession of an estimable fellow citizen, worthy of its custody, was cheerfully purchased by him on the terms which were kindly named . . .

Munster News, 6 Sep. 1862

KILFENORA 1865

To the Editor of the *Munster News.*
Kilfenora, June 1st, 1865

Dear Sir—An article appeared last year in one of the local papers descriptive of a beautiful statue of the Virgin and Child, found in a bog near Kilfenora, on the property of Lord Inchiquin. Its height is 38 inches. It is carved in black Irish oak, and in a style that might contrast favourably with modern art. A few days ago another statue, but without the Infant, more antique in appearance, taller by 30 inches, composed of like material, was discovered by the same man who found the former, whilst cutting turf about six or eight feet from where the other was uncovered . . . The first of the statues thus revealed is in the possession of the writer, and at the earliest opportunity he proposes to present it to the learned and venerated President of Maynooth College, to be placed for some time for useful exhibition in the Museum attached to the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, of which the revered ecclesiastic is a valuable member.

Yours,

A Catholic.

Munster News, 3 June 1865

CLARECASTLE 1880

An ancient gold cross was found last winter in an excavation in the ruins of Clare Castle, of which the Queen desired to know the history. As treasure trove, it became the property of the Crown, and by the Queen's command the antiquarians have found out all about it. There is strong reason, they say, for believing that it formed at one time a part of the royal collection of jewels belonging to King Edward III, for it is recorded that he had among his jewels, kept for state preservation in the Tower of London, "a cross of gold which represents the cross of Jesus Christ, set with pearls, and cannot be valued". This description exactly answers to the cross found at Clare, for that had four large pearls, one at each transverse section of the cross, while the cross itself was most beautifully foliated, and the chain, about two feet long, was of the richest description. How this precious royal jewel came to be found in the ruins of Clare Castle is thus accounted for: "It was the common practice of our sovereigns in former ages to bestow on their children and grandchildren, as wedding gifts, rare jewels and relics, and as Edward III's granddaughter Philippa was married to Edward Mortimer, the Lord of Clare, and upon her marriage came to reside at the Castle, she, in all probability, had the jewel given to her on the occasion, and it was by her taken to the Castle, where it got lost. . . .

Clare Journal, 23 October 1880

LISSYCASEY 1881

Great excitement was occasioned a few days since at Lissycasey, between Kilrush and Ennis. Two men digging a drain near Lissycasey came across an iron-clasped chest of a very large dimension, and lying on it was a large sword. The men assumed that it was a coffin and conveyed the intelligence of their discovery to the police at Lissycasey police station. The box was opened by the police, and [*sic*] their surprise they found it to be full of gold coins of ancient date. The men claimed the treasure trove, but the police sent to Ennis for a horse and car, and escorted by a party of police, the box and sword were conveyed to Ennis station. Great excitement prevailed in the neighbourhood on the singular discovery becoming known, and the ill-luck of the finders in not making more gain of the discovery. On the sword was engraved the word "O'Neill".

Limerick Reporter & Tipperary Vindicator, 20 May 1881

ENNIS 1893

On Wednesday, while some labourers were employed at excavations in the disused Protestant Church, built on portion of the ruins of the old Franciscan Abbey, Ennis, the preservation of which has been undertaken by the Board of Works, they came on a strange discovery in a niche of the Church—the ossified remains of a cat; there is the skin on the body, most of the teeth perfect, and even the hirsute appendages on the face. From the position of the niche in a deep recess cemented over, the theory would suggest that the animal must have been built into it; but, whether in a moribund state or alive, is a moot question. In the interior of the latter-day church there is erected a mural tablet 215 years old. This will give an idea of the antiquity of the building that is now being dismantled, and which will [sic] be an addition to the old Abbey. The skeleton is in the possession of that lover of antiquarian lore, Mr. Charles R. Pilkington, Causeway, Ennis, who prizes it so highly that he says money would not buy it.

Munster News, 11 Feb. 1893.

REVD. IGNATIUS MURPHY

ST. CRAVEN'S WELL, NEAR ENNISTYMON, CO. CLARE

In the townland of Ballymacravan, about 1½ miles NNE of Ennistymon, is the holy well known as "Tobercravan" (Par. Kilshanny, Bar. Corcomroe; Co. Clare; marked on O.S. 6-inch sheet 15, 18 cm. from the eastern margin and 25.7 cm. from the southern margin). The field in which it is sited slopes downwards to the western side of the Ennistymon-Kilfenora road, and has been recently cleaned of scrub by its owner, Mr. Patrick Egan. In so doing, Mr. Egan retained the old holly tree which grows by the well, and also built a stone wall around it and the well (Pl. VIII:1) leaving a space for pilgrims to walk the prescribed "rounds". The well itself is protected by a whitewashed and mortared stone wall on either side, and is covered by a thin slab on which is an open box-like cement structure in which are several religious statues, etc. (Pl. VIII:2).

St. Craven, after whom the well and the townland are named, was a contemporary of St. Caimin of Ballykinvarga, near Kilfenora, who had a reputation as a curer of eye ailments, and local tradition has it that St. Craven, being so afflicted, called on St. Caimin to be cured. Having performed the necessary exercises [see E. Rynne, *N. Munster Antiq. J.*, (1970), 58], St. Craven was successfully cured. But, as the old sean-fhocal goes, "Is lia gach othar taréis a leighis" (*every patient is a medic after his cure*), and upon his return St. Craven, too, began to cure sore eyes; and to this day three "rounds" at his holy well are reputed to cure any eye ailment.

The Tobercraven "rounds" resemble rather closely those prescribed at Tobercameen. They must be performed on a Monday-Thursday-Monday rota, or alternatively on a Thursday-Monday-Thursday rota. Five Paters, Aves and Glorias are first said kneeling before the well, and then five decades of the Rosary are recited while walking slowly five times around the well in a clockwise direction. The "round" is then concluded by blessing the eye, or eyes, with the water, by taking three sips in the name of (1) the Father, (2) the Son, and (3) the Holy Ghost, and finally by crossing oneself with water from the well.

Our Hon. Editor, Mr. Etienne Rynne, has made the following interesting comments to me concerning St. Craven's well:

> It has oftimes been said that the great majority of Ireland's holy wells probably owe their origin to the pagan Celtic period. For the pagan Celt sources of water were often places of worship, and it would seem that instead of destroying them the early Christians merely christianised them, thus transferring the credit for whatever beneficial power they reputedly had from the pagan god to a Christian saint. While it is not possible to say whether Tobercravan had such a history or not, its traditional antiquity and its association with a holly tree, a type of tree sacred to the pagan Celts, may well be significant.

Eugene O'Curry, in a letter dated the 2nd November 1839 and sent from Kilrush, comments on the well to the effect that it was "called Tobar-na-Crabhain or Mac Cravan's Well at which Stations are still continued to be performed and cures expected" (page 311 of the Co. Clare Ordnance Survey Letters, *i.e.* page 110 of volume I of the typescript copy in the Clare County Library, Ennis).

PATRICK BARRY

NEWMARKET FARMING SOCIETY, 1831-1833

Although a good deal has been written about the commune at Ralahine, near Newmarket-on-Fergus, in the years 1831-1833, it attracted no notice whatsoever in the *Clare Journal* at the time. The newspaper does, however, refer to Vandeleur's financial difficulties in late 1833 and the subsequent bankruptcy proceedings.[1] But the commune is not mentioned.

About the same time as the commune was established, a Farming Society was set

[1] *Clare Journal*, 12 Dec. 1833; 27 Feb. 1834.

up in the area, called the *Newmarket Farming Society*, and its activities were fairly well reported. The inaugural meeting of the society was held at Mrs. Bowen's Inn, Newmarket-on-Fergus, on 29 December 1831, with William Smith O'Brien in the chair.[2] Sir Edward O'Brien was elected President while John Vandeleur (presumably John Scott Vandeleur of Ralahine) was a member of the committee. A number of resolutions were adopted, the second of which read:

> That the object of the Society be to encourage the improvement of agriculture in the district, by the distribution of Premiums for the best specimens of each class of stock; for the most skilful Ploughing; for the production of the best Green Crops; for Agricultural Implements; and in general to promote the introduction of the most improved methods of Farming.

The first public activity of the society was a ploughing match at Killulla on Monday, 19 March 1832.[3] However, there was some trouble because one of the land marks had been removed and eventually the ploughing competition had to be abandoned. The *Clare Journal* reported:

> We regret to be obliged to mention that in consequence of the misconduct of the peasantry, it was impossible for those holding the ploughs to proceed, of which 26 were entered . . . We would indeed regret that the Society were dispirited so soon, and we do hope, that they will exert themselves at the next meeting with becoming resolution, and effectually check any attempt at noise or disturbance.

In conjunction with the ploughing, competitions for horses and cattle were held in Newmarket-on-Fergus and these passed off successfully. Three weeks later the ploughing match was held again, this time without any trouble, but the number of contestants was considerably reduced.[4]

A year later a very successful ploughing match was held on the land of Mrs. Healy at Manus, with a military band in attendance.[5] The *Clare Journal* described it as follows:

> The concourse of gentlemen, farmers, and peasantry was numerous, and the greatest humanity and good will was to be seen, during the whole day. The Members of the Society partook of an elegant collation at the hospitable mansion of the amiable lady upon whose grounds the match came off, and afterwards dined and spent an evening of great hilarity at the house of Mrs. Bowen in Newmarket—William Scott, Esq., Presiding.

This is the last mention the *Clare Journal* makes of the Farming Society. It is remarkable that its activities coincided with the existence of the commune, raising the question whether it was in some way inspired by the commune or was a reaction to it.

REVD. IGNATIUS MURPHY

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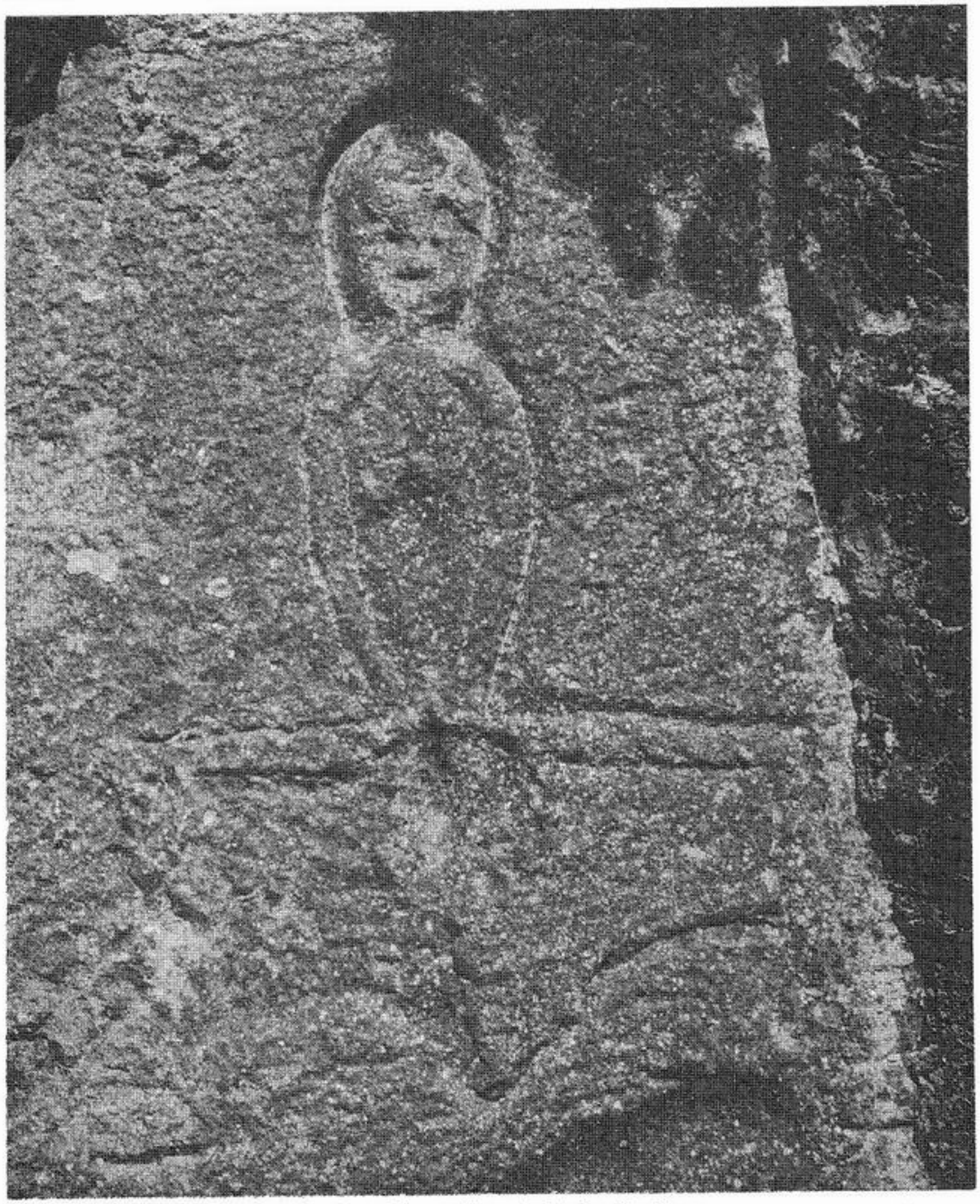
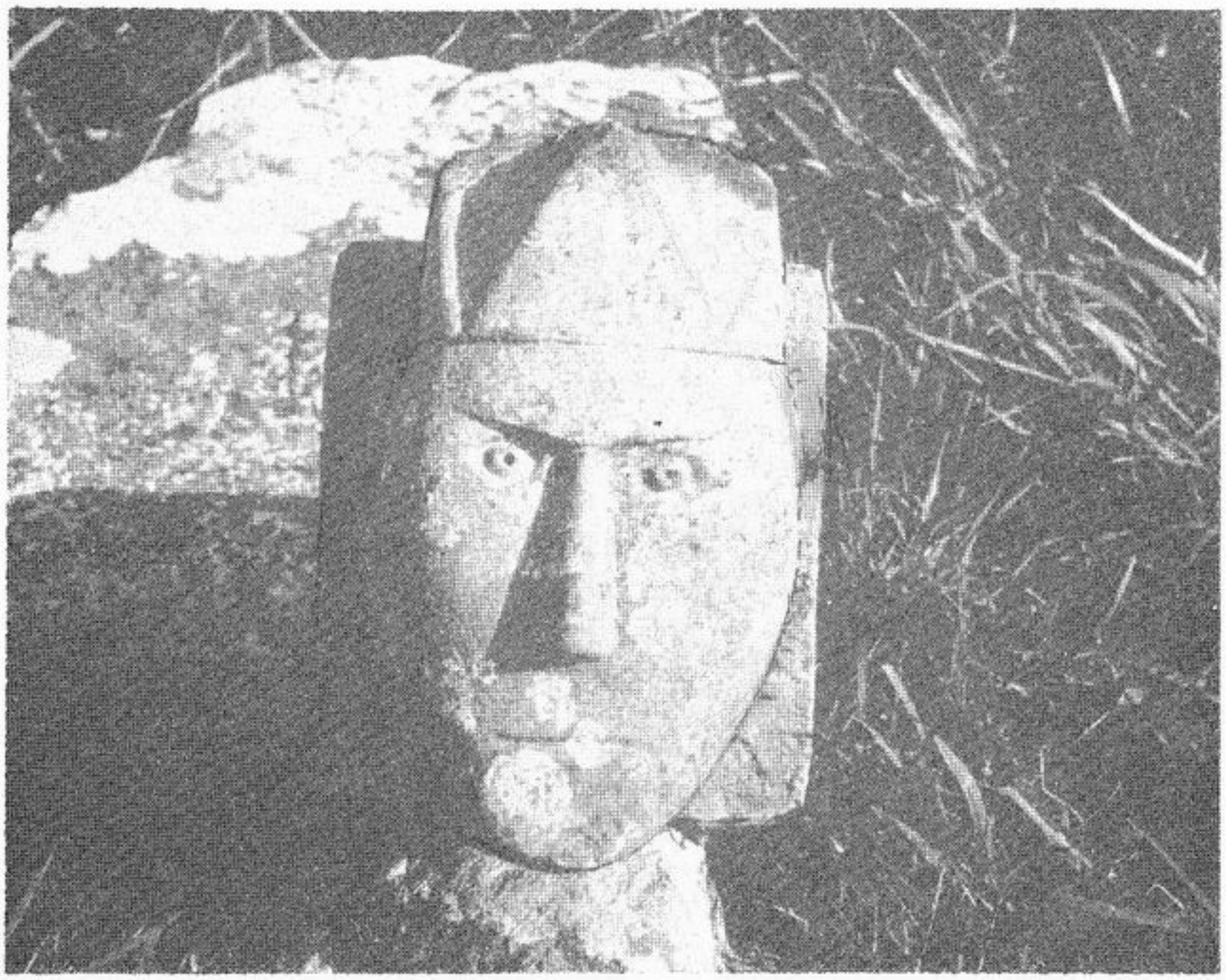
[2] *Clare Journal*, 22 Dec. 1831; 2 and 5 Jan. 1832.
[3] *Clare Journal*, 12 and 22 March 1832.
[4] *Clare Journal*, 12 April 1832.
[5] *Clare Journal*, 18 March 1833.

PLATE VI



Sheela-naGig at Clenagh Castle, Co.Clare

[*Photo:* Jorgen Andersen]



1. Stone head from Killilagh, Co. Clare [*Photo:* E. Rynne]

2. Oblique view of stone head from Killilagh, Co. Clare. [*Photo:* E. Rynne]

PLATE VIII

1. General view of St. Craven's Well, near Ennistymon, Co. Clare.

[*Photo:* P. Madigan]

2. St. Craven's Well, showing box-like structure containing religious statues.

[*Photo:* P. Madigan]