Miscellanea.

EXCAVATIONS AT LOUGH GUR, 1940.

During the summer of last year archaeological excavations under the Government's Special Employment Schemes were continued at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick. The work was carried out under the direction of Dr. Sean P. O'Riordan, Professor of Archaeology at University College, Cork, who had with him a staff of helpers, which included students of the Cork and Dublin University Colleges.

Readers may remember that the report of the 1939 excavations at Lough Gur dealt with the very important discovery of stone age houses on Knockadoon, the peninsula in the lake, and the possibility that these represented part of an early village site. Because of the great interest and significance of this discovery, the excavators decided to concentrate their efforts on sites on Knockadoon in 1940, and with the kind permission of the landowner, Mr. R. Ryan, T.D., who gave every assistance, three further sites were excavated—two dwelling sites and a stone circle.

Site I. was indicated by a small level platform, some stones around its edge, protruding through the surface. The remains appeared to be those of a small house. Excavation showed, however, that this was not the case, but that the site was much more extensive. The stones formed part of a series of low walls which were in general not visible above the present ground surface, and which had been built to give a terraced effect to the sloping hillside surface. A connecting wall joined two of these terrace walls, giving an enclosure within which were found several houses. These were revealed by the post-holes of the wooden posts which had been inserted in the clay of the ground surface, now covered by a depth of several feet of ancient accumulation of refuse. The ancient wooden houses were circular, the walls being carried by a double row of posts around an internal area of about sixteen feet diameter. In the centre of each house was a hearth with a rubbish-pit close by, containing pottery fragments, bones and other refuse.

The finds show that the history of this site began in Neolithic (late Stone Age) times, and continued into the early Broze Age. The whole of the area of this site could not be investigated in the season.

Site II. consisted of a small plateau or shallow valley on a shelf of rock east of Site I. The valley slopes gently to the southern end where there was a row of large stones forming a step about three feet in height. This gave a terraced effect to the slope, while another terrace wall had been built at the northern end of the valley; a revetment to the slope. On the western side of the valley was a stone-built hut of very rough construction, one wall being formed by the rock outcrop. The whole had an interesting appearance of a primitive house standing in its own field.

Excavation showed this to be of the Early and Middle Bronze Age, but showed also that, as in the case of Site I., the history of the site began much earlier in Stone Age times when several wooden huts of varied structural details had been built on the clay floor of the valley.

The third site is a stone circle situated on the west of the Knockadoon peninsula, consisting of two concentric rings of low standing stones about four feet apart, the outer diameter being about 100 feet. The space between the rings was filled with the remains of a stone bank. Excavation showed that the covering of earth within the circle was nowhere very deep, and that, in fact, the ancient builders had selected a natural rock plateau for their monument. Near the centre of the circle had been built a roughly rectangular structure marked by the remains of stone walls on three sides and by post-holes on the fourth. There was, however, no evidence of actual habitation within the circle, and there can be no doubt that this circle, like the larger example excavated at Lough Gur in 1939, was a ritualistic site connected with the ceremonies of a religion dating, as the finds showed, from the end of the Stone Age and the beginning of the Bronze Age times.

An interesting feature of the circle was the fact that before its construction a house had existed at its north-east side. The house was of very irregular construction, and built of wood, the post-holes of some of its supports lying under the bank of the circle.

A total of nine burials was discovered on this site, only one of which was that of an adult, the others being burials of children. The burials were found inside the circle, and outside it on the site of the house to the north-east, where the single adult burial lay beneath the remains of the house. One of the burials had with it twelve stone beads, evidently the remains of a necklace, while another had seven bone beads and a stone pendant, clearly showing that these necklaces were left in position at the time of burial.

When it is stated that the 1940 Lough Gur excavations produced over eighteen thousand fragments of pottery, as well as hundreds of other objects, it will be understood that no short account can fully deal with the finds, and that the excavators' work after the excavations, in classifying and studying the finds, is greater even than that which has to be done while actual digging is in progress. The pottery is the most interesting material found, and consists of various types of Neolithic wares, giving much new evidence of early cultural connections in Southern Ireland. Of special interest are the considerable fragments of "beakers," again sufficiently rare to be a novel product of Irish excavations. Other Bronze Age types were also found. Numerous flints, arrowheads, scrapers, and other implements, stone axes and axe fragments used as scrapers, bone implements, bone and stone ornaments, bronze knives, a stone mould for casting, Middle Bronze Age axes, and many tiny quartz fragments—parts of implements—were among the other finds connected with the main history of the sites excavated. Later finds made in the course of the excavations on Site I. which had been lost on the site at periods after its desertion, were a very fine bronze socketed axe with rope-moulded ornament on the socket rim, an Iron Age fibula—"safety-pin"—and silver coins of the 10th century date, struck by a Bishop of Northumbria.

In general, the excavations here give most valuable information on the early cultural and social history of this country. They have justified the hope of the discovery of an earlier village site on Knockadoon, but much work is still necessary to find the extent of this early habitation, which may justly be claimed to be one of the most important archaeolological sites yet discovered in Ireland.—*Limerick Chronicle.*

LIMERICK CITY MUSEUM.

Since the publication of the paper on the City Museum in the Journal for Autumn, 1940, the following are the most important items acquired and on loan :—

1. Certificate of Freedom of Limerick, 1746. Mr. C. H. Fitt, Corbally.
2. City Sheriff's Ceremonial Pike-head " " "
3. Late bronze-age axe and haft of socketed knife. From the Society.
4. Iron knift (Danish or early medieval). Mr. C. Halpin, Newmarket-on-Fergus.
5. Replica of the "Tara" Brooch (made by Johnston of Dublin). Mrs. Philip O'Sullivan.
6. Andrew Welsh's Limerick Journal. Vol. III., No. 46, August 11, 1741. (the second oldest existing copy of a Limerick Newspaper).
7. Biggs' Military History of Europe : printed in Limerick by Andrew Welsh in 1749 on paper made by Joseph Sexton of Limerick.
8. (a) Pike-head dug up inside City wall. Mr. J. Walsh, Mallow Street.
   (b) Old bayonet from Beagh Castle. " " "
   (c) Old Bayonet from near John's Castle. " " "
   (d) Sword-hilt from the Shannon near Tervoe. " " "
9. Charter of the Limerick Brogue-makers, 1688. Mr. J. D. O'Connor.
10. (a) Stone-axe (river-ford type) from Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. Mr. C. W. C. London.
    (b) Two 18th century Insurance Plates. " " "
11. 18th century Cavalry Sword, from Lough Gur. Mr. T. Moynahan, Holycross.
12. Mss. of Michael Hogan's autobiography and of his unpublished poem, The Snow-queen. From Sir Vincent Nash.
13. Two Rush-lights. From Mr. R. Gelston.
14. Set of 6" " maps of Co. Limerick. 1840 edition. From Mr. R. Gelston.
15. Stone-age axe from Killaloe. From Mr. G. F. Haskett, Killaloe.
16. Socketed bronze-knife. From Mr. T. Keane, Rockmount, Limerick.
17. Stone axe. From Mr. Cormac Halpin, Newmarket-on-Fergus.
18. Two-handled silver cup made by George Moore of Limerick (1768-1784).
19. Silver dish-ring made by James Warner of Cork (circa 1795).
20. 500 half-plate photographs of local and Irish antiquities. From Mr. J. N. A. Wallace.
21. Medal struck in honour of Colonel Vereker and the Limerick Militia when they defeated the French at Collooney, County Sligo, in 1798. From Mr. H. G. Hewson, Hollywood.
22. Holed stone-axe, apparently used as an amulet. From Killimer, Co. Clare. Miss N. Peppard, Limerick.
23. Photographs of the misericords in St. Mary's Cathedral. Mr. R. Hewson, Hollywood.
24. Set of the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. From R.I.A.
25. (a) Tanged bronze knife. Mr. Harty, Croom.
    (b) Stone implement. " " "
26. Rush-light holder or "suebogue." From Mrs. G. Molony, Adare.

—R. H.

INISCATHAIG.

As a footnote to my paper in the Journal (1940), it may be added that my attention has since been drawn to an entry in the old Grand Jury Book of the County Clare at the Spring Assizes in 1854. This contains a petition from the Grand Jury to the Lord Lieutenant setting out "that the islands in the Shannon called Scattery and immediately adjoining the Barony of Moyarta in the County of Clare before the passing of the 3rd and 4th Vic. Cap. 108, belonged to and was declared to be within the boundaries of the City of Limerick and paid the usual taxes assessed by Grand Juries in that City" . . . . "that on the passing of the said recited Act it was not included within the boundary of the City of Limerick." The Grand Jury prayed that the island "immediately adjoining the Barony of Moyarta in the County of Clare," which by virtue of the provisions of the recited statute "had become a separate barony," might now be attached to some barony in Clare, and the county cess applotted thereon.

It appears by a further note in the same source at the Spring Assizes in 1855 that the island was attached to the Barony of Moyarta by Order in Council or Proclamation of 13th November, 1854, made apparently in response to the Grand Jury's petition. My attention was drawn to these entries by Mr. Art O'Donnell of the County Surveyor's Office, Ennis, whose grandfather, Mr. Simon O'Donnell, was High Constable of Moyarta in 1854/5.

DERMOT F. GLEESON.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VISITING CARDS.

In the library of Curragh Chase, Adare, there is an interesting collection of playing cards, nineteen in all, the backs of which have been used as visiting cards.

Among the messages written on the cards are the following, typical of all.

"The family of Callows Complimts. to the family of Curra, hope they are all well & master better, the Bearr. Carries a few plumbs & ten pears, Mrs. Bateman begs to know if Mr. Wogan is come Monday Aug 9th 1762."

"Mrs. Mansell & Mrs. W. Mansell will have the pleasure of waiting upon the Bishop of Limerick on Friday—they are sorry they cannot have that pleasure to morrow" (undated).

"Capt. Borough presents his Compts. to Dean Perry, sends Buchanan's Hist'y of Scotland, but has not done with Hanway's Travels yet. As the Dean is going to Dublin begs to have Missions Travels. Wishes the Dean a good journey. Limk. 19th. May 1773."

"Mr. Westropp begs Mr. Hunt will send two bushells of wheat by bearer. July 22d. 1761."

"Sbr 23 1760 Mr Fitzmaurices Complimts to Mr & Mrs Hunt & desires to know how they are and if they are to be at home to morrow he intends himself the honour of paying his compliments and dining with them. Shannon Grove Thursday."

"The Brigadrs best wishes attend Curragh hopes all friends there are well & that Gentle Nancy is in good Health & Spirits, Mrs Carter will be a safe hand to send Mrs. Scotts receipts by."

Miss Grey, of the Print Dept. of the British Museum, writes that the use of playing cards as visiting cards in the eighteenth century was a common practise and the cards so used are said to be the origin of our engraved visiting cards. Lady Dorothy Nevill in *Under Five Reigns* (1820) wrote : "visiting cards, it is not generally known originated from ordinary playing cards which were used as such as late as the end of the eighteenth century. As time went on specially devised visiting cards with rather ornate calligraphy took the place of playing cards, and these, in course of time, developed into the small and simple pieces of pasteboard in use to-day." An example of the use of playing cards for messages is found in Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode*, pl. iv. (1745). No doubt cards had become cheap at this time. At the beginning of the century Swift complained of their cost, writing to Stella circa 1712 "Cards are very dear." It is interesting to find in Limerick an example of this forgotten fashionable custom.

R. WYSE JACKSON.

CHANCEL CORBELS IN THE FRANCISCAN FRIARY CHURCHES AT QUIN AND ADARE.

When the Society visited Quin last June, attention was called to the stone corbels in the north and south walls at the west end of the chancel. These are at such a height from the ground that they would appear to have supported a Loft or Gallery. The presence of such a Gallery in a ritual choir seems hard to explain, yet there are exactly similar corbels at the same place in the Adare Friary chancel. In both cases the corbels are clearly an afterthought, inserted after the walls had been plastered. The writer suggests in explanation that when the friars returned to their ruined friaries in 1641 their first step would be to reroof the chancel or choir—their own special part of the church—and that they may have put in a loft at the west end for their own accomodation until other lodgings were repaired and made available. Crofts for a resident priest were common in small parish churches.

R. F. H.

AN UNUSUAL PISCINA.

While examining the ruins of the parish church of Dunaman, near Adare, the writer came upon a peculiar piscina stone among some fallen masonry. It is a sandstone block about 12 inches by 6 by 4½ : one third of the length had been built into the church wall and was rounded on the underneath and ornamented with ribs like the fingers of a hand. The top was hollowed into a small basin-like depression with a rather deep angular channel leading back into the wall where there was a much larger cavity with a drain hole in the part of the stone inserted in the masonry. It would be well if this rather unusual type of piscina could be secured for the City Museum, as if left loose in the ruined church it is liable to be put into a grave. Indeed, all the dressed coign stones and voussoirs of the chancel arch have been taken away since Lord Dunraven wrote *The Memorials of Adare*. This church had a croft for a resident clerk or priest at the west end of the nave.

R. F. H.

SHEELA NA GIG AT BALLYPORTRAY CASTLE, CO. CLARE.

Some time ago a young man named Peter Cahill, Corofin, discovered a flat stone some 300 yards to the east of the ruined castle of Ballyportray, Kells, Corofin, Co. Clare (O.S. Map, 17). The stone had apparently been once incorporate in the castle building, but when found was lying face down in the grass, having been apparently removed therefrom. On turning over the stone a carved Sheela na Gig was found on the lower face. The stone is 19½ inches by 15 inches and the figure occupies almost the entire surface. It is carved out of the stone in relief and presents all the characteristics of such figures. A list of these appeared in the Journal R.S.A.I. (1936) by Dr. Edith M. Guest.

Recent discoveries of Sheela na Gigs have been made in Co. Clare by Sergeant Long at Bunratty Castle and at Clenagh Castle (N.M.A.J. Vol. I., p. 39; J.R.S.A., Vol. LXVII., p. 128).

The attention of Lord Clarina having been called to the stone by Mr. Joseph Scott, he acquired it from the finder and has presented it to the National Museum.

DERMOT F. GLEESON.

PROCEEDINGS, 1940 : THOMOND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the City Technical Schools on Friday, February 2nd, 1940. The following officers were elected for the year :—Venerable Archdeacon Begley, P.P., D.Litt., President; Rev. T. F. Abbott, B.D., and Mrs. O'Donovan, Vice-Presidents; Mrs. N. Stewart and J. N. A. Wallace, Hon. Secretaries; Mr. E. Treacy Hon. Treasurer. Committee—Rev. T. Wall, P.P.; Rev. M. Moloney, Mrs. O'Callaghan, Messrs. E. H. Bennis, D. F. Gleeson, M.R.I.A., D.J.; R. F. Hewson, and P. V Twomey. The reports and statement of accounts for 1939 were read and considered satisfactory.

After the ordinary business of the meeting, Mr. R. F. Hewson delivered a lecture on "15th Century Carvings in Limerick Churches."

During the year the following lectures were delivered :—

1. Nov. 30th, 1939. "The Books in the Reference Library," by Mr. R. Herbert.
2. Dec. 20th, 1939. "The Book of Invasions," by Dr. R. A. S. Macalister.
3 April 11th, 1940. "Inis Cathaigh," by Dermot F. Gleeson, M.A.,M.R.I.A.

The following excursions took place during the year :—

1. Tour of Walls, etc., during which a wreath was placed on the grave of Dr. Dan Griffin, in memory of the centenary of Gerald Griffin's death. 28th April, 1940.
2. Excursion to Killaloe, visiting the Cathedral, the oratories, and Beal Borumha. 30th May, 1940.
3. Joint excursion with the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society to Cashel. 30th June, 1940.

During the year the Society made the following purchases, which are on display in the City Museum :—

1. Bronze spear head from Belvoir Bog, Sixmilebridge.
2. Socketed bronze axe and the socket of a small bronze knife.

PROPOSED FORMATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION.

Are you interested in your own district ? Its art, architecture, geology, literature, natural history, topography, scenes of everyday life ?

In previous days all visual records were made in the form of drawings and prints, depending much for their accuracy on the persons making them. To-day the camera, with its accuracy and simplicity, places the correct recording of life within the scope of everyman.

The Society proposes to form a Photographic Section in order to make full use of the advantages offered by this simple form of record; the ultimate aim being a collection of photographs dealing with every possible phase of local life. Such a collection will be an invaluable one to members of the society or to any other person interested in Limerick and district, and will be a magnificent gift to our succeeding antiquarians. It will be housed in the Reference Department of the City Library and will be available to every member of the Society during the normal Library hours.

The district covered by the collection will be, more or less, Thomond, that is, Limerick, Clare, West Tipperary, North Cork, and North-East Kerry.

It is proposed also that the Section be open to non-members of the Society on payment of a small fee or on presentation of a certain number of approved photographs.

While the proposal is tabled for discussion at, and the formation of the Section will actually depend upon the decision of, the Annual General Meeting, it is suggested that persons interested would forward prints to the Secretary at the City Library. Already there is here, a collection of some 500 prints, mostly of local interest, on loan from a member of the Society. Every photograph accepted will either be put on public display or filed for immediate reference.

All persons interested are invited to write their opinions to the Secretaries or put them forward at the General Meeting of the Society.

CITY OF LIMERICK PUBLIC LIBRARY