

## Miscellanea

### A RADIOCARBON DATE FOR A BURIAL FROM ARDCRONY, CO. TIPPERARY

In 1977 this *Journal*<sup>1</sup> published a report by P. F. Wallace on a recently discovered burial at Ardcroney, Co. Tipperary. The discovery coincided with the initiating of a dating programme by the present authors in association with Professor W. G. Mook of the Physics Laboratory, Rijksuniversiteit, Groningen, in the Netherlands, the aim of which is to provide a basic radiocarbon chronology for Irish prehistory.

The burial was an important addition to the well defined and small but rapidly increasing number of burials of *Linkardstown Type*. These burials have attracted considerable attention and discussion, chiefly centering around their general cultural context and date. The burial was, therefore, a very suitable subject for inclusion in the dating programme. Mr. Wallace kindly provided a femur from the burial.

The date obtained for bone collagen was  $4675 \pm 35$  BP (GrN-9708), that is, around 3500 B.C.\*—calibrated according to the curve of Mook *et. al.*<sup>2</sup> A very similar result was obtained from another *Linkardstown Type* burial at this time: Ballintruer More— $4800 \pm 70$  BP (GrN-10469). Full details of both these dates, together with a detailed discussion, will be found elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The results, although unexpected, are of considerable interest as they indicate that these burials do not fall at the end of the Neolithic as many commentators had thought, but in the earlier part of the Middle Neolithic. These burials must have been contemporary with at least some court-tombs and indicate that there must have been at least two regional styles of burial. The absence of an easily recognisable cultural trait, such as court-tombs in the northern part of the country, has contributed to our lack of understanding of the Neolithic of Munster. However, recent work by Lynch<sup>4</sup> and the dating of the Ardcroney burials have opened up interesting possibilities for the study of the Neolithic of this region.

A. L. BRINDLEY and J. N. LANTING

<sup>1</sup> P. F. Wallace, "A Prehistoric Burial Cairn at Ardcroney, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 19 (1977), 3-20.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Mook, A. F. M. de Jong, H. Geertsema, "Archaeological Implications of Natural Carbon-14 Variations", *Palaeohistoria*, 21 (1979), 10-18.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. Brindley, J. N. Lanting, W. G. Mook, "Radiocarbon Dates from the Neolithic Burials at Ballintruer More, Co. Wicklow, and Ardcroney, Co. Tipperary", *J. Irish Archaeol.*, 1 (1983), 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> A. Lynch, "Man and Environment in South-West Ireland", *British Archaeol. Reports* (British series), 85, (1981).

### A ROMAN-TYPE FIBULA FROM THE ROCK OF CASHEL

In 1877, the Commissioners of Public Works deposited in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, through its Inspector of National Monuments, Thomas Newenham Deane, a group of miscellaneous objects found on the Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary. Included in the group were the following: a small brass lion, a 'spring fibula of the Dolphin pattern', a bronze pin with 'a small elliptical pendant attached', 2 pieces of 'bell metal', stained glass, an iron object, a key, some other glass together with a Youghal

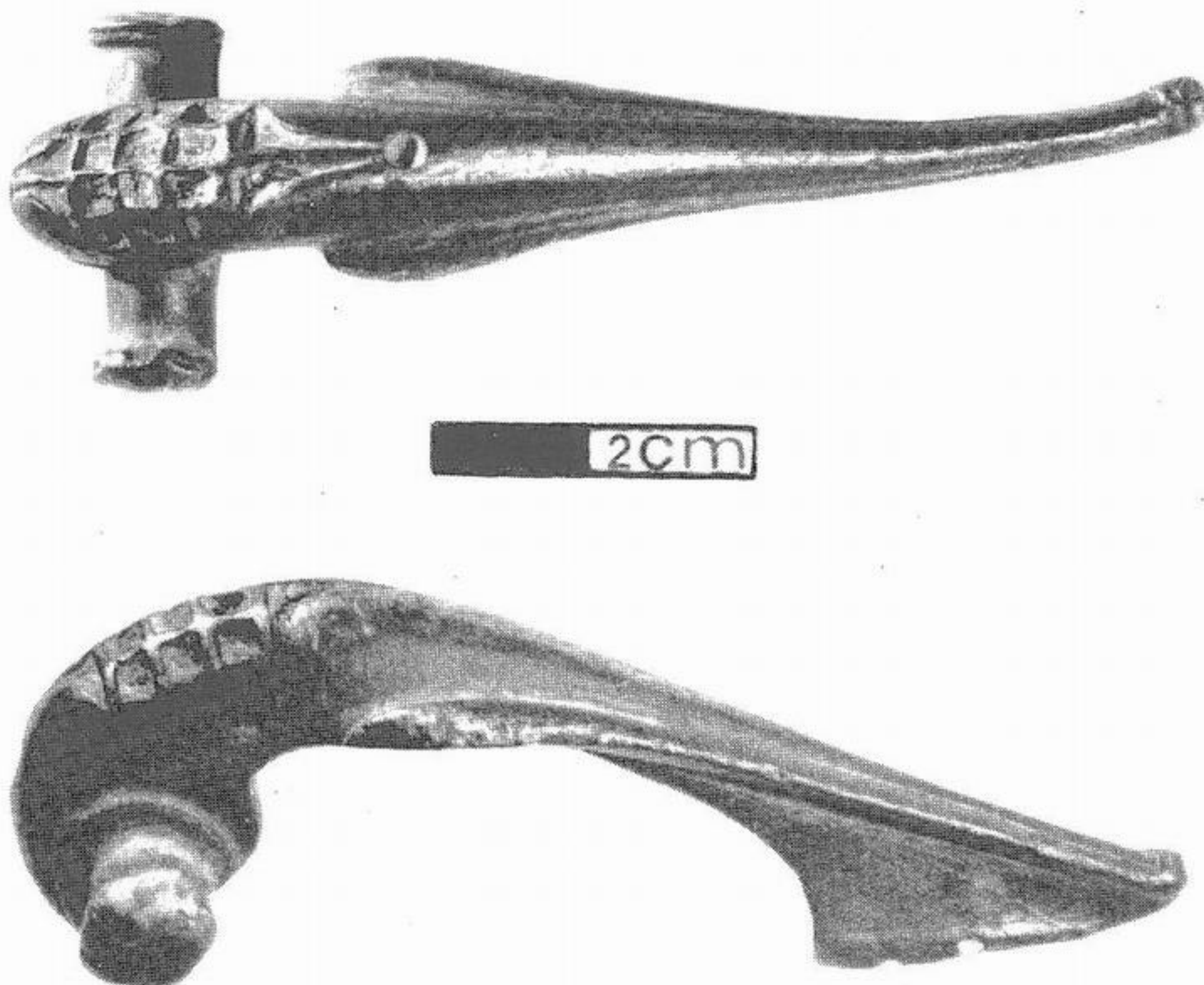


Fig. 1. Dolphin-type Roman fibula from Rock of Cashel. (Photos: National Museum of Ireland).

token and a Mecklenburg schilling. The lion, fibula and bronze pin were found according to the Register "in open space between Cormac's Chapel and main building of Cashel Cathedral".

The 'dolphin pattern' fibula has so far escaped the attention of various writers who have discussed other brooches of this type and related material. The discovery recently of an unnumbered dolphin brooch in the National Museum which conforms in all except one detail to that described in the Register prompted the present note.

The Register entry reads as follows:

1877:8 'Spring fibula'. Bronze-greenish—Pin and catch wanting—of the *Dolphin pattern*. Narrow extremity slightly curved—traces of blue opalescent enamel, in indented ornamentation on back. Perpendicular length  $7\frac{3}{4}$ ". Gt. W.  $\frac{7}{8}$ ".

The length of the bow at  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches is an obvious slip of the pen; the object in fact measures  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches. The width at  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch is correct.

The brooch is typical of the dolphin type (Type H),<sup>1</sup> with its bow humped over the junction of the arms (Fig. 1). Cast milled mouldings occur on both sides of the head at the junction of the cross-bar. The bow narrows and curves gently towards the end which finishes in a rounded moulding. Two lateral wing-like extensions to the bow also taper gradually towards the tail. The catch-plate is solid and one side of it is decorated with a



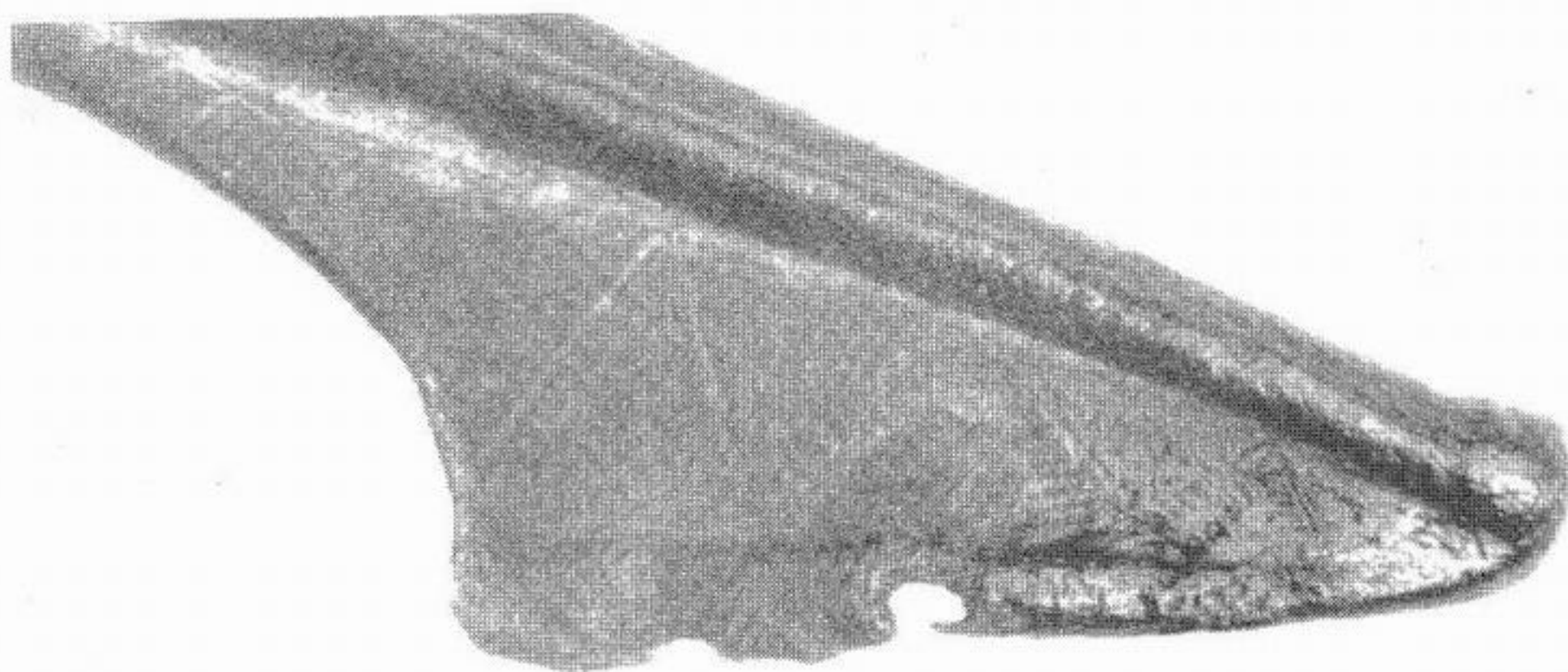


Fig. 2. Detail of catch-plate, Roman fibula from Rock of Cashel.  
(Photo: National Museum of Ireland)

double zig-zagging line (one of the lines is very lightly incised) infilled with hatching (Fig. 2). Along the narrow edge where the catch-plate springs from the bow is a row of tiny chevrons. The outer edge of the catch-plate is very damaged and has been turned back, making it unusable. The original register entry describes the brooch as a spring fibula. In fact it is clear that the fibula was hinged. The pin and the bar on which it hinged appear to have been made of iron and this is probably why the pin does not survive.

The upper third or so of the bow was decorated with blue enamel, traces of which survive in five cells. In some places the enamel has faded to white. The enamel was set into a rectangular area sub-divided into twelve small cells. At either end of the rectangle is a sunken roughly triangular area bisected by a median line, with at the apex of each triangle a small circular depression, all of which were probably also originally filled with enamel.

This example of a dolphin-type fibula is the sixth recorded from Ireland. Three were found at Lambay Island, Co. Dublin,<sup>2</sup> including one decorated with blue enamel in a zig-zag pattern. The fourth example is recorded by Bateson as coming from Co. Offaly.<sup>3</sup> Hawkes<sup>4</sup> notes that a dolphin-type brooch was found at Dún Ailinne, Co. Kildare. All apparently date to the later part of the first century A.D.

There is only one other object of Roman type recorded from the Cashel area. This is the oculist's stamp found at Spital-land, Golden, about four miles west of Cashel, and now in the British Museum.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately it is not possible to date this object.<sup>6</sup> While it is obviously not possible to reconstruct the nature of a settlement on the Rock of Cashel during the proto-historic period from a single find, it is of interest to record this fibula as the earliest dateable find from this historic site.

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood and Ian Richwood, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, London 1965, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> E. Rynne, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 76, C(1976), 240-241.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. Bateson, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 76, C(1976), 175.

<sup>4</sup> C. F. C. Hawkes, in B. G. Scott (ed.), *Studies on Early Ireland: Essays in Honour of M. V. Duignan*, Belfast 1981, p. 65.

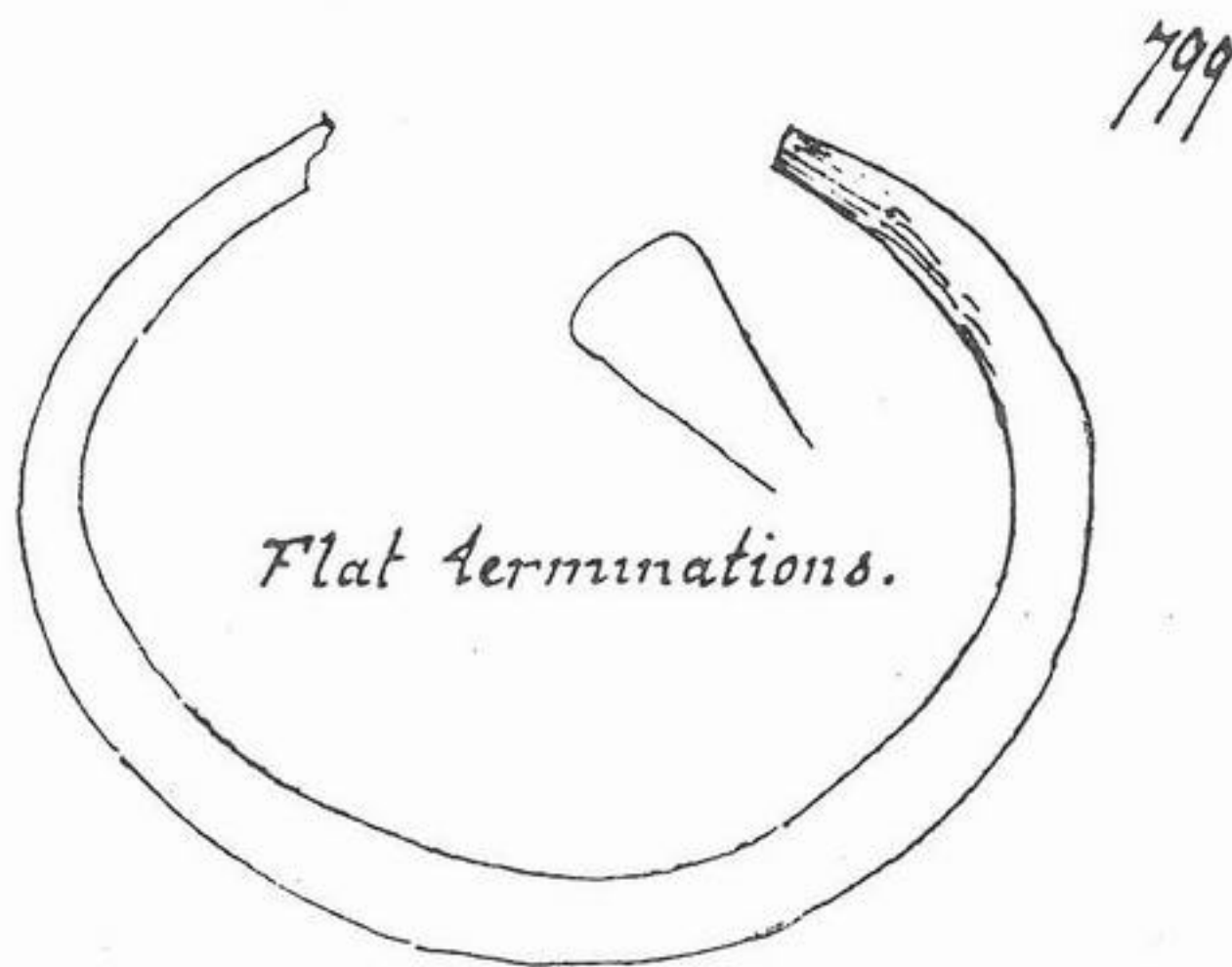
<sup>5</sup> W. G. Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*, vol. I, London 1902, pp. 236-237, fig. 76; Reginald A. Smith, *A Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain*, British Museum 1922, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> J. D. Bateson, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 73, C(1973), 74.

## A VIKING-AGE SILVER HOARD FROM THE RIVER SHANNON, CO. CLARE

The purpose of this note is to identify and briefly elaborate on the single identifiable component of the only Viking-age silver hoard known from Co. Clare. This hoard has already been brought to notice by J. A. Graham-Campbell in his excellent study of the Viking-age silver hoards of Ireland,<sup>1</sup> but does not seem to have been accorded its due prominence. It is provenanced to the Clare side of the River Shannon, and consisted of an example of 'ring-money' accompanied by two examples of 'plain rings'—originally recorded in the Windele Ms. 12.M.10, p. 799, kept in the Royal Irish Academy; the objects themselves are now lost.

Co. Clare is not particularly noted for its Viking-age silver finds, having only two single-finds—a plaited neck-ring, provenanced to Miltown-Malbay,<sup>2</sup> and a 'thistle-brooch' from Clonloghan, near Newmarket-on-Fergus<sup>3</sup>—and no coin-hoards from this period. It can, however, claim two Hiberno-Norse coins, both single-finds from the archaeologically excavated site of Beal Boru, near Killaloe.<sup>4</sup>



*Silver  
found in the Shannon  
at Clare side.  
with it were 2 plain rings.*

Fig. 3. Windele's drawing of Viking-age silver arm-ring/'ring-money'. (Courtesy of Royal Irish Academy).



The Windele drawing (Fig. 3) of one object in the hoard is the subject of this note. It is captioned: *Silver found in the Shannon at Clare side. with it were two plain rings.* This drawing can undoubtedly be identified as an example of 'ring-money'—'ring-money' is a term much favoured by nineteenth century antiquarians, usage of the term arising from the late eighteenth century discovery that certain tribes in Guinea, the Gold Coast and other African states, were using similar bronze and iron penannular arm-rings as a form of currency.<sup>5</sup> Here, however, the term is being used in the strict sense intended by Grieg,<sup>6</sup> and refers to a Scoto-Norse type of unornamented arm-ring, manufactured, it appears, as a type of 'currency-ring' based on the Scandinavian unit of weight, the *öre*.<sup>7</sup>

Such arm-rings are particularly common in Scotland with more than sixty complete and over one hundred and fifty fragmentary examples known.<sup>8</sup> They also form a significant portion of the Viking-age hoards in the Isle of Man,<sup>9</sup> but occur in conspicuously small numbers in Ireland. Here, they are known from only three hoards, that from Co. Clare (the subject of this note), the apparent hoard from Lough Sewdy, Co. Westmeath,<sup>10</sup> and the tantalising hoard from "near Raphoe", Co. Donegal.<sup>11</sup> In the National Collections there are at least eleven certain examples, all unprovenanced,<sup>12</sup> though there are also three fragments which may be parts of other such rings.<sup>13</sup>

It has been established that 'ring-money' was being manufactured by the Norse in Scotland during the period between c. 925 and c. 1075, as the coin-dated Manx and Scottish hoards indicate. It is to this period that the Co. Clare hoard probably belongs, and it not only supports contacts between the Norse of Scotland and Ireland, but on a wider scale, may reflect the usage of a common system of non-numismatic weight-standards between both countries.

JOHN SHEEHAN

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Graham-Campbell, "The Viking-age silver hoards of Ireland", in Almqvist and Greene (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress*, Dublin 1976, Appendix C, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> N.M.I. reg. no. P.885 (10). See Graham-Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 73, note ii, for the re-provenancing of this object to Miltown-Malbaw.

<sup>3</sup> N.M.I. reg. no. 1914:4. J. Bøe, *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, Part III of *Norse Antiquities in Ireland* (ed. H. Shetelig), Oslo 1940, p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> R. H. M. Dolley, "The Coins From Beal Boru", *J. Cork Hist. Archaeol. Soc.*, 67(1962), 18-27.

<sup>5</sup> See, *inter alia*, W. Betham, *Trans. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 7(1897-1800), 7-17, and E.C.R. Armstrong, *Catalogue of Irish Gold Ornaments*, Dublin 1920, pp. 30 and 34-35.

<sup>6</sup> S. Grieg, "Vikingstidens Skattefund", *Universitetets Oldsaksamlings Skrifter*, 2(1929), 270-275.

<sup>7</sup> R. Warner, "Scottish silver arm-rings: an analysis of weights", *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, 107(1975-76), 136-143.

<sup>8</sup> J. A. Graham-Campbell, "The Viking-age silver and gold hoards of Scandinavian character from Scotland", *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, 107(1975-76), 126.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Graham-Campbell, "The Viking-age silver hoards of the Isle of Man", in *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man*, London 1983, pp. 62-63.

<sup>10</sup> Unpublished, in private possession. I am grateful to P. F. Wallace, National Museum of Ireland, for informing me of these arm-rings.

<sup>11</sup> J. A. Graham-Campbell, "A Viking-age silver hoard from near Raphoe, Co. Donegal", *forthcoming*. This hoard, unfortunately, was sold at Sotheby's in 1979 and appears to have left not only Ireland but Britain also.

<sup>12</sup> N.M.I. reg. nos. W.42-48, W.14 and 1888:8-10. In addition there is a fine example in the British Museum provenanced to Ireland (B.M. 97,3-23,8).

<sup>13</sup> N.M.I. reg. nos. W.17-19.

## POSTAL SERVICES IN CLARE IN THE LATE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES

A map of Ireland printed for the House of Commons in 1838 gives details of what it describes as the "Circulation of Letters" in Ireland in January of that year, just two years before the introduction of the 'Penny Black'. Four methods of transporting the post are mentioned and the routes in Co. Clare were as follows:

### By Mail Coach:

- i. Limerick Bunratty—Newmarket-on-Fergus—Ennis
- ii. Ennis-Gort-Galway

### By Mail Car:

- i. Limerick—Broadford—Tulla
- ii. Ennis—Ennistymon—Miltown Malbay
- iii. Ennis—Kilrush

### By Horse Post:

- i. Connecting with the Ennis-Galway Mail Coach at Ardahan. From Ardahan to Kinvara and Burrin (beside New Quay).
- ii. Killaloe—Scariff
- iii. Connecting with the Ennis-Kilrush mailcar at Lissycasey.<sup>1</sup> Thence to Kildysart.

### By Foot Post:

- i. Kilrush—Kilkee
- ii. Connecting with Ennis-Kilrush mailcar about five or six miles from Kilrush. Thence to Knock.
- iii. Connecting with Ennis-Ennistymon mailcar about midway to Ennistymon. Thence to Corofin.
- iv. Newmarket-on-Fergus—Quin
- v. Connecting with Limerick-Ennis mail coach about six miles from Limerick. Thence to Sixmilebridge.

In 1838 there were seventeen post offices in Co. Clare. Contemporary newspapers give us some information as to when these were established. In early November 1787 a twice a week post was established between Ennis and Kilrush,<sup>2</sup> though it is not clear whether this was the first postal service to Kilrush. In April 1804 a post office was opened at Kildysart,<sup>3</sup> and two years later Newmarket got one. To avoid confusion with Newmarket in Cork the post office authorities decided that the Clare Newmarket should be called Newmarket-on-Fergus.<sup>4</sup>

The first mention of a possible mail coach service in Clare was in March 1791. A Limerick-Dublin mail coach was planned to begin running in the following summer and it was hoped to have a similar connection between Limerick and Ennis.<sup>5</sup> Although the Limerick-Dublin coach began its service in mid-June 1791, the Limerick-Ennis mail was still being carried by horse in 1808.<sup>6</sup> Finally, on 31st October 1811, the *Clare Journal* reported that a mail coach was to begin between Limerick and Ennis on the 5th of November.

In October 1805 a daily post was established between Ennis and Kilrush, and nine years later Miltown Malbay got a similar service.<sup>7</sup> This latter is an indication of the popularity of Miltown Malbay/Spanish Point as a holiday resort.

In 1800 Ennistymon was served by a foot post—and the postman, in a notice in the *Ennis Chronicle* of 29th December 1800, gave a reminder to those served by him of his need for gratuities:



The Ennistymon Postman takes the liberty of obtruding himself on the notice of the worthy gentlemen in the circle of his walk.—They all know the hardships attendant on such a journey, performed on foot three days in each week.—His forbearance hitherto, he humbly hopes, will, at this season of general scarcity, have its effect, in procuring for him some trifling gratuity, the recollection of which will speak in the prayer of his poor family.

In 1838 the then thriving seaside resort of Kilkee was served by a foot post from Kilrush. Apparently shortly after this a mail car was introduced on the route. However, in 1842, in order to achieve a saving of £10 per annum, the post office authorities reverted to the foot post. The *Limerick Chronicle* described the change as “discreditable” to the authorities and remarked that the mail for Kilkee averaged 500 letters per day in summer. This was now being brought from Kilrush by a little boy. A year later the Postmaster General agreed to provide a mail car again.<sup>8</sup>

Mail robberies were quite unusual. In early May 1810 a gang of three armed men held up the night mail at about midnight between Ennis and Clarecastle, and shortly afterwards the same gang robbed the postman bringing the Kildysart mail to Ennis.<sup>9</sup> The *Clare Journal* of the 3rd/4th May 1810 commented: “Any occurrence of this kind, so unusual, has not been on record in this County for many years past.”

IGNATIUS MURPHY

<sup>1</sup> The meeting point is not named on the map, but it seems to be Lissycasey.

<sup>2</sup> *Ennis Chronicle*, 5 Nov. 1787.

<sup>3</sup> *Clare Journal*, 23 April 1804.

<sup>4</sup> *Clare Journal*, 17 March 1806.

<sup>5</sup> *Ennis Chronicle*, 28 March 1791.

<sup>6</sup> *Ennis Chronicle*, 20 June 1791; *Clare Journal*, 18 Aug. 1808. This means that a Limerick-Dublin Mail Coach was in operation three years before the date suggested in Patrick F. Wallace, “The Organisation of Pre-Railway Public Transport in Counties Limerick and Clare”, *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 15 (1972), 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Clare Journal*, 14 Oct. 1805, 13 June 1814.

<sup>8</sup> *Limerick Chronicle*, 31 Aug. 1842; *Limerick Reporter*, 23 Sep. 1842; *Limerick Chronicle*, 19 July, 2 Aug. 1843.

<sup>9</sup> *Clare Journal*, 10 May 1810.

## DICKENS IN LIMERICK, 1858

Charles Dickens had a lifelong urge towards everything theatrical—acting, adapting his works for the stage, and producing them. This urge, and the promise of considerable financial rewards, led him to undertake dramatised public readings from his works. These he began in 1858, and in September of that year he came to Limerick. A correspondent for the *Limerick Chronicle* (4th September, 1858) went along to hear him, but seemed to have been somewhat disappointed with the performance:

Mr. Dickens has been reading his works in Limerick on Wednesday and Thursday evenings before crowded and fashionable audiences. His merits as a writer—clothing the common incidents of everyday life with a touching interest—and ever leaning to the side of the weak and injured—are universally known and appreciated by the reading public. As a general reader we cannot give him unqualified praise, for though he undoubtedly possesses dramatic talents of a first rate order for personifying characters, yet he recited several passages of a descriptive nature in a sing-song, schoolboy style that was below par.

SEAN MARRINAN