

Miscellanea

THE UNIDENTIFIED ARMS AT ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL

Carved in one of the stones on the north-east buttress of St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, is a coat of arms consisting of a chevron between three escallop shells (Fig. 1). The identity of the family thus represented remains a mystery. They can only be properly seen from Nicholas Street, across the wall surrounding the Cathedral.



Fig. 1.
Unidentified arms, St. Mary's Cathedral,
Limerick. (Photo: P. M. Tankard)

On the buttress at the south-east corner another coat has been carved: a chevron between three clarions. In this case an inscription has been added: "Johannis Arthur", confirming the undoubted fact that these are the arms of the Arthur family.

This link with the Arthurs has given rise to the only suggestion which appears to have been made as to the identity of the north-eastern coat. Dowd suggests that it perhaps belonged to Johannah Muryagh of Cork, wife of Thomas Arthur who was Mayor of Limerick in 1421 and again in 1426. In support of this, Dowd (i) cites the Arthus MSS. to the effect that this Thomas financed the building of the facade of St. Mary's choir, and (ii) points out that the inscription "Johannis Arthur" referred to above may have applied to the father of Thomas.¹ So far, so good, but unfortunately the arms of the

Muryagh or Morrogh family of Cork appear to have been simply three escallops without the chevron.²

Arising from the above suggestion, although not raised by Dowd, was the possibility that the arms in question may have been those of John Arthur's wife. However, the Arthur MSS. indicate that she was a Vele,³ a family whose arms were very different, according to Burke.⁴

Clues to the identity of these arms might be sought in several ways. One would be to make a list of those families who were prominent citizens of Limerick in the early fifteenth century, this being the period in which the relevant parts of the cathedral are thought to have been built, and then check the heraldic entitlements of these families. Alternatively, a list could be made of those families which appear to have been entitled to the appropriate arms, and then compare this list with that of prominent citizens of the time. This paper is a report on the results of the second method.

With the aid of Burke, Papworth and Berry,⁵ a list was composed of those families from England, Scotland and Ireland who were shown as entitled to a chevron between three escallops (see Appendix). Tincture was ignored since there appears to be no indication of this in the carving.

For prominent citizens, three sources were used: (1) the Arthur MSS. as translated and edited by MacLysaght and Ainsworth, (2) Lenihan's lists of Provosts, Mayors, Bailiffs and Sheriffs, based on the Arthur, White and Sexton MSS., and (3) Cotton's lists of Bishops and Deans.⁶

When the two lists (prominent citizens and those with appropriate arms) were compared,

only five families were found to occur in both: Browne, Mitchell (or Midchell), Russell, Taylor and Tankard.

Browne appears several times in the Arthur MSS.,⁷ but not elsewhere in the sources used. Mitchell occurs as Midchael or Midchell in the Bailiff lists for 1437 and 1479. Taylor also occurs in the same lists for 1341, and Russell in 1309 and 1438.⁸ The only reference to Tankard is in the Arthur MSS, where there is mention of "Thomas Tankard, parish chaplain" who was bequeathed 10/- in the will of Thomas Arthur (the gentleman referred to above).⁹

However, with regard to these five families, problems arise in the matter of heraldry. Neither Burke nor Berry mention Irish Branches of the Mitchell and Tankard families, while in the case of Browne, Taylor and Russell Irish arms are given by Burke, but they are quite different from the required coat. In these five instances it might be advisable to consult the records of the Chief Herald in Dublin. With regard to Tankard, the College of Arms in London have stated (in a private communication) that their copy of records of the former Ulster King of Arms mentioned Tankards in county Meath using the appropriate arms in 1747, although with the addition of three annulets on the chevron.

As for Thomas the parish chaplain, he would obviously have had links both with St. Mary's and with Thomas Arthur, but from his office he hardly seems a likely candidate for the unidentified arms. The only notable Irish Tankard appears to have been John, elected Bishop of Killala in 1306, but it seems doubtful if evidence would survive to show whether the Bishop was entitled to arms, or whether he was connected with the Limerick branch of the family.

The results of this investigation must therefore be regarded as quite inconclusive, and have perhaps only stirred the dust on a long-forgotten mystery. Hopefully, however, it will kindle interest on the part of someone with the expertise and the opportunity to follow up some of the leads—for example, with the Chief Herald in Dublin, or in Limerick records not explored in the above.

Appendix

Families who have borne a chevron between 3 escallops

Akenthorp, Almot, Amyas, Armyn, Arnold, Aspilon, Bayard, Bedell, Branling, Breton, Browne, Calby, Carem, Carnesh, Carron, Chamberlayne, Champion, Charon, Chedder, Chinkerlin, Chipmanden, Colbey, Colcombe, Coltambe, Cottrell, Dacres, Devenshire, Donstable, Dorthorpe, Downham, Dunstable, Ermine, Erneys, Exmies, Eymes, Eyre, Fairway, Fanel, Favell, Garnesh, Gay, Genton, Gervaise, Graham, Gyll, Hawkewood, Judge, Kerdiff, Kinge, Kinmarton, Langhorne, Le Miere, Littleton, Longstroder, Melbourne, Miche, Michell, Mitchell, Milbourne, Mudgan, Newman, Orme, Perin, Pollard, Raynham, Reyman, Russell, Scotney, Shapleigh, Shelly, Stickland, Taylor, Tankard, Townshend, Tregarthen, Trelowe, Tremayne, Trenchard, Trevenour, Tripoke, Waskatt, Wenyewe, Wolaston, Wollacombe, Wolmer, Woodman.

Acknowledgments

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City Library, without whose unfailing patience and efficiency, even extending to the antipodes, this work could never have been undertaken.

PETER M. TANKARD

¹J. Dowd, *History of St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick*, Limerick 1936, pp. 23-24.

²B. Burke, *General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales*, London 1884.

³E. A. MacLysaght and J. F. Ainsworth (eds.), "The Arthur Manuscript", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 8(1958-61), 11.

⁴*Op. cit.*

⁵Burke, *op. cit.*; J. H. Papworth, *Ordinary of British Armorial Bearings*, London 1874; W. Berry, *Encyclopaedia Heraldica*, London 1828.

⁶E. A. MacLysaght and J. F. Ainsworth, in *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 8(1958-61), 2-19 and 9(1962-65), 51-59; M. Lenihan, *History of Limerick*, Limerick 1866, pp. 690-697; H. Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae: The Succession of the Prelates and Members of the Cathedral Bodies of Ireland*, Part IV, Dublin 1847, pp. 322-325 and 335-337.

⁷MacLysaght and Ainsworth, *op. cit.* (1962-65), pp. 55 and 57.

⁸Lenihan, *op. cit.*, pp. 694-697.

⁹MacLysaght and Ainsworth, *op. cit.* (1958-61), p. 17.

¹⁰J. Ware, *The Whole Works concerning Ireland*, Vol. I, Dublin 1735-45, "The History of the Bishops".

A NUMISMATIC PORTRAIT OF BRIAN BORU

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century Ireland underwent an industrial revolution. It was not on as large, or indeed as lasting, a scale as that which occurred in England. Whatever about the residual problems left after its passing, the revolution started facing a major obstacle—the chronic shortage of small change. The last silver coinage minted for Ireland was during the 1641 rebellion. During the eighteenth century there were long periods of time when no copper currency was minted either, e.g. 1697-1723. After the 'Wood's Coinage' dispute of 1723, minting operations were carried on intermittently until 1782. After that year no coinage at all was issued for Ireland until 1805. To compensate for the shortage in currency, the populace had to make do with worn or counterfeit coin or what is termed 'regal evasions'. These latter pieces resembled coinage but carried inscriptions like "GEORGIUS TRIUMPHO", etc. They were struck from pre-worn dies and treated to give them a blackened finish. This gave them the appearance of having been in circulation and so rendered them more acceptable to the population at large. By adopting spurious legends and featuring such people as 'Colonel Kirk' of Siege of Derry fame, or 'Louis the Sixteenth',¹ the manufacturers could avoid prosecution for counterfeiting. Notwithstanding this expedient, the countryside abounded with mendicant coin counterfeiters, to judge from contemporary newspaper reports. Johnson, one of the more notorious of the counterfeiters on the Munster circuit, was finally arrested in Glin, Co. Limerick, in 1790.²

Against such a background it is hardly surprising that several large concerns should have issued tokens to pay their workforce. The most frequently met tokens from this period are those issued by the Hibernian Mine Company (Camac, Kyan and Camac) and the Cronebane Mine. Both concerns had their principal mines in the Vale of Avoca. Indeed, both concerns had their tokens extensively counterfeited. Several smaller concerns also took to issuing tokens. Still there was a chronic shortage of small change. Enterprising token manufacturers took to issuing general circulation tokens. These were sold in bulk to shopkeepers and traders up and down the country and put into circulation. From here it was but a short step to



the production of 'Mules'. This occurred when the obverse (front) of one token was struck with the reverse (back) of another issue. These tokens could, and did circulate alongside their more legitimate counterparts. Their redemption could be, of course, refused by either, or both, parties represented on the pieces. With such a plethora of tokens, mules, concoctions and counterfeits, numbers of people began to collect tokens and so the manufacturers had another brainwave: the issuing of tokens from spurious concerns, in limited numbers, for sale to the collectors. Eventually the whole business came to an end with tokens being prohibited and the issuing of regal copper coinage for Ireland in 1805.

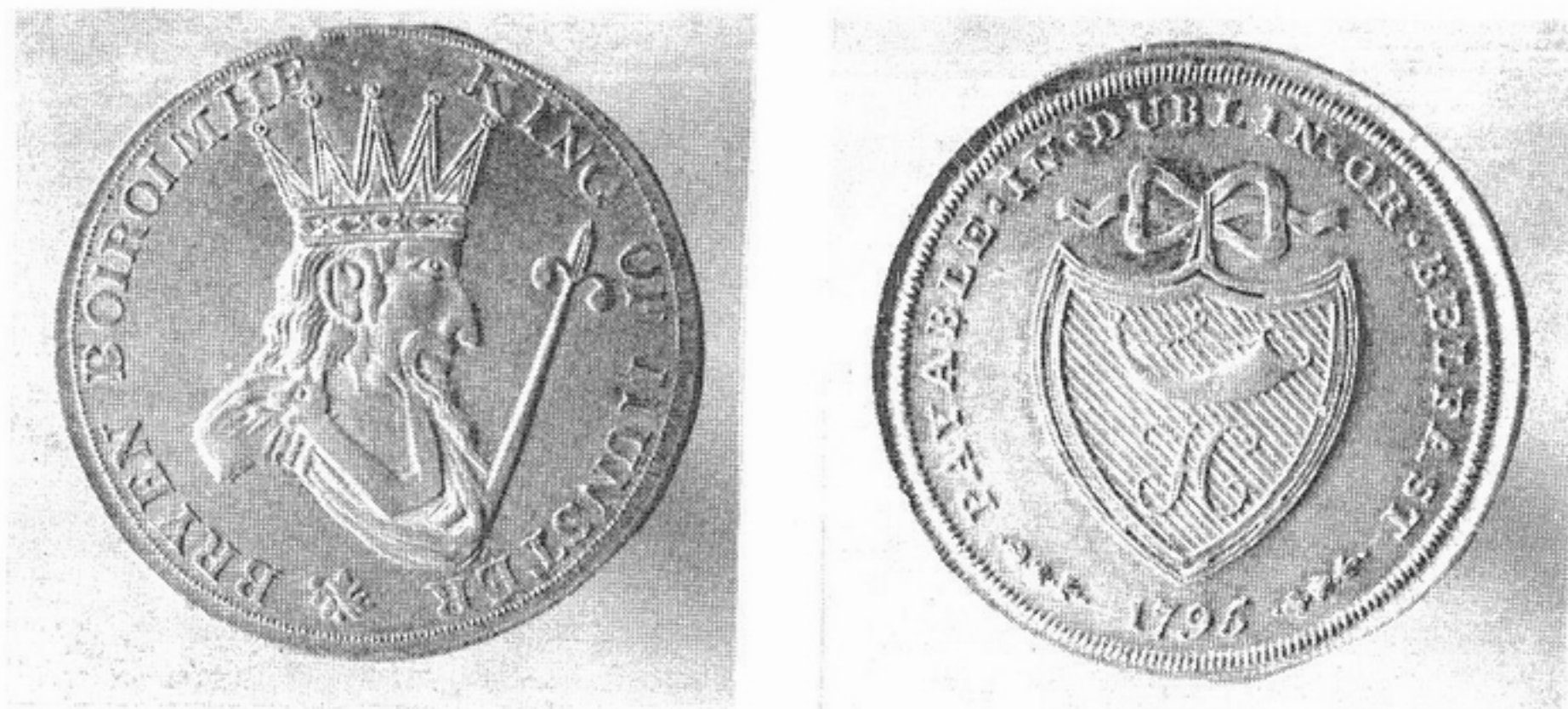


Fig. 2. Obverse and reverse of a token dated 1795 and showing a 'portrait' of Brian Boru. (Photos: P. Walsh)

One series of general circulation tokens is the 'Munster' series. These portray Brian Boru on the obverse, with various reverse designs. The Brian Boru motif would have been identifiable with Munster and so would have rendered easy the circulation of these pieces in the province, particularly in the Thomond area. There are nineteen varieties in the series which are described and illustrated by Dalton and Hammer.³ The piece illustrated (Fig. 2) is no. 3 on Dalton and Hammer's listing. It can be described as follows:

O A draped and crowned bust of Brian Boru replete with royal sceptre with the inscription BRYAN BOIROIMHE KING OF MUNSTER.

R A heraldic coloured shield suspended from a ribbon with a bow knot, bearing the letter H in scroll writing, surmounted by a horn. The inscription reads PAYABLE IN DUBLIN OR BELFAST 1795. The edge is blank.

This piece is obviously a 'mule' with one of the 'H' series tokens from Dublin. The issuer of the 'H' series has not been identified. It is unlikely that this intentional numismatic link between Brian Boru and Dublin was prompted by residual memories of Clontarf.

PAUL DUFFY

¹For a virtually complete listing of these pieces see James Atkins, *The Tradesman's Tokens of the Eighteenth Century*, London 1892, pp. 385-395. There is an illustrated summary listing in B. A. Seaby's *Coins and Tokens of Ireland*, London 1970, pp. 145-146.

²*The Gentleman's and London Magazine*, Dublin 1790, p. 167.

³R. Dalton and S. H. Hammer, *The Provincial Token Coinage of the Eighteenth Century*, facsimile reprint by B. A. Seaby Ltd., London 1969.

A LIMERICK PAWNSHOP FARTHING

Pawnshops have long been a necessary evil for the poor in this, and other, countries. In the Middle Ages money was difficult to obtain, and the prohibitions against usury imposed on Christians created a monopoly on lending for the Lombardic Bankers¹ and the Jews. Interest rates were extremely high, ranging from 32½% to 43½%. Various proposals were put forward to protect the poor and limit usury. In 1361 Bishop Northburg of London left money for the foundation of a bank, to lend money on pawned objects without charging interest. As expenses had to be met from the foundation capital the bank failed, in due course, when this capital was exhausted. In 1461 the first *Mons Pietas* was founded in Perugia by the Franciscans (during the Middle Ages the word *Mons* was applied to banks of exchange and credit, and as these often lent money on pawned goods the charitable bodies operating on the same basis added the word *Pietas* to identify them as benevolent, not speculative). The *Mons Pietas* charged a low interest rate to cover administrative costs. However, even this low interest rate caused controversy in relation to the usury aspect of interest rates. Pope Leo X finally settled the controversy with a Papal Bull, "Inter Multiplicis", issued on the 14th of May, 1515. This declared the *Montes* to be in no way sinful or illicit but, rather, meritorious and, further, that those who preached or wrote against them were subject to excommunication. This silenced the vested banking interests who were against the *Mons* for obvious reasons. By the end of the eighteenth century *Mons Pietas* were universally accepted throughout continental Europe.²

By the 1830s the need for such establishments was evident to many in Ireland. The country had many pawnbrokers, some of whom exploited the ignorance of their customers. In "Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland" T. C. Forester³ quotes his experiences of a Galway City pawnshop:

"In Galway I was assured, so little do the people know the commercial value of money that they are constantly in the habit of pawning it.... I went to a pawnbroker's shop; and on asking the question the shopman told me it was quite a common thing to have money pawned; and he produced a drawer containing a £10 Bank of England note pawned for



Fig. 3. Obverse and reverse of a Limerick pawnshop farthing of 1837. (Photos: P. Walsh)

a shilling; a £1 Provincial Bank note pawned for six shillings; a Guinea in gold of the reign of George III pawned for fifteen shillings two months ago". Needless to say most money pawned was never redeemed thus resulting in a handsome profit to the pawnbrokers.

In 1837 eight *Montes de Pietas* were opened in Ireland, the first apparently in Limerick.⁴ This was built at the expense of Sir Matthew Barrington, son of Sir Joseph Barrington the founder in 1830, of Barrington's Hospital in the city. The profits of the Limerick *Mont de Piété* were applied to fund the hospital. In 1840 the amount advanced was £25,488 whilst the amount returned for released articles was £23,675, resulting in a profit of £1,357. Interest was at the rate of 4d. in the pound and there was no charge for the tickets of pledged articles.⁵

However, by 1841 the eight Irish *Montes de Pietas* had lost over £5,000 between them. By 1843 only three survived and in that year they too failed, the last survivor being at Portadown.⁶ Only two of the *Monts* issued tokens, those of Cork and Limerick. The Limerick token (Fig. 3) carries a fine representation of a church with the date 1837 below. The inscription reads "PAYABLE AT THE MONT DE PIÉTÉ LIMERICK". The reverse simply carries the value of the token in two lines, "ONE FARTHING", contained within a wreath. The view of the church quite probably recalls the charitable and ecclesiastical nature of the original *Mons Pietas* foundations.

PAUL DUFFY

¹For an account of the Lombardic Bankers activities in Ireland see M. A. O'Sullivan, *Italian Merchant Bankers in Ireland in the Thirteenth Century*, Dublin 1961.

²For a fuller account of the Medieval 'Mons Pietas' see *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (various editions).

³Quoted (on p. 70) in S. J. Maguire "Galway Scrap Book", *The Galway Reader*, 3(1950), 44-76.

⁴Dom. H. J. De Varebeke, "The Barringtons of Limerick", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 7:3(1956), 23-30.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶F. E. Dixon, "Tokens of the Limerick Mont de Piété", *Irish Numismatics*, 10:5(1977), 179.

A BED OUTSHOT IN COUNTY CLARE

Built-in alcove beds are a feature of traditional houses in Western Europe, from Brittany to Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Islands.¹ Where they occur in Ireland it is usually in the form of a 'bed outshot' included as part of the structure of the house, and generally



Fig. 4. Hatched area is the known distribution of the Bed Outshot in Ireland.

situated in the kitchen close to the main hearth.² Measuring from 1.75 to 2.00 metres by 1.10 to 1.25 metres, this outshot is intended to contain a single or double bed, often for use by the older members of the household,³ and typically roofed with a continuation of the house roof.⁴ In a study based on linguistic evidence, Lucas suggests that the bed outshot is a degenerate "remnant of an annexe to the ancient Irish house", which was divided from the main living area by curtains or straw mats in a manner reminiscent of the bed outshot.⁵ The distribution of this feature in Ireland has been well documented by Ó Danachair⁶ and McCourt,⁷ who both independently demonstrated a north-western province (Fig. 4).



Fig. 5. Formerly thatched house at 'Poulkyne', in the Burren, Co. Clare. (Photo: J. M. Harrison)

The subject of this note is a house (Figs. 5 and 6) on the North Commons of the Burren, in an area known locally as 'Poulkyne'—National Grid Reference R.275.940—which the writer surveyed on November 23rd, 1983. A farmhouse, it consists of a basic two-unit plan with the room opposite the hearth partitioned off, and a half loft above. The walls are of limestone, 0.70 metres thick, and measuring 12.00 metres by 4.20 metres externally. The chimney was originally a canopy covered with jute bags and white-washed, but was reconstructed in stone about fifty years ago. The roof was formerly thatched on collar beam trusses, but has recently been modernised. At the back of the house an outshot (Fig. 7), with a newly added window, is covered by a continuation of the house roof.

The house has been occupied by several generations of the Carkil family who were supposed locally to have come from Scotland around 1800. Griffith's *Valuation* for 1855

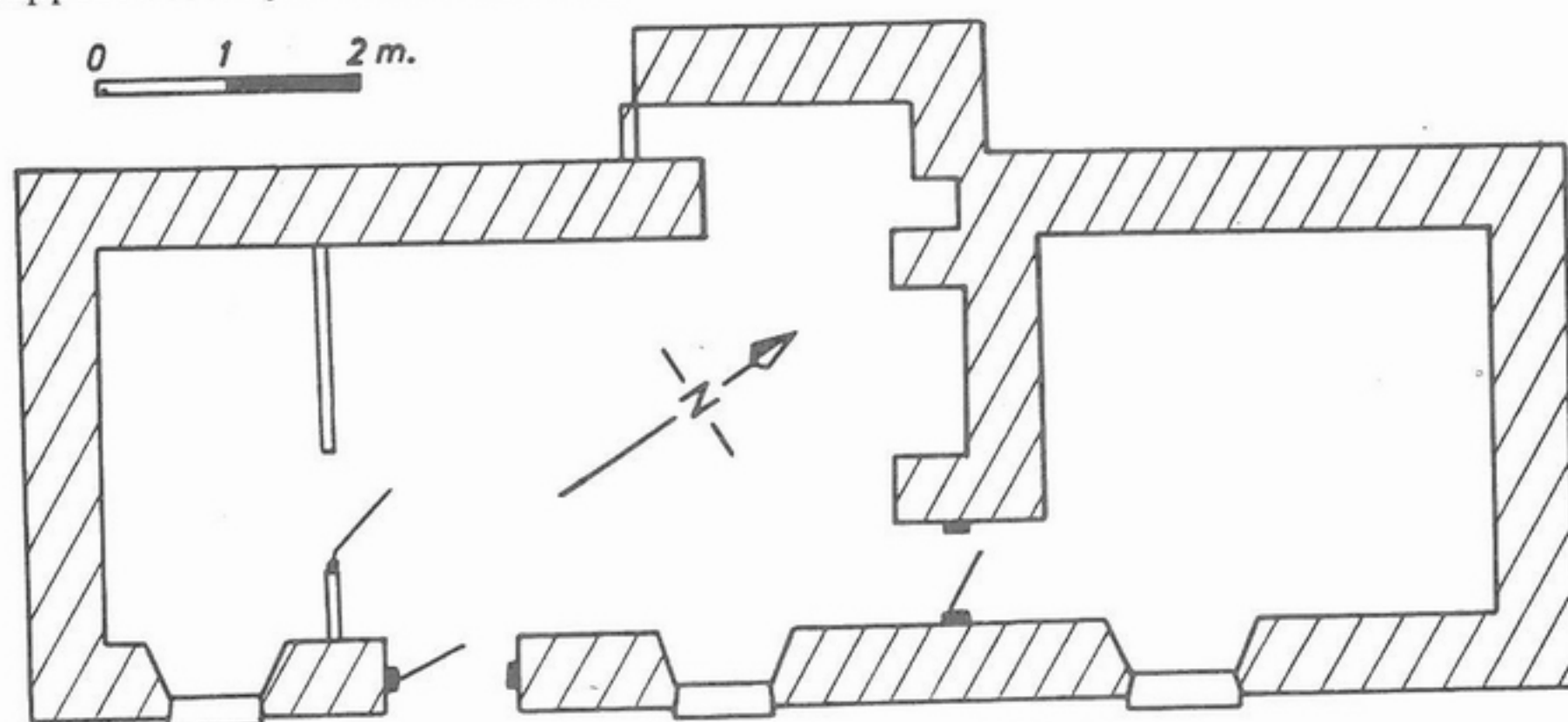


Fig. 6. Plan of house at 'Poulkyne', Co. Clare.

records a John Carkil as holding a house, land and offices⁸ which appear on the six-inch scale Ordnance Survey map of this area for 1852. The outshot was known locally as the 'nook' and was the traditional place for the settle-bed where the two youngest members of the family slept.

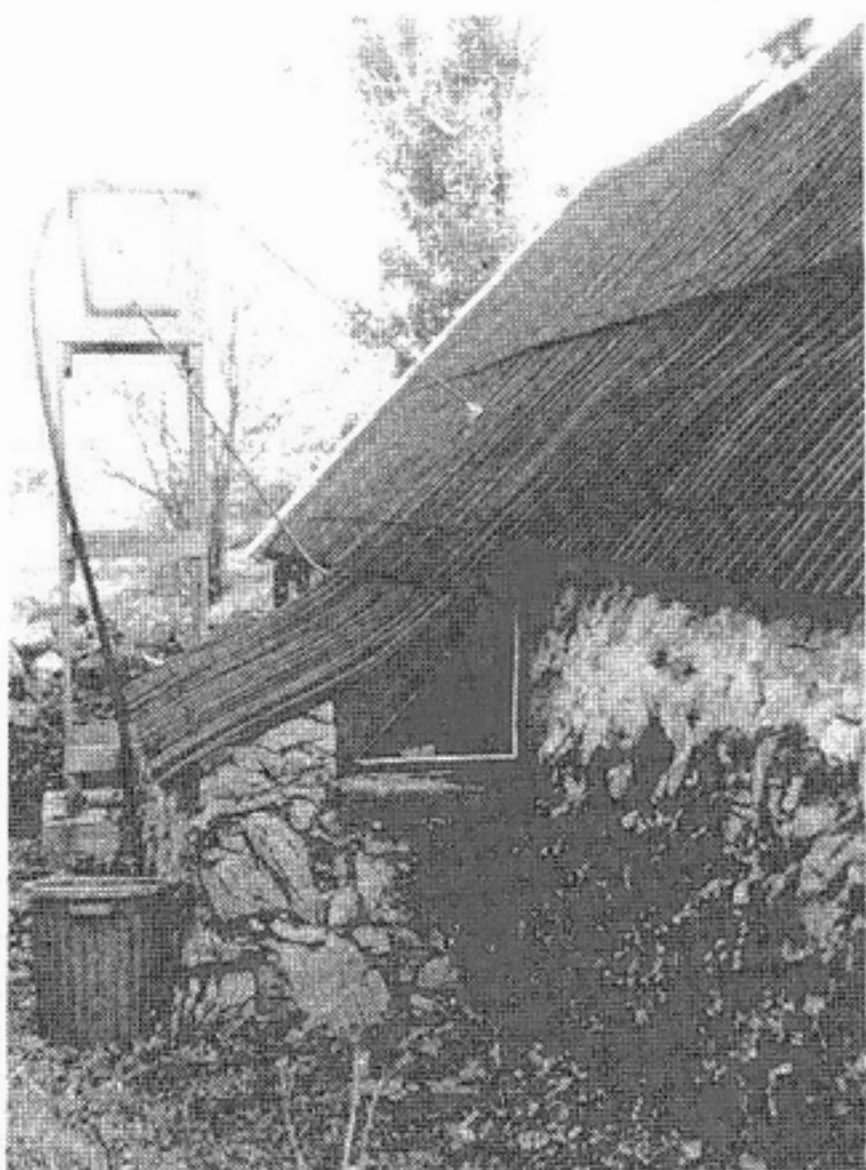


Fig. 7. Outshot, formerly thatched, behind house at 'Poulkyne', Co. Clare—window is recent addition. (Photo: J. M. Harrison)

McCourt⁹ describes the north-western region of Ireland as one of 'ethnographic fixation', or a relic area where features previously known elsewhere still survive, and suggests that the outshot may have existed in areas to the south where the traditional houses are mainly of 'jamb wall' type. As the bed outshot belongs to the 'direct entry' house tradition,¹⁰ it is possible that earlier direct entry houses in these areas would have had outshots. In County Clare, on the other hand, the dominant tradition is of direct entry houses without outshots, the jamb wall or 'lobby entry' house being a recent and not very common feature.¹¹ It is difficult therefore, to explain the occurrence of a bed outshot in this region as a relic of an earlier building practice. The tradition locally is that the family who built the house came originally from Scotland,¹² and that the outshot was called the 'nook'—a term applied to it in some Scottish districts¹³ and not used in Ireland¹⁴—which

suggests that this house may have been built by someone familiar with a foreign building tradition. The Burren outshot would not, therefore, be inconsistent with the accepted distribution pattern of the feature in Ireland.

JOHN M. HARRISON

¹S. Erixon, "West European Connections and Culture Relations", *Folkliv*, 2(1938), 170; G. I. Merriam-Jones "The Bed Outshot in Brittany", *Ulster Folklife*, 25(1979), 29-53.

²C. Ó Danachair, "The Bed Outshot in Ireland", *Folkliv*, 19-20(1955-1956), 27.

³A. T. Lucas, "Contributions to the History of the Irish House: A Possible Ancestry of the Bed Outshot (Cuilteach)", *Folk Life*, 8(1970), 181.

⁴C. Ó Danachair, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁵A. T. Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁶C. Ó Danachair, *op. cit.*

⁷D. McCourt, "The Outshot House Type and its Distribution in County Londonderry", *Ulster Folklife*, 2(1956), 27-34.

⁸R. Griffith, *General Valuation of Rateable Property—Union of Corofin in the County of Clare*, Dublin 1885, p. 32.

⁹D. McCourt, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁰A. Gailey, *Rural Houses of the North of Ireland*, Edinburgh 1984, p. 156.

¹¹Information obtained from fieldwork on Clare house-types carried out recently by the writer, and at present being prepared for publication.

¹²The family name of Carkil, furthermore, appears to be a Clare version of an original Scottish surname—see E. MacLysaght, *Irish Family Names*, Shannon 1973, pp. 37 and 58.

¹³A. Fenton, *Scottish Country Life*, Edinburgh 1976, p. 190; *idem.*, *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*, Edinburgh 1978, p. 117.

¹⁴C. Ó Danachair, *op. cit.*, p. 29; A. T. Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-98.

A BAPTISMAL FONT-COVER: *CAPUT JOHANNIS IN DISCO*?

Roughly between Quin and the Tulla-Ennis road, in east Co. Clare, is the new church at Clooney, believed to be the first church in Europe dedicated to the late Pope John XXIII. Opened in August 1976, it replaces the old church built in 1820 and in it are incorporated various pieces of church furniture brought from the older building. Of particular interest among these are a fine silver chalice presented to "ye Parish of Clooney" in 1725 by "Ellonor Geaylor",¹ and an old stone baptismal font of which the parishioners are rightly proud.

The font is remarkable for its stone cover or lid, which is circular, 31cm. in diameter, and has a face carved in relief at its centre (Fig. 8). The rather rustic face is itself sculpted as if on a small circular background, about 8cm. in diameter, and the rest of the top of the cover slopes gently away from it and is dressed all over with closely-set short lengths of chiselled radial lines, giving a rayed appearance around the head.

Although the human head is perhaps the best-known pagan Celtic form of idol² and is often represented in a mask-like manner, as is that on the Clooney font-cover, it would



Fig. 8. Stone font-cover or lid, Clooney, Co. Clare. (Photo: National Museum of Ireland)

be unreasonable to see this latter face as either a deliberate revival of the head-cult or a carry-over of a lingering tradition, albeit that such a preference for sculpting human heads seems to have been continued well into Christian times in Ireland, e.g. on Romanesque churches such as at nearby Dysert O'Dea³ and on the tau-cross at Killinaboy.⁴ In medieval Ireland, just as elsewhere in Europe at the time, a common subject among sculptors was the scene known as *Caput Johannis in Disco*, the head of John (the Baptist) on (Salome's) dish. In Ireland most representations are imported English alabasters of fifteenth century date,⁵ but of perhaps more relevance because nearby and not an import is the carving of St. John's head on a dish to be seen on the canopy of the Royal Tomb in Ennis Friary⁶ (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. St. John's head on the canopy of the Royal Tomb, Ennis Friary, modelled on an alabaster original.
(Photo: P. Harbison)

While not suggesting that the Ennis carving need necessarily have influenced the sculptor of the Clooney font-cover, it seems clear that he came up with much the same idea, doubtless because of the baptismal nature of the font—who more suitable to have on it than St. John the Baptist? Is it just possible that instead of representing the saint standing dressed in a sheepskin, as would perhaps have been more usual in the early nineteenth century, he remembered having seen the *Caput Johannis in Disco* at nearby Ennis and considered it an easier and more original way of associating the saint with the font?

ETIENNE RYNNE

¹J. J. Buckley, *Some Irish Altar Plate*, Dublin 1943, p. 154, no. 1725 b.

²E. Rynne, "Celtic Stone Idols in Ireland", in *The Iron Age in the Irish Sea Province: C.B.A. Research Report 9*, (ed. C. Thomas), London 1972, pp. 79-98.

³See, *inter alia*, F. Henry, *Irish Art in the Romanesque Period (1020-1170 A.D.)*, London 1970, pls. 73-75.

⁴E. Rynne, "The Tau-Cross at Killinaboy: Pagan or Christian?", *North Munster Studies: Essays in Commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (ed. E. Rynne), Limerick 1967, pp. 146-165.

⁵J. Hunt and Peter Harbison, "Medieval English Alabasters", *Studies*, 65:260 (Winter 1976), 310-321; such an alabaster carving from an unknown Irish church is at present exhibited in Craggaunowen Castle, not far from Clooney (*ibid.*, p. 311, ill. no. 2).

⁶J. Hunt, *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 17(1975), 36, pl. II, 1.