

Miscellanea

A FLINT JAVELIN-HEAD FROM KILMACOW WEDGE-TOMB, KNOCKFEERINA, CO. LIMERICK

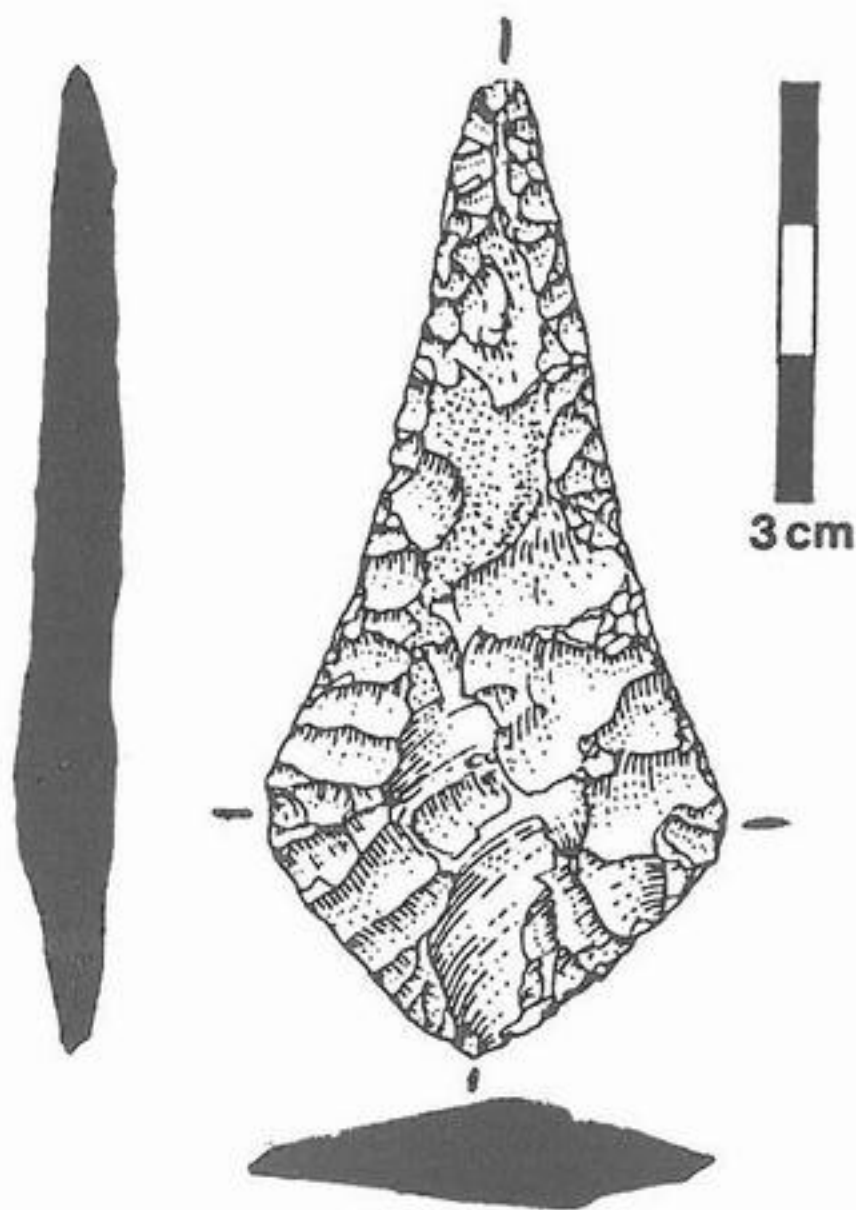
A flint javelin-head in Limerick Museum (Reg. No. LM 138) is inscribed in ink "Found/Knockfearna Cromlech/R. Furnell/1911". The hill of Knockfeerina (O.D. 948 ft.), a volcanic pipe through Old Red Sandstone to the east of Ballingarry, overlooking the limestone plain of central Co. Limerick, has two monuments from which the javelin-head might have come. Both are in Kilmacow townland, one a cairn on the summit of the hill, the other a wedge-tomb¹ (de Valera and Ó Nualláin, 1982, Li.3). The cairn was in ruins by 1910 (Lynch, 1910, 108), and had previously been demolished and rebuilt (Molony, 1905, 255). Neither author mentions a chamber in the cairn. On a visit to the site in 1977, the landowner informed me that his father had been a member of a party which dug into the wedge-tomb about 1911. This, in addition to the tomb being referred to as a 'cromlech' (Lynch, Molony, *op. cit.*), confirms that it is from the wedge-tomb that the javelin-head came. Dr. George Fogerty noted (in Lynch, *op. cit.*) that the tomb had previously been dug into deeply from time to time.

The javelin-head (Illus. 1) is of Collins (1981) type C, elongated lozenge-shaped with concave long edges and slightly convex short edges. It is made from a flake of grey flint, the pitted pebble surface remaining along a section of the spine on one face, and trimmed cortex remaining along one edge for half its width on the same face, and at the base of the implement. The other face has steep-sided bulb-removal scars, with a slightly dished blank area below. Fine pressure flaking covers most of the surface, and polishing is evident, particularly along the spines. It is 7.1 cm. long, 3.3 cm. wide and 0.7 cm. maximum thickness.

The flint javelin-head is characteristically a Neolithic implement, occurring frequently among the grave-goods in court-tombs, and in deposits under the cairns of a number of passage-tombs (Collins, *op. cit.*). Bronze Age associations are doubtful. One, of type B, made possibly from lignite, "is said to have

been found" with a Bowl Food-Vessel at Mountfield, Co. Tyrone (Abercromby, 1912, Vol I, 121, 143, fig. 281A). Another, of type A, was ascribed to a Late Bronze Age level at Island MacHugh, Co. Tyrone (Davies, 1950, 36, fig. 14, F37), but from the excavation report, this appears more likely to be associated with the Neolithic occupation of the site.

The Kilmacow javelin-head is significant, being the only one at present known from a wedge-



Illus. 1. Flint javelin-head, Kilmacow, Co. Limerick.

tomb, and it is only the second known from Munster, the other, of type B, broad lozenge-shaped, being found during ploughing at Donickmore, Co. Cork (O'Kelly, 1946, 61-62).

LARRY WALSH

¹Townland Kilmacow, Parish Ballingarry, Barony Connello Upper. O.S. 6" sheet 30:13:6, 22.4 cm from west margin, 4.4 cm from south margin. "Giant's Grave" (1924). National Grid R.453.365.

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A NEOLITHIC BURIAL AT ASHLEYPARK, CO. TIPPERARY —A SUMMARY ACCOUNT¹

In the Spring of 1980 a large burial chamber was uncovered in a round mound in Ashleypark townland about five miles north of Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, during the course of farm development work. Subsequent archaeological excavation by the National Parks and Monument Branch, Office of Public Works, under the writer's direction uncovered in the chamber the bones of an elderly adult male and a child of 4-5 years accompanied by plain and decorated Neolithic pottery. The decorated pottery was of two types: cord-ornamented ware and channelled ware. A bone from the adult male gave a radiocarbon date of 4765 ± 40 B.P. (GrN-11036). The range of this date, when calibrated to calendar years with 99.7% certainty, is 3350 to 3650 B.C.²

The burial chamber was roughly rectangular, measuring about 2 m. in length by 1.2 m. in width and a maximum of 2 m. in depth. It had large upright stones on all sides except the north-west side where there was only a small upright supplemented by roughly piled-up stones. A large stone with a flat sloping surface formed the floor of the chamber which was roofed, before disturbance, by a large thin capstone and two smaller subsidiary ones. When the contents of the chamber were removed it was clear that both the floor stone and the slab forming the south-west wall of the chamber continued beyond the north-west wall. Further excavation in this direction showed that the chamber was only the inner end of a much larger megalithic structure, 5 m. long, which was constructed around a large oblong limestone erratic, part of which served as the floor of the chamber. The remainder of the structure had no roof, had no upright slab at the north-west or outer end, and was entirely filled with cairn-stones among which were found animal bones. The latter were disarticulated and smashed, and were clearly food refuse, being mainly cattle bones.³ To



Illus. 2. Aerial view of Ashleypark Burial Mound (after excavation). (*Photo: C. Manning*)

one side, beneath the cairn-stones in this outer part of the tomb, the bones of a child of eight months were found.

The entire megalithic structure had been buried within a cairn some 18 m. in diameter and 3 to 4 m. high at the centre. This in turn was covered by a mantling of clay making the mound about 26 m. in diameter and over 5 m. high at the centre before disturbance. This clay covering was derived from a wide shallow ditch closely encircling the mound. Beyond this again there was a second wide shallow ditch and a low outer bank giving the entire monument a diameter of 90 m.

On completion of the excavation the cuttings were backfilled and the mound reconstructed leaving the megalithic structure exposed to view (Illus. 2). The State has since acquired the site and it is now preserved as a National Monument.

This monument at Ashleypark can be classed as a Linkardstown Type burial. Another of these was discovered at Ardcroney, just over a mile away to the north, in 1977.⁴ These burials always have a circular mound completely covering a large cist or chamber which contains one or two burials accompanied by Neolithic pottery. The type of pottery most commonly found is a necked vessel with overall channelled decoration, as was found at Ardcroney.⁵ Most of the known examples of this burial-type have come to light in Leinster. The North Tipperary examples at Ardcroney and Ashleypark are at present outliers in the

distribution, but it is likely that further examples will come to light in Munster. The radiocarbon dates from a number of these burials⁶ place them well within the Neolithic period. It is possible that many of the round tumuli of Munster cover such burials and this may explain the apparent scarcity of Neolithic burial monuments in the province.⁷

CONLETH MANNING

¹For the full report of the excavation see C. Manning, "A Neolithic Burial Mound at Ashleypark, Co. Tipperary", *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 85,C(1985), 61-100.

²*Ibid.*, Appendix V.

³*Ibid.*, Appendix II.

⁴P. Wallace, "A Prehistoric Burial Cairn at Ardcroney, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary", *North Munster Antiq. J.*, 19(1977), 3-20; for other prehistoric sites in the area see C. Manning, "Prehistoric Sites in the Neighbourhood of Ardcroney", *Éile*, 2(1983-84), 43-55.

⁵Wallace, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9; M. Herity, "Irish Decorated Neolithic Pottery", *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 82,C(1982), 247-404.

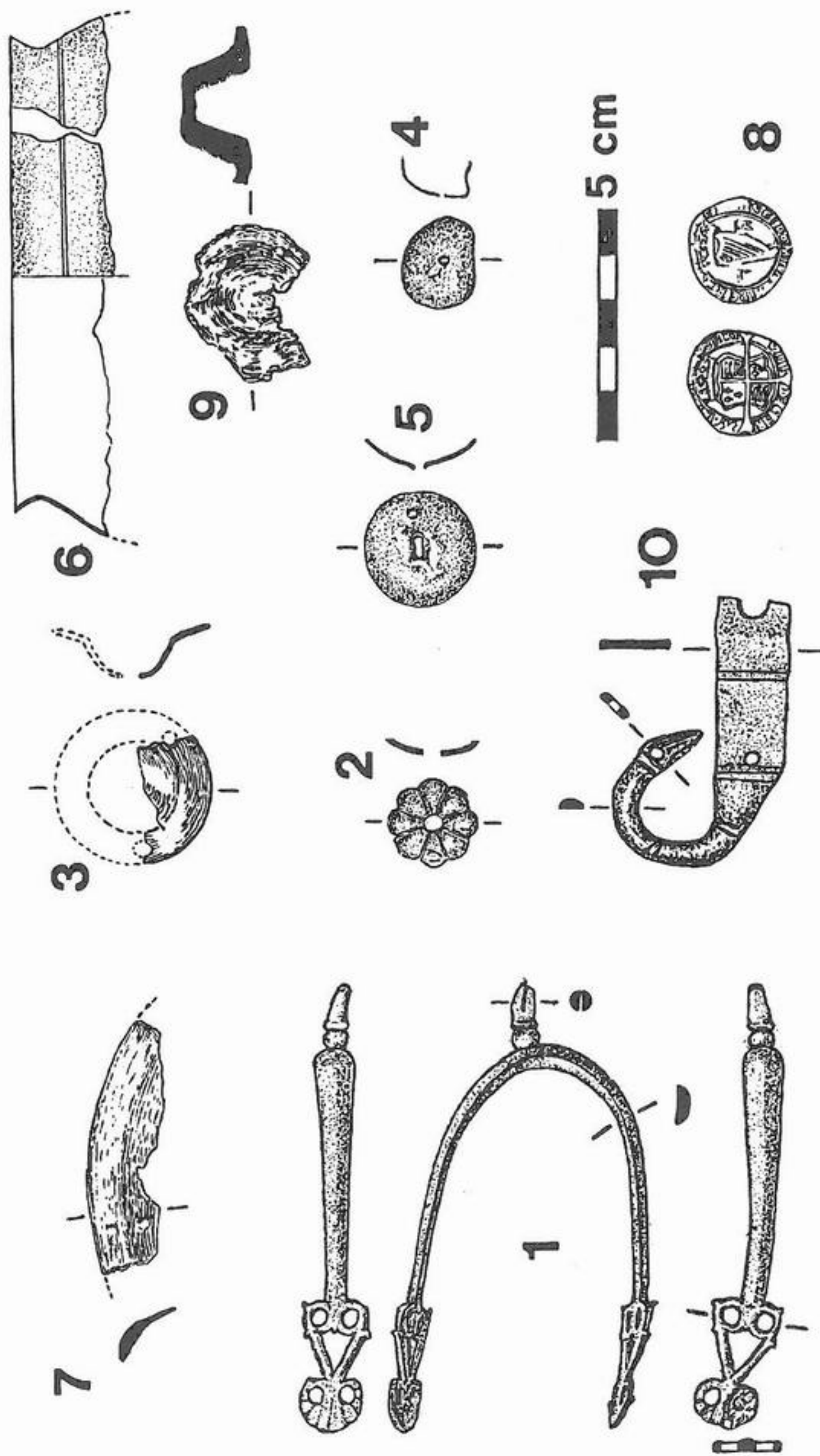
⁶A. L. Brindley, J. N. Lanting, "A Radiocarbon Date for a Burial from Ardcroney, Co. Tipperary", *North Munster Antiq. J.*, 24(1982), 99; A. L. Brindley, J. N. Lanting and W. G. Mook, "Radiocarbon Dates from the Neolithic Burials at Ballintruer More, Co. Wicklow, and Ardcroney, Co. Tipperary", *J. Irish Archaeol.*, 1(1983), 1-9.

⁷The reference to the scarcity of Neolithic burial monuments in Munster is, of course, based on the assumption that all of the wedge-tombs are of Early Bronze Age date.

MEDIEVAL METAL OBJECTS FROM BAUNKYLE, CO. CLARE

In 1981 the National Museum of Ireland acquired a collection of metal objects found at Baunkyle, Co. Clare [Par. Killinaboy; Bar. Inchiquin; O.S. 6-in. scale sheet 17 (16.35 cm. from S. and 16.55 cm. from W.)]. The material was discovered spread over an area forty yards square in the corner of a ploughed field which overlooks the southern shore of Inchiquin Lough. The finds (Illus. 3), though not directly associated, appear to constitute an assemblage of broadly contemporary late medieval metalwork.

1. (NMI 1981:84) A small gilt bronze spur with a split projection at the curved end which formerly held a rowel. The terminals are decorated with openwork designs, each of which cleverly incorporates four rivet-holes, one still containing an iron rivet. The terminal design consists basically of an openwork triangle surmounted by a scallop design. Max. L. 9.9 cm.
2. (NMI 1981:85) Small decorative bronze boss of rosette form with a central rivet-hole. Max. W. 1.92 cm.
3. (NMI 1981:86) Fragment of a bronze object of domed form with a flat flange-like rim bearing remains of two rivet-holes. Estimated D. 3.6 cm.
4. (NMI 1981:87) Thin bronze object of hemispherical form. The object is distorted and a hole in its surface results from corrosion. D. 1.95 cm.
5. (NMI 1981:88) Domed circular object of tinned bronze. There is a rectangular aperture at the centre and a circular one almost on the same axis, 4 mm. from the edge. D. 2.43 cm.
6. (NMI 1981:89a-d) Four fragments of a bronze bowl, three of which formed part of the rim and one from the base. The vessel, which was very fine, appears to have had a simple globular contour and a flat base. The neck was constricted and it had an everted rim. Estimated D. at rim 10.2 cm.; T. 1 mm.
7. (NMI 1981:90) Thickened and out-turned rim of a bronze dish. Max. T. 3 mm.; Min. T. 1 mm.
8. (NMI 1981:91) Silver groat of Henry VIII dated 1534-35.
9. (NMI 1981:92) Roughly circular, domed fragment of lead with a rectangular depression in the centre. Max. W. 3.4 cm.; Max. T. 1.6 cm.
10. (NMI 1981:93) Flat strip of bronze, broken at one end, with a curved and pointed projection at the other. There are three rivet-holes and the object is decorated with a series of incised lines. Max. L. 5.8 cm.; Max. W. 1.55 cm.; Max. T. 2 mm.



Illus. 3. Medieval metal objects from Baunkyle, Co. Clare.

Discussion:

The finds appear to consist of an assemblage of both military and domestic artifacts.

Three objects, the spur (no. 1) and the circular bronzes (nos. 3 and 5) appear to be items of horse furniture. The spur is difficult to date. Straight arms are characteristic of prick-spurs which are an earlier form, but the terminals of the Baunkyle spur are closer to those of well-dated 15th century rowel-spurs though these latter have bent arms (Ward Perkins, 1954, fig. 33). The scallop design is a common motif on later medieval metalwork and it occurs on a stirrup excavated at Clontuskert Priory, Co. Galway (Fanning, 1976, pp. 127-8, fig. 9). The fragmentary bronze object (no. 3) may be a small plain bridle-boss. These usually were ornate objects which concealed either end of the mouth-piece of a bridle-bit (Ward Perkins, 1954, p. 85). The Baunkyle object is smaller than an elaborately decorated 16th century bridle-boss from the Thames at London (Ward Perkins, 1954, fig. 22), but otherwise the overall form is the same.

The tinned bronze object (no. 5) is probably a harness mount. So also may be the hemispherical bronze object (no. 4) though its identification as such is less certain.

Like the scallop design, rosettes were a common decorative motif during the later Middle Ages. The example (no. 2) may have been used to decorate armour but it could also have been employed as harness decoration. The device was used, for example, to decorate the terminals of a curb-bit now in the Musée de Cluny, Paris (Ward Perkins, 1954, fig. 18:1), and also the terminals of a 'string-shoe' for a late 17th century harp, from Newtown Castle, Co. Westmeath (Rynne, 1966, fig. 1).

Although finely-made bronze bowls are common throughout the medieval period (Ward Perkins, 1954, pp. 201-2), an exact parallel for the Baunkyle example (no. 6) is not immediately forthcoming. The profile, however, is identical to that of medieval cooking pottery (Sweetman, 1979, fig. 7). The fragment of a metal rim (no. 7) is also part of a vessel, probably a shallow dish. It is too incomplete for one to speculate further on the form of the complete vessel.

The flat curved strip of bronze (no. 10) may be part of a binding or decorative strip from a wooden chest. The form differs from the binding-strips on the late medieval casket from Knockmore, Co. Clare (Rynne, 1971, pp. 37-40) and that found in the excavations at Clontuskert Priory, Co. Galway (Rynne, in Fanning 1976, p. 127, fig. 9:144). Though the Knockmore and Clontuskert examples are the only positively identified binding-strips from caskets, it is not unreasonable to assume that other forms were employed on various types of wooden objects such as chests, doors and furniture.

The lead object (no. 9) is a type of rawl-plug used to hold window frames in position in medieval churches and castles. Only the coin (no. 8) can be closely dated. However, it is much worn and is likely to have been in circulation for some time before being lost.

Comment:

The material does not constitute a hoard and the individual pieces are likely to have been lost at different times over a number of years. Close dating of most of the objects is difficult, but none of the finds seems to date earlier than the 14th or later than the 16th centuries. They are likely to be associated with a late medieval settlement which formerly existed either at the site of discovery or in its immediate vicinity.

In 1941 the discovery of medieval material during the construction of a sewage disposal plant at Ennis resulted in an archaeological excavation being undertaken on the site (Hunt, 1946, 195-209). The settlement was identified by the excavator as the palace of Clonroad More which is referred to in the annals. An excavation at the location of the discoveries

at Baunkyle might prove equally rewarding in furthering our knowledge of the medieval period in Co. Clare.

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THE MOUNT CALLAN OGHAM STONE—A FOOTNOTE

Arising from the article on the Mount Callan ogham stone [this *Journal*, 25(1983), 43-57], Fr. Ignatius Murphy, a member of Thomond Archaeological Society, drew my attention to the following notice which appeared in the *Ennis Chronicle*, vol. 1, no. 1, for Thursday, 8 April, 1784:

A gentleman well versed in Celtic or original Irish, lately discovered a most curious proof of the antiquity of our language, on Mount Callan, in this county. Being informed that there was an inscription on a large Druid Altar, called the 'Altar of the Sun', on said Mount, he went up, but searched in vain for the characters he was taught to expect. However, mentioning the matter to a peasant, who resided near the spot, he directed him to another monument of antiquity at about a mile distant, which consisted of a very large flag or stone, placed on a kind of Tumulus, with the following inscription in the Bearla Pheni, or Phenician Irish—Whee'n Lack shuh, tha Conaun, colo-gough cuss-foddach—"Under this stone lies the thorney, and long-legged Connaun". Tradition, in the neighbourhood of this place, had handed down this Connaun, as one of the companions of our Fuin McCoul, the Fingal of McPherson, supposed by the latter to have lived about the first, but by Irish historians about the fifth century. Thus much it will, at all events, tend to prove, that our pagan ancestors were not ignorant of letters; and when it is considered, that under a thousand difficulties, and at the hazard of life, professor Maupertius travelled from Berlin to Lapland, so far as the latitude of 71 degrees, to examine an inscription on a small Runic obelisk, so very near the pole, the above must be considered as a real curiosity; and worthy of further investigation.

This, then, is the first printed version of a direct transcription of the inscription, albeit a phonetic one. While the newspaper does not identify the gentleman in question, it is most likely to be Theophilus (or Tadhg) O'Flanagan, as this story in the *Ennis Chronicle* is so very similar in content and style to the letter from O'Flanagan dated Ennis, 20 April, 1784 (that is, twelve days after the account had appeared in the newspaper), quoted by Vallancey in *Archaeologia*, vol. 7 (1785). That is the letter in which O'Flanagan gives his first reading of the ogham. In the letter he also described his trip to the mountain and his search for the ogham; how he first came upon a monument which he searched very carefully, but in vain, for an inscription; how he then asked a "peasant" for information and was directed to the stone with the inscription.

I am most grateful to Fr. Ignatius Murphy for the reference, and to an t-Ath. Séamus Ó Dea who re-checked it in the *Ennis Chronicle* for me. The newspaper is very rare and not readily available, and this makes the story well worth recording here.

SIOBHÁN DE HÓIR



SILVESTER GOONAN'S SERMONS

By the end of the 18th century, Dublin had a thriving Catholic publishing and printing industry, graphically described by Thomas Wall in *The Sign of Doctor Hay's Head*.¹ One of Wall's more engaging personalities, Pat. Wogan, in business at No. 23, Old Bridge, Dublin, published a volume of sermons in 1798 on various religious subjects, for different Sundays and Festivals of the year, "By the late Reverend Silvester Goonan, of the City of Limerick" (Illus. 4).

Goonan was in his forty-sixth year when he died suddenly on the 14th of July 1796, as we learn from a foot-note to the editors Advertisement. The *Limerick Chronicle*, announcing the death in its July 16th issue, records that he "was found dead in his bed at his house in Peter's Cell".² He had been a notable preacher; hence the sermons, "faithfully printed from his Manuscripts", the editor says, and at the request of friends and acquaintances, most of whom had heard him deliver them.

Sermons were widely read at the time, but to insure themselves against loss publishers would collect subscriptions beforehand and publish the list of Subscriber's Names at the beginning of the work. Wogan's list for the Goonan project, mainly drawn from Limerick and its environs, is an interesting study in itself. He had 278 names, about 100 of them clergy, and he was sure of 336 copies because a number of his clients had ordered more than one. The work is an impressive production, 484 pages, well bound between boards covered in light-leather. I have not seen a price quoted, but I should say it would have cost at the time about six shillings.

Among the Limerick clergy registered under the 1782 Catholic clergy relief act was Silvester Goonan, Curate, St. John's, age 32, who had taken orders in Paris in 1778. Since we know from the Advertisement of the book that he was born in 1751, he must have registered in 1783. The following year, 1784, he was

curate of St. Mary's, working in the old church which was built in 1749. In the parish registers at St. Mary's he first appears on May 15th 1784, as the Rev. Mr. Gunan, baptizing Ann dau. to Jonathan Hehir and Mary Lyon. Dr. Nihill and Mary Meade were the 'Gos.', i.e., Gossips, the title *patrini* shared with tattlers and tipling companions until the later 18th century, at least in St. Mary's, when they began to be registered as 'spon.'—sponsors.

S E R M O N S

ON VARIOUS

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

FOR DIFFERENT

SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS

OF

THE YEAR.

By the late Reverend SILVESTER GOONAN, of the City
of Limerick.

D U B L I N :

PRINTED BY PAT. WOGAN, NO. 23, OLD BRIDGE.

1798.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

Illus. 4.

Throughout Goonan's time the entries were made in English and not by the *baptizans*, except in a few instances when the priest used Latin. Goonan's last baptism was on July 4th 1796, this spelling of his name well established by then³; the subject was John, the son of Jermia Hedigan. On July 12th, two days before he died, he is registered as having married Denis Carmody to Margaret Hely, in the presence of the three witnesses usual at the time.

It is difficult to determine from Begley's haphazard jottings⁴ whether the Rev. Mr. Goonan had become parish priest of St. Mary's by the time of his death. He is so described in the report of his passing published in the *Limerick Chronicle*. In Begley's account, when Dr. John Creagh died in October 1790, having been parish priest for forty-five years, a petition was made to have Goonan succeed as parish priest and Dean of the Diocese. The senior curate, so Begley says, "discharged his duties with great zeal and eloquence which endeared him to all".⁵ This, no doubt, was the theme of the petition. But Goonan failed to make it. The two posts went to the parish priest of Bruff, the future bishop, Dr. John Young. "He was inducted . . .", says Begley, "by Dr. Conway [the bishop] on 1st March, 1791, in the presence of Rev. Sylvester Goonan, Charles Tuohy, and the Franciscan fathers, Thomas Bourke and Patrick Hogan".⁶

Young apparently set up in St. Mary's, for Begley notes that after his consecration as coadjutor to Bishop Conway in 1793 he went to live with the old man in Mungret Street. Did he give up St. Mary's parish then in favour of Goonan?

Begley's statements are contradictory. He says that "After Dr. Young had become coadjutor bishop Dr. O'Flynn was promoted to the Deanship and parish of St. Mary's".⁷ In the parish lists, however, Silvester Gorman (obviously Goonan) is given as parish priest of St. Mary's from 1792, the year of Young's appointment to the coadjutorship, O'Flynn going to St. Mary's in 1796, when Young took over as bishop.⁸

Returning to St. Mary's registers, one finds Goonan and the Rev. Mr. Herbert in almost full possession for 1793 and 1794. They were helped by the Rev. Mr. McGrath, 1795/6. Dr. Young was celebrant on a number of occasions. He did a marriage on Janr. 8th 1795 and a baptism in that year also. But these may have been return visits by way of compliment, since we find him doing a baptism on Nov. 7th 1796 and again on July 1st 1797, during which time he was bishop of the diocese.

Throughout 1797, the clergy who did the sacraments regularly were Herbert, McGrath, O'Neil and Creaton. Dr. O'Flynn's name first appeared for a baptism on May 8th 1797; but the parish priest was in relatively the same position as Dr. Young was during his coadjutorship: he had other burdens, being a professor in Bishop Young's seminary.⁹ Perhaps what happened is that at the time of his death Goonan had been acting parish priest of St. Mary's.

Although we have considerable detail about the circumstances of our preacher's death, the *Limerick Chronicle* noting that "he had been complaining a few days past of a pain in his stomach", no evidence can be found about his burial place.

The sermons, with their ornate, artificial style, make heavy reading now. One has to be patient with an age as with a neighbour. They are in their way eloquent, the whole thirty-one of them, though never exciting. They certainly read well, which cannot be said for Fr. Tom Burke's published sermons;¹⁰ sound in doctrine, appealing in piety, they are well put together, the structure always the same: the introductory section, the two parts and the closing prayer.

Goonan belonged to his age in more than the manner of his preaching:

Do not imagine that the plan of Christian education, which I have proposed to you, will disqualify your children from appearing to advantage in the world. No; it will make them real ornaments of society; it will teach them to give every one his due, to observe that degree of respect for others, which their superior rank, or situation in life may require. . . .

God help us, what the run of parishioners in Goonan's St. Mary's must have thought of their chances of becoming ornaments of society is another matter. At least they could have been enthralled by his eloquence and he had other ways of serving them. The *Limerick Chronicle* observed that—the pain in his stomach notwithstanding—he was “performing the sacred functions of his office to a sick parishioner at 11 o'clock on the night before his decease”, a tribute repeated a few days later in *The Freeman's Journal*.

MICHAEL TYNAN

¹Published by M. H. Gill and Son Ltd., Dublin 1958.

²For an interesting story of Peter's Cell see Revd. M. Moloney, “Religious Houses in Medieval Limerick; I: Peter's Cell”, this *Journal*, 9(1962-65), 69-75.

³Fr. John D. Leonard, Hon. Sec., Thomond Archaeological Society, has not only assisted me in tracking down the newspaper reports mentioned in this article, but has also carried out some research into the Goonan presence in the Limerick of the time. “Goonan, Cornelius, of Limerick, Innkeeper. 1742” appears in the list of conformists to the Church Established quoted by Lenihan in his *History of Limerick*, 1866, on page 375. Ferrar's *Limerick Directory*, 1769, lists a Cornelius Goonan, Haberdasher, Thomondgate, and a Cornelius Goonan, Innholder, Mungret Street. Lucas, *General Directory*, 1788, has a Kate Goonan, Woolen and Linen Draper, Thomondgate.

⁴John Archdeacon Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the Present Time*, Dublin 1938, pp. 248 ff.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 595-596.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 262. Bishop Young's seminary was founded in 1794 at Palmerstown, moving in 1795 to Newgate Lane and in 1800 across the Main Street to Peter's Cell, before finally transferring to Park House in 1809 (Moloney, *op. cit.*, p. 72).

¹⁰Rev. T. N. Burke, *Sermons, Lectures and Addresses*, New York 1877.

PROPOSED CANAL IN WEST CLARE

Hely Dutton's *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, published in 1808, mentions a proposal “made some time since” to build a canal from Poulmasherry Bay to Doonbeg. This canal, capable of carrying ships of 300 to 400 tons, would enable them to avoid the dangerous passage around Loop Head. Dutton also saw it as useful for carrying limestone to improve the bogs. However, he had one reservation—“possibly the Atlantic Ocean would be a dangerous sea to meddle with, as Dunbeg harbour is by no means a safe one”.¹

I have been unable to find where this proposal originated but it was repeated not long afterwards in an official government report on the bogs in south-west Clare by Thomas Colbourne, an engineer.² Colbourne, in a survey done in 1811, suggested a canal running from Moyasta, on Poulmasherry Bay, to a point just south of Dunmore Castle on Doonbeg Bay. His estimate was for a canal which would be adequate for the sailing boats in use on the Shannon. The cost would be about £15,000 per mile, amounting in all to £61,250. A less ambitious canal, capable of taking small boats, would cost about £30,000. Colbourne himself was in favour of the larger canal, which would have eight locks. “It would open a communication from Limerick to Galway, without the circuitous and dangerous passage round Loophead. . . . Limestone might also be brought coastways from Burrin.”

Rev. John Graham, writing on south-west Clare in Mason's *Parochial Survey of Ireland*, mentioned the proposal for the canal but, like Dutton, was sceptical about its advisability, "In the conjunction of an equinoctial tide, with a storm from the north-west, an opening at Dunbeg large enough to admit vessels of three or four hundred tons burden, might prove the means of inundating a great part of the barony of Moyarta."³

After Graham (1816) there is no further mention of the canal. It was never more than a proposal, although Colbourne did provide fairly detailed costings.

IGNATIUS MURPHY

¹Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, Dublin 1808, pp. 220-221.

²*Parliamentary Papers 1813-14*, vol. VI, part 1, pp. 103-104, 110.

³William Shaw Mason, *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland*, 3 vols., Dublin 1814-19, II, pp. 475-476.

LONGEVITY IN COUNTY CLARE

While looking at some issues of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* from the 1890s I noticed that the Miscellanea sections contained a number of examples of longevity, a topic in which some members were very interested at the time. The following are examples from County Clare, mainly from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Although one is inclined to be extremely sceptical about accepting the very high ages without supporting documentation, the accompanying detail is in some cases very impressive. The *Guinness Book of Records* says that the Hon. Katherine Plunkett (1820-1932) who lived 111 years 327 days holds the Irish record for longevity (authenticated) and it remarks that centenarians surviving beyond their 113th year are of extreme rarity anywhere in the world.

Limerick Chronicle, 2 July 1787

Patrick Hehir of Poulbane, near Corofin, at the age of 118. He was active until a few weeks before he died, "the effects of a life of temperance".

Ennis Chronicle, 15 October 1787

John Danagher of Ennis, at the age of 110. He died in the House of Industry, Ennis, having retained his senses to the last.

Ennis Chronicle, 31 May 1790

Rev. Patrick Curtin, parish priest of Dysart, at the age of 101. Hely Dutton (*Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, Dublin 1808, page 3n.) mentions Fr. Curtin as an example of longevity. "He never had the tooth-ache, and got a new tooth at 98, never lost a tooth but the one that was replaced at this unusual age, and enjoyed good health to the last."

Ennis Chronicle, 7 March 1791

Daniel Carroll of Kilkishen, aged 115. "He retained his faculties to the last, and walked upwards of four miles to prayers the Sunday before his death."

Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, 1808 (page 3n.)

"There are many instances of longevity, one Hagarty near Moy died lately at the age of 107, and preserved the use of his intellects to the last. A family of the name of Rumsey, near Kilrush, are remarkably long-lived."

Clare Journal, 4 January 1808

Cornelius Hehir, of Knocksallagh, near Carrahan, aged 100. "He recollected having sold Turf at Ennis, in the year 1720, when the town contained three slated houses only—he was extremely facetious and remarkably fond of tobacco."

William Shaw Mason, *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland* (vol. II, Dublin 1816)

The section on the Kilrush area of West Clare was written by Rev. John Graham, who was Protestant curate there. He mentions that the neighbourhood abounded with instances of longevity, including "Old Nanny" in Kilrush, "who is now considerably above an hundred years of age".

Clare Journal, 13 December 1821

Mrs. Holland of Kilrush, at the very advanced age of 121. "About two years since . . . she acknowledged that she was then 118, and until that period, she could read the smallest print without the assistance of glasses. She also confessed that she danced at the first house-warming of the Court of Ballyket, and was then grown up; which circumstance confirms the period of her great age, as from an inscription on a stone in the wall of the Court, it was built in the year 1718." It is very likely that this woman is Graham's "Old Nanny".

Clare Journal, 16 February 1835

John Meere of Dromedrehid near Ennis, aged 110. "He possessed his faculties to the last and was able to walk about."

Nenagh Guardian, 3 July 1875

"A correspondent informs us that there is a man at the advanced age of 106 years named Frank Morgan, residing at Lahinch, who occasionally walks from that village to Ennis, a distance of eighteen Irish miles. He was originally a blacksmith and has returned to that occupation for maintenance. He served in the Clare Militia in 1792, under Colonel O'Brien. He does not look to be more than eighty years of age, and is quite cheerful and chatty."

Munster News, 25 September 1875

"A woman who was known by the title of 'Big Peg', her patronymic having been lost in the lapse of generations, died at the extraordinary age of 120 years, a few days back, at Loop Head. She was of robust frame, and retained her mental faculties until three years ago, when she became somewhat idiotic. . . ."

Munster News, 23 February 1879

This records the death of John Higgins of Ogonnelloe, a centenarian, "who bore a pike in the Irish Rebellion".

Independent & Munster Advertiser, 2 June 1883

Mrs. Hourigan of Tulla, aged 106. "A few hours before her death she repeated the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity in the Irish Language. Deceased was born A.D. 1777."

Saturday Record, 5 August 1905

Biddy Fox of Rathloo, near Fenloe, Newmarket on Fergus. She had many reminiscences of 1798, including the reception given to Captain Bridgman on his return home from fighting in other parts of Ireland.

IGNATIUS MURPHY

THREE MINOR NUMISMATIC FINDS FROM COUNTY CLARE

The purpose of this note is to record three separate finds of numismatic material from County Clare. Two finds are somewhat related as both involved counterfeit bank tokens and both finds were made in the Ennis area.

The first find consisted of four "Georgian Sovereigns". These were discovered in late 1974 during a treasure-hunting foray in the immediate vicinity of Quin Abbey. Details of the find are extremely sketchy. However, it would seem that on a first visit to the Abbey one sovereign was found and on a subsequent visit, within a few days, using a more sophisticated metal-detector, three further sovereigns were located at the same spot. The find-spot is reputed to have been immediately outside the eastern wall of the Abbey, almost midway between the bastions of De Clare's castle. As the four coins were described as "Georgian Sovereigns", it is probable that the coins were either George III issue of 1817-1820 or George IV issue of 1821-1825, as both these issues used the Bernadetto Pistrucci reverse design of St. George and the dragon.¹ It must be conceded, however, that one or more 'shield backed' (*i.e.* the reverse containing a crowned shield bearing the Royal Arms) sovereign of George IV could have been included in the find. These were issued between the years 1825-1830.² As no exact details of the coins are available, no accurate assessment of a loss date can be made. It is, however, quite probable that the coins were lost by a sight-seeing visitor to the Abbey.

This shadowy and, seemingly, now dispersed find provides a reminder of the dismal record of preservation of sites of historic importance from the attentions of mindless treasure-seekers.

The second find was made in the Summer of 1969, during the tarmacadamming of a private driveway near the Tulla Road in Ennis. It consisted of two Irish coins, a George IV penny of 1823 (Seaby 4623, D.F. 631)³ and a crude contemporary counterfeit George III thirty pence Bank token (Seaby 4616, D.F. 618).⁴ The forged token was cast in brass and silvered over—a large area of the silvering had leached away over the years during which the token had lain in the ground. Regrettably, a large portion of the token's edge had been damaged so it is not clear whether the piece was struck in a 'forgers-tree' mould⁵ or a single-coin mould.⁶ Both pieces were found in the upper layer of soil immediately below an old gravel driveway. The George IV penny had considerable surface corrosion; however, enough of the design fabric remained to show that the coin had seen little circulation before loss. With the assimilation of the currencies of Britain and Ireland in 1826, the Anglo-Irish series of coins were demoneterised. Given the condition of the non-corroded part of the penny's surface, a loss date of about 1826 would be reasonable and in keeping with the legal status of the currency at that time.

The third find consisted of a single piece, a contemporary forgery of a Bank of England three shilling token dated 1816 (Seaby 3014).⁷ The piece is an extremely good copy but has a dull grey colour and is marginally heavier than the genuine article. An investigation of the engrailed edge showed a fine line of raised metal running right around the circumference. Obviously the piece was cast in a single-coin mould similar to that found at Lispole, Co. Kerry.⁸ The exact find-spot is not at present very clear, but it was found in 1963 in a garden near St. Flannan's College, Ennis. The piece is now in private hands in Co. Galway.

At first glance it might seem strange that two different contemporary counterfeits of Bank tokens should be found in Ennis. However, given the parlous state of the coinage of Ireland in the late 18th/early 19th century⁹ it is not at all surprising that counterfeits should turn up in any urban area. Johnson, a notorious Munster coiner or counterfeiter,

was arrested in Glin, Co. Limerick, in 1790.¹⁰ In February of the same year, at Carlow, an unnamed individual up on an assault charge was found to be a counterfeiter. Whilst being searched "the whole apparatus for coining gold, and a piece resembling a guinea, in the rough but not coloured were found on him".¹¹ As late as 1825 there were six people brought before the court in Co. Galway for passing "forged notes and base coin".¹² These sort of figures seem to give the lie to the commonly held assumption that adulterine mints in Birmingham were responsible for most of the counterfeit coin circulating in Ireland at this period. However, so long as coin finds remain unreported this and other problems in Irish numismatics will go unresolved. Certainly, one should be thankful for the reporting of the two Ennis finds as they throw some light on an extremely interesting but sadly neglected facet of Irish numismatic history.

PAUL DUFFY

¹B. A. Seaby, *Coins of England and the United Kingdom*, 13th edition, London 1974, where the coins in question have reference nos. 2971 and 3041.

²*Ibid.*, reference no. 3042.

³B. A. Seaby, *Coins and Tokens of Ireland*, London 1970; Anthony Dowle and Patrick Finn [D.F.], *The Guide Book to the Coinage of Ireland*, London 1969.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Michael Dolley, "An Early Nineteenth-Century Forger's Run from the Co. Offaly", *J. Old Athlone Soc.*, 1:4(1974-75), 271-272, plate 18.

⁶Michael K. Murphy and Michael Dolley, "A Later Nineteenth-Century Kerry Forger's Mould from Lispolé", *J. Kerry Archaeol. Hist. Soc.*, 7(1974), 139-142; the mould is illustrated on plates 2 and 3.

⁷Seaby, *op. cit.* (1974).

⁸Murphy and Dolley, *loc. cit.*

⁹Paul Duffy, "A Numismatic Portrait of Brian Boru", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 25(1983), 71-72.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*The Gentleman's and London Magazine*, Dublin, February 1790, p. 111.

¹²*The Connaught Journal*, Galway, 28th July, 1825.

THE BALL AT ROXBOROUGH HOUSE, 1895

Roxborough House stood in the townland of the same name, about four miles south of Limerick City and a short distance to the east of what are now the grounds of Limerick Golf Club, at Ballyclough.¹ In the 17th century the area was part of the ancient parish of Cahervally, and the lands belonged to the Roches,² one of whom, Dominic Roche, was created Viscount Cahervally by James II.³ Under the Cromwellian Settlement the lands were granted to the Hollow Blades,⁴ In the reign of Queen Ann, Connell Vereker of Cork bought the lands of Roxborough from the Hollow-Sword-Blade Company and built a mansion, "in a park laid out with canals, terraces and hedges, in the stiff Dutch fashion".⁵ The Verekers became very prominent in County Limerick, and in the City, during the 18th century. One of them, Henry Vereker, died from wounds received in a duel with his neighbour, Michael Furnell of Ballyclough, in 1792.⁶ Henry's more celebrated brother, Charles Vereker, the hero of Collooney, became Viscount Gort, in 1817.⁷

The Verekers left Roxborough in the 19th century and went to live at Lough Cutra, in County Galway. The house changed occupants more than once, and, in 1879, the contents were auctioned, "in order to give promptest possession to the incoming tenant".⁸ The incoming tenant was Alexander W. Shaw, of W. J. Shaw and Sons, Mulgrave Street—Shaws' Bacon Factory.⁹ He was one of the prominent business men in Limerick at

the end of the 19th century.¹⁰ He was born in 1847, the second son of William John Shaw, of Willow Bank, County Limerick.¹¹ In addition to being head of the bacon-curing firm, Alexander Shaw had other business interests, including a directorship of the Waterford-Limerick and Western Railway.¹² He was a J.P. for Limerick City and became High Sheriff of County Limerick in 1899.¹³ He was a keen sportsman and he is credited with being the original promoter of golf in Limerick.¹⁴ He played a leading role in the establishment of Limerick Golf Club, the grounds of which were laid down at Ballyclough, near his home, and of which he was first captain. He was also the prime mover in the setting up of Lahinch Golf Club,¹⁵ of which he was captain also. Among his other interests music held a high place, and he acted as local representative for the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music.¹⁶ He travelled extensively in America and Europe,¹⁷ and he had at least two publications to his credit: *Irish Trade* and *Irish Canals and Waterways*.¹⁸ He was knighted in 1906.¹⁹ In his later years he moved to Limerick City and lived at Derravoher in the 1920s when the registration number of his car was TI 393.²⁰ He had married, in 1876, Eleanor Gubbins, daughter of William Gough-Gubbins, of Castletroy. They had three sons and four daughters.²¹ The following is an extraordinarily detailed account of a ball given by the Shaws to celebrate the birthday of one of their daughters, in May, 1895.²²

There were festivities on an exceedingly brilliant scale last night at Roxboro', the residence of Mr. A. W. Shaw, J.P., a ball, to which the elite of the city and counties of Limerick and Clare were invited, having been given in honour of the birthday and 'coming out' of Miss Shaw. It is now some time since an important social event of the kind has taken place in this district, or one, under the circumstances, of such an interesting and congratulatory nature. As might have been expected, the arrangements for the occasion were of a most elaborate character, nothing being left undone by Mr. and Mrs. Shaw to make the night a thoroughly enjoyable one in every sense of the word. The whole house was thrown open for the occasion. The staircases were tastefully set off with handsome palms and potted plants, and the guests were received in the two beautifully-furnished drawingrooms, one of them leading into a very pretty conservatory, which was a maze of colour, and this in turn communicated with a very cosy ante-room, just at the right of the ballroom. The latter was a surprise in its way, and for picturesque effect left nothing to be desired. The grounds outside the veranda were tented in to a length of 60 ft. by 20 ft. in width, which were the dimensions of the ballroom proper, and besides this, a flight of stone steps on the terrace was taken in for the accommodation of the band. This was a really ingenious idea, and the profusion of ivy on the pillars, in its natural form, together with the palms, ferns and mosses, contrasted most effectively with the bright crimson geraniums and flowers of other hues. The whole of the canvas structure—which, it may be observed, had an exceedingly pretty roof of crimson and yellow stripes—was brilliantly lit up by three solid brass chandeliers of ornate design, each containing thirty lights. These were placed in the centre of the ballroom, and along the side were handsome mirrors, and branches containing six lights each. A pretty border of clematis encircled the room, and the verandah and ante-rooms looked exceedingly bright with anemones, lilacs, azalias and other flowering plants, with some stately palms giving to the whole surroundings a very refreshing effect. It should be said that the oak floor, specially laid down, was splendidly waxed, and accordingly, the most ardent Terpsichorean would not wish for more happy conditions, because, in addition to the exquisite music of Mervyn Brown's string band from Dublin, and an excellent floor, the cool temperature experienced under canvas was much more agreeable for dancing at this time of year than if one were actually within doors.

Supper was served in the diningroom, and also in a marquee specially erected for the purpose. The tables, which glistened with plate, were very artistically set off with white flowers and lily of the valley, and an apartment at the back of the salle de danse was converted into a tea-room. The catering was excellently done by Mrs. McMahon, Thomas Street; Mr. Benjamin Edgington of London erected the ballroom in a highly creditable manner. It goes without saying that the numerous guests enjoyed themselves to the fullest extent, and dancing, which commenced at ten, proceeded uninterruptedly, not until the streaks of dawn had appeared, but until the sunbeams of a bright May morn smiled upon the now weary dancers and suggested that pleasure, like everything else, has its beginning and its ending. Need it be said that the heartiest congratulations and many happy returns were conveyed to the amiable and accomplished young lady in whose honour, as we have said, last night's festivities were held.

The costumes were very pretty and varied, and amongst those noticeable were the following:— Mrs.

Shaw wore a very handsome black brocade with white satin bodice, ornaments, diamonds. Miss M. Shaw wore a white satin bodice, trimmed with tulle and silver sequins, with butterfly sleeves. . . . Mrs. Curling, a handsome blue and white brocade with pearl trimming, ornaments, pearls and diamonds. . . . Miss Sutherland was attired in a white dress with pink bodice and shoulder strap of roses. . . .

The writer continues the account with descriptions of the other ladies in which the adjectives, "handsome" and "pretty" alternate with "charming" and "becoming". The other names mentioned were those of Mrs. J. B. Barrington, Mrs. Eva Barrington, Miss Moreland, Mrs. A. Bannatyne, Miss Phelps, The Misses Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, Mrs. Verschoyle, Miss Bunbury, Mrs. C. Croker, Miss Parker, Miss Vincent, Mrs. Bennett, Miss Bruce, Mrs. Sandes, Mrs. Eva O'Grady, Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Vansittart.

SEAN MARRINAN

¹O.S. 6-inch sheet 13 (Co. Limerick).

²Down Survey Map of the (South) Liberties of Limerick; R. C. Simington, *Civil Survey of Limerick 1654-56*, Dublin 1938, p. 472.

³G. Mac Spealáin, *Stair Aos Trí Muighe*, Baile Átha Cliath 1967, 1. 191.

⁴J. G. Barry, "The Cromwellian Settlement of the County of Limerick", *J. Limerick Field Club*, 2:5(1901), 49.

⁵M. Lenihan, *Limerick: Its History and Antiquities*, Limerick 1866 (reprint Cork 1967), p. 224, fn.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 385, fn. and p. 706, fn.; R. Cussen, "Caleb Powell Sums Up His Grand Jury", in E. Rynne (ed.), *North Munster Studies*, Limerick 1967, p. 419; B. De Breffny, "The Vereker Family", *The Irish Ancestor*, 2(1973), 74.

⁷*The Irish Ancestor*, 2(1973), 75.

⁸*The Munster News*, 23rd August, 1879.

⁹W. Bassett, *Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Kerry: Directory*, Limerick 1880-81, p. 79.

¹⁰Anon., *Modern Ireland. Men of the Period*, The Biographical Publishing Company, London (N.D. but c. 1900), p. 199.

¹¹*Walford's County Families of the United Kingdom*, London 1904, p. 908.

¹²*Modern Ireland*, loc. cit. (fn. 10).

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁵*The Limerick Chronicle*, 15th October, 1895.

¹⁶*Modern Ireland*, loc. cit. (fn. 14).

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Who's Who 1924*, London 1924, p. 2544.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Walford's County Families*, loc. cit. (fn. 11).

²²*The Limerick Chronicle*, 25th May, 1895.

SMOKEHOLE EXPERIMENTS AT CRAGGAUNOWEN

One of the main disadvantages of the archaeological record with reference to habitation sites is that it is often impossible to obtain evidence for structures above ground level. A possible solution to this problem may be found in the reconstruction of various types of buildings with similar ground plans, on which various experiments could be carried out according to other available evidence.

An experiment using the two houses on the crannog replica construction (Illus. 5) at the Craggaunowen Project, near Quin, Co. Clare, recently provided some information on the presence or absence of smokeholes in thatched, timber framed houses with wattle and daub walls. Though both houses enclose approximately the same internal area, one of them is circular in plan while the other is sub-rectangular with rounded corners; neither have smokeholes and when the central fires are in use the smoke simply makes its way through



Illus. 5. Craggaunowen Crannog: rectangular house on left, circular house (partly hidden by gate-tower) to right.
(Photo: SFADCo)

the thatch. The first indication that conditions inside the two houses were not the same was when it was noticed that visitors were less likely to remain for any length of time in the rectangular than in the circular house. Subsequently a series of observations suggested, for similar fires and over the same period, that the roof of the circular house was the more efficient dispenser of smoke.

This may be the result of two factors:

1. The conical roof of the circular house causes a spiral of hot air to rise and acts as a natural chimney.
2. A conical roof has greater surface area relative to internal volume than has a rectangular roof. Given that the internal volume is the same in both rectangular and circular houses, this extra surface area provides more space for smoke to escape.

The suggestion is, therefore, that the conical roof of a circular house with a central fire is efficient enough in the dispersal of smoke so as to make a smokehole unnecessary. Indeed, in certain types of weather such a provision would probably create a fire-risk because of a greatly increased up-draught. A rectangular house however, without the benefit of a conical roof and with relatively less roof surface area, would require a smokehole for the comfort of its inhabitants.

JOHN M. HARRISON

