

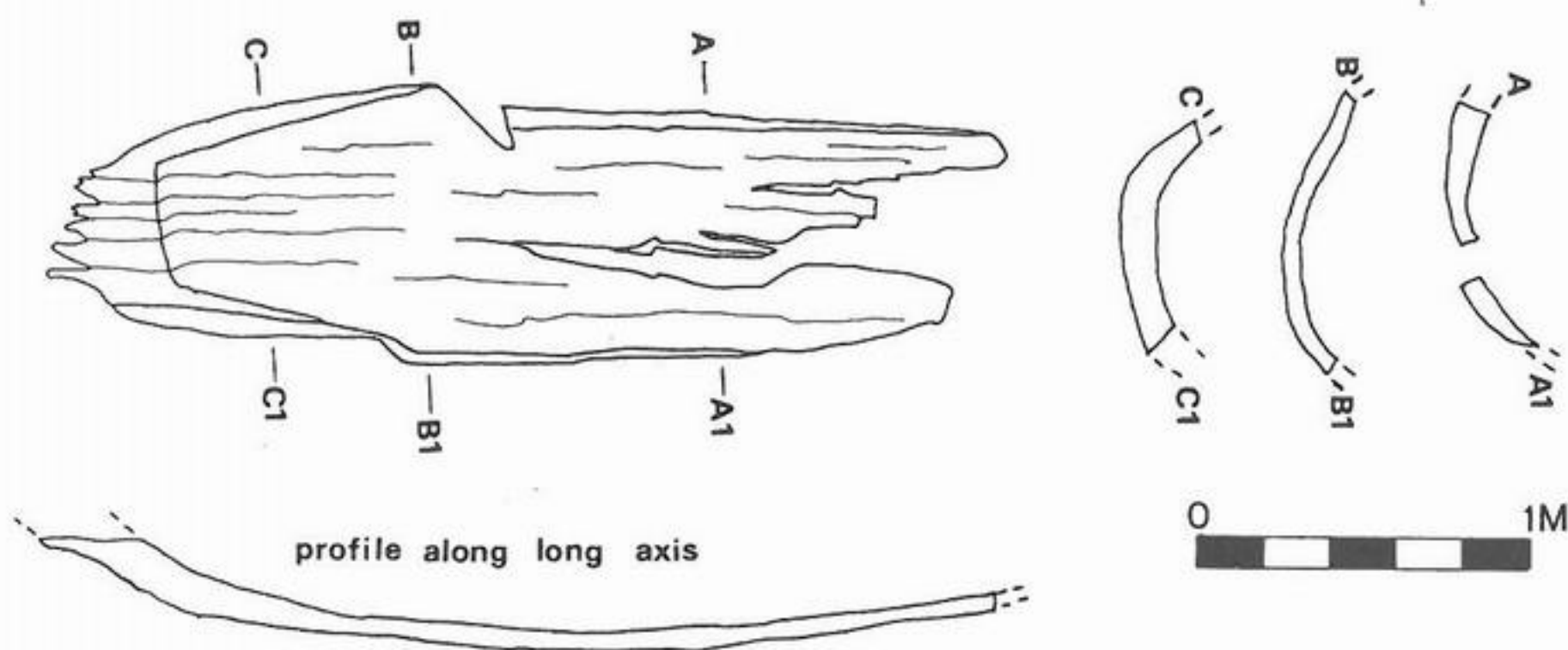
Miscellanea

A LOG-BOAT FROM CLENAGH, CO. CLARE

On the 21st of February, 1987, Mr. Henry Power discovered a log-boat on his father's property at Clenagh, Co. Clare. Through the good offices of Mr. Donal Carey, T.D., the find was reported to the National Museum of Ireland and with the kind co-operation of the land-owner, Mr. Michael Power, and the assistance of Mr. Larry Walsh, Curator of the Limerick Museum, the boat was investigated by the writer.

Location

The boat was located at a bend in a small L-shaped tidal creek in the eastern bank of the estuary of the River Fergus. (Td. Clenagh; par. Kilmaleery; bar. Bunratty Lower; Co. Clare. O.S. 6" sheet 51, 11.5 cm. from W.; 12.5 cm. from the S.)



Illus. 1. Log-boat from Clenagh, Co. Clare.

Description

The remains were those of the prow section of what appears to have been a substantial log-boat made of oak (Illus. 1). The incomplete craft, only the bottom of which survived, was 2.88 m. long and had a maximum width of 0.83 m. It was carefully carved and varied in thickness, reaching a maximum at the prow of 30 cm. The average thickness elsewhere was between 5 cm. and 10 cm. The greater thickness of the prow was probably designed to counter the threat of impact damage in what was the most vulnerable section of the craft. Test-holes, features which are commonly found in other log boats are absent. These are believed to have acted as a guide to judging the thickness of craft during their construction.

Comment

The age of the boat is difficult to determine on purely morphological grounds. Boats of this general class were probably used over a great span of time and probably performed a number of functions involved with transport, fishing and hunting. For a full discussion

of such vessels the reader is referred to A. T. Lucas, "The Dugout Canoe in Ireland: The Literary Evidence", *Varbergs Museum: Arsbok 1963: Festskrift till Albert Sandklef*, 14(1963), 57-68.

EAMONN P. KELLY

A NOTE ON A DESTROYED RINGFORT NEAR DROM, TEMPLEMORE, CO. TIPPERARY

In February 1987 a larger than average earthen ringfort at a place known locally as Harry Wall's Cross, about four miles south-west of Templemore, was destroyed in the course of land reclamation—the land had changed ownership some months previously. Sited in the townland of Rorardstown Lower, in the modern parish of Drom and Inch, it was beside the road leading from Templemore to Bouladuff. It is depicted as a small almost circular field enclosure on all editions of the six-inch scale Ordnance Survey map, at a point 14.5 cm. from the western margin and 22 cm. from the southern margin of Sheet 35 for Co. Tipperary.

The ringfort, as estimated by the writer, was approximately 42 m. in overall diameter. The bank was virtually complete, with the entrance to the north-east, which had been widened within recent times to form a field gateway. At the centre of the site there was a rise in ground level which could have resulted from occupation over a long period; it is, however, equally likely to have been caused by the natural lie of the land. A fosse surrounded the ringfort, which on its North, East and South sides was filled to within 15 cm. of existing ground level, but on its West side had a surface depth of almost 1.5 m. The fosse was also approximately 2 m. wide at its West, whereas elsewhere it was less than half a metre in width. The most likely explanation for this variation in depth and width is that the ringfort was sited on a natural incline which sloped downwards from West to East. The ringfort afforded quite good views to its North and East, but vision was restricted to its South and especially to its West due to the rising ground to its rear.

Below the ringfort, in the field to the East, possibly associated earthworks were indicated by crop-marks. There are several other ringforts located in the immediate area, notably one in the same townland, in the adjacent field on the opposite side of the road to the South-East of the ringfort here discussed.

DONAL J. O'REGAN

SENDING A TELEGRAM IN NORTH MUNSTER

Early in July 1987 the telegram service in Ireland came to an end and was replaced by the new teletext system. An article in *The Irish Times* on the 8th of July commented that even Bord Telecom was unsure about how long the telegram service had been operating in Ireland but a spokesman thought it started "sometime in 1861". However, British Telecom in London, where the early records are kept, assigned 1857 as a probable starting date. Even this earlier date would appear to be wrong, at least for North Munster, as Maurice Lenihan, in his *Limerick: Its History and Antiquities* (Limerick 1866, p. 515, fn.) states that in 1856 the Electric Telegraph Company completed their arrangements for

communication with Limerick.¹ Four years later the *Limerick Reporter & Tipperary Vindicator* of 8 May, 1860, announced the link-up of Ennis with Limerick:

B. D. Watlock, Esq., district engineer, and T. H. Sanger, Esq., superintendent of the British and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company, arrived in Ennis to-day at 11.34 from Dublin, when the former immediately connected up the necessary apparati, and commenced working the line of Telegraph recently erected between that town and Limerick. The line, as anticipated, proved to be in perfect working order, and the signals transmitted from either end were good. The establishment of this rapid means of communication will be hailed as a great boon by the merchants and traders of Ennis and the surrounding districts who have heretofore been altogether in the back ground with respect to such scientific advances. . . . The erection of the line opening up a Telegraphic Communication between the two places has been effected in little over a month.

Three weeks later the *Limerick Reporter & Tipperary Vindicator* of 29 May, 1860, informed its readers that an office was open at the railway station from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Sundays excepted) "from whence Messages may be forwarded to all parts of the United Kingdom and the Continent".

IGNATIUS MURPHY

¹The text in Lenihan gives a list of events in 1865 but from internal evidence this is very obviously a misprint for 1856. On page 522, fn. Lenihan mentions the link-up with Ennis in 1860.

NOTE ON THE MURDER OF JOHN O'CONNELL CURTIN

Con Costello in his lively article on Dr. Hugh Brosnan of Killarney entitled "A Kerry 'Moonlighter'" in the 1981 issue of the *Journal*, touches on the murder of John O'Connell Curtin of Castle Farm, Firies, by 'Moonlighters' in 1885. There are a number of factual errors in the description of the incident in the article, which should be corrected. These corrections are based on information contained in the Curtin Family Papers in the possession of a descendant now resident in London.

John O'Connell Curtin was a native of Killaculleen, Tournafulla, County Limerick. He married Agnes de Courcy in 1847 and took up residence in Castle Farm, Molahiffe, Firies, in the 1850s when his father-in-law became too old to run the farm himself. Though a tenant of the Kenmare Estate, there is no evidence that John O'Connell Curtin was on particularly friendly terms with Lord Kenmare's Agent and it is certainly untrue that the Agent dined with Curtin on the night of his murder, Friday the 13th November, 1885. On that night several 'Moonlighters' raided Castle Farm looking for guns. A struggle with the Curtin family ensued. One of the 'Moonlighters', Thade Sullivan, was shot dead and another wounded. John O'Connell Curtin probably fired the shot that killed Thade Sullivan but it is likely that his intention had been to fire over their heads. John O'Connell Curtin himself was shot dead. There was no brother of Curtin's there on the night of the incident and the allegation that John O'Connell Curtin was drinking on the night of his murder is without foundation. Two local men, Thade Casey and Dan Daly, were tried at the Cork Winter Assizes in December, 1885, for the attack on the Curtin house and were sentenced to 14 years penal servitude each.

Both John O'Connell Curtin and Thade Sullivan were buried on the Sunday following their deaths. The local sympathy was with Sullivan, and the Curtin family were subjected to a most cruel and vicious boycott. The distress of the Curtin family and the boycott became a "Cause Célèbre" and was taken up by the newspapers and journals of the time, by the Nationalist newspapers no less than the others. *The Times* opened a testimonial fund for

the Curtin family. Wilfred Scawen Blunt, a well-known English poet, visited and investigated the incidents. Robert Louis Stevenson, the author, was so affected by what he read that he was only narrowly dissuaded from coming to live near Castle Farm to share the suffering and hardships of the Curtin family. The Curtin family sold out and left the area in April, 1888.

JOHN CUSSEN

SOME GAELIC WORDS STILL USED IN THE LISTOWEL DISTRICT

Edward Fox's interesting short note on page 104 of the last number of this *Journal* (1986) prompted the following:

- (1) One of the meanings of the Gaelic word *Bradaidhe* is, according to Dineen's *Irish-English Dictionary* (1927), "a thieving beast", which implies that the animal in question is given to wandering from its owner's land into what are usually the more succulent pastures of his neighbour's. In the Listowel district of North Kerry this word has been corrupted into 'braddy', used as an adjective, as for instance "a braddy cow". What is more interesting is that one also hears of "a braddy moon", meaning a very bright moonlit night when an animal given to wandering is, as it were, facilitated by the moon's brightness.
- (2) In the same district three birds, and only three, are still known by their Gaelic names, namely, *Riabhog*, a meadow pipit, *P(h)ilibín*, a lapwing or plover, and the *Gabhairín Reodha* (literally "the little goat of the hoar frost"), the jack-snipe. Furthermore, the jack-snipe is only known by his Gaelic name when he is heard drumming his mournful descent at Summer dusk; at other times he is simply called a snipe.
- (3) All the fruits and berries found in the locality have English appellations with one exception: the Bilberry or Whortleberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is known in its Gaelic version, *Fraochán*.
- (4) A portion of a potato containing an eye for planting is never called a potato; it is called a *Sceallán*, as "Did you plant the *scealláns* yet?"

P. LYSAGHT

TWO MAY DAY CUSTOMS IN NORTH CLARE

Just as Edward Fox's note in last year's *Journal* prompted Paddy Lysaght to record the above notes, I have been prompted by both authors to make more widely available the following two items culled from the *Clare Champion* over a decade ago. Maybe other readers can contribute similar items of Folk interest for recording in future numbers of our *Journal*. (E.R. Hon. Editor)

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In keeping with tradition as old as the town itself, Ennistymon heralded May Day with a chestnut bough on practically every doorway on Monday evening. The placing of the bough is carried out by a group of local people who silently pass on their way unknown to householders. This year the ancient rite was performed in near Arctic weather conditions, biting winds and heavy hail showers.

"News Items from Ennistymon",
The Clare Champion, 4/5/1973

On the morning of May day, overseas visitors were amused to find a yellow furze bush displayed on almost every homestead, its purpose being to ward off the "Good People" who move to their summer quarters on May night. Many expressed deep interest in this strange traditional custom.

"Ballyvaughan Notes",
The Clare Champion, 7/5/1976