Miscellanea

A WEDGE-TOMB AT GARRANBANE, MURROE, CO. LIMERICK

This megalithic tomb (Illus. 1) is situated on the lands of Mr. Seamus Keane, near Murroe, Co. Limerick. It is quite well known locally but does not appear to have been recorded in the archaeological literature. A note written by Prof. M. J. O'Kelly on the 6-inch scale map collection in the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cork, dated 24 February 1958, records some correspondence between Prof. O'Kelly, the National Museum of Ireland and Mr. O'Riordan of the Glenstal Archaeological Society on the subject of the tomb, but the matter does not appear to have been followed up and nothing was entered in the topographical files of either the National Museum or of the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cork.

The tomb lies about 1.2 km north-west of Murroe Village and 0.75 km north-west of Glenstal Abbey.[1] It is situated on rough pasture land, just below the 600 feet (183 m.) contour on the western foothills of the Slievefelim Mountains.

The tomb is of wedge-tomb type and consists of a single chamber or gallery measuring just over 4 m. long internally. It lies north-east south-west (Illus. 2). The north side of the gallery is complete and comprises four orthostats. The south side of the gallery has one orthostat in place at each end; two stones lying across the chamber are probably displaced sidestones so originally there were probably four orthostats on this side also. Two stones running parallel with and outside the north side of the gallery probably mark an outer line of orthostats

Illus. 1. View of the tomb from the south-west. (*Photo:* E. Shee Twohig)

but only the tops of these two stones are visible above the cairn material which encloses the tomb. Three large stones just south-east of the tomb are almost certainly displaced capstones. Local informants report that the tomb was dug out and the capstones displaced by farm workers on the Barrington estate of Glenstal Castle in the early decades of this century. The south-western end of the tomb has been dug out to a depth of over 1.0 m. below the tops of the orthostats in this area.

It is not clear which end of the gallery was the entrance way. Most wedge-tombs seem to have been open to the west but here the stone closing the western end of the gallery is one of the highest and most substantial stones in the tomb (1.10 m. high, 0.40 m. thick). The eastern end-stone is lower and only 0.17 m. thick (see section, Illus. 2) and could more

GARRANBANE CO. LIMERICK

BOULDER

0   1   2   3   4   5   10

METRES
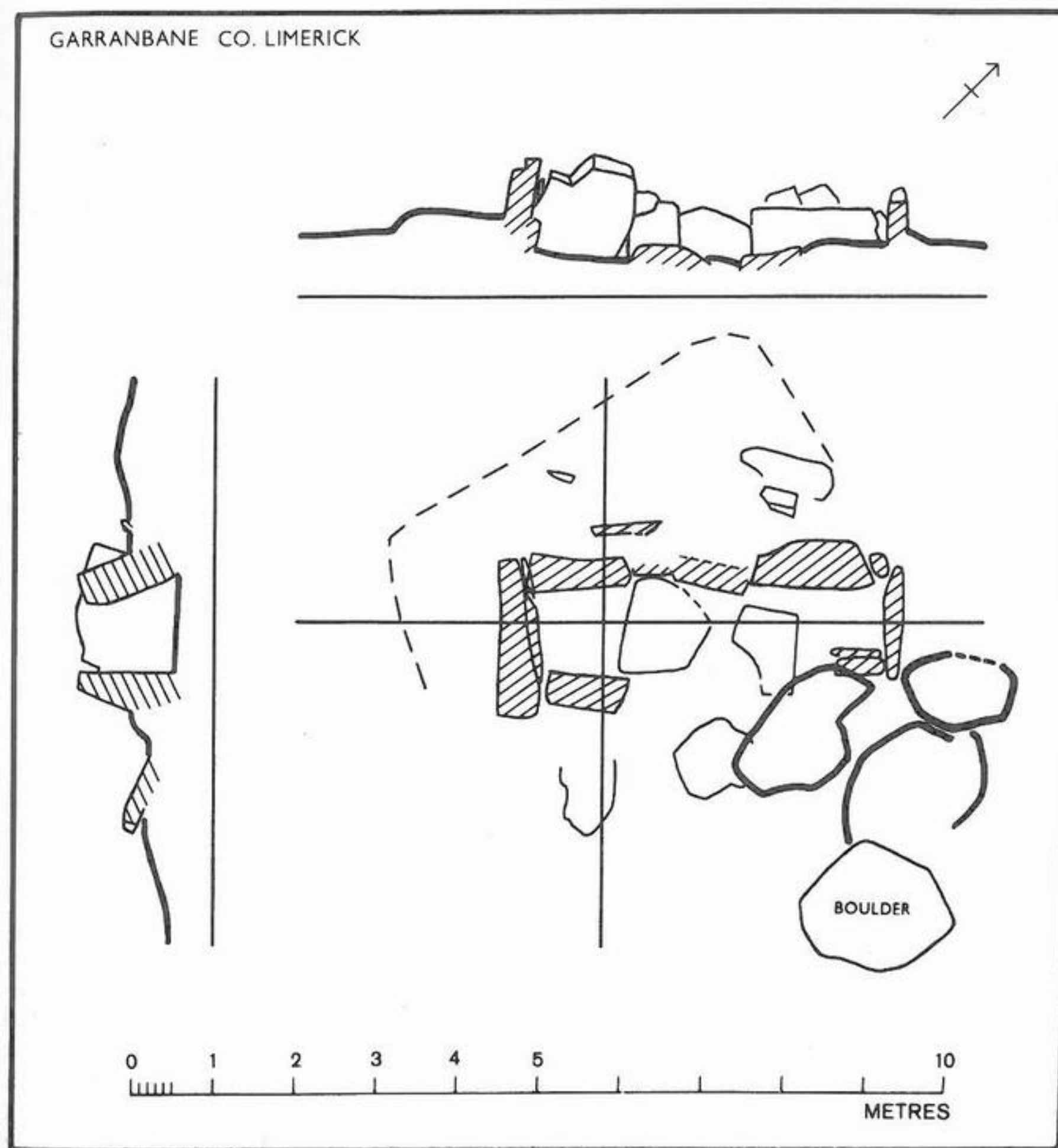
Illus. 2.   Plan and Sections of the tomb (courtesy Archaeological Branch, Ordnance Survey).

easily have been moved to allow access to the tomb. Several other wedge-tombs in this area of the lower Shannon estuary (in east Limerick, east Clare and west Tipperary) have a similar arrangement, often with the eastern end open, the best known examples being at Baurnadomeeny, Co. Tipperary, and Lough Gur, Co. Limerick.

In general this tomb is a good example of the wedge-tomb group of megalithic tombs. Its situation on relatively high ground is typical of these monuments. Approximately 470 wedge-tombs are now recorded in Ireland. They are widely distributed, but there are concentrations in the Burren area of Co. Clare, in mid Cork and around Kilmacomma in west Tipperary. This particular monument lies about 10 km west of the Kilmacomma group, being separated from the group by the Slievefelim Mountains. About seven wedge-tombs are recorded in east Limerick including one, now destroyed, which would have been just over 3 km north-west of the Garranebane monument at a site called Tuamanirvore in Cappanahanagh townland.[2]

Excavation in wedge-tombs has been singularly uninformative in terms of burial ritual, dating, etc. Over twenty sites have been excavated, and cremated human bones have been found in the majority of sites while a few have yielded inhumation burials. Pottery has been found in a number of tombs but it is often difficult to ascertain'if the pottery was placed in the tomb when it was first built and used or if it was deposited there much later. The dating of the tombs is thus problematic, but they certainly seem to have been the latest of the four types of megalithic tombs to have been built in Ireland, dating to somewhere in the period 2800-200 B.C.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Dr. Seán Ó Nualláin, of the Archaeological Branch, Ordnance Survey Office, Dublin, for supplying the plan of the monument which illustrates this paper.

ELIZABETH SHEE TWOHIG

[1] Garranbane Td.; Abington Par.; Owneybeg Bar.; National grid ref. R.749.628; O.S. 6-inch sheet 7 for Co. Limerick (25.5 cm from western and 23.0 cm from southern margins).
[2] De Valéra, R. and Ó Nualláin, S., *Survey of the Megalithic Tombs of Ireland, Vol. IV*, Dublin 1982.

GILT-BRONZE BROOCH FROM NEAR KILSHANNY, CO. CLARE

Over thirty-five years ago, probably in the 1950s, a particularly fine highly decorated gilt-bronze brooch of pre-Viking pseudo-penannular Irish type came into the possession of the late Archdeacon James O'Donoghue, at the time Parish Priest of Kilshanny, just south of Lisdoonvarna, in north-west Clare. Unfortunately there seems to be no record of either its find-circumstances or of who gave it to Fr. O'Donoghue. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that it had been found somewhere in the immediate area of Kilshanny, thought to be perhaps from a bog (see Illus. 3, *inset*). In 1962 Fr. O'Donoghue was transferred as Parish Priest to Ardrahan, Co. Galway. Tomás Ó Dochartaigh, national School Teacher at Ballyglass, Ardrahan, obtained the brtooch on loan from Fr. O'Donoghue for display in his school, and thanks to him the brooch was sent briefly, in 1975, through the good offices of Fr. Martin Coen, C.C., Craughwell, Co. Galway, to the National Museum of Ireland where it was recorded, photographed and a fibre-glass replica made of it. With the death of Archdeacon O'Donoghue in 1977 the brooch passed to Mr. Ó
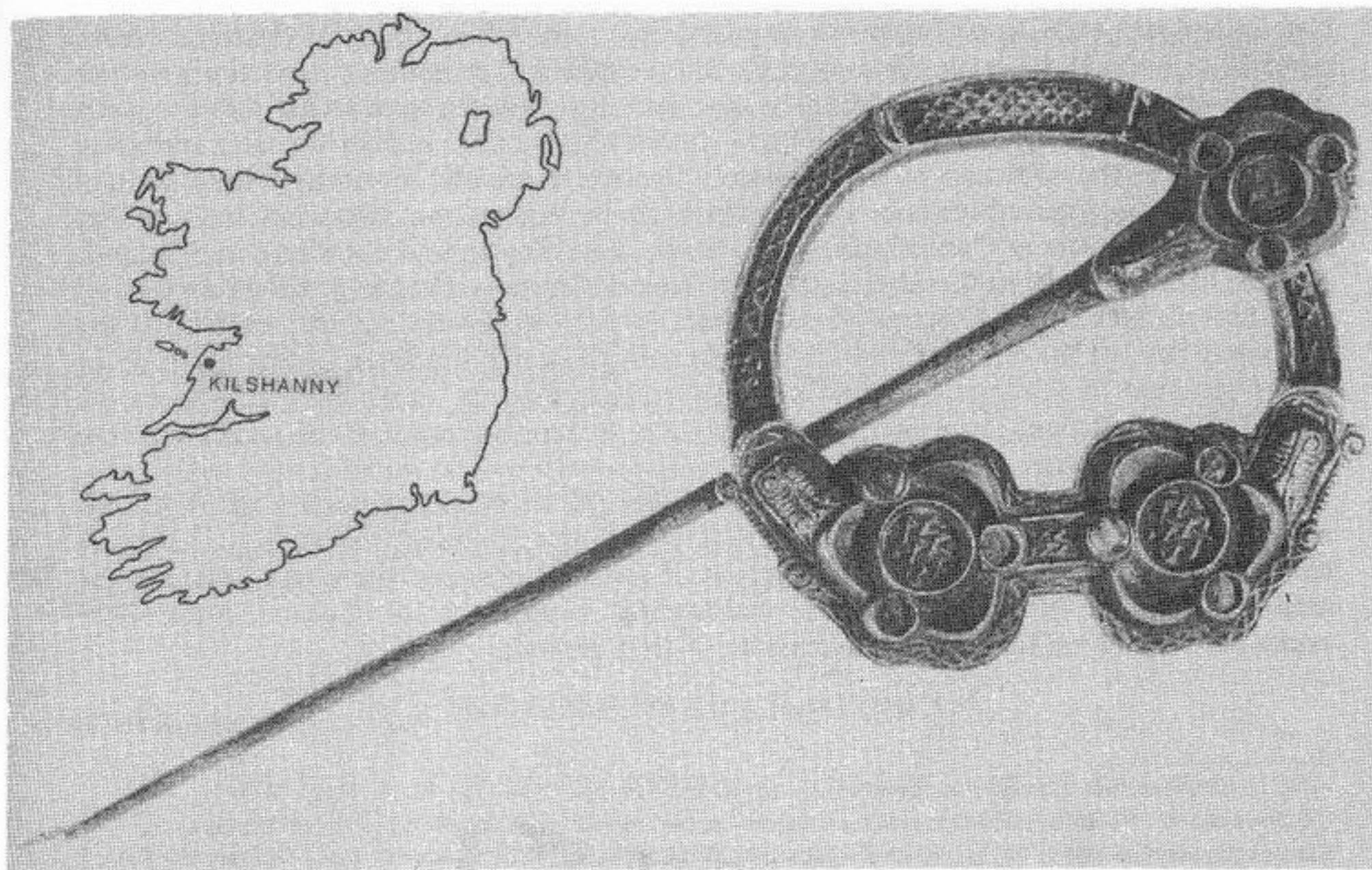
Illus. 3. Gilt-Bronze Brooch from near Kilshanny, Co. Clare (*Photo*: Nat. Museum of Ireland), and map showing approximate findspot.

Dochartaigh's keeping, and I was privileged to play a part in his generously depositing it to the National Museum in November 1980, where it is registered as 1980:131.

The brooch (Illus. 3) is of the pseudo-pennanular type, *i.e.* the gap between the ring-terminals is linked by a short decorated bar-like piece, thus preventing the ring from being truly pennanular. It has a long pin, well over twice the maximum diameter of the ring in length, the head of which is similar in design to the ring-terminals. The back of the brooch is plain and flat and shows traces of original tinning. The front of the brooch is heavily decorated with simple interlace in *kerbschnitt* or chip-carved style executed in the *cire-perdue* or lost wax technique. The pinhead and terminals are of irregular outline, arising from their central motif which consists of a decorated disc surrounded by three lobe-like semi-circular ridges alternating with three circular settings, two of which, one in each terminal, still retain amber studs. An animal head with upturned snout extends down the pin from the pinhead and also others up the hoop from the terminals. There are traces of gilding on the front of the brooch. Rather unusually, the pin is attached to the brooch by a gapped loop at the back of the pinhead, the gap apparently to allow it to be attached or removed without undue difficulty.

The brooch is 7.5cm. in maximum external diameter and 5.8cm. in maximum internal diameter. The pin is 18.2cm. long.

The Kilshanny Brooch fits into a fairly recognisable group, the best-known of which is probably the so-called Dunshaughlin or Lagore Brooch. The animal heads 'biting' the pin and the hoop are unusual however, but can perhaps be used to provide a possible

typological sequence. Such heads are standard on zoomorphic brooches, the latest group of which, Group D, have terminals with circular centres and prominent projections at their ends.[1] Such brooches can be dated to the late 5th and 6th centuries, perhaps even somewhat later. Such irregular outlines to the terminals could readily develop via a few short stages to the terminals of the Kilshanny Brooch, especially when the 'biting' animal heads are taken in combination. One might perhaps suggest that brooches such as that from the North Gate at Canterbury, Kent, from Croy, Rogart and elsewhere in Scotland, from St. Ninian's Isle in the Shetlands, and from Ballinderry Crannog, Kilmainham and elsewhere in Ireland, may have played a part in such an evolution. Subsequent to the Kilshanny Brooch the terminal outlines become sub-triangular and when animal heads occur at the junction of the terminals and hoop they are turned the other way, as witness the 'Breadalbane' Brooch, the so-called 'Queen's Brooch' from Co. Cavan, and the Dunshaughlin/Lagore Brooch.[2]

Taking everything into consideration, therefore, the Kilshanny Brooch is an important addition to the group, having some features which give it added importance in helping to elucidate some of the evolutionary details of Irish brooches of the type. A date in the second half of the 8th century seems probable for it, though the use of amber studs might argue for a later rather than earlier phase of that period.

ETIENNE RYNNE

[1] H. Kilbride-Jones, *Zoomorphic Penannular Brooches*, London 1980, pp. 65-67, Figs. 48-50.

[2] Illustrations of these various brooches can be readily found in R. A. Smith, "Irish Brooches of Five Centuries", *Archaeologia*, 65(1913-14), 223-249, and D. M. Wilson, "The Brooches", in A. Small, C. Thomas and D. M. Wilson, *St. Ninian's Isle and Its Treasure*, Oxford 1973, pp. 81-105.

A FIND FROM THE OTHER CLARE CASTLE

Research into references to old archaeological finds recorded in local newspapers and other archival material can often lead to the re-provenancing of artifacts as Mary Cahill has recently demonstrated in the case of portion of a gold dress-fastener held by a Clonmel dentist in 1861 and now identified among the collections of the National Museum.[1] Some care is necessary, however, given the often unscientific and uncritical nature of the original sources.

In 1976, Revd. Ignatius Murphy drew attention to some forgotten finds from Co. Clare.[2] One of these finds was of a gold cross which a local paper, *The Clare Independent* of 23rd October, 1880,[3] reported as having been found "in the ruins of Clare Castle". The report, on page 2, describes the cross as having "four large pearls, one at each transverse section of the cross, while the cross itself was most beautifully foliated, and the chain, about two feet long, was of the richest description". It is more than probable that this report, which from its occurrence in a Co. Clare newspaper might easily be thought to refer to that county, in fact refers to the Clare Cross, found by one Walter Lorking at Clare Castle, in Suffolk, in 1868.[4] That cross, of fifteenth century date, is now in the British Museum[5] and was recently described and illustrated by David Hinton in his book *Medieval Jewellery* in the Shire Archaeology Series.[6] It matches the description of the cross given in the 1880 newspaper article in having four pearls pinned into the junctions of the cross arms and shaft, in being decorated with foliage motifs, and in being attached to a gold chain. It is impossible to know whether the Editor of the *Clare Independent* of

1880 was aware of the cross's true findspot. The report does not specifically mention the fact that the cross was found in Suffolk and it may be that the newspaper was reprinting a report that had already been copied several times. At any rate we must, I believe, reluctantly accept that such a beautiful object was not found in Co. Clare.

PATRICK HOLLAND

[1] Mary Cahill, 'A Dentist's Dilemma', *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 28(1986), 3-6.

[2] Revd. Ignatius Murphy, 'Some Forgotten Clare Finds', *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 18(1976), 78-80.

[3] I am very grateful to Revd. Murphy for having provided me with information regarding the original report and for having confirmed that the newspaper report is in the *Clare Independent,* not the *Clare Journal* as stated in the 1976 article in this journal. I would also like to thank Mr. John Cherry, Deputy Keeper, Dept. of Medieval and Later Antiquities, The British Museum, for information regarding the Clare cross and Miss M. Moroney, Clare County Library, for her research into the original reference.

[4] Albert Way, 'Gold Pectoral Cross Found at Clare Castle, Suffolk', *Archaeol. J.*, 15(1868), 60-71.

[5] A. B. Tonnochy, 'The Clare Reliquary', *British Museum Quarterly,* 11(1936-7), 1.

[6] David A. Hinton, *Medieval Jewellery from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century,* Shire Archaeology Series, no. 21, Ailesbury 1982, plate 33.

THE LOOP HEAD LIGHTHOUSE

Loop Head (Illus. 4) is the western extemity of the Clare Coast on the Northern side of the Shannon Estuary at co-ordinates Longtitude 42' 34 North, Latitude 9' 56 West. From the top of the tower, 277 feet high, the lantern flashes its intermittant warning to shipping. The station is still manned. When this station becomes unmanned and the all singing, all dancing computer takes over, then the intermittent flash will continue from a great blind eye. And any unfortunate mariner in the area depending on flares or making some visual signal to the land can rest assured that his chances of survival will have diminished considerably.

The first lighthouse at Loop Head was erected in about 1670. This was of stone-vaulted
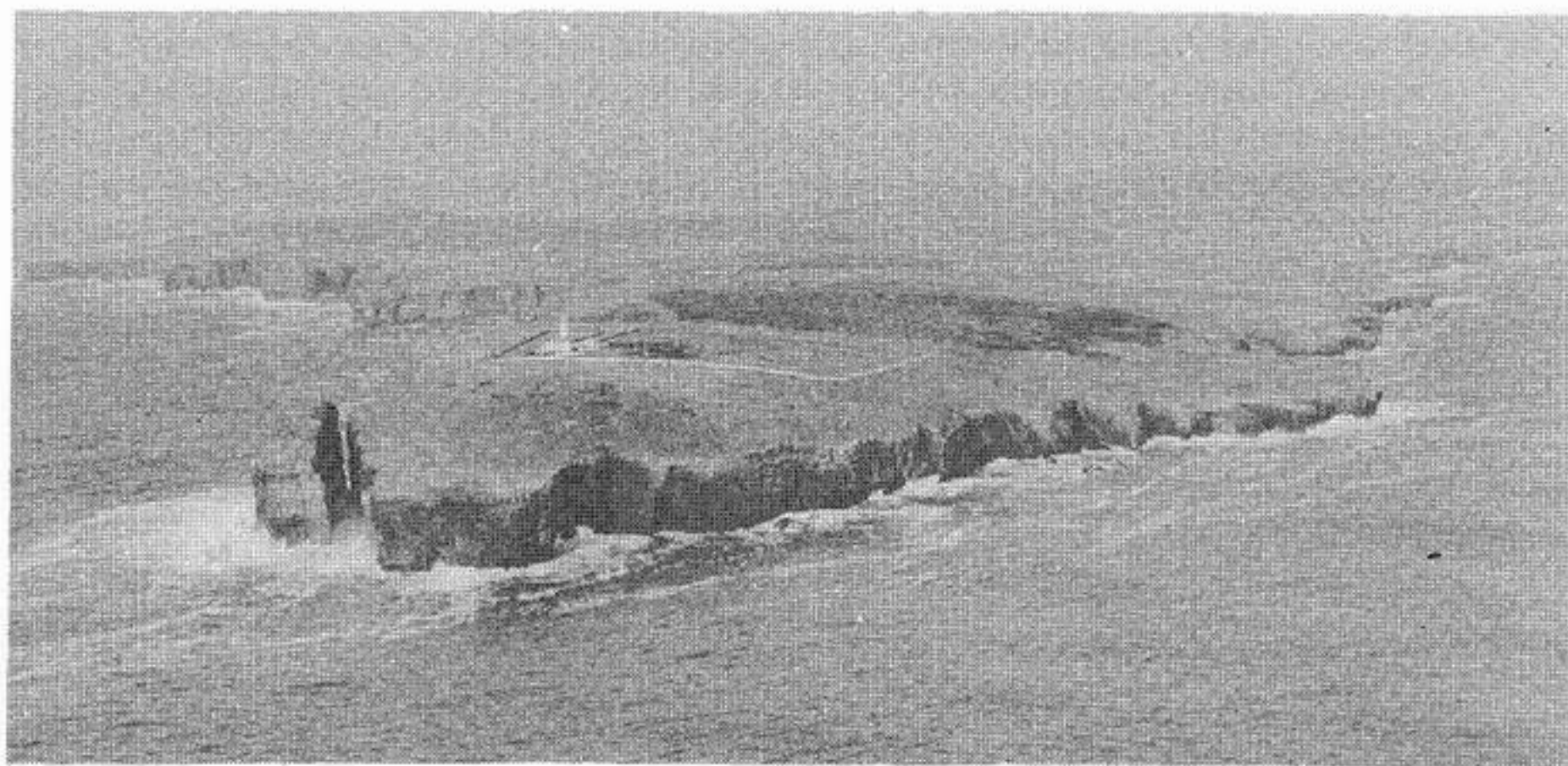
Illus. 5.   The Lighthouse on Loop Head. (*Photo:* John O'Brien)
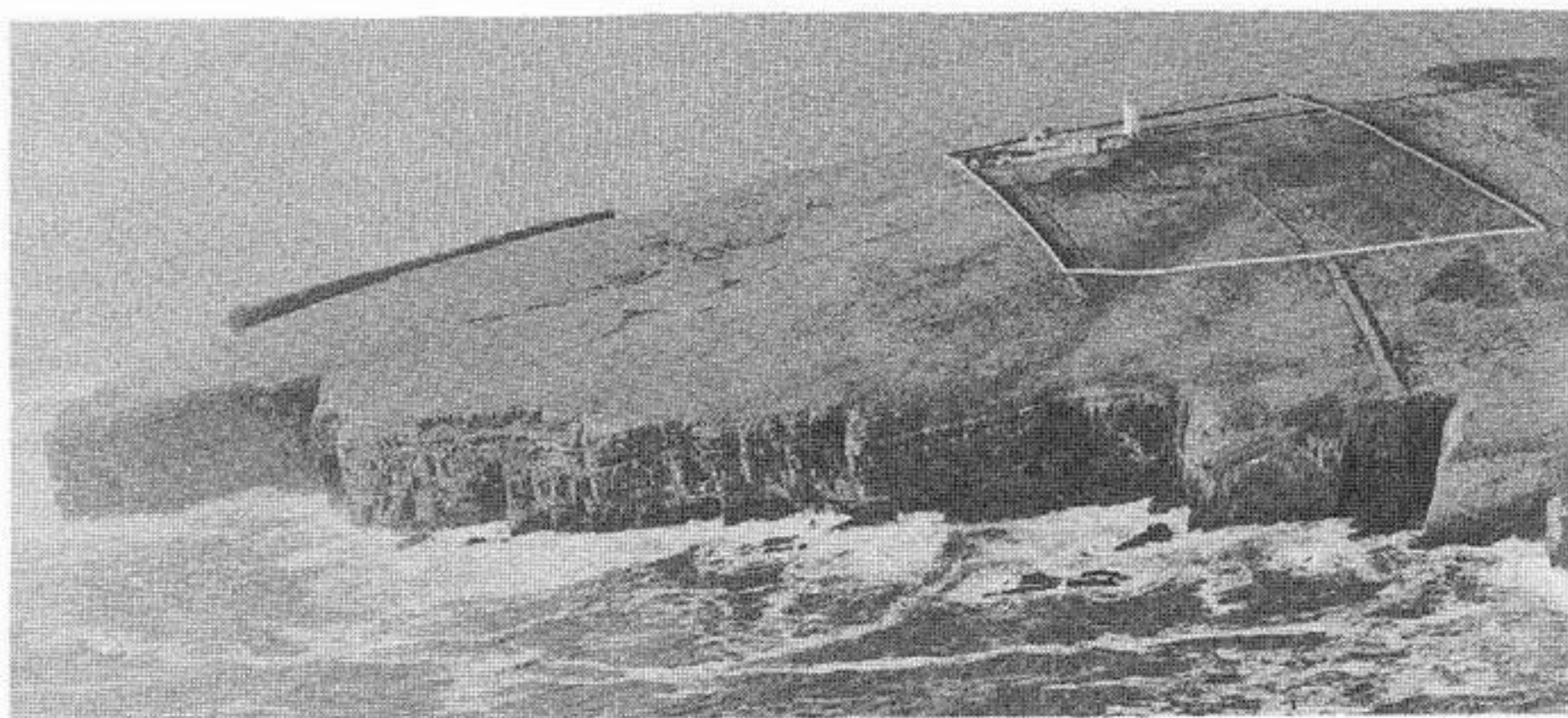
Illus. 4. Loop Head, Co. Clare. (*Photo:* John O'Brien)

cottage type. There were two or three rooms in the cottage to accommodate the lightkeeper and his family. Between two of the rooms a stone stairway led to a platform on the roof where a coal-burning chauffer or brazier was placed. Some of the battered walls of cottage still survive.

The lighthouse apparently fell into disuse in the latter part of the seventeenth century. This was a matter of great concern to the merchants of Limerick City and in 1717 they, together with the Aldermen of the city, petitioned the Irish Parliament to place a light at Loop Head. In 1720 the lighthouse was re-established there.

In 1802 a new tower, 277 feet high, was built by Thomas Rogers. The tower had four rooms and a lantern. The era of using coal fires to provide a light at Loop Head was at an end. The oil for the lantern was stored in the ground floor room of the new tower and access to the entrance room on the first floor was by an internal nineteen-step staircase. The other two rooms and the lantern were connected by an internal spiral staircase.

Twelve lamps were contained in the lantern which was twelve feet in diameter. Each lamp contained its own concave parabolic reflector and the reflected light shone through a twenty-two inch diameter convex lense of solid glass. This was very similar to the "Bull's Eye" or "Bottle Glass" seen in the windows of today's Pseudo-Georgian Houses.

By 1811 the keeper had moved out of the tower and resided in an adjoining cottage. In 1825 the number of lamps and reflectors was increased to fifteen, despite which in 1836 the Chamber of Commerce in the City of Limerick complained that the light was poor and that the tower should be rebuilt. The inspector reported that the light was as good as any around the coast, but seven years later, in 1843, he did propose that a new optic and tower be provided.

In 1844, with the agreement of the Ballast Board, Mr. William Burgess of Limerick was contracted to build a tower, to the design of Inspector George Halpin, some thirty feet East-North-East of the 1802 tower. In 1854, on the 1st May, this tower took over from the 1802 tower, which had to be demolished in daylight, so that it would not obstruct the light from the new tower (Illus. 4 and 5).

The light was improved in 1912. It was changed to a new intermittant light in 1969, in March of that year. In 1971 the light was changed to electric from vapourising paraffin.

An explosive fog signal, established in 1898, was discontinued in 1972. In 1955 a radio beacon was established and transmitted the morse code letters L P ($\cdot$ — $\cdot$ — —) every two minutes during fog. This was changed to continuous transmission in 1964, and on the 9th of December 1977 the Loop Head signal was grouped with a new radio beacon at Slyne Head.

Loop Head Lighthouse also has V.H.F. marine radio and single side band radio, which will be an advantage to mariners, but only as long as the lighthouse remains manned.

DICK ROBINSON

A NOTE ON THE PLACENAME *RATHURD* IN THE LIBERTIES OF LIMERICK

In an earlier volume of this *Journal* Gearóid Mac Spealáin (1942, p. 113) discussed the derivation of Rathurd, or Rathsyward, and concluded that it "more probably derives from a Norse personal name—Siurd, Sioghbhard". An entry in the *Calendar of Justiciary Rolls of Ireland 1308-14* for 13th June 1311 (Wood, *et. al.,* p. 214), ties the Syward family to Rathurd and, it is suggested, confirms Mac Spealáin's conclusion. The entry reads:

> "William Savage, charged that he, together with Nicholas son of John de Burgo and David de Burgo, robbed Walter Syward at Sywardesrath in the suburbs of Limerick, of horses, cows and other goods to the value of 100s., comes and defends, etc."

The name Siward occurs several times throughout the 13th century in a Limerick context. The earliest coins of King John minted in Limerick bear the maker's name Siward (Seaby 1984, pp. 105-6) and a Walter Syward is a witness to several of the documents, datable to between 1225 and 1237, in the *Black Book of Limerick* (MacCaffrey 1907, documents 48, 52, 61, 63, 97 and 116) while the same volume records a "Sywardo preposito de Limirik" in 1248 (*ibid.,* document 23). It would, therefore appear that the Siward family was one of some standing within the local community. The family appear to have held the land into the fifteenth century because a copy of an Indenture dated 1414-15 preserved in the Sexten Chartulary records a Reginald Seward liable for 3d rent for holding in the suburbs (Sexten's Chartulary, p. 61). The land seems to have passed out of the family's hands in the latter part of the fifteenth or first part of the sixteenth century, for by the 1580s it was in the hands of one John Browne who was attainted after the Desmond Rebellion (Sexten's Chartulary, p. 36).

My thanks to Larry Walsh, Curator of the Limerick Museum, for drawing my attention to Mac Spealáin's article.

B. J. HODKINSON

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