MISCELLANEA

NOTES ON THE RE-PROVENANCING OF TWO GOLD DRESS-FASTNERS FROM COUNTIES TIPPERARY AND LIMERICK

Readers may recall an article in this *Journal* by the present writer (vol. xxviii 1986, pp. 3-6) on a fragment of a large dress-fastner, the provenance of which was then unknown. Since publication it has become possible to identify the findplace as 'Pairc an Óir', in the townland of Clohernagh, near Bansha, Co. Tipperary. The identification of a number of published and archival sources for this and other similar objects will be published shortly in a memorial volume for the late Dr. Joseph Raftery (to be edited by Dr. Michael Ryan).

A very high percentage of the National Collection of Bronze Age gold ornaments is unprovenanced, mainly because of the reluctance of ninteenth century finders to reveal the true find-places and the neglect of many collectors whose only interest was in adding desirable specimens to their cabinets. Find-places and find circumstances were incidental details which could be disregarded. Jewellers were often the main conduit to either the melting-pot or to the safe haven of a collection. Almost certainly, we owe the identification of a North Munster provenance for another interesting gold dress-fastner (NMI Reg. No. W.148; Wilde 1862, p.69; Armstrong 1920, p. 68 pl. xv, no. 280) to the diligence of a jeweller who wrote on the surface of one of its terminals the following details:-

Co. Limerick, 2-11-12, n/-/-, >X/>/<X

This mixture of numbers and codes can be partly interpreted as follows:-

Found in Co. Limerick
Weight 2 ounces 11 pennyweights 12 grains
The price in code

Both Wilde and Armstrong (*op. cit.*) record the weight as 2oz 11dwt 7gr, a discrepancy of 5gr. When weighed recently the object registered 80.00 grammes or 2oz 11dwt 10.6gr Troy. The price is represented by the letter code 'n'. As each jeweller's establishment would have used its own code, it is not possible to say how much the letter 'n' represents. This object would have been acquired by the Royal Irish Academy sometime before 1862 when the price of gold was in the region of £4 to £5 per ounce. Therefore the price may have been somewhere between £10 and £12.50. The final series of symbols I cannot interpret but would welcome suggestions. On the other terminal is written 13-. These previously unnoticed details are very lightly inscribed on the internal surfaces of the terminals but are clearly visible when examined with a (X 10) hand lens.

The object (Illus.1) is an undecorated dress-fastner (sometimes called 'fibula' or cup-ended ornament) which seems to have been cast in one piece. It is a little unusual in that the bow or handle is of sub-triangular section. The underside of the bar is flat with a rough texture. This surface has been left as cast while the outer surface has been well finished and polished. The rims of the terminals are slightly thickened. There is a one raised rib concentric with the rim on the outer surface of each of the terminals. The maximum lateral width is 12.25cms. The terminals average 5.2cms in diameter. It is one of a large group of similar objects which can be dated to the Dowris Phase of the Later Bronze Age, *c.*600-800 B.C.

References

Armstrong, E.C.R.   *Catalogue of Irish Gold Ornaments in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy*, Dublin 1920.

Cahill, M.   'A Dentist's Dilemma' *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 28(1986), 3-6.

Wilde, W.   *Catalogue of the Antiquities of Gold in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy*, Dublin 1862.

MARY CAHILL
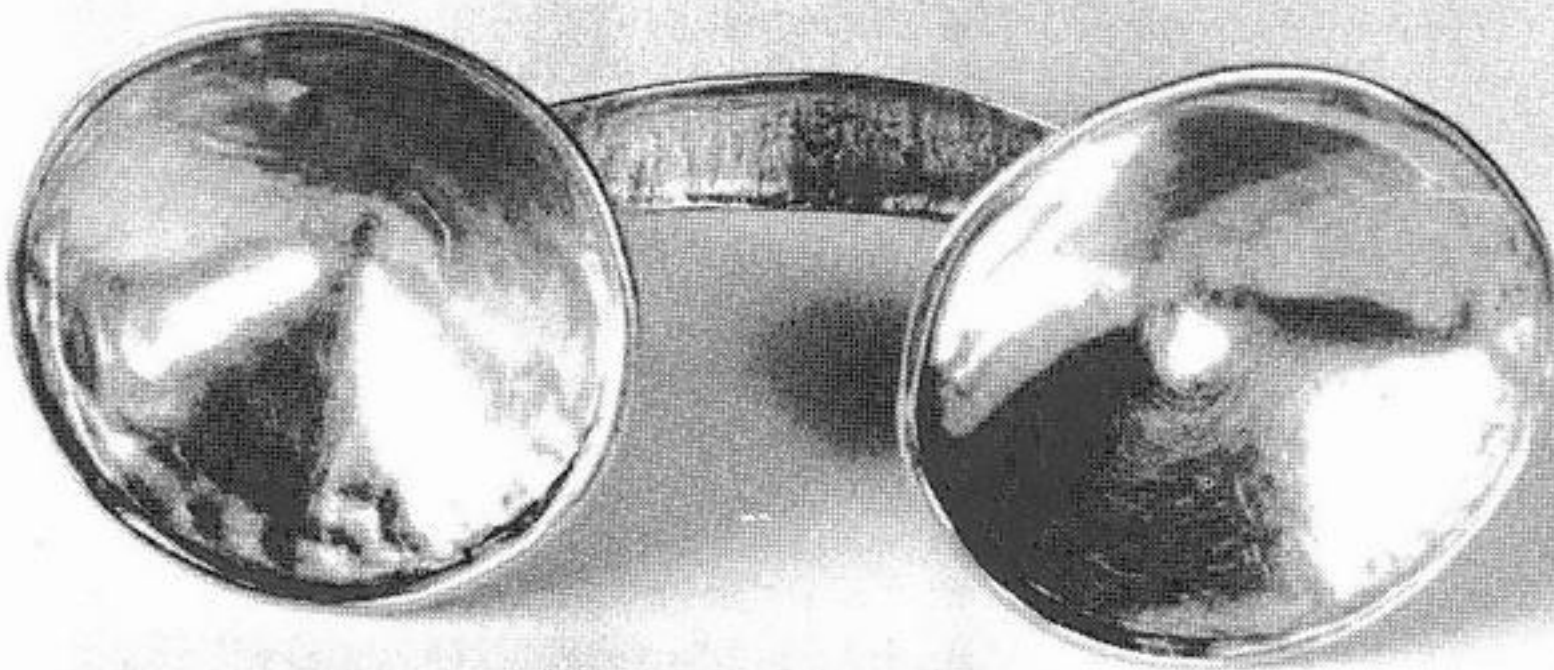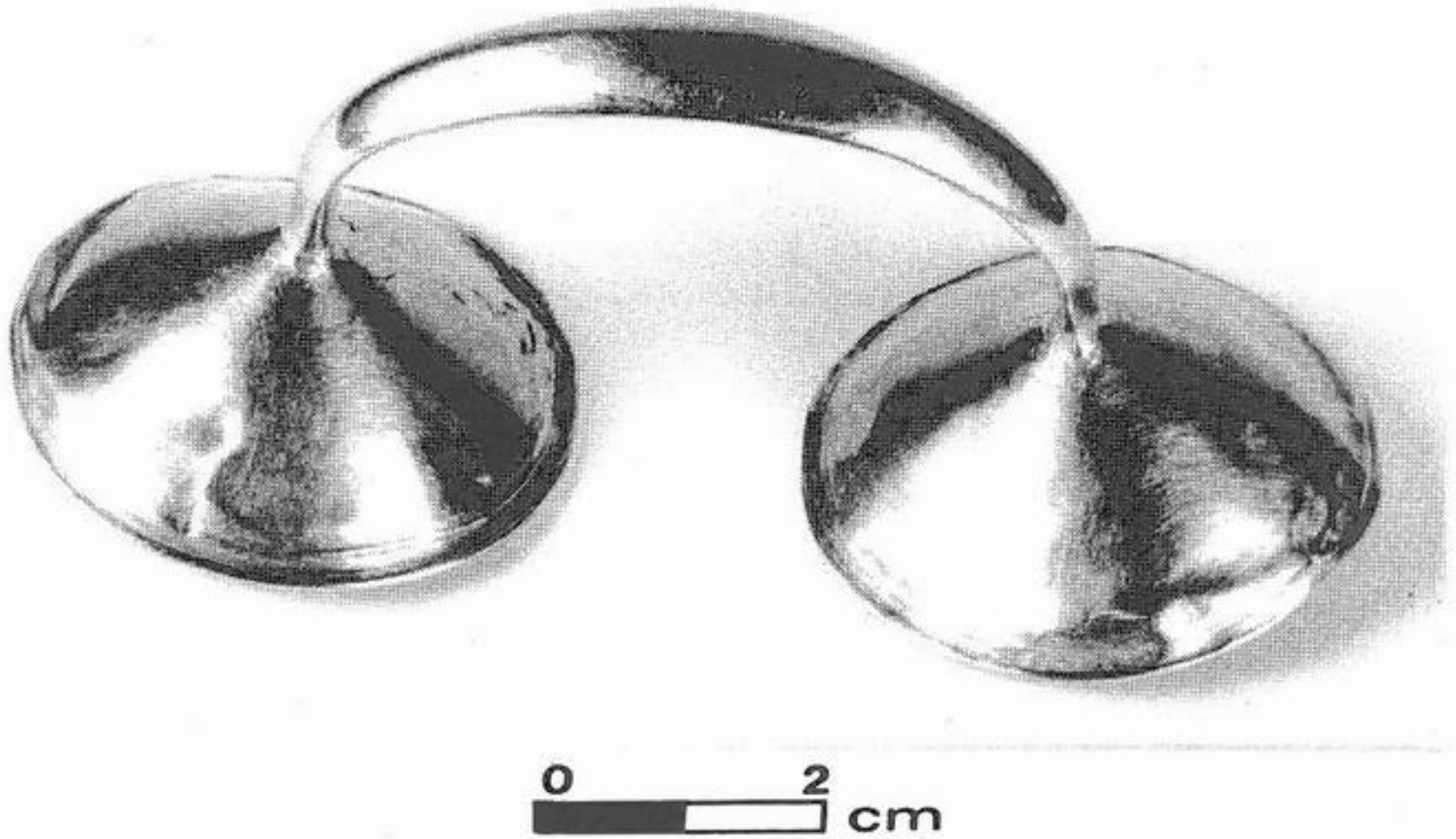
Illus. 1.   Gold dress-fastener from Limerick.

(*Photo:* National Museum of Ireland)

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TWO NEW LIMERICK SILVERSMITHS

An entry in the Sexten Chartulary[1], dated 24 August, 1608, names John Lyles, goldsmith of Limerick, a name not previously recorded in lists of Limerick silversmiths. The entry, titled "The copy of the order between William Creagh & me for pt of the Garden Wale", concerns a dispute which arose in 1602 between Edmond Sexten of Limerick, Esquire, and William Creagh FitzJohn, merchant, over ownership of a piece of stone wall separating their properties, which had collapsed partly due to the fall of the east side of Creagh's house, and been partly rebuilt by Sexten. Creagh was claiming the remainder of the wall as belonging to his house, while Sexten maintained that the entire wall belonged to his garden. They mutually agreed on "Willm Arthur fz John of Limricke, Merchant, John Lyles of the same, gouldsmite, and Morrish Cassy of the same, Joyne" as independent arbiters, and took oaths to abide by their judgement. The arbiters judged in favour of Sexten, finding that his father, Stephen, had built the entire wall and permitted Creagh "to make windowes and lights in the front of the sd house towards the sd garden, " but that Creagh had no interest or right other than by license of Sexten. They added that Edmond Sexten agreed in their presence that Creagh could re-insert the windows and lights as before on rebuilding the house.

The Arthur Cross, one of the treasures of the Diocese of Limerick in the custody of the Roman Catholic bishops, was known by John Hunt[2] to be a 1625 remake of a medieval cross, possibly part of the set of objects made for Bishop Cornelius O'Dea in 1418. The underside of the base of the cross is inscribed "Phi Lyles, fecit." The name Lyles was not recorded then among the list of Limerick silversmiths, and Hunt noted that the related forms of Leyles, Lewles and Lawless occur among the names of Cork and Youghal silversmiths of the period[3], although with no Philip amongst them.

The existence in 1608 of the Limerick silversmith, John Lyles, a form of the name which is not known among Cork silversmiths, indicates that the maker of the Arthur Cross, Philip Lyles, was also a Limerick silversmith.

LARRY WALSH

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[1]British Library, Add Ms 19.856 - *Copy by Sir W. Betham of a register of papers relating to the family of Sexten of Limerick, compiled by Christopher Sexten between 1630 and 1640*, 19th century, pp. 55-56. I am grateful to Brian J. Hodkinson, archaeologist with Limerick Corporation for drawing my attention to this entry.

[2]John Hunt, :The Arthur Cross", *J. Roy. Soc. Antiqs. Ireland*, 85(1955), 84-87.

[3]Ian Pickford (ed.), *Jackson's Silver & Gold Marks*, 3rd edit., Woodbridge, Suffolk 1989, "List of Cork Goldsmiths", pp.719-721.

A LIMERICK SILVER FREEDOM BOX, 1693

A silver freedom box recently acquired by the Limerick Museum (Illus.2; reg. no. LM 1991:258) is engraved on the lid with a version of the arms of Limerick, a castle on a shield, in a cartouche of feathers, tied below, and inscribed around *John Craven Esqr. Mayor his and the Corporation of Lymarick's Guift with the freedom of that Citty to Leu^t. William Brown the 2^d. day of October 1693*. The box is circular with detachable lid, diameter 10.8cm., weight 170.8 grams.

Illus. 2. Silver Freedom Box, Limerick 1693.

(Photo: Weir & Son, Dublin)

The recipient, a soldier in the Williamite army, is named in Story's accout of the 1691 siege of Limerick[1]:

September the 8th ... One of the great mortars had a shell burst in her, flinging the mortar and carraiage nigh two yards from the flooring, which is a demonstration that the firing the fuse before you give fire to the mortar is neither the readiest not the safest way, but this was the method of all our foreign bombadiers, tho' one Lieut. Brown afterwards at MacKay's fort made use of a much better way, as shall in time be related ...Sept. 10 ... And that evening, two mortars were brought from on board and planted at MacKay's fort, being managed by Lieutenant Brown, llieutenant to Capt. Pitt's miners, who did more execution than all the rest, firing three for one of theirs, and throwing the bombs very exact. He neither made use of sand upon the bomb, not fired the fuse, but putting it into the mortar with the fuse down, the flash of the powder kindled the fuse as it was discharged from the mortar.

William Brown, born of Scottish parents at Belfast in 1658, served throughout the war as Lieutenant and Adjutant of Col. St. John's Regiment of Foot, and was present at Derry, the Boyne , Aughrim, and Limerick. After the surrender of Limerick, he settle at Clonboy, near O'Brien's Bridge, Co. Clare, his grant being confirmed, together with the tolls of Bridgetown fair, in 1717. He died on 28 February, 1725. His decendants intermarried with many Co. Limerick and Co. Clare landed families[2], and the Clonboy estate continued in their ownership until the death of Ernest George Brown in 1942[3].

There is no trace of a maker's mark on the box. However, a similar silver box in the National Museum[4], (re. no. 77-1943), without inscription and undated, bears a mark of Jonathan Buck (senior). The treatment of the city arms, omitting the central conical tower, is identical on each, and the cartouches differ only in minor detail. Comparison of the two, side by side, leaves little doubt but that they are the work of the same silversmith. If so, the known working life of Jonathan Buck senior is extended from 1698-1725[5] to 1693-1725.

The reason for conferring the freedom of the city on Lieut. Brown was probably his mention in Story's book, which was approved for printing on 2 March, 1693, and which must have made Lieut. Brown somewhat of a celebrity locally. The naming of John Craven, listed as mayor in 1692,[6] on the box may appear to be in error. However, at that time the mayor was elected on the Monday after Michaelmas Day (29th September), and served until the Monday after Michaelmas the following year, in Craven's case, Monday, 2 October, 1693, thus making the conferring one of his last acts as mayor, one day before the second anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Limerick.

LARRY WALSH

[1]Story, Rev. George: *A Continuation of the Impartial History of the Wars of Ireland*, London 1693, pp. 210 and 212

[2]Burke, Sir Bernard: *Landed Gentry of Ireland*, London 1912, p-74.

[3]Weir, Hugh W.L.: *Houses of Clare*, Whitegate, Co. Clare, 1986, p.75.

[4]Teahan, John: *Irish Silver from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century*, Dublin 1982, p.20. I am grateful to John Teahan, Keeper of Art and Industry, National Museum of Ireland, for permitting comparison of the two boxes, and for his observations.

[5]Bennett, Douglas: *Collecting Irish Silver*, London 1984, p.197.

[6]Lenihan, Maurice: *Limerick; Its History and Antiquities*, Limerick 1866 (reprinted Cork 1967), p.704.

THE PETER TAIT TOKEN

The history of Nineteenth Century Limerick industry has received scant attention, which is surprising as a number of the city's businesses were internationally famous for either their size or innovation[1]. One such firm was the clothing factory set up by Peter Tait, a Scotsman, who acquired the old Militia Barracks at Edward Street, and converted it for industrial use[2]. His clothing factory - 'the first and most important of the kind in these kingdoms' employing 'some hundreds of persons'[3] was the first to use the Piece-Work system of employment in the clothing industry[4]. By 1892, this establishment, then known as the 'Limerick Clothing Factory', employed upwards of one thousand people - the Military uniform section alone accounted for some seven hundred hands[5]. Tait supplied uniforms to the army of the Confederate States during the American Civil War. His blockade running vessel, the "Evelyn", was the first steamer to leave Foynes for America[6]. In 1864, Tait was involved with the Russels in setting up a flax development company in Limerick, travelling to Belfast on January, 25th to study the problems of flax management[7]. He was mayor of Limerick on three occasions[8]. The Tait memorial clock erected in Baker Street (1865-67) was designed by William E. Corbett C.E., City Surveyor[9]. Tait also made a brief foray into national politics - putting himself forward as a Home-Rule supporting candidate in the Limerick by-election of 1871. He subsequently withdrew and Issac Butt was elected unopposed[10].

Stratten's Review, published in 1892, gives the foundation date of the firm as "upwards of thirty years ago"[11] *i.e. c.*1862. Writing in 1890, O'Dowd gives the foundation date as "about twenty years ago"[12].
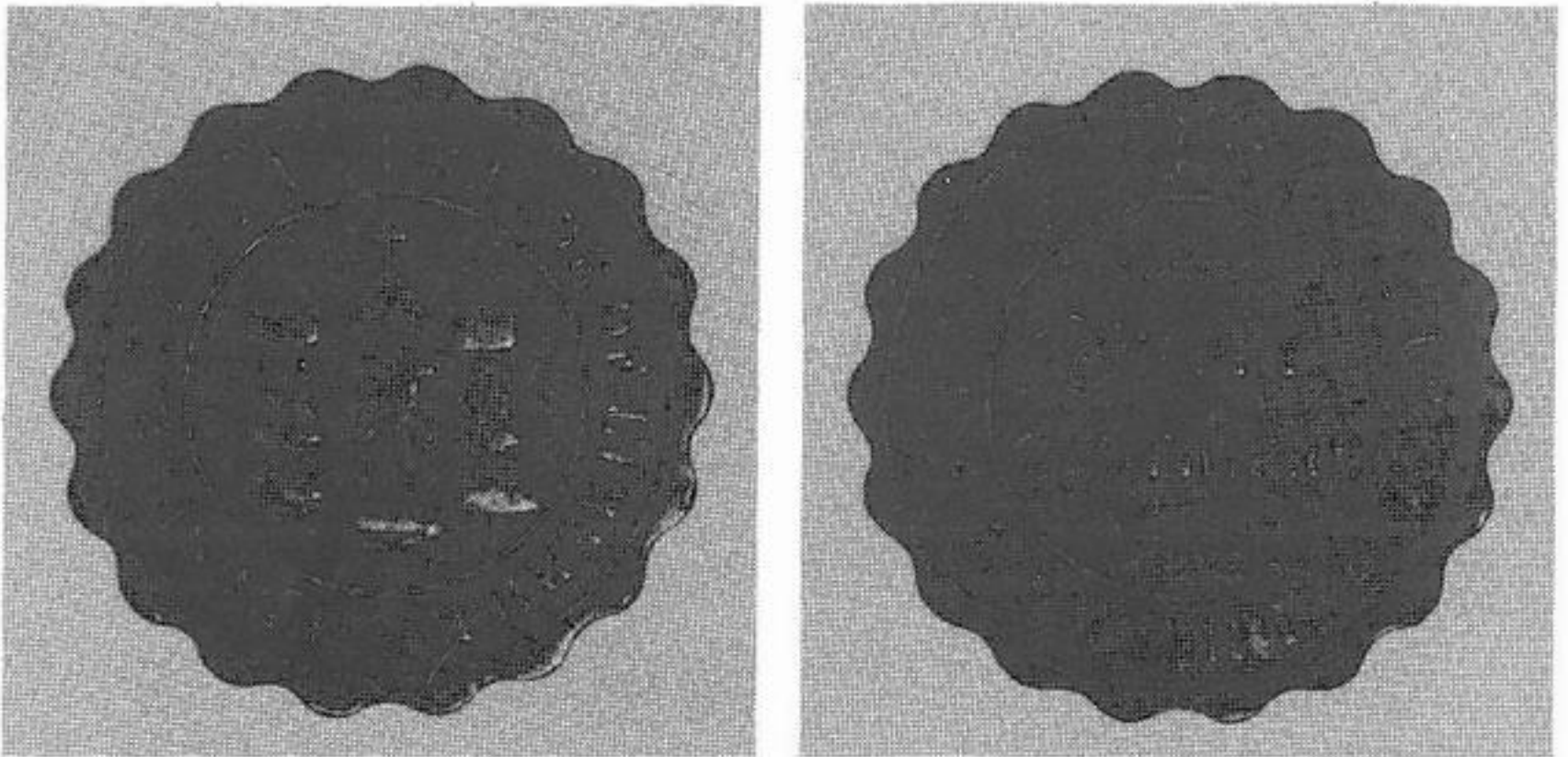
Illus. 3. Obverse and reverse of the Peter Tait Token.
(*Photo*: M. Whelan)

O'Dowds date, quite possibly, relates to the reconstitution of the firm into "The Limerick Clothing Factory"[13]. The token (Illustration 3) described below, was more than likely issued about the time that Tait commenced his business i.e. c. 1862. It is an advertisement piece, hithero unpublished. As well as producing military uniforms, Tait made suits to order for various drapery establishments. The tokens would have been placed in one of the pockets of such suits as an advertisement for the firm. This practice was followed by a number of English clothing manufacturers in the late 19th/early 20th Centuries.

The token can be described as follows:-

Obverve: (Front) A varitation of the Arms of Limerick - two towers flanking a castle gateway which has a partially lowered portcullis. In the background, a pitched roof surmounted by a cross. The surrounding inscription reads "+ PROSPERITY TO THE TRADE OF LIMERICK".

Reverse: (Back) "+PETER TAIT & CO. + LIMERICK" between an outer circle of dots and an inner wire circle. The central inscription reads "Army Clothiers" between two horizontal bars and is contained within the above mentioned wire circle.

The design on the observe bears a striking resemblance to two of the Stein Brown Co. Distillary tokens[14], the main differenes being that in the latter pieces, the roof is surmounted by a pennant and is narrower than on the Tait token. The towers are also shown to be of masonry construction throughout. The diameter of the Tait token is 40mm and the piece, most unusually, has a scalloped edge, the depth of the scalloping being 1mm.

I am indebted to our editor, Professor Etienne Rynne, for bringing this token to my attention.

PAUL DUFFY

[1]The author's "Stratten's Limerick 1892" forthcoming in this journal will attempt to remedy, in part, this gap in Limerick's published history.

[2]Stratten's "Dublin, Cork and South of Ireland: A Literary Commercial and Social Review" London 1892, p.286. The building is shown in the frontis map in Lehihan's 'History' and named as "Taits Army Clothing Factory". The map was prepared by Corbett, the City Surveyor.

[3]Lenihan's "History of Limerick" p. 529.

[4]Stratten, op. cit., p. 287.

[5]Ibid, p.286.

[6]Lenihan, op. cit., p.731

[7]Ibid, p. 526.

[8]Stratten, op. cit., p. 286.

[9]Lenihan op. cit. see fn. 2 above re map - clock details are on p. 753.

[10]Brendan Cahir "Isaac Butt and the Limerick By-Election of 1871" N.M.A.J. X, 1966 p.p. 56 - 66, at p.59.

[11]Stratten op. cit. p. 286.

[12]Rev. James O'Dowd "History of Limerick" 2nd Edition, Dubin 1990, p. 104.

[13]There is an extensive notice of the business under this heading at pps. 286 -88 in Stratten where at p. 288 it is stated the company became a limited liability company in 1884. This limited company took over the existing company of the same name and continued to run to business.

[14]Paul Duffy "The Stein Brown and Company Distillery Tokens" N.M.A.J. XXVII 1985 pp. 85 - 87. The relevant tokens are numbered 3 and 4 p.85 and shown as Illustration 9 and 10 p. 86.