

MISCELLANEA

A DESTROYED CASHEL NEAR ENNIS

About two miles west of Ennis, on the outskirts of the town, is the townland of Kilquane. The Ordnance Survey 6-inch scale sheet, no. 33 for the county, indicates three ancient sites in this townland, a "Burial Ground (Disused)" about 300m. west of Greenpark House, what appears to be a large roughly circular walled enclosure about 750m. northeast of Greenpark House, and an oval enclosure about 350m. east of Greenpark House.

Since the 1970s considerable building operations have been taking place in the general area, and in 1979 permission was requested to sink a septic tank at the edge of the oval enclosure. The request was passed on to the late Seán Ó Murchadha, Administrative Officer for Planning in Clare County Council, and he, realising that the enclosure was a ringfort of probable archaeological interest, turned it down pending receipt by the builder of a letter from the National Monuments Advisory Council, in Dublin, "to the effect that they have no objection to the location of the septic tank in the position proposed". He also mentioned that the Archaeology Department, in University College Galway, might be prepared to carry out a preliminary inspection of the site, in consequence of which, a year later, I received a letter from the builder informing me of the situation and asking if I "could help out on this occasion". Some correspondence followed, and early in 1981 I received a visit from the builder who indicated to me the site in question on the O.S. map (45cm. from the western margin and 21.5cm. from the southern margin). He also informed me that the greater portion of the site, that within the area behind the planned bungalow, had been already bulldozed away "down to bedrock". It seemed, therefore, that at that stage there was no reason why he should not sink a septic tank at the proposed point. However, I told him that I could not stand over such a statement without having inspected the site personally and that I would do so shortly, and four days later did so.

The site had been completely destroyed except for a short segment of a stone rampart, about 30m. long, 2m. thick and 1.80m. in maximum height, which remained just outside the back of the bungalow's garden; these measurements were not uniform and undoubtedly had not been so in the bulldozed area either. The rampart was built of large blocklike stones on its inner and outer faces, with a core of smaller, more irregular stones. At a point in the remaining portion of the wall, i.e. in the southern part of the enclosure, there seemed to be a stone facing running through the wall at right-angles to its outer circumference. Though not matched by a similar facing about a metre or two from it (where the wall appeared to be considerably less well built - largely of 19th-century construction?), it seemed likely that this indicates the original entrance to the cashel.

The site was a large one, about 40m. by 30m., and somewhat unusual in that it was built on a slope, from South to North, rather than on level ground. Despite its apparently rather collapsed state, judging from the surviving portion it must have been fairly impressive; although as the surrounding area was rather rough and rocky, this might not have been so obvious to the uninitiated and its bulldozing might therefore be somewhat excused. It does, however, emphasise the importance of the detailed Archaeological Surveys at present being carried out, county by county, by the Office of Public Works. Some have already been completed and published, and it is hoped that the one for Co. Clare will soon be started. It also demonstrates the importance of

archaeological knowledge among all involved in granting planning permissions and in preserving our heritage - the late Seán Ó Murchadha had that knowledge: in 1977 he had been conferred with a B.A. degree, one subject of which was Archaeology, and this note is offered *in memoriam*.

ETIENNE RYNNE

WINDOW SPANDRELS FROM CASTLETOWN (DOORA) CASTLE, NEAR ENNIS

There is more than one Castletown Castle in Co. Clare - in fact there are some fifty-four townlands called Castletown in Ireland, all of which probably have or had a castle at some stage. All the Clare castles so called are now in ruins, though probably the most destroyed is that in the parish of Doora, about 2¼ miles south-west of Clooney, 3 miles north-east of Quin, and about 2½ miles east of Ennis - it is marked as a ruin on O.S. 6-inch scale sheet 34, at a point 30.3cm. from the western margin and 27.9cm. from the southern margin. All that survives at present is a roughly square mound of earth-covered rubble and portion of the western wall in which can be seen the top part of a lintelled opening (a doorway?). Little is known of its date, or history, but clearly it was of Tower House type.



Illus. 1

Close by to the west of it are the tottering remains of three or more old ruins, all probably built within the last couple of centuries from stones taken from the adjacent castle. The largest of these ruins, that closest to the castle, is of a dwelling, and set high into the internal dividing wall, over a fireplace, is a carved stone, 16 inches wide and 11½ inches high (Illus. 1). This stone is clearly the central spandrels, now placed upside-down, of a two-light window. Each spandrel bears a large deeply-carved, pointed-leaved trefoil. A sixteenth-century date seems most probable for it and, therefore, also for the castle nearby*

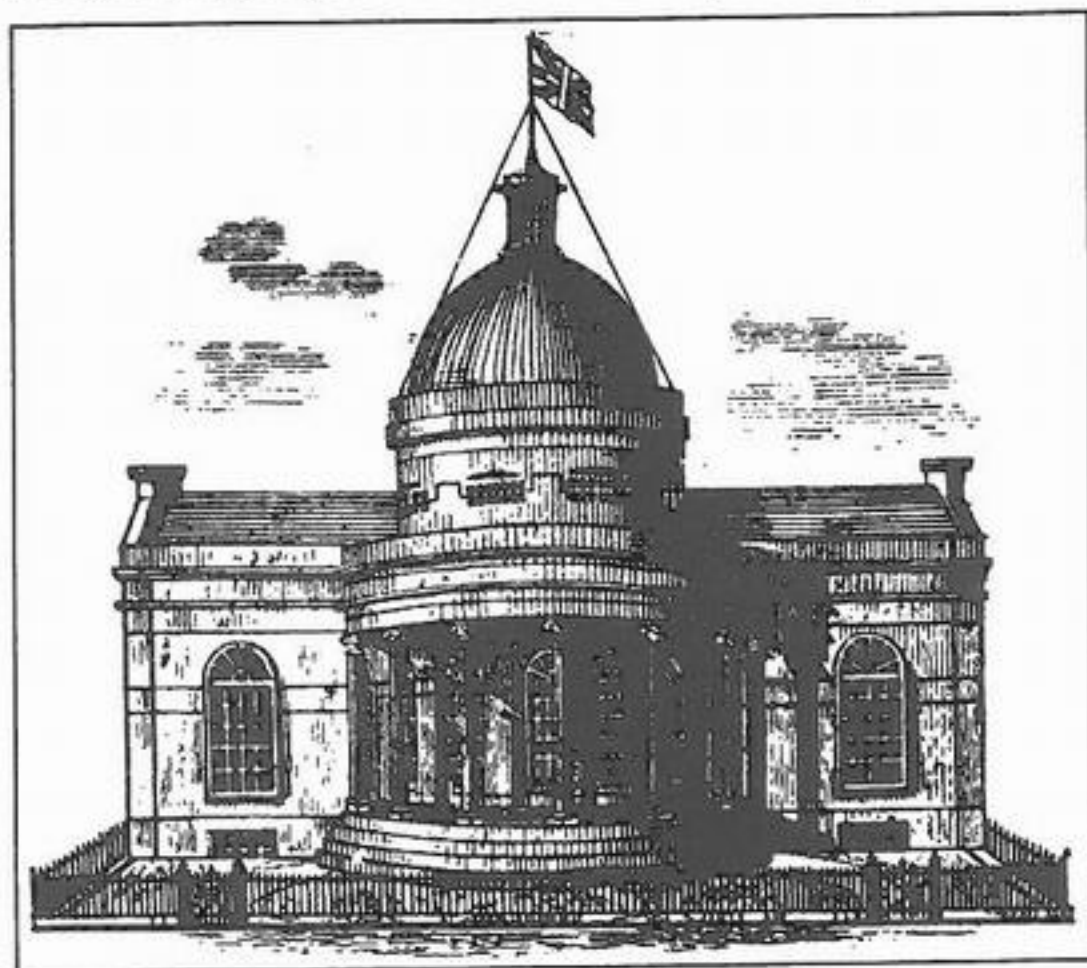
SÉAN Ó MURCHADH

*See M. Breen, this *Journal* pages 131 and 135 (no. 3), for a date of before 1570 for this castle and for the occupier at that date, "william neylan a quiet man". A recent visit to the site, which is almost inaccessible at the end of a narrow 'green road', failed to discover the carved stone - the chimney breast had collapsed since photographed in 1989 by the late Seán Ó Murchadha. - E.R. Hon. Editor.

THE LIMERICK MONT DE PIÉTÉ – A FURTHER NOTE

This author concluded a previous note on the Limerick Mont De Piété farthing token with a somewhat tongue-in-cheek observation as follows: “The view of the church quite probably recalls the charitable and ecclesiastical nature of the original *Mons Pietas* foundations”¹. This follows the conventional description of such a building as *a church*, a descriptive term which would normally be that used by numismatists. Bell, however, in his description of the token does not call the building a church. Having given a brief architectural description of the edifice he then observes that “the building shown ... probably housed the Mont De Piété, together with other businesses”².

Confirmation that the building was in fact the pawnshop built in association with Barrington’s Hospital comes from *Dowd’s History of Limerick* where he states “... a *Mont de Piete*, established in 1837, stood close by. The building was a long time disused and had fallen into decay. The cupola and pillars formed a peculiar object indeed, till the whole was demolished in 1884”³. A fine engraving accompanies the text. This engraving (Illus. 2) bears a remarkable resemblance to the building depicted on the token (Illus. 3) even allowing for the difference in scale.



Illus. 2



Illus. 3

Lenihan gives some further information on both the building and the pawn office. Sir Matthew Barrington built the Mont De Piété in 1837, which however closed in 1845. The pawnshop was established for two purposes: (i) to provide an income for Barrington’s Hospital out of profits, and (ii) to provide the poor with a cheaper rate of interest than that prevailing in private pawn shops. The capital for the pawn shop was raised by the issue of debentures varying from £5 to £500, at an interest rate of six per cent. Between 1837 and 1840 the gross profit of the concern was £3940-10s-2½d. From 1837 to March 19th, 1841, the total number of pledges or articles pawned was 460,895 and the amount advanced against the pledges was £78,595-9s-1¼d whilst only £71,005-8s-7d was paid in redemption - indicating a high rate of abandonment of articles, pledged no doubt for many and varied reasons. Lenihan states that an active manager was installed to run the business at the outset, but concludes that the business failed through gross neglect. The building was converted into a Police Barracks in November 1847⁴. Its life span as such was short as it is recorded that it had been disused for a long time prior to its demolition in 1884⁵.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Limerick Treaty 300 which enabled the new edition of Dowd's *History* to be published, architectural historians now have ready access to illustrations of the long vanished *Mont De Piété* - "a remarkable object ... with its cupola, pillars, railing and small grass enclosure"⁶.

PAUL DUFFY

¹Paul Duffy, "A Limerick Pawnshop Farthing", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 25 (1983), 73-74 at p. 74.

²R.C. Bell, *Unofficial Farthings 1820-1870*, London 1975, at p. 19.

³Cian O'Carroll, (ed.), *Dowd's History of Limerick*, Dublin 1990, at pp. 96-97.

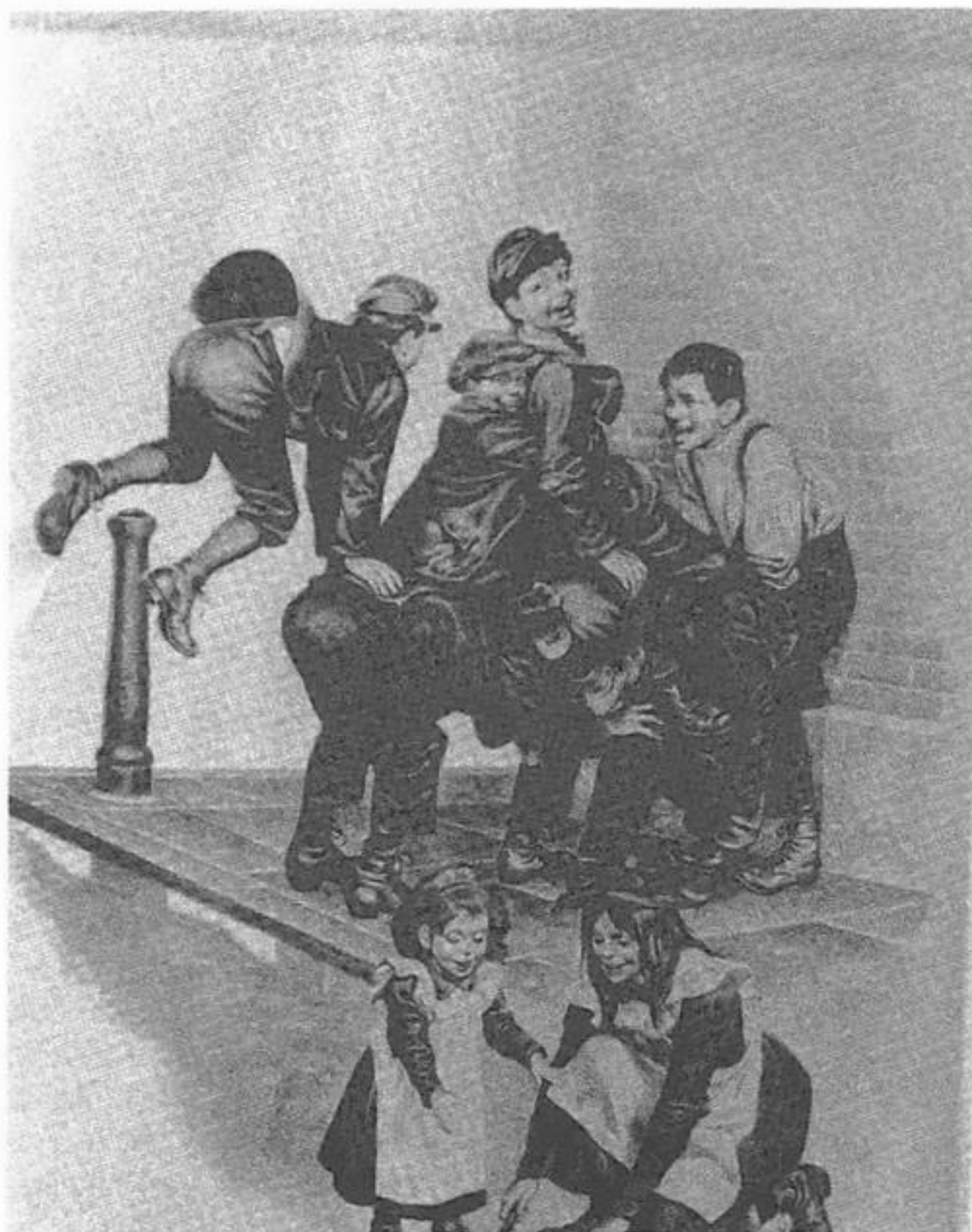
⁴Maurice Lenihan, *History of Limerick*, facsimile reprint Cork 1991, at pp. 480-481.

⁵*Dowd's History*, p. 96.

⁶Lenihan, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

'HIGH CROSS, STRONG HORSE'

The photograph (Illus. 4) is of a coloured print purchased in a second-hand bookshop off the Edgware Road, London, about 1950. The main illustration is of a boys' game. One boy against the wall is acting as a prop for two other boys, bent in what can be described as a single scrum. Two other boys are astraddle on their backs, while a third boy is in the act of jumping behind these. On the right-hand lower corner, the girl spinning the top for the child, need not concern us here.



Illus. 4

What is most interesting in all this is that this boys' game was played about the streets and laneways of Limerick, and especially about King John's Castle in the thirties and probably earlier; I played it once or twice myself, and lived to regret it - I sprained my hand!

When the scrum was formed the first boy about to jump on to it, shouted as he jumped: "Number one, high cross, strong horse". Then the next boy to jump shouted "Number two, etc., etc.", and so on if there were others ready to play the game. It was a rough and tumble business, with very few rules, and usually ending with the collapse of the scrum.

How and when did this English game (as it undoubtedly is) come to Limerick? The probability is that the children of the British military based in King John's Castle played it. As children they would have fraternised with their local counterparts, who would consequently have learned it from them.

"High cross, strong horse" is, as far as I know, gone like the snows of yesteryear. Even in Limerick its memory seems to be restricted to just a few in the Englishtown district. It would be interesting to learn if it is known in any other Irish town, and especially in those which held a British garrison.

PADDY LYSAGHT