

LOUGH GUR

Notes on the Above
made by

DOCTOR BERYL F. E. MOORE, M. A. [m.B.]

Macalister on Lough Gur

Blocks of shale are sometimes found which, bear a deceptive resemblance to stone or metal hatchet-heads; one such was found by Macalister at Lough Gur and another on the Hill of Tara. Such cheap imitation weapons may have been used for sepulchral purposes.

A very beautiful spear head enriched with inlaid strips and bands of gold was found at Loch Gur.

Throughout the Bronze Age shields were made of wood, wicker or leather; materials sufficiently hard to resist the feeble weapons they had to oppose. Towards the end of the Bronze Age and during the beginning of the Iron Age shields sometimes were made with a fine coating of bronze - one such was found at Loch Gur.

A La Tene sword with long straight blade and blunt point (so not used for thrusting) was found at Lough Gur over 100 years ago. It had a makeshift handle adapted from the metatarsal bone of a sheep and a bronze scabbard with 2 figures of birds mounted on it.

Shell Guide on Loch Gur

A small lake 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ m. NNE of Bruff and 12m. SSE of Limerick.

Gearoid file i.e. Gerald the Rhymer, 4th Earl of Desmond disappeared in 1398 and is said to sleep beneath its waters, but every 7th year he emerges to ride upon the ripples of Lough Gur.

The light limestone soil of this area attracted Neolithic cultivators who came in numbers to this district. The following is a list of the monuments going Deiseal (clockwise):-

- 1) Lios - a National Monument. The largest stone circle in Ireland.
- 2) To SE is Cloch a' Bhile, a pillarstone.
- 3) In next field to N is a circle with 15 stones - a National Monument.
- 4) To SW are 9 stones of a circle that originally had 69 stones - a National Monument.
- 5) On opposite side of the road is a Court Cairn - a National Monument.
- 6) Adjacent to the Cairn is a hollow to NW and is said to be the site of another stone circle.
- 7) In fields between the Lios and the W shore of Loch Gur are traces of Cladh na Leac, an ancient sunken roadway.
- 8) NE of Lios at the foot of Ardaghlooda Hill is a pillarstone - a National Mon.
- 9) On the hill are ancient field walls and circular enclosures.
- 10) 300 yds. N in swampy ground is Crock Island, a crannog.
- 11) By the lake shore 300 yds. to SE of Lough Gur House is a stone circle - a National Monument.
- 12) E of the latter is a platform ringfort.
- 13) 300 yds. N of the latter on Knock fennell is a stone ringfort.
- 14) On the summit of Knockfennell (531 ft. high) is a small cairn.
- 15) In the valley below to E are Red Cellar Caves and some ancient cultivation terraces.
- 16) Some 400 yds. ESE of these are the Spectacles - a group of ancient hut sites and fields - a National Monument.
- 17) 440 yds. E is Leagaun, a pillarstone.
- 18) 200 yds. N is a hilltop pillarstone.
- 19) 200 yds. SE of Leagaun is another pillarstone, also called Leagaun.

- 20) 400 yds. SE of the latter is a stone circle with an internal fosse.
- 21) Nearby to SE is a flat kerbed cairn which contained an Urn Burial
- 22) On the ridge to S are 2 stone ringforts called Carraig Aille 1 and 2, with ancient field and stone enclosures - National Monuments. Excavation dated the occupation of these to 8th 9th and 10th cents. A.D. In later times Carraig Aille No. 2 lost its warlike character and contained several undefend houses both inside and outside its walls.
- 23) At Loch Gur cross roads to SE of Carraig Aille, is a pillarstone.
- 24) On the road leading back to Holycross crossroads, $\frac{3}{4}$ m. WSW, on S side of this road is a wedge shaped gallery grave - a National Monument. 12 individuals were buried in it; the gravegoods were Neolithic pottery (decorated), and Beaker and Early Bronze Age ware.
- 25) 400 yds. N at the foot of Knockadoon are the ruins of a 15th cent. Castle called Killough or Black Castle.
- 26) 400 yds. WNW of Castle on Knockadoon is a circular cemetery surrounded by a double-kerbed bank.
- 27) Further NW is a similar enclosure - a National Monument.
- 28) SW of latter is an irregular enclosure of similar construction.
- 29) On S and W slopes of Knockadoon are Neolithic and Bronze Age habitation sites; including a rectangular, aisled, Neolithic house site.
- 30) Less than 400 yds. N of Black Castle is a double-kerbed enclosure.
- 31) To NNE on the hilltop is the remains of a cairn.
- 32) At NE foot of the hill is the fine 15th cent. tower of Lough Gur Castle, alias Bourchier's Castle.

The 2 Castles - Bourchier's and Black Castle closed the approaches to Knockadoon which was then an island. They were important seats of the Earls of Desmond, and after the Desmond Rebellion Lough Gur Castle was granted to Sir George Bourchier, an ancestor of the Earls of Bath who lived here till 1641.

- 33) Near the Castle (Bourchier's) is a pillarstone.
- 34) 150 yds. to E is a Bullaun.
- 35) 440 yds. WNW is a small cave.
- 36) To NE in the corner of the lake is Bolin island, a crannog.
- 37) 400 yds. SSW of the cave is an irregular enclosure with double-kerbed bank.
- 38) $\frac{1}{4}$ m. SW of Lough Gur gallery grave are the ruins of New Church; a simple late medieval structure.
- 39) 300 yds. SE is Carriganaffrin, a rock where Mass was said in Penal times.
- 40) 440 yds. SW on S side of the road in Ballynagallagh is Leaba na Muice, a ruined chambered tomb - a National Monument.
- 41) 400 yds. S are the remains of Mainister na Galliagh, a medieval nunnery.
- 42) NW of the nunnery is the Hero's Grave, a cairn.
- 43) To W of the latter is a second stretch of the Cladh na Leac.
- 44) On Garret Island in the lake are the dubious ruins of Desmond's Castle (so called).
- 45) 2 M. NNE of the Holycross Cross-roads in Grange townland is the Mote, a small ringfort with hut sites.
- 46) In the next field to S is a rectangular platform with ring Barrows.
- 47) Also in Grange is Dromin, a ringfort 400 ft. in diameter.
- 48) In the adjacent townland of Ballingoola are further ring Barrows and house mounds with ring ditches, likely belonging to the Iron Age.
- 49) In WNW of Holy Cross crossroads is Caherquillamore where over an area of some 500 acres in a deerpark and neighbouring fields are many medieval settlements - fields, roads, house sites. 2 were excavated and belonged to 14th, 15th and 16th cents., and were very similar to peasant habitations of recent times.

National Monuments of Ireland:

Lough Gur lies 12 M. SE of Limerick city, the principal approach to the lake and monuments is by the Limerick - Kilmallock road turning off along a by-road to the left at Holycross. The lake lies on the edge of the dairying country of the Limerick plain. It is surrounded by low scarped hills which break through the glacial drift; their upper slopes being covered with a light soil of limestone, and used for grazing bullocks and dairy cattle but rarely sheep. The lake is at present horse-shoe shaped, curving around the rugged and steep hill of Knockadoon which forms a long peninsula. Formerly the water almost completely ringed this hill, but drainage work in the mid 19th cent. has considerably lowered the water level. An island (Garrett Island) has for many years been a bird sanctuary, and a great variety breed in and around it. This aspect is described by Praeger in his "The Way that I Went" and "Natural History of Ireland". The social life of the district is described by O'Brien in "The farm by Lough Gur". When the drainage (referred to above) was undertaken 100 yrs. ago a number of antiquities came to light and led to many surveys and excavations since - namely by Windle, Professor O'Kelly, the late Professor O'Riordain and many others. Great quantities of Neolithic pottery, rectangular Stone Age house sites, double-walled enclosures (now known to be house sites also), inhumed Neolithic burials, Beaker pottery and an occasional occurrence of metal in the upper layers were amongst the finds, and clearly show that Lough Gur was continuously used as a living site throughout Neolithic and Early Bronze Age times without a break. And of course from that time to the present day we find late Bronze Age and Celtic habitations; so from the third millennium BC to the present day people lived in this district.

List of National Monuments:-

- 1) Cairn.
- 2) Partly destroyed megalithic tomb - Leaba na Muice.
- 3) 2 Stone circles. Doubtful sites.
- 4) Wedge shaped megalithic tomb. Early Bronze Age, Excavated.
- 5) Standing stones. Doubtful site.
- 6) A large slab-like standing stone at Lough Gur cross by the roadside.
- 7) Carraig Aille 1. Stone fort. Viking period. Excavated.
- 8) Carraig Aille 2. Stone fort. Viking period. Excavated.
- 9) Hut sites on Carraig Aille. Viking period. Excavated. Little remains to be seen.
- 10) Habitation site. Neolithic. Excavated. No remains to be seen.
- 11) Foundations of a rectangular Neolithic house. Excavated.
- 12) A large double-walled enclosure with a Standing Stone. A Neolithic cemetery. Excavated.
- 13) A large double-walled habitation-enclosure. Neolithic. Excavated.
- 14) An enclosure of stones against a rock-face. Early Bronze Age habitation site. Excavated. Approach and Access difficult.
- 15) Remains of a hilltop cairn, with traces of a kerb.
- 16) Flat-topped cairn, retained by a kerb, it contained urn burials. Bronze Age. Excavated.
- 17) A large double Stone Circle, the outer ring set against an outer retaining bank. Excavated. No dating evidence (similar to the Early Bronze Age circle at Grange).
- 18) "The Spectacles". Hut sites, marked by stone foundations, and an accompanying field system. Early Christian period. Excavated.
- 19) A Standing Stone.
- 20) Small hilltop Cairn. Excavated.
- 21) Platform type ringfort. Early Christian Period. Excavated.
- 22) Incomplete small stone circle.
- 23) "Crock Island". A small Crannog, now connected to the shore by marshy ground.
- 24) A large Standing Stone.
- 25) A small Standing Stone.

- 26) A small segment, all that remains of a large Stone Circle.
- 27) Remains of a destroyed megalithic tomb,
- 28) A very large impressive Stone Circle, with the stones set against a high outer bank. A ritual site of the Early Bronze Age. Excavated. Not yet in State care.

Other monuments in the district not yet in state care:-

- 1) A second crannog on Bolin Island.
- 2) A fine well-preserved Tower House of around AD 1500 (Bourchier's Castle).
- 3) Remains of a 13th cent. Castle with parts of the keep and curtain wall. (Black Castle).
- 4) Site of Desmond Castle on Garrett Island.
- 5) A ruined 17th cent. church (New Church).
- 6) Many enclosures and habitation sites of Knockadoon.

An Island site at Lough Gur

By David Liverage in JRSOI 1958. Geroid Island (pronounced Garret Island) is a low wooded islet in Lough Gur close to the shores of Knockadoon. The excavators of Knockadoon found numerous flint flakes under the water along the island shores, so The Author and Mr. Geo. Mitchell excavated the island in 1956 with 2 workmen and money provided by Trinity College, Dublin and deposited their finds in the National Museum.

The main feature is a large circular platform of stones, 40 metres in diameter and 1 or 2 metres deep, with a high wall built on it. The wall was built with mortar but has now mostly fallen; it follows the circumference of the platform in a series of straight lines which enclose a polygon. Within this enclosure are traces of sunken rooms with entrances to them. All is very overgrown and ruinous; it is called on OS maps Desmond Castle. Neither O'Donovan nor any historian describes it or gives any historical data. It is probably medieval and appears never to have been finished or inhabited. Before the drainage carried out by Count de Salis the platform alone must have emerged above the surface of the lake and have been used as a crannog. 2 other crannogs are now stranded on dry land by the lakeside; built when the water level was much higher than it is now.

Excavation trenches were dug and pits bored, and it was found that Garret island was nothing but a bank of solid mud with no rock core. The oldest artifacts were got in the deepest layers of the mud and the most recent nearer the top. Originally Lough Gur was a small lake, then it became a larger one, and now it is a small one again. When the lake began to become larger and the island smaller (say 2,000 years ago) the people carried out stones and threw them on top of the mud so as to increase the size of the island and render it fit for further habitation.

Whether the platform built with mortar was designed to accommodate a castle or not is still uncertain, but before Count de Salis undertook the post famine drainage the platform only was above the water, and after his scheme was carried out the platform was high and dry on a small islet which rapidly became overgrown with trees.

The finds comprised pottery of many ages, worked bone and flints. The nearest actual flint beds are in Co. Antrim and in Britain, though rare drift pebbles of flint are sometimes got over a wide area of the Central Plain carried there from Co. Antrim. We may assume therefore that all the flint used at Lough Gur was imported and knapped on the site. The island was rich in animal bones which seem to have been pounded to get the marrow out and therefore belonging to a period before metal tools were available to systematically split the bones. Some bones were gnawed, whether by dogs or wolves, or both, is uncertain. The bones belonged to cattle, pigs, sheep, deer, and large birds (mostly Cormorants).

2 very large oak trees must have grown on the island long ago as remains of their enormous trunks were found still vertical in the mud. The carbon 14 test on this wood gave an age of 3,680 yrs. i.e. 1722 BC.

Some cobbled flooring was unearthed; and the pollen and seeds were mostly of the water-loving shrubs, marsh plants and the white water lily.

Natural caves around the lake have yielded bones of extinct animals such as reindeer, giant Irish elk and bear.

The Festival of Lughnasa by Maire Mac Neill.

Of the great festive Assemblies held on heights in Munster, 3 were in Co. Limerick:-

1) Cnoc Firinne

A very fertile spot where a ridge of old sandstone crops up in the surrounding limestone. The highest hill of the ridge is called Cnoc Firinne (or Knock Feerina) and is 948 ft. high. It is one of the most famous fairy hills in Munster and gets its name from a fairy king - Donn Firinne. Nearby are other fairy sites eg. Knockairy and Pallas Green (cnoc Greine). There is a stone cairn on top called "The Lying Boy" and a dolmen on N Slope called "The Giant's Grave". Another part of the ridge is called "The Strickeens" because it is like a cock's comb. There are many "giant stories" in this neighbourhood.

Ballingarry Valley was the site of an Abbey in bygone days and an old road ran by the Abbey and cut thro' the ridge in a North-South direction. A large earthen fort with a rampart known as the Fort of the Fians is also nearby. There is a deep hole in the hill called Poll na Bruidhe and it is Donn's entrance to his home; often music can be heard coming out of this cavern. This ridge was the scene of a famous Lughnasa Festival, everyone carrying a stone up the hill and putting it on the cairn before taking part in any games or merriment.

2) Lough Gair Assembly (nowadays Gur) -

This was one of the three great ancient assemblies, the other two being Tailten and Carmen. 3 versions of a poem about an Oenach at Lough Gur survive; it was recited at "The Oenach of Life" held somewhere in the plain thro' which the River Liffey flows. The poet says he is "Blind Guaire", but tells how before he became blind he enjoyed the horse races around the rock above Lough Gur (Hill of Doon).

For some 4000 years people have lived here, so the place is rich in archaeological interests and folk traditions in consequence. It is a famous fairy resort and Geroid Iarla (3rd Earl of Desmond) has lived in the memory of the people of this neighbourhood for nearly 600 years as a fairy king.

Crom Dubh is also well known in this area and it is even said that he brought the first sheaf of wheat ever brought to Ireland on his shoulder to the fields around Lough Gur, therefore all here call him "Black Stoop". The largest stone circle in Ireland is in this district and the largest stone in the circle is called Ronnach Crom Dubh. 1 M. S of Lough Gur is a hill called Knock derc which is 485 ft. high; it has a wonderful view from its top, a stone seat, near the summit, and a funnel shaped hole going straight down from the pinnacle called Money Hole (Poll an Airgid) and a large triple stone circle called Carraig Beac, Cloch Breac and Baelee's Drive. An early church dedicated to St. Patrick lies at the foot of Knockdere, and nearby is a well also dedicated to the Patronal Saint, and S of it is a mound called "St. Patrick's Bed". He is said to have personally visited the Lough Gur area in a successful effort to gain converts in this strong pagan centre where Crom Dubh worship seemed all-powerful.

1 M. S of Knockderc is Cnoc Aine, hill of the fairy Aine in English.

4 M. E is Cromwell's Hill, called after Crom Dubh and not Oliver. There are Dolmen and other prehistoric monuments on its slopes.

Of the 5 or 6 other important Oenach sites in Ireland, one was certainly in Co. Limerick and another likely was - Oenach Culi, situated in E Limerick and got its name from a goddess ancestor. Oenach Clochain was likely held at Knocklong where there is a Clogher Hill.

3) Athea, Co. Limerick

In the Barony of Stanid and parish of Rathronan, Athea is a little glen amongst the western Limerick hills; it was a fording place on the river Caley. St. Bartholomew is the Patron of the parish and in the middle of the last cent. the Patron was held on his Feast-day August 24th, though before that in earlier times it was held on 1st August, Crom Dubh's Day.

Close to the church site (Temple Athea) is a Holy well called Tobar Muire, about 1 mile from the village. Faction fights ended in a death here at Athea in the year 1880, so the ceremony was suppressed.

Professor O'Kelly's Notes On the Lough Gur Site, The Great Stone Circle, Grange, Lough Gur.

150 ft. in diameter. A post hole was found at the centre and is thought to have held a stake from which the circle was struck by means of a cord.

Stones are of sandstone, limestone, basalt and volcanic breccia. The largest is called Ronnach Cruim Duibh and measures 13 by 7 by 4 ft. All the types are available in the neighbourhood eg. basalt at Knockderc 2 M. away, volcanic breccia on Grange Hill 1 M. North and limestone all around. The stones had sockets dug for them and when erected in their sockets were packed about with boulders.

Outside the orthostats and forming a backing for them is an earthen bank 30 ft. wide and 4 ft. high. There is no ditch so this earth must have been brought here. The level of the interior of the circle is 2 ft. higher than the field due to a deposit of soil around the bases of the orthostats. Entrance to circle is on E side, a slab-faced cobbled passage thro' the bank giving access to the enclosure between 2 large orthostats.

Finds were mainly flints, arrowheads, scrappers, blades etc., pottery, round bottomed Neolithic bowls, sherds of Beaker ware and Food vessels; Bronze Awl and dagger-sheath. These were dated 1800 to 2000 BC.

There are 2 other circles nearby which likely when complete were 55 and 180 ft. in diameter, a great standing stone to NE, an ancient trackway bordered on each side by boulders called locally Claidhe na Leac. On the opposite side of the road is a possible court cairn, and 2 m. further to W is Caher-Guillamore, an extensive post Norman village, dated 14th to 16th cents. And further W is Rockbarton Bog where peat cutting revealed hearth sites which yielded Beaker and "Coarseware" pots.

Megalithic tomb:

A wedge tomb with a small western chamber cut off from the main chamber by a septal slab; quite a feature of southern Irish wedge graves, common in Tipperary. The finds dated it to Neolithic times as both round-bottomed and flat-bottomed pots, Beaker and food vessel ware was obtained. The flints were of poor quality, therefore early.

2 Ringforts at Carraig Aille:

Both stone forts, with house sites and enclosures between. No. 1 is oval and to the North and has a stone rampart 11 to 14 ft. thick, built of blocks of limestone. It survives to 3 ft. high and has 2 flights of steps to the wall walk. The entrance is to East and is 7 ft. wide, and has a rebated jamb on each side to take the halves of a wooden gate. A cross trench presumably held a threshold log against the gate or on which the bottom of the gate rested. Some paving was found and also hollows for debris.

The finds included bronze and iron pins, knives, iron saw, 25 bone combs, 10 stone spindle whorls, grindstone, rotary querns, flint scrappers, jet bracelet, 6 stone axes; 1 amber and 3 glass beads.

No. 2 is somewhat rectangular and has a diameter of 156 ft. ramparts well-built of limestone blocks, 12 to 14 ft. thick and 3½ ft. high. There are steps at 6 points around the interior, and the late Professor O'Riordain thought the walls were originally 6 to 8 ft. high. The entrance was in SE and was 5 ft. wide; it was half paved and half cobbled. This fort was occupied over a long period in war-like times at first and in peaceful times at the end; houses were erected inside and outside.

The finds included a hoard of silver objects found between 2 stones on the innerface of the rampart and ascribed to 10th cent. A bronze terminal mount from a drinking horn dated 8th or 9th cent; also bone combs, querns, ring brooch, whet-stones etc., This hoard remained undiscovered thro' hundreds of years of occupation.

"The Spectacles"

On a little plateau above NE corner of the Lake is a small settlement of 3 huts. An animal shelter and some ancient fields.

House A was circular, 15 ft. in diameter, and the walls were 3 ft. thick. 2 hearths were found within, a projecting porch was situated outside the doorway and a paved path led from the door to a series of rough steps at the plateau edge leading down to the lake. There were post holes inside and outside the hut and the walls and roof seem to have been supported by these posts.

House B was oval; House C was a long narrow structure likely a cattle shelter and House D was in the next field to the S; it was rectangular and measured 14 by 12 ft. internally.

The finds dated the houses to 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th cents. A.D. and were similar to the objects found in the 2 stone forts.

Bolin Island Crannog

This was a complete island before the post famine drainage scheme, but is now accessible from the main land dryshod. This Crannog and "Crock Island" in NW corner of the lake were built by laying down a great ring of boulders and filling the enclose space with brushwood and earth.

Bourchier's Castle:

It is owned by Count de Salis, a descendant of the former Lough Gur landlord. Some years ago new windows and doors were put in as it was intended to use it as a shooting lodge. It was built in 15th cent. by a Desmond but granted to Sir Geo. Bouchier (son of 2nd Earl of Bath) on Desmond's forfeiture. It was built on the narrow neck of land between the 2 ends of the horse shoe shaped lake; and by defending this point of access the whole of Knockadoon became a fortress.

The ground plan is rectangular and built in 2 parts. Thos. Dineley's map (1681) shows the lake completely surrounding Knockadoon and the Castle having a fore-building and drawbridge leading from the castle across the lake to the mainland.

Knockadoon Circles

Dr. Watts of Trinity College by C 14 dating shows that some of these habitation sites are later than the primary colonisation in the NE and along the E coast of Ireland:-

Dalkey Island - 3340 BC

River Bann Hearth - 3330 BC

Knockineagh round Cairn, Co. Down. - 3060 BC

Knockadoon hut Circles - 2450 and 2700 BC

Circle J yielded many human skeletons and the small standing stone within the enclosure had a child burial near it.

Circle K had 2 concentric circles of large stones about 4 ft. high with a 4 ft. space between, the diameter being 102 ft. In the centre was a rectangle formed by post holes, so it would appear we have here a circular enclosure with a house in the centre.

The Black Castle

This is a very ruined structure, which seems to be older than Bourchier's Castle, and like it another point of access to Knockadoon. It had a great stone-built causeway which stood above water level before that level was reduced over 100 yrs. ago. Geo. Dineley (1681) shows it even then as a ruin.

House sites on Knockadoon

9 of these were excavated - Site A may be taken as typical of the rectangular huts ; it measured 32 by 20 ft. inside, was 3-aisled, had a door-way at SW corner, a central hearth, thatched roof; it was just occupied in Neolithic times and into the Bronze Age.

Site C was circular in plan with a diameter of 17 ft. constructed of concentric rings of posts, and was evidently a circular hut.

The Long story of the Irish ring-fort

Enclosures defined by 2 concentric circles of upright stones used to be thought of as stone circles (ritual monuments) but the late Prof. O'Riordain's and Prof. O'Kelly's excavations show they were habitation sites where the space around the house was enclosed by a wall composed of a bank of sods between 2 concentric circles of upright stones. The sods disappeared completely in the course of time leaving only the stone uprights. These sites were developed in the Early Bronze Age or even late Neolithic times.

Circles O and P

Both curious monuments.

P has an overall diameter of 33 ft. and has a Kerb of contiguous stone around the edge of a flat circular platform. Is it a stone circle or all that is left of a tumulus ? 2 pottery vessels described as "Urns" were found in NE quadrant and from these it was dated middle or late Bronze Age.

O has an overall diameter of 184 ft. and consists of an earthen bank faced on both sides with standing stones. Excavation revealed a ditch inside the bank and an annular space surrounded a central circle of contiguous stones. The latter is 50 ft. across. In NE quadrant some boulders are thrown together without apparent arrangement.

No finds, hence no date. The ditch inside the bank suggests it is a ritual site and not a habitation one.

Article by Professor Sir. B. Windle, University College, Cork, in Cork Archaeological Journal of Year 1912:-

1. Objects near Holy Cross Cottage - A to E.

- A Gallaun - of limestone and quite close to the western edge of Lough Gur.
- B Great stone circle - all the stones of which are of limestone except Rannach Crom Duibh which is a conglomerate. This name means "The Staff of Black Crom". The entrance to the Circle is to NE, and opposite it are 2 stones in the circle forming a notch, and it is thro' this notch that one standing in the entrance gets a full view of the rising sun. Gallaun A can clearly be seen from the great stone circle B and helps in plotting N and Magnetic N.
- C A small stone circle.
- D A disturbed circle or grave.
- E A disturbed grave.

11. Objects between Holy Cross Roads and Black Castle - F to I

- F Leaba na Muice i.e. the pig's bed. The capstone of this dolmen is of limestone, 1 ft. 5 ins. thick; it now rests on the fourth stone, but likely rested on all 4 originally.
- G Beyond the ruins called New Church, along the S side of the lake is a couple of heaps of stones called "The Stone Circles", but as they were under water originally it is unlikely that they were circles. They may have been crannoges. The level of the lake used to be much higher and the S side is now either dry land or swampy land periodically flooded.
- H Giant's graves - a cist burial 12 ft. long by 5 ft. wide, long axis EW, covered by 3 or 4 flat slabs originally. 12 stones in all comprise this monument. Also called Dermot's and Grania's Beds.
- I Gallauns - situated on the brow of a hill 400 ft. high, apparently without a name. They comprise 2 large stone blocks, both conglomerates though all the rest of the stones on this hill are limestones.

The Gallauns are $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. and 7 ft. high, and embedded in the ground for a couple of feet. The southern block is much the bigger and can be easily seen from the stone circles in Knockadoon and believed to be used for taking certain sightings. The top of the hill (on whose slope these Gallauns were erected) has a remarkable outcrop of jagged stones also clearly seen from Knockadoon. The Galtees lie behind with one particular high peak appearing over this jagged outcrop.

111. Objects N of Lough Gur - N to S

- N Gallaun at Lough Gur crossroads, composed of a tabular limestone, 6 ft. high.
- O Stone circle called Lisheen; unfortunately a wall was built thro' it in recent years. This circle is a large important monument which consists of a) a circular bank with a stone circle surrounding it outside, each stone standing erect, and a second stone wall formed of slabs lining the earthen bank inside; and b) a central bank surrounded by a series of stones along its outer edge. This monument is 182 ft. in diameter and its outer earthen bank is $14\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide. The ground between the outer and inner banks is lower than that outside the monument, so that the banks must have been formed by digging the earth away and throwing it up on the banks from either side. The inner circle is composed of 33 stones, all limestone, the highest 4 ft. high. On the E side the bank is double and doubly lined with stones, the purpose of which is unknown.
- P Stone Circle - a much smaller one, a flat topped mound surrounded externally by slabs of limestone much sunk in the grass. The width of this circle is 33 ft; it is close to O and to its West are 2 recumbent stones $25\frac{1}{2}$ ft. apart, and 40 and 43 ft. from P.
- Q and R Gallauns. They are North of the stone circles and W of the road and opposite the hill called Knockroe which is on the E side of the road. They are both small pillar stones.
- S Gallaun. Big and interesting stone, on the low brow of a hill overlooking a valley of fair size. This Gallaun, which can be seen from a long way, is a large tabular

stone which is $8\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high and $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. broad.

4. Objects on Knockadoon - J to M

Knockadoon was once an island, in fact it was one as late as 1600 AD. The 2 weak spots are guarded by castles. Many skeletons of Long Horn Cattle have been found on it.

J Stone circle, 100 ft. in diameter. There are 4 stone circles on Knockadoon but J is not visible from the other 3. J is really a double circle with 4 ft. between the 2 circles of stones, none of which are more than 4 ft. high and most are much less. It has a small central circle all of limestone, except a remarkable Gallaun of conglomerate, placed in this central circle. While standing at this gallaun the other gallaun called I can be seen and the rocky outcrop behind and above it, as well as the peak of the Galtees behind and above that again.

J when excavated was found to have a child's body and a small piece of a stag's antler buried beside the gallaun; the child was aged about 6 to 8 years of age. A few yards W of the Gallaun a cist burial was found, also of a 6 to 8 year old child, with some bones of an adult of small stature. This cist was a small one apparently because a small person was buried in it, in a crouched position. Rabbit and swine bones were also found in the cist, as well as a very large pig's molar tooth.

K Stone circle - with 3 concentric circles of stones, the outer diameter being $102\frac{1}{2}$ ft.

L Stone circle - which overlooks the partly drained piece of lake which lies below it, and is now boggy land liable to flooding.

M Stone circle - small but double.

5. Objects on Knockfennel - T

T Ring or oval of stones 44 ft. in diameter to N of lake, near Lough Gur House. This is the remains of a stone circle.

O'Riordain working with others (Hunt, Mitchell, O'Kelly) writing in PRIA and RSAI after excavation says:- The people who lived on Knockadoon likely went at certain times yearly to Rock Barton Bog for food gathering eg. fowl, fish, and berries. The Builders of the great stone circle B likely lived in the neighbourhood. Pollen analysis showed that the house sites must have been earlier than the late Bronze Age, in fact from Mesolithic times men likely lived here. The area seems to have been eminently suitable for pre-historic men, and excavations in Knockroe Hill, Rockbarton Bog and Caherguillamore have unearthed Early Bronze age pottery, Beakers, Coins and hearths. The greatest number of hearths were found 2 m. N of Rockbarton Bog and near them were many flints, pointed bones but no metal objects, therefore very early habitation sites. The Viking type hoard of silver objects found hidden in the wall of the stone fort on Carraig Aille (which is 400 ft. high) were dated 10th or 11th cent. but the huts inside and between the 2 forts were dated from 8th to 15th cent. This showed that people lived beside this hidden hoard for hundreds of years without knowing of its presence. The coins are thought to be imitation Roman coins, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter, of Bronze portraying Constantius II.

In the case of the Caherguillamore district to the W of the great stone circle, only a small number of the sites are even marked on the map.

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O'Donovan's Survey Letters

Parish of Knockainy - Aine's Hill so called from Lady Aine daughter of Eogabhail; she is the second most distinguished Banshee in Munster.

Townland on Lough Gur - here is an old church called Teampull nua (so called because it was new in comparison to another old one in the vicinity). It is well built, measuring $56\frac{1}{2}$ by $21\frac{1}{2}$ ft. the walls are 4 ft. thick, sand and lime are used as cement. The Countess of Bath is credited with being the builder of this place of worship.

Black Castle - its walls are $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. thick in the older parts of the building.

Parish of Grange - Irish "Grainseach", a Granary.

O S Name Book - Lough Guir, means "lake of incubation or hatching of Birds". It has an island still which is a Bird sanctuary. Keating says Lough Gur was fortified by Brian Boru; this likely means Knockadoon.

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Megalithic tomb - JRSAL, vol. 85 p. 34-50. excavation by Sean O'Riordain and Gearoid O'hIsceadha carried out in 1938. This monument is to S of the lake and was called a "giant's grave" in OS map. Stones were of limestone, overall measurement was 29 by 12 ft. main axis SW - NE, and consisted of 2 parts - a long main chamber 21 by 5 ft. and a small subsidiary chamber or portal at W end. A large septal stone divided the 2 chambers. The walls were formed of large orthostats outside with thin slabs inside and a filling between. Part of the tomb had collapsed, due to the steepness of the hillslope on which it was constructed. 4 capstones were over the main chamber but the capstone over the small portal chamber was missing. The extreme E capstone was too small to span the chamber so stood on a corbel which in turn stood on the side wall.

Finds - Animal bones in small quantities, quartz pebbles, some crushed pottery and cremated bones 8 ft. away to SSE next to a rocky outcrop. The crushing was due to rock fall and the pottery was of the Beaker type. A portion of a mould for casting bronze spear heads and a fragment of a crucible were unearthed. A lot of sherds, whetstones, a perforated stone, hammer stones and small bits of poor quality flint were found. A whole ox burial was discovered under the main chamber to the South; it was a young ox; the head was not in the correct position suggesting it had been cut off prior to burial. In the W chamber a cist burial was found.

Crofton Croker writing in 1824 says "this tomb was lived in by an old homeless woman" and this would account for the modern things found eg. pipe stem, slate, pencil, iron bucket handle. The Gentleman's Magazine of 1833 published an article about this old woman living in this prehistoric tomb, when she died the roof was thrown off and "treasure diggers" took over but found no money, so it was left till excavated recently.

When the inhumed bones were examined, it was found that at least 8 adults were represented and 4 children (1 of a year, 1 of 3 years, 1 of 12 years and 1 newly born) When the animal bones were examined they were found to represent horse, bird, dog, wolf, cat, fox, badger, sheep, goat and pig.

The tomb was 75 yds. from E. margin of the lake, 300 ft. to WNW on the slope of a small hill which rises to 400 ft. behind the grave. It is of the wedge type mainly in use during the 2nd millenium BC.

"The Spectacles" excavated by the late Sean O'Riordain. 1 circle represented a circular hut site and the other circle turned out to be just an outcrop of rock. The word "spectacles" was never used till so shown in 1920 on the map of Co. Limerick; 2 circles when drawn on paper look like spectacles. They are on a shelf of land running N - S, 35 yds. wide, at E end rising gently to the top of the hill but at W end dropping sheer to the lake shore. The entrance to the circular hut was clearly marked by inturned stones. Walls were 3 ft. thick, and consisted of 2 layers of stones and filling between them. 12 post holes were found inside the house and 6 outside; they likely supported the roof and a verandah or wide eave, or a porch, in front. 2 clearly defined hearths were found inside the hut, likely for use when the wind blew from different directions. There was a paved approach. Finds were very many: knives made of iron, $\frac{1}{2}$ ton of animal bones (1 dog, size of a terrier, 1 cat, only 2 birds, rook and teal, and 1 skull of a large fish). There were several small field sites around and a rough stone enclosure that appeared to be for cattle. This small farm was used during early Christian times.

Carraig Aille 1 and 2 - were used from Neolithic to Medieval times, and are situated on rising ground running NW - SE, about 400 ft. high, overlooking the marsh of Knockadoon which used to be part of the lake till drained in the middle of the last cent.

Site called No. 3 - near the stone forts to N W. As there were no post holes it was thought these 3 or 4 buildings might have been pens for sheep or cattle, and therefore needed no roofs.

Red Bog - in 1942 a man who had previously worked in Lough Gur excavations noticed pottery in another man's newly cut turf; he collected it and brought it to be examined; this led to an extensive excavation of Red Bog and considerable finds there. Several hearths were found with spreads of ash, charcoal and burnt stones with pieces of pottery. The stones must have been carried into the fen, the larger ones to build the hearths and the smaller ones to act as pot-boilers. It is fair to picture a reedy swamp here with scattered trees and open water in patches. The early inhabitants made their way here to fish and fowl, and squatted at these fires cooking their food. When the season was over they returned to their permanent homes, likely on Knockadoon. The pottery, flints and 2 stone axes found in Red Bog were dated as being earlier than the Late Bronze Age and more likely to the late Neolithic period. The pot boilers were heated in the fire and dropped in pits or troughs with water, to heat the water and cook the food placed in it.