Bunratty Mound

Just to the N.W. of Bunratty Castle at a distance of about 200 yards from the N.W. tower, there is a rectangular earthen mound. T. J. Westropp, in his well-known article on Bunratty in the journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society (1915 Vol. 111 No. 4), had suggested that this mound, with the surrounding fosse was the remains of the original Norman Motte erected by Robert de Muscogros in 1251.

As this mound stands in the grounds newly acquired for the erection of an Hotel, it was desirable to discover whether it was a Norman structure or not. It was included in a landscaping and planting scheme which will protect it from interference but only allowed four days for investigation.

The mound is rectangular in plan, lying with its long axis North & South. It has a top area of approximately 70ft. x 45ft. and it slopes very slightly from North to South. There are a number of trees and bushes growing from the sides. The sides are steep, from 10 to 12ft. high, and the corners are reasonably sharp. There are a number of slight depressions in the top and irregularities in the sides, which have been worn in places by cattle tracks.

A trench was dug, 4ft. wide, from the centre to the west, along a line, E.W.

Excavation showed that there was a considerable amount of modern humus on top and sides. Below this was layer of boulder clay containing large stones, the normal subsoil of the immediate neighbourhood. This lay upon several layers of dense black charcoal much of it in large pieces, with bands of light coloured material between. Below this again was a layer of humus. This lay on a compacted clay layer immediately over the undisturbed subsoil.

Running parallel with the line of the mound and close to its lower border was a foundation, 2ft. high, of brickwork, built with 2" brick, 18" wide. This was followed into the bank at the sides, and was of uniform height throughout the length exposed. No displaced bricks were encountered in the immediate neighbourhood, and it appeared to be complete in height as originally built.

This wall was well mortared and sat upon a stone and mortar foundation layer on the clay subsoil. There was a clay floor just below the level of the highest course of brick. The habitation level outside had been approximately 15" lower. Outside the line of the wall a layer of darker humus represented the habitation layer and over this a very dense black layer of burnt material sloping up the side of the mound. This lay also on the undisturbed clay of the fosse which had been formed when throwing up the spoil of which the mound was formed.

The sequence of events appear to have been as follows:

The red brick foundation is that of a Building of 16th Century date. The wall foundation presumably supported a timber constructed building,
probably the usual late Gothic or Tudor domestic form of timber with lath and plaster filling.

This building was destroyed by fire, and upon the debris was thrown a large amount of spoil obtained by digging a broad trench round the site of the proposed mound and piling it on the remains of the destroyed house. Both existing humus and the boulder clay of the subsoil were thrown up.

Upon the mound so formed, some sort of wooden structure was erected. The evidence for this is seen in the dense black layer seen in the fosse and sloping up the sides of the mound, from the position evidently subsequent to the building of the mound and unrelated to the burned material laying about the house foundations.

It seems highly probable that this mound is the gun emplacement for four cannon mentioned by Penn as erected to defend the broad deep channel of water then separating the castle from the high ground to the North.

Some sort of 'Herd' or fence of stout logs or perhaps gabions of basketwork and earth would presumably have been erected on the top edge of the mound to protect the guns and gunners from musket and cannon shot. The subsequent burning of this, after the capture of the castle by the confederates, would account for the burned material in its present position in the fosse.

**FINDS:** There were some fragments of brick mixed with the uppermost layers of the boulder clay on the mound. From the black layer lying directly above the floor of the house, came an iron knife. From the burned layers above, came two plain white glazed fragments of delph or similar ware, fragments of a 17th century cooking pot, with internal glaze, and portion of a glass wine bottle.

Close against the brick foundation wall, and possibly related in date to this structure was a fragment of salt glazed stone-ware of late 16th Century type.

J.H.

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**Excavation Of Two Ringforts Near Shannon Airport**

During the spring of 1959 two earthen ringforts near Shannon Airport were due for destruction owing to the laying down of the new runway for jet aircraft. Consequently they were both excavated by the National Museum of Ireland, under the direction of Mr. Etienne Rynne, M.A.

The larger of these two sites was a double-banked enclosure on the slopes of 'Thady's Hill', within which the remains of a rectangular stone house was uncovered. Excavation suggested that this house dated from Late Mediaeval
times and was apparently a secondary feature. No definite date could be assigned for the building of the ringfort.

The second ringfort, sited in low-lying neighbouring townland of Garrynamona, was smaller and had only a very low surrounding bank. It also appeared to have been occupied in Late Medieval times, although here also, there may have been earlier habitation.

Apart from a fragmentary decorated bone comb from the Garrynamona site, no outstanding finds were made.

We believe that full reports of the two excavations are being prepared for the annual report of the National Museum which will appear in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland for 1960.

F.G.A.

Architecture In Nineteenth Century Limerick

(See this Journal, 1957)

On the invitation of the author of the above paper I submit some notes I have made on the buildings in Limerick and neighbourhood gleaned from the files of the Dublin (later Irish) Builder from 1859 onwards:

1859. Death of Joseph Welland, architect of St. John's (Prot.) Ch., Limerick: he had designed 100 churches.

1860. Cannock's premises Gribbon (of Dublin)
       Jas. Hogg & Co. Wm. Fogerty
       St. Mary's Cathedral Slater: removed box-pews, galleries, E. Window, re-roofing.
       Ennis Nat. Bank Premises W. F. Calbeck, Dublin

1863/64. Croom Schools W. Fogerty
       Athea Church & Cross W. Fogerty

1866. Rathkeale Nat. Bank W. F. Calbeck

1869. Castleconnell, W. Fogerty
       Waterpark House

1870. Abington Ch. (Prot.) Rawson Carroll of Dublin
       Dromore Castle E. Godwin
       Cahirconlish Prot. Ch. E. H. Cargan

       Baptist Chapel, Limerick G. P. Beater, Dublin.

H.G.L.
The Imperial Government of Austria, after long deliberation, has adopted the elaborate plans of Mr. Joseph Fogerty, C.E. of London (formerly of Limerick), for the construction of a great circular railway, embracing within its ample sweep the entire city of Vienna, and uniting five or six great Continental railways leading to the capital, but having their different termini at an inconvenient distance from the city. These will now be brought into one grand central termini (sic) in the heart of the capital, and by many triumphs of engineering skill the rails will, for the most part, be carried on pillars so as to intrude as little as possible on the convenience of the magnificent city it is intended to unite with the outer world. The cost will be about six millions, sterling, but Mr. Fogerty is sustained not only by the Imperial Government of Austria, but has along with him a powerful syndicate in England, insuring the successful issue of this most gigantic undertaking, which it is calculated will take three years to complete. We heartily congratulate our fellow-citizen on this "concession" bestowed by the Emperor himself in the most complimentary manner, and heartily wish that the Vienna Circular Railway may add one more to the many triumphs of engineering skill associated with the name of Mr. Fogerty.

—Newspaper cutting February 6th, 1883.

* * *

The plans of the Jesuit church, Limerick, were said to have been drafted by a Charles Geoghegan, a well-known architect in his day, but the architect who actually was responsible for the building was William Corbett, a Limerickman. The church was not ready for occupation until 1868.

C.F.

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A slab at St. Michael's informs us that Martin Morris, architect, was responsible for the rebuilding in 1881. The original penal chapel had opened in 1781 and had been enlarged in 1805. Some of the original masonry may be noticed at the back on the outer wall of the left transept.

R.O'S.

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The Abbey Of Mothel, County Waterford

WORKS OF MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

The abbey of canons regular at Mothel, three miles S. of Carrick-on-Suir, is briefly noticed by Canon Power in his Waterford and Lismore and in his notes to the Lismore Annals (Arch. Hib. xii). There are references in Extents of Irish Monastic possessions and in Irish Monastic and Episcopal Deeds.

The abbot at the suppression in 1540 was Edmond Power who according to the Fiants of Henry VIII was brother of the Lord Power of his time. As his
reward for the surrender this scion of the House of Power was granted a life tenancy of the monastic lands. The monastery was in the Power country and just a century before the suppression there is a deed granting the Power of his day billeting rights (corrody) at the Abbey. The family still maintains a special burial enclosure in the churchyard, and the Memorials of the Dead, Vol VII, records two Power obits from gravestones here dated 1483 and 1735 respectively. During works carried out by the O.P.W. last summer a slab of the sixteenth-twenties was uncovered commemorating Walter Power and Kathleen Phelan, his wife.

The Estates record that before the suppression "the abbey had been from time immemorial the parish church" and that "there are no superfluous buildings which can be thrown down." A stretch of the south wall survives and part of a puzzling west gable wall—puzzling because the splay of the gable window opens outwards instead of inwards. Beyond the east end of the side wall there is a rectangular enclosure extending southwards, but it is not clear whether the low wall that encloses it is medieval or modern.

In and near this enclosure can be seen the 17th century Power slab already mentioned, the sacred monogram IHS in impressive relief upon stone, and coupled capitals and a vousoir of late 12th century date. Here also the Public Works officials have restored a box tomb with panels carved in relief along the sides and ends and with a Latin inscription running along the table of the tomb. According to Lewis the carvings now re-assembled had been inserted for safety in the church walls some time about 1825. Lewis also mentions an inscription mentioning a Maurice Omenane as part of the monument to which the carvings belonged. Maurice's name in Latin is now to be seen on a slab in the vicinity of the box-tomb. Its dimensions tally exactly with the vacant space on the cover of the tomb and it may have lain there originally.

The inscription on the mensa of the box tomb is interrupted in places and much weathered. It appears to contain certain conventional phrases about somebody whose ancestors were benefactors of Moteh Abbey... suis parentibus... qui plures bona operc huic c (o) m (ui) faciunt, and asks a prayer... Ave Maria p (ro) a (n) i (m) a. The Christian name of the commemorated person would appear to be Rory (Roricus, abbreviated to Roric); and the surname may be fairly read as O Conany. Now a document of 1483 in the Papal Letters confirms a Rory O Caman in the abbacy of Moteh. The annals mention an abbot Rory, a most colourful person (perhaps the same) in 1477 and in the Monastic Deeds there again appears in 1501 an abbot Rory of Moteh. The crude carvings on the tomb would suggest a date in the first part of the sixteenth century. A Conan sat on the Enquiry that preceded the suppression of Moteh and the family figures prominently in and about Carrick in the Ormonde Deeds and the Pfants.

The carvings appear on six panels, two on either side of the tomb and one at each end. Each panel holds three figures. In the panel illustrated in pl. a monk stands between a figure of Christ with orb and sceptre and Our Lady with the Child on her left arm and her right hand holding a crozier. The monk's extended hands touch the sceptre and the crozier. On the next panel St. Michael holds the scales of judgment and beyond him are SS. Peter and Paul with keys and sword respectively. On the other side are figures which may be identified by their attributes as SS. James, John of Jerusalem, John the Baptist and (?) Thomas of Canterbury. In addition St. Margaret of Antioch with her dragon and
St. Catherine of Alexandria with her wheel are easily identifiable. Ever since the Crusades Catherine and Margaret ranked among the most popular woman saints in the west. They appear on the O'Dea crozier (1418) and theirs were among the voices said to have been heard by Conor O'Dea's contemporary, Joan of Arc. Crucifixion forms one end panel, and opposite is a group showing a monk between two prelates with mitre and crozier.

In the fifteenth century documents Mothel is frequently referred to as the "monastery of SS Cuan and Brogan, of the Order of St Augustine." Apparently like Molana, 30 miles S.W. on the Blackwater, it had been the habitat of a native community long before the adoption of canonical rule. Broccan and Cuan both figure in the pre-Danish Feilire of Oengus with feasts in mid-July. Later commentators in the Leabar Breae assign them both to Mothal Broccán i nDílisib Muman. The Annals of Inisfallen mention the death of a notable ecclesiastic at Mothal in 1077. A few perches S. of the ruin and beside the roadway stands a socketed cross-shaft showing faint traces of interlace and dating obviously from the earlier foundation. The monk appearing in the panel between Christ and Our Lady may well represent one of the earlier patrons of the place. M.M.
Ballyhea Churchyard: Medieval Slab With Effigy

Some years ago a limestone slab with effigy in high relief was uncovered by grave-diggers in the chancel of the ruined medieval parish church at Ballyhea,
diocese of Cloyne. The slab shown in pl. measures approximately four feet by eighteen inches. The effigy shows a civilian, neither knight nor cleric, bareheaded, beardless and with joined hands. He wears gown and hood over a full-sleeved tunic reaching to the ankles. The shoes, with pointed toes and fastened across the instep, rest on the figure of a dog. Flanking the arch that frames the head are two angels each resting his cheek on his outer hand. It is very competent and assured work, very well preserved, and dating apparently from the first half of the fourteenth century. There is no trace of an inscription.

From the Pipe Roll of Cloyne and the Justiciary Rolls it would appear that the most influential families in the Ballyhea district at the period were the Cogans and the Sarsfields. The Cogans gave their name to Rathgoggan, the present Charleville. The traditional Sarsfield pedigree recites a thirteenth century Henry "who came to Ireland and lived in Cork for some time and married the daughter of Fitzgerald by whom he had the lands from Bealogh Favrye to Kilmallock". Ballyhea (Bealach Atha) stretches to the western slopes of the Ballyhouras (Bealach Febrat). A Henry Sarsfield who may well be the same appears in a Limerick land transaction in the Black Book under the year 1267.

The Normans came early to Ballyhea as appears from an entry of the year 1176 in the Annals of Innisfallen: "The grey foreigners came from Ath Clath to Luimneach and thence to Muscraige Aeda and they plundered Bealach Atha". The church was then but recently erected: its impressive pedimented south doorway figures in Leask’s "Irish Churches." For a Romanesque church it has imposing dimensions, sixty-nine feet by twenty-four, so that one is not surprised to find that in the ecclesiastical taxations of the early fourteenth century, the period of our effigy, Bealach Atha figures as the most important living in its deanery of Muscraige Donnagain.

M. M.

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Kilcolman Castle

Kilcolman got its name from St. Colman, friend and disciple of St. Finbarr and himself a poet. Here came Maurice, 1st Earl of Desmond, son of Tomas an Appac, to build a castle in 1347 when the raids of the Irish were threatening the security of the Normans. It is said that five counties could be seen from its battlements—a view extending from the Comeraghs in Waterford to the mountain peaks of Kerry.

The Desmonds held it till they lost all in the 1580's. Next man on the Kilcolman scene is the enigmatic Edmund Spenser, in whom were united two very dissimilar callings, the gentle poet of the Faerie Queen, and the cold and ruthless exterminator. Born in the mid 16th century, very little is known of his family. He is said to have been connected with the family of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, Northamptonshire, to whose daughters he dedicated many of his poems. One assured fact about Spenser is that he was admitted a sizar to Cambridge in 1569. Got B.A. 1573.
Sir Philip Sydney’s influence got him appointed secretary to Lord Leonard Grey when the latter was made Lord Deputy in 1580. He was witness to all the atrocities of Grey’s campaign. He describes his experiences in a treatise, ‘View of the State of Ireland’. He puts the sufferings of the people on record not out of pity but to show how the thing might be done again if need arose. It was during this period he met Sir Walter Raleigh, who also served under Grey. In 1581 Spenser was appointed Clerk of Degrees and Recognizances in the Irish Court of Chancery, a post which he held for seven years, at the end of which time he was appointed secretary to the Council of Munster. He received a lease of the lands and abbey of Ennisorthie and at the Plantation of Munster he got Kilcolman Castle and 3,000 acres. Spenser resided at Kilcolman, and to visit him there came Raleigh after having circumnavigated the globe. In his honour Spenser wrote the poem, ‘Colin Clouts came home again’. He accompanied Raleigh to London, but eventually returned to Ireland. He married Elizabeth Lynda, of whom nothing further is known, but he immortalised her in the wedding ode, ‘Epithalamium’, the finest composition of its kind in the English language. She bore him five children, four of whom survived.

The first Desmond Rebellion brought him to Ireland, the second, that of the Sugan Earl, drove him out. He had earned the hatred of the Irish and they lost no time in seeking revenge. When they swooped down from the Galtees, Spenser was not at home. His wife fled, the castle was set on fire, and despite the efforts of the attackers, an infant child of Spenser’s died in the flames.

Spenser was ruined. He fled to England and died in penury at King’s St., Westminster—for lack of bread, said Ben Johnson. He died a pauper, yet was buried at Westminster Abbey. Essex paid the funeral expenses and the obsequies were more than royal. When his remains were lowered into the grave, his fellow poets filed past, and each one cast an ode and the pen that wrote it, on top of the bier.

Three sons grew to manhood, Sylvanus, Laurence and Peregrine. Sylvanus got Kilcolman and married a Miss Nagle whose gt.-gr.-niece was the mother of Edmund Burke. Laurence had property and died S.P. Peregrine got an estate called Renny; he had a son named Hugolin. Sylvanus had a son William who succeeded him. All lands were lost in Cromwell’s time but given back at the Restoration. In the Williamite wars Hugolin sided with James and lost Renny. William sided with William and got Renny back. William had a son Nathan who died 1734 leaving four children, Edward, Nathan, John, and Barbara. Edward married and had a daughter. He died at Mallow, 1790. Nathan had no family. John had an affair with his housekeeper—she was shaving him on the morning of his marriage to another lady and she cut his throat.