ANCIENT REMAINS ON THE WEST COAST OF CO. CLARE.

By THOMAS JOHNSON WESTROPP, M.A., M.R.I.A.

(Concluded from Page 169.)

Over ten years have gone by since I commenced at the suggestion of a valued friend only recently taken from among us, Dr. George J. Fogerty, R.N., a series of papers on the antiquities of the country round the pleasure resorts of Co. Clare. Begun just as peace settled down after the South African War, the series of papers ended as a more widespread and deadly war began. Great changes of every kind marked the eleven years during which the papers appeared. It is evident that in progressive work much new material accrues every year; also that mistakes get detected accordingly. I bring together in this paper some of the most necessary corrections and some additions to the series of papers.

CAHERMURPHY (Journal Limerick Field Club, vol. ii., p. 255). On a later visit to this place I was greatly impressed by the very curious earthwork in which the castle stands. The previous account in these pages is so inadequate that I must supplement it before I close these papers.¹

If the tribal legends of its late owners, the MacGormans, be true, their tribe, the Ui Bairchi, or Ui Bricin, fled from Carlow² and Slewmargy to Domhnall mór O’Brien, King of Munster, between 1170 and 1190, and was settled by him on the northern seaboard of Corcovaskin, still called from them Ibrickan. The O’Gormans, thus indebted for protection, freedom and territory,

¹See also Journal Royal Society of Antiquaries, vol. xii., p. 117.
²See Rev. Mr. Shearmain’s paper in the Journal of the Kilkenny Society (now Roy. Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland), vol. iii., series iv. (vol. xiii. consec.), p. 522; also the pedigree registered at the Ulster’s Office by the Chevalier O’Gorman.
became a most loyal garrison, and they, the O'Briens and MacMahons of Carrigaholt kept down all traces of rebellion in the remnant of the Corca Bhaiscoinn and the Mairtinigh, their predecessors in the district. Wild stories were told of their ancestor Gorman; he was said to have been King of Africa, and his by-name, Maur, was equated with "Mauretanian" by too erudite scribes. In fact, the Irish belief that the Africans were blue men (Fir Gorma) sufficiently accounts for this strange assertion. Gorman lived about 590, and helped the pagan Saxons against the Christian Britons of Wales. Late in the 12th century Walter "de Redensford" or "de Ridelesford" overran their settlements round Sliabh Mairgi, and the tribe divided, half fled to Ulster and half under Murchad, son of Eachthighern, to Doire Senliath on the borders of Co. Limerick and Co. Tipperary in Uaithne or Owney. The Chevalier O'Gorman preserves a copy of the list of their tribe lands, including "Caher morrigu de Cahermor," Monemore "Castle" (fort), Clahanes, Dromine, Gorman or Drimellagh(y), Tullycrone, &c. Whether "Cahermorrigu" represents some older form I dare not assert, but it seems most probable that Cathair Murchadha, the chief residence, was dug by order of Murchad, the chief, and in imitation of a Norman castle, with its bailles and fortified mound. The structure has more affinity with Norman than with primitive Celtic earthworks in design, but not execution. The tribe held the parishes of Kilfarboy, "De colle bovum (Oxmount) or Kilmurry, where the name "Oxmount" still survives as a field name at the church, and Kilmihil. Behind them, but separated by a waste of marshy shale hills, lay the Uí Cormaic, in Kilmaley and Clondegad. The O'Conors and O'Deas lay beyond Moy along the northern border. Murchad was succeeded by his son Cueba (the name confused with the MacNamara name Cumeadhia in the Registered pedigree), whence descended the unbroken line of chiefs. According to the Mac Bruodins, the succession ran through Conor, Donald and Cueba, the last circa 1300, "David" (Dathi?), John, Cueba, who died

5 Maghombracain (the O'Gorman's plain). Ann. Four Masters.
at Cuinche (Quin) in 1412, Melachlin (1438), Donn, and Melachlin Dubh, Chief in 1498, some say till 1522, which tallies with the date of his grandson. The Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaoigh has much to say of Cuebha Mac Gorman, the near friend of King Turlough from 1277 onward, "his close door of protection while he slept and his shield on the battle field." This beautiful friendship renewed itself, generation after generation, and we find it between their sons, the younger Cuebha and Prince Dermot O'Brien, when Cuebha and the three sons of Donchad O'Dowden were the bodyguard of the prince in the terrible battle of Corcomroe Abbey, 1317. The various lines of MacGormans after 1500 are numerous and complicated, so I will confine my notes to the chief castle.

It was said to have been "built" by Domhnall, grandson of Melachlin Dubh, but as usual "built" means "rebuilt," for the tower is far older than the time of a grandson of a chief living in Elizabeth's reign, or even of the earlier Melachlin, 1498. The reputed builder died of a broken heart in 1600; he may have built some of the houses near the tower, as his period is marked by growing ideas of comfort; the peel tower, a little earlier, sufficed to house the chief and a swarm of his family and retainers. In 1623, as we learn by an Inquisition of April, 1637, the castle had a hall, courtyard and two bed chambers, probably representing the three house sites outside the peel tower. The family shone rather in hospitality than in architecture, for not a piece of carved (or even moulded) stone remains in the ruin. On the other hand, the statements that they had entertained bards for 400 years, that they sheltered priests, and that Donn was nick-named an fhiona, and described even in Latin documents as "Donus Vinife de Caher Murrughu"—all these suggest hospitality. So also Thomas Mac Gorman the Chevalier kept up a magnificent establishment in Paris till the Revolution chased him, an old, ruined and childless man, back to the shore of the Atlantic in 1793.

The castle lies on the southern slope of a low ridge, nearly isolated by streams and marshes, and evidently once a peninsula in a large shallow lake. Perhaps it was the "Monemore Castle"

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6 Visitation of Dr. Rider, Bishop of Killaloe, 1622. P.R.O.I.
7 Registered Pedigree, Ulster's Office.
held by the chief Murchad after 1172, "Cahermorrughu de Cahermore" being the "large stone fort" on the edge of the Doolough tableland not far to the north, Monemore being evidently "the great marsh." Had the fortification been made a few hundred feet to the north, it could have overlooked the valley, stood on a dry site, and been a place of some commanding strength. It could have equally well kept in touch with the lake by lines of ditch and mound, more defensible, if slighter, than the present works. These advantages were all sacrificed, perhaps for shelter. A site less commanding, more wet and more easily open to being "rushed" by an enemy were hard to find at any fort or castle in Co. Clare. It lies about 7 miles from the sea, not far north from the village and church of Kilmihil, on a little stream which (under the names of the Creegh River and, farther down, of the "Skivileen") flows into the Atlantic at Rayoganagh near Dunbeg.

The fort makers dug unusually strong earthworks to either end of a steep wet slope. They joined these by a far weaker mound and fosse, so overhung that the court can be overlooked from close beside the ditch. An enemy crossing the ridge, even by daylight, could have assailed and probably scaled the defences a few minutes after the occupants had seen the foe on the sky line. The capture of the weak north-west corner must have put the two lines of really strong works on the western face into the hands of the enemy, and still further the great ramparts were then nearly useless, for they were joined at their upper end by a mound eminently suited for the enemy's purposes.

The enclosure was a long oblong, with a rounded east end, and was terraced up into a west court of two platforms, divided by a fosse from a D-shaped east court, in which, on a rounded bastion-like terrace, stood the little turret. The western mounds are parallel running down the slope for about 170ft. N.N.E. and S.S.W., with a fosse outside and one between them. They slope about 1 in 2, and are respectively—the outer, 24ft. thick below and 6ft. thick on top, and 11ft. over the outer and 9ft. over the bottom of the inner fosse; the inner, 26ft. to 18ft. thick and the same height. The outer fosse is 10ft. wide and 4ft. to 5ft. deep; the inner 6ft. to 8ft. wide. The inner mound had evidently a
breastwork, and rises a couple of feet above the outer mound. The entrance through these is probably late, and lies 50ft. from the north end; a small drain is cut deeply inside for the southern reach. The cross rampart runs nearly due east from the north end of the outer mound; its fosse is 5ft. deep and 12ft. wide; the mound barely rises above the field, and is nearly levelled along the east courtyard. The part between the west mounds is terraced inside. At 72ft. from the west mound a wet fosse runs down the slope; small streams usually flow down all the fosses, and the upper east court is a swamp in wet seasons, even in summer. The fosse is about 25ft. wide.

The western court is in two terraces, the upper a square of 63ft, the lower 12ft. below the terrace, 69ft. wide, 84ft. N. and S., with the foundation of a hall 57ft. by 24ft., with a garderobe drain at its S.W. corner.

The east court is fenced at its outer end by similar works (in size and depth) to those of the west side, but, unlike them, semi-circular, giving the main plan its shield-shaped outline. They seem to have been cut down, rising little higher than the field, 6ft. or 8ft. over their fosses; the banks are steep, 1 in 1, sometimes 1 in 2, and are covered with sallovs, willows and furze. The east court is 114ft. E. and W. by 159ft. wide, but is irregular and in two terraces. There are house foundations at the N.W. angle and to the N.E. at the curve. In the centre, on a semi-circular bastion on the terrace edge, is the north wall of the tower, a fragment 23ft. long by 5ft. 3in. thick. Even between my visits in 1903 and 1908 the upper part with the window head has fallen. Traces of the porter's lodge and of an ambry remain. The stairs were to the S.W., the basement was vaulted, and there were two storeys with floors above it.

The whole earthwork measures east and west 346ft over all, 290ft. inside, and 214ft. N. and S., at the west end, 219ft. in the middle, and 186ft. at the tower. The foot of the slope was terraced up some 5ft. or 6ft. over the marsh, but seems to have been unwalled at that side.

On the hill top to the N.W. is a small earthen ring, 45ft. inside the mounds, 8ft. to 10ft. thick, and over 5ft. high, with many traces of stone revetment.
The stone ring fort, probably the real Cathair Murchadha, has been fully described in these pages for the first time. I only add its plan by the kindness of the Council of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, who also have lent me the other illustrations of my paper from their Journal.

MILLTOWN MALBAY.

The Liss of Dough and that of Rinbaun may also be noted to complete the better my paper on Milltown Malbay. Their plans and sections are sufficiently shown in the illustration. The most remarkable feature is the curved passage or souterrain in the second, which lies near the village of Quilty towards Caberrush. It is a narrow passage, 2ft. wide, and now barely 3ft. high, the outer wall only a foot thick and much broken, but the strong roof slabs remain. Both these forts are well seen from the railway to the west of the line between Milltown Malbay and Quilty.

MUTTON ISLAND OR INISCAERAGH.

A second visit to Mutton Island revealed the existence of a small promontory fort, now nameless, at the S.W. headland. It is on a small cape about 60ft. high, with black window-like recesses in its northern wall. The rampart is slightly curved and much overthrown by the sea, which has entirely swept away its northern end; it has only a few courses of stonework remaining, and was fairly well built. It is 117ft. long, and about 33ft. more has been washed off the rock; the wall varies from 18ft. to 25ft. thick. Near the end of its garth a rock shaft runs down to the sea and spouts great columns of water and spray in western gales. The bay beside it is called Coosnadread; the rock itself is said to be "Gorraun," so I have ventured to call the little fort Dun-Gorraun in my list of 112 promontory forts on the coasts of Connaught and West Munster. It is a picturesque and impressive spot, as I last saw it, on a hazy evening in September, 1910; the dark rocks, the sheets of spray, the long rollers, following each other from the unbounded sea, and rose red from the low sun and the tumbled curve of stones (the only trace of a forgotten generation) bounding the little terraced enclosure of sward and sea pink.

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PROMONTORY FORT, MUTTON ISLAND.
"where the waste land's end leans westward" at the ancient
Inis Fitae. The fact that the island was cut into three some time
between 799 and 804⁹ by a tidal wave probably implies that the
fort in its present form is later. The other fragments are Inis-
matail and Roanshee rock. Iniskerech and Inismatail are named
in the grant of Donchad Cairbrech O'Brien, King of Thomond,
to the Archbishop of Cashel, confirmed by the Irish Government of
King John in 1215.¹⁰

The "cross" at St. Senan's altar or station on this island has
been broken (probably by the heat of a tar barrel lit on the
"leacht") since my visit in August, 1887.

LISLARD AND THE MOTE, CRAGGICORRIDAN (L.F.C.,
vol. iii., p. 50.)—The place is called Cracc I Corradain in the 1390
rental. These are fully described in Journal R.S.A.I., vol xiv., pp.
55-56, with plans and sections. The mote has an outer ring in parts
5ft. high, but much levelled to the north. It is about 84ft. across
over all, and 12ft. to 18ft. thick. The fosse is about 5ft. deep and
9ft. wide below. There is a terrace-like ledge to either side, from
the inner of which rises the "mote" about 12ft. high and the same
on top. Lislard has an outer ring 88ft. over all, a fosse, and a
central platform, on which is a small low mound, 18ft. across and
3ft. high. Both are possibly sepulchral.

BALLYGANNER (N.M.A.S., vol. i., p. 16).—A closing section
on the antiquities of this remarkable site is being published,
R.S.A.I., vol. xv.

CROSS. THE KILBALLYOWEN FONT (Ibid., vol. ii., p. 115.)

On several occasions, from 1896 on, I made inquiries in and about
Cross as to the carved font, noted by Graham (in his contribution
to Mason's Parochial Survey, vol. II., p. 431) in 1816, as lying in
Kilmacduan Church. I was always told that no such object was
known. All my "informants" were old men, and I regret to say
that they, and they alone (of countless persons all round Ireland)

p. 207.
from, I presume, some stupid suspicion as to my object, deliberately told falsely what every member of the congregation in Cross Roman Catholic Church must have known. Quite incidentally Mrs. Tom Cusack of Cross (whose kind thoughtfulness in the matter and the courtesy of Rev. Mr. Clancy, P.P., and Rev. J. A. Austin I have pleasure in recalling) told me of its existence in the chapel, and enabled the late Dr. George J. Fogerty and myself to examine and make photographs of it. Tradition alone has named the patron of the plain old church that lifts its dark ruined gables to the Atlantic storms on the rising ground to the west of the village. It was dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Kilballyowen, the church of John's townland, might be of quite different connotation, but the font shows that the dedication was recognised nearly five centuries ago. The church, as so often, has no earlier record than the Papal Taxation of 1302-6, as Kellmolihegyn, cill bhaile eogain; no part of the present building seems so old, but it is hard to assert the date of the flagstone churches, with rarely a carving or a moulding to help us as to the period even of any of their features.

The font is a beautiful piece of work, of the rich and delicate art of the later 15th century, 1460 to 1480, and, I think, of the earlier date. Mason says 11: "On each side of the square pedestal which supported it are figures, not inelegantly sculptured, but only two of them remain perfect; one of these is a human figure, bare headed, with a staff or crozier in its hand, and the other a tree." The Ordnance Survey Letters repeat this, and Canon Dwyer adds an unfounded conjecture that the carving was intended to teach the need of the fruit of good works in the baptized. This is a singularly unhappy idea, as the foliage is "nothing but leaves," and the design is common on altars, tombs, and even secular buildings, where had even fruit been shown no such teaching could have been deduced.

A most interesting fact remains, that the work is identical in character with only two other monuments in the country. One of these is the carving of St. Sebastian on the door jamb of Killyvordan, removed first to Corofin, and now in the safe keeping of

KILBALLYOWEN FONT.
Dr. George U. Macnamara at Bankyle. The other is the once beautiful tomb of the O'Briens to the right of the altar in the chancel of Ennis "Abbey." This last concerns us closely; it was built by Morina, daughter of O'Brien, King of Thomond, and wife of MacMahon of Corcavaskin. As Father Anthony Bruodin (ante 1643) generalizes, the descendants of "Bernard" (Brian catha an Aonaidh) O'Brien, along with the illustrious family of MacMahon, have a very beautiful tomb, built in the shape of an altar, or, as Hugh Brigdall records, in 1695, "the ancient monument of grey marble, whereon is engraved the story of our Saviour's passion, and belongs to the family of the MacMahons." It is probable that the MacMahons employed the cunning sculptor of the royal tomb to carve the font which they placed in the large church near their castle of Carrigaholt, about 1460.

The font is of dark grey marble, and consists of a now much-broken basin, resting on a hollow shaft and a base. (The base is well designed in simple moulding, and, like the shaft, is octagonal in plan, each face 8½ inches long. It is about 15in. high, being, however, set in the concrete floor, though I think but little is concealed. The shaft is square, with spirally fluted shafts at the angles; it is 10½ inches square and about 19in. high. The spiral flutings resting on small foliaged corbels above the base. The chief panel is in fair preservation, considering that it lay exposed to the weather and all wanton and accidental injury in the roofless ruin for some three centuries. It represents the forerunner of our Lord. The Baptist has long hair, short beard and moustache, and a curious lily-headed staff, bearing in his left hand a little lamb, in allusion to his famous saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." He wears, not the rude furry tunic which represented the camel's hair garment on so many carvings and seals, but a many-pleated robe and cloak held by a sexfoil-rose brooch. The opposite panel has a more defaced figure, which I cannot identify.

The side panels are of rich leaf work designs. All the upper part of the basin is broken, but its mouldings formed plain capitals to the spiral shafts.

I will only copy the inscription over the east door at the Sacristy of the modern building: "I. H. S. Aedi. fuit Haec Eccl.
BELL SHRINE OF ST. SEAN—FRONT.
The bar shows scale for one inch.

ST. SENAN'S BELL SHRINE.

I must not close this paper without very briefly noting the remarkable relic, which tradition associates with the Apostle of Corcavaskin. It is in the possession of Mr. Marcus Keane of Beechpark and Dundahlin. As I described it very fully in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries on the occasion of their visit to Lisdoonvarna in July, 1900. I will only note it briefly for the completion of this paper owing to its close connection with S.W. Co. Clare.

It will be remembered that the Life of St. Senan (13th or 14th century) tells how a bell descended from Heaven, ringing loudly, and reached St. Senan at a place marked by the mound, or altar, on the ridge beside Kiltinnaun. The tongue then flew away. It was called Clog na neal (the bell of the clouds) and Clog an oir, probably from former gold ornaments of its shrine. It was, of course, most reverentially preserved by the comharbs of St. Senan. The last recognized lay comharb was Calvagh, son of Siacus O'Cahan, or O'Keane, who died in 1581; he had the courage to oppose the assumption of the "converbship" by Donald O'Brien, who was supported by the Elizabethan Government; the latter, however, did not care to cause discontent in the district. Nicholas O'Cahane was "Coroner" of Co. Clare at the time of the destruction of the Spanish Armada, in 1588. Charles Cahane held Lisdeen near Kilkee and Teige Cahane held Ballyowen, in 1641. Even after all the confiscations of the Commonwealth, Brian Cahane, in 1690, was "one of the chief gentry and ablest persons" near Kilrush. The bell shrine was in the keeping of the direct line of the family till 1730, when it passed by marriage to Robert Cahane of Ballyvoe, said to derive from the Ulster O'Cahans. In this line it descended to its present owner, Mr. Marcus Keane of Beechpark and Dundahlin.

It was first exhibited to scholars in 1826 at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in London. It and another relic, a bronzed iron bell, found (it is said at Scattcary) by Mr. J. Cooke, were ex-

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13 *Archaeologia*, vol. xxi., p. 559.
THE BELL SHRINE OF ST. SENAN—BACK.
hibited by the latter and Mr. Francis Keane in Dublin, 1853; the latter bell was sold to the British Museum; I cannot learn whether it fitted the shrine or not. Mr. Keane lent the shrine to the Royal Irish Academy in 1864, and it remained for some years in their museum.14

Canon Dwyer gives an elaborate description, but, strange to say, from the lithographs rather than from the bell, which he must have had every opportunity of studying through his friendship with the late Mr. Marcus Keane, author of "Towers and Temples." He makes some quaint mistakes; supposes the crowned monster to be dying; the dragons to be waltzing, and the "rampant leopard" to be springing at the neck of a man, who (or rather whose head) really forms no part of the "leopard" panel, being part of the older work. He attaches a symbolic meaning, "Sin militant, but Grace triumphant," based on these imaginary devices.

The older shrine, popularly supposed to be the bell, is a strong case of bronze, more like a book shrine; the faces are beaten out from the inside to form a cross and four panels. A thin silver band is fused into the main lines of the pattern. The jewel once set in the centre is gone. The D-shaped sockets at the ends of the arms were set with green glass; one bit remains. There is no trace of gold work. The panels are filled with curious and quaint interlacings of serpents of unusual irregularity, and I think not older than the 11th century; there are no traces of the trumpet pattern, and the serpents are like those on the late 11th century doorway of Killaloe Cathedral and other buildings and crosses. The whole pattern, indeed, is rather crude and uncouth. The whole is enshrined in a case of thin silver plates, the pattern lined out with black enamel on the end panels. Enamel also occurs in the early work on the crown of the shrine; one of the side plates is lost; the other has the two-winged

dragons; the left has the "collapsed" (really crawling) crowned monster, and the right end panel the leopard.

Space fails me to tell all the legends which the awe of the peasantry attached to the shrine. About 1834 a farmer was robbed of £20 in notes, and applied for the bell, on which suspected persons were often sworn. It was brought to his house with much ceremony to be used after the Mass on Sunday, but on the Saturday night the family were aroused by a crash, and found the window broken, and (on getting a light) the notes and even the string which tied them lying on the floor.

Once a gentleman in Co. Galway sent his servant to borrow it; the latter, who was guilty of the crime his master wanted to detect, got the bell, but flung it into the sea. On his arrival, after his long journey, he said the O'Cahanes would not lend it. "You are a liar," said his master; "for there it is on the table before you." The culprit, horror-stricken, at once confessed his crime. It was last used in 1834, and was believed to avenge a false oath by striking with convulsions and death, or at least by twisting and disfiguring the culprit's face. Many other stories were once told about its power, but the two given sufficiently characterize the majority, for few persons dared the fatal power of the "golden bell" of St. Senan of Iniscatha.

I close with regret this series of papers, bound up as they are in my memory with many happy recollections. I had hoped to have included papers on Kilrush and Scattery, and on Ballyvaughan and Corcomroe, and should the Society pass successfully through the critical time on which it appears to have entered, perhaps some other writer may take up and complete these remaining places on the coast. At least I may hope that these notes have interested many, even of those well acquainted with the subjects of my papers, and perhaps may have led others previously ignorant of their existence to the many objects of ancient interest round the pleasure spots of the Atlantic coast that focus of beauty.

"Above, free winds and fiery clouds ranging at their will—brightness out of the north and balm from the south, and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea."