

# Rathmichael Historical Record

The Journal of the Rathmichael Historical Society



*Puck's Castle*

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Editors: K. Turner  
D.C. MacGarry

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Two things seem to stand out from other events as we look back on the year 1984.

One was the re-printing in May of Canon G.D. Scott's famous book "The Stones of Bray". First published in 1913 by Hodges Figgis of 104 Grafton Street, it has been out of print for a long time - the few copies to be found fetching enormous prices. I was lucky in recent years to get mine for only a guinea. (1965)

Canon Scott dedicated his book to the town of Bray which he calls "the most delightful spot in the world", and which he loved dearly having known it all his life. Between them, he and his father, Archdeacon Scott, were rectors of Bray for nearly a century and Canon Scott knew the area intimately.

Bray is usually regarded today as little more than the gateway to some of the loveliest scenery in Ireland, but we learn from Scott that it has interests in its own rights. Bray Head, we are told, affords the oldest fossils that have been found anywhere in the world - furthermore, Scott tells us in his fascinating introduction on the geology of the area, that about ISO years ago, a number of skeletons of Roman soldiers with coins were discovered close to the seashore at Bray, the first proof we have had that the Romans ever landed in Ireland during the occupation of Britain.

The other item which occupied so much of our attention was the near-annihilation of the trees in and on the fringe of Corbawn Lane.

The view, from Killiney Hill, of Killiney Bay and the Sugarloaf used to include a lovely centre area of woodland in the Vale of Shanganagh. This is unfortunately no longer quite the case, as concentrated housing schemes fill up the fields, and the intervening belts of trees which should separate, camouflage, and help to integrate them have been ruthlessly obliterated in order to make room for a few more houses on each site.

When the residents of the Shankill area realised the extent of the threat, they made strenuous efforts to minimise the damage.

In spite of these operations, and the forcing from a reluctant County Council of Tree Preservation Orders, felling continued along Corbawn Lane, and finally within the grounds of Dorney Court itself. The former no longer appears as a beautiful, long, shady avenue with huge arching trees meeting high overhead, whilst the serried ranks of houses in the grounds of the latter merely remind us of “what might have been”.

The demolition of the house along with the felling of so many “protected” trees seems to indicate a complete lack of imagination and foresight on the part of the authorities.

After Planning Permission for housing had been granted it was rather late in the day for the planners to discover that houses and “protected” trees could not occupy the same piece of ground! The local community, backed by the local Councillors and T.D.s made a heroic effort but, unhappily, to no avail. As one T.D. remarked ‘the “Tree Preservation Order” appeared not to be worth the paper it was written on.

K.M.T.

### **Editorial Note**

This the 1984 edition of the Rathmichael Historical Record was in an advanced state of preparation in mid 1985 when the Society lost its friend and founder/editor Mrs. Kathleen Turner on her sudden death on the 20th July.

This edition of the Record is published substantially as prepared by Kathleen Turner and as such represents her last published contribution to our Society.

An obituary for Mrs. Turner will appear in the 1985 edition of the Record.

D.C. MacG.

## **Rathmichael Historical Society**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on the 25th of January 1984 in the Burton Hall, the following members were elected to the Committee for the coming year.

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| President        | Joan Delany      |
| Hon. Secretary   | Wendy Guilford   |
| Hon. Treasurer   | Nicholas Healy   |
| Ordinary members | Howell Evans     |
|                  | Albert Mason     |
|                  | Damian MacGarry  |
|                  | Tanya O'Sullivan |

**Wednesday, January 25th** Following the Annual General Meeting there was a Members' Night and it proved to be a very pleasant one. Members had been invited to bring slides to show after the business of the evening was over, and the result was as instructive as it was enjoyable. Six members took part in this - Howell Evans, Nicholas Healy, Oliver Lloyd, Conway Maxwell, Betty O'Brien and RKC Pilkington.

### **Howell Evans**

showed slides of Horse Troughs which, he said, in the days before the motor car were as important as today's petrol stations. Troughs were provided at vantage points around the city where some can still be seen; e.g. opposite the RDS, at the Custom House, in St. Stephen's Green N. a double one (this one at the behest of my grandfather, a great horse lover. KT) and other places.

Outside the city, troughs are to be seen at, for example, Blackrock College, Monkstown Church. They are usually made of solid granite, cement or cast iron, complete with cistern supplied by the Council or Corporation. One at Lombard Street is inscribed "Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association".

### **Nicholas Healy**

gave us an interesting insight into some of our own Society's activities with slides showing the excavations being carried out at the Ballyman site by members of the Field Archaeology Group.

### **Oliver Lloyd**

showed a selection of slides taken during family holidays in the West of Ireland; most were of castles or churches and provided material for an audience contest - "where is it?"

Most interest was shown in a series of slides taken of the small oval currachs used by islanders in West Donegal for fishing and for ferrying supplies between the islands of Cruit and Owey. The former is connected to the mainland by a bridge and the latter ceased to be inhabited about five years ago; therefore it is probable that these currachs have gone out of use. They were usually propelled by one man kneeling in the bow using a paddle. About 1965 some currachs were converted to take a small outboard motor.

### **Conway Maxwell's**

slides covered a wide range, including a few of archaeological excavations - now past history - some streetscapes in Dublin and a few houses now all demolished. Among the first were slides taken in 1955 of the "Mound of the Hostages" at Tara, including an interesting Bronze Age burial of a young nobleman; interiors of the Passage Graves at Fourknocks after excavations, but before being roofed over; excavations in Dublin of Wood Quay and St. Nicholas Within. Other slides taken in Dublin included a statue of Lord Eglinton (now blown up), Winetavern Street, Nassau Street and Fenian Street under demolition, also Georgian houses in Kildare Place. Two houses of particular interest, Allenton House in Tallaght and Brazeel House near Swords, were mentioned. The latter, built for the Lord Chancellor in 1635 had a decorative chimney-stack with brick arcading and decorative plaster pendants, unique in Ireland (now demolished).

### **Betty O'Brien**

showed a selection from her collection of beautiful slides of High Crosses from many different parts of the country.

**R.K.C. Pilkington**

showed some slides of the Ballyman area as seen from the hill above Ballybrew Quarries and explained that this area (Ballyman) had at one time been occupied by a post-glacial lake, as the ice sheets which covered this part of the country were receding. The present land form was a delta in the lake made up of sand, gravel and silt brought down from the mountains by melt-water.

## Wednesday, February 22nd

An illustrated talk, entitled *My City*, was given by Mr. P. Casey in the Burton Hall, Rathmichael.

The lecturer began by stating that he never took a photograph at eye level but always had the camera pointed up or down. He then delighted us with his wonderful and unusual slides of the old Dublin now fast disappearing before our eyes, accompanying each slide with a running commentary. Here are one listener's impressions of the evening:-

“From this lecture it was easy to understand why Mr. Casey has such an affection for Dublin. This point was illustrated again and again by his heart-breaking photographs of so many well-known buildings in Dublin either in a state of complete neglect or total demolition.

Having worked in Dublin all my life, I share with him a feeling of horror at what we have lost during the last ten to twenty years, unfortunately, with a total lack of awareness on the part of most citizens. Some small sections have been preserved but it is up to all of us to see that these remain.

Not all the buildings destroyed were of historic importance but were more part of childhood for those brought up in or near Dublin , e.g. the Metropole Cinema, Jury's Hotel, various shops and statues,

His photographs were magnificent and obviously taken with the eye of an artist; and, not only did they illustrate his text, but they would have conveyed his message alone.

We have inherited a fine Georgian city, and as we know, progress must take place, but it should be done in such a manner that it does not spoil our jewel from the past.”

W.G.

### **Wednesday, March 28th**

Mr. John Teahan, of the National Museum of Ireland, gave an illustrated lecture on *Irish Silver*.

In the course of a fascinating talk, illustrated as could be expected by most interesting and unusual slides, the speaker showed how the taste in decoration varied with the centuries, e.g. towards the end of the 17th century, silver richly decorated was in vogue, to be followed in the next century by the simple plain lines of the classical period. Among the many interesting slides were some unusual ones such as a gravy pot designed with a device for keeping the contents hot - and the final one of a model in silver of a still.

For those who would like to know more about the subject, we recommend Mr. Teahan's book *Irish Silver* (Stationery Office, Dublin, 1979).

### **Wednesday, October'24th**

Miss Patricia Ryan gave an illustrated talk on *Irish Sundials*.

The speaker began by tracing the origin of the sundial to Egypt where it dates back to 2,100 B.C. These dials had a 24-hour division of the day. Sundials came to the Greeks and Romans via Babylon - the earliest in Greece dating about 300 B.C. There are about 250 Greco-Roman dials, mostly free-standing. Through the Romans the sundial spread over Europe.

The earliest Irish sundials were monastic and kept monastic time, using a calendar which differed from that of Rome, reflecting the controversy regarding the date of Easter prior to the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D.

Sundials are to be found in the following monasteries and schools:

Kilmalkedar, Iniscealtra, Reekaun, Clone, Monasterboice, Saul, Nendrum, Bangor, Clogher and Kilcummin.

There are also a number of sundials at eremitical sites in the West, though the Françoise Henry examples at Skellig Mhichil are not dials, nor is that on Aran.

Sundials are divided into slab- and pillar-dials. All are free-standing and are made from one stone. The fact that some examples show a tenon suggest that they were set in a base. Dating is not easy, but the speaker suggested that the 7th century seemed likely on the analogy of the Clogher dial with its flat, ribbon-bordered interlace resembling the Book of Durrow which is dated to the second half of the 7th century, 634 A.D.

Some characteristics of Irish sundials are the occurrence of Maltese and Greek crosses, e.g. on the back of Kilmalkedar dial.

The canonical hours are not specifically marked though the offices may not have been recited at the hours after which they were named, for example, Third and Ninth hours.

None of the dials show all the hours of the day, though Clone and Nendrum have eleven and ten division respectively.

In Ireland dials must be set to face South.

It is interesting to note that, while the Irish dials are free-standing, Anglo-Saxon dials, almost without exception, are set into the wall of the church, over the door in the South wall. Of only two exceptions to this siting among the 27 or 28 known dials one is at Llynog, near Bangor, North Wales, which was an Irish foundation.

### **Rathmichael Reservoir** Wednesday, November 28th

A talk on the *Fauna Of Booterstown Marsh* was given by Dr. A. Brooks in the Burton Hall.

This was a very interesting presentation consisting of slides illustrating the different birds and animals which could be encountered at various times of the year in and around the area of Booterstown Marsh, accompanied by attractive sound recordings of the calls or songs appropriate to each.

In these days when the various television companies show us such extraordinarily detailed and close-up pictures of every aspect of wild-life, it is easy to assume that there is no problem in obtaining such pictures, and to forget the vast resources of time, money and camera crews which the companies are able and willing lavishly to deploy for even a few moments viewing. The result is that it is easy to become blasé and assume that anyone should be able to take such pictures at will, and that merely by going for an early morning walk you will surely meet a fox, for example, and that he will of course pose for you as you take your close-up view.

Similarly on a visit to the country there will be no problem in locating the nest of even the rarest bird, which will without doubt contain eggs and be so situated as to provide another perfect picture for the bag.

Appreciating the real difficulties involved makes us rejoice in the close-up pictures which Dr. Brooks and such enthusiasts obtain, and the knowledge which enables them to identify with accuracy” the various birds involved, such as stints, redshanks, greenshanks, ruffs, knots, sandpipers, bar-tailed godwits, wotnots, dowditchers, whimbrels, etc. etc.

The citizens of Dublin are fortunate to have such amenities as Bull Island and, on a much smaller scale, Booterstown Marsh right on their doorstep.

The Marsh is held at present by An Taisce, by courtesy of the enlightened Pembroke Estate, but there is always a threat to its existence posed by bureaucrats dreaming dreams of roads, and still more roads, and “Progress” towards a “Wonderful Future which makes them covetous of every open space in sight.

CM.

### **Rathmichael Reservoir**

In October of this year work was started on the construction of a new two million (2,000,000) gallon reservoir to serve the area of South County Dublin from Deansgrange to Bray and from the high ground (Foxrock/ Carrickmines/ Rathmichael) eastwards to the Dun Laoghaire Corporation boundary and the sea.

The reservoir was envisaged in 1977, but negotiations for the acquisition - under the Public Health Act of 1878 - of the necessary land in Rathmichael Townland from the owners (the Maxwells) were not begun until 1979 and it is only following a five year delay that construction work has begun.

Clearing the site for the reservoir involved sweeping away a thick shelter-belt of blackthorn, and some young fir trees, from the north side of the field concerned, and also the obliteration of some well-built old and thick stone-walls, whose purpose was never very clear, though they seem unlikely to have been of any archaeological significance. The solid rock, mostly granite, underlying this whole area had then to be blasted away, to a depth of ten to fifteen feet, in a series of explosions lasting altogether for about three or four weeks. After this the vast quantity of broken rock had to be removed and it was then possible to mark out the actual reservoir area and start pouring concrete. The work is expected to continue for at least another year.

To sustain the heavy traffic involved in bringing all constructional material required to the site, a vast amount of broken stone was dumped and roughly spread on Rathmichael Lane, the character of which suffered somewhat from the rather ruthless treatment it received. This included the savaging of the mature hawthorn hedge on the East side of the lane and also the needless filling up of the drainage ditch along that side.

When completed the reservoir will be roofed with reinforced concrete and then grassed over. It will contain some 10,500 cubic metres of water supplied from the Vartry Reservoir in County Wicklow via the existing old cast iron main. The top water level will be 100 metres above sea-level.

The Site Engineer for the County Council is a woman, Máire ní Chionna, and her last such job was in Nepal!

The main contractors for the reservoir are Earley Construction Ltd. from County Leitrim.

**Weekend Outing To County Down**  
**5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> May 1984**

On the Saturday morning, fourteen members of the Society, together with John Bradley who accompanied the party as guest speaker as in former years, headed north to County Down in good weather.

A full programme had been prepared with the assistance of the local societies in the area and was enjoyed by all.

The sites visited included:

- Goward Dolmen** - A portal dolmen topped with a 50 ton capstone.
- Dromena** A fine stone cashel with a souterrain.
- Dundrum** A round keep with surrounding curtain walls and bounded by a rock-cut fosse.
- Lunch was taken here as the authorities have provided picnic tables and land-scaped the bawn as a small park.
- Clough** The castle, a motte and bailey with a fragment of a later stone castle has a variety of building dates from early Norman to Plantation.
- Ballynoe** Stone circle
- Downpatrick** Here the party was received and shown over the Cathedral by Mr, Albert Colmer of the local society and the Rev. G.M. Kingston, Canon of the Cathedral.
- Saul** The site of the first Patrician foundation was visited by the party who viewed the remains of the Augustinian Abbey and the early Christian monuments in the vicinity.
- On Sunday some of the party started early and made for Raholp before the whole party assembled for the day's outing.
- Raholp** Another Patrician foundation, the ruins standing inside a small ringfort are a simple rectangular stone structure believed to be the oldest such surviving building on this island.
- Audley's Castle** A well preserved 15th/16th Century tower in a small bawn.
- Inch Abbey** The remains of a wealthy Cistercian foundation, a daughter house of Furness in Lancashire was founded in c 1180.
- Nendrum** An early Christian foundation which appears to have ceased in the late tenth century, the site has extensive remains of huts,

houses, early grave slabs and the stump of a Round Tower all adding up to what is perhaps the best example of the layout of an early Monastic site.

At this stage the evening chill sent most of the party on its way homeward to Dublin leaving a few hardy survivors to visit the Giant's Ring and Leganny Portal Dolmen.

### **Summer Visits**

#### **Saturday, May 19th - Historic Treasure Hunt**

As a contribution to the Dublin County Council Festival of Art and Culture, the Society organised a competitive tour of local monuments, covering a wide range of historical periods.

The entry was disappointing, no more than four motor cars set off from the starting point at the Silver Tassie in Loughlinstown, but the Committee had enjoyed preparing for the event, and it was agreed that it had been a success culturally and socially, if not numerically.

The winner was Robin Goodbody, with a remarkable time of 72 minutes for completion of the course, all questions correctly answered.

#### **Sunday, June 24th - Tour In North Kildare**

On a fine Sunday just after mid-Summer the Society met at Enfield on the main Dublin to Galway road. The attendance was regrettably small but the tour was enjoyed by those members who did come.

The first stop on the tour was at Dunfiirth where we climbed through the overgrown graveyard to view the fine tomb mensa with its effigy of Sir Walter Bermingham (obit 1548) in white armour, and the sides of a tomb chest elaborately carved with the figures of Apostles in niches, all included in the walls of a small mortuary chapel built within the confines of the ruined Chancel.

From Dunfiirth we travelled south-west to Carbury where we visited the remains of the great stone castle of the Berminghams, built on the highest point in the district and giving commanding views over the Plains of Kildare. The castle itself has been rebuilt many times since the lands were held by the first Anglo-Norman proprietor Meiler fitz Henry who constructed the motte near the present castle. The lands were in the hands of the Berminghams from the 14th century onwards and it was this family that built the first stone castle on the site. The present building is the product of successive re-constructions, particularly in the period 1447 to 1563 when it passed into the Cowley or Coiley family which later became Wellesley, ancestors of the Duke of Wellington, who was of course born near Trim in County Meath.

North of Edenderry was our next stop. The only extant remains of the medieval manorial village of Carrickoris (Carraig-Feorais, the Rock of the Berminghams) is a graveyard still in use and, in an adjoining field, the ruin of the Bermingham Castle. The party studied this building which shows at least two phases of construction resulting in a substantial tower house type of structure.

Leaving Carrick, a few miles further north we rounded a bend in the road and had our first glimpse of our next site, at Ballyboggan, the ruins of the great Augustinian house of Holy Trinity, De laude Dei. The remains consist of the large cruciform church of 13th century date, the east end of which is attached to and included in the present graveyard, which is still in use. A low wall has been built at the division between Chancel and Crossing and the remainder of the church is in a farmers field and used as a shelter for cattle! The foundation was one of the largest and wealthiest of the Irish houses of the Order though little is now known of its history, but to judge from the standing remains, when complete the monastic buildings must have been a spectacular sight, built on rising ground within a bend of the Boyne which bounds portion of the site. In 1538 following on the suppression of the Monasteries, the venerated reliquary, The Holy Cross of Ballyboggan was burnt. On our visit we found no decorated work but a stone Trinity plaque from the church does survive at the nearby church at Ballynabracky.

The day ended with a visit to the Church of Ireland church of St. Finnian at Clonard. This 19th century church stands on a corner of the great monastic site of Clonard founded by St. Finnian in the 6th century. The foundation included churches, schools and a university said to have had three thousand students. The settlement was repeatedly sacked both by the neighbouring inhabitants and later by the Vikings who are recorded as raiding the town five times. At one point the annals tell us that Clonard was completely burned having been fired no less than three times in one week!

Later both a Convent of Nuns and a house of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine dedicated to St, Peter were established on the old site. These houses survived up until the Dissolution and it is to the latter house that we must apparently ascribe the sole remaining relic of the greatness of Clonard, the magnificent medieval Baptismal font which now stands in the present Church. Leaving the Church we viewed the well preserved motte, one of two at Clonard, which testify to the continuing importance of this area of Co. Meath to the administration of the area with the coming of the Normans.

DCMacG

### **Saturday, July 28th** - Newtownmountkennedy & Environs

We had intended to see Mount Kennedy House, described by the Shell Guide as a fine house built in 1785 for General Cunningham by Michael Stapleton who also did stucco work inside, but this, unfortunately, proved impossible, so we concentrated on the Newcastle area.

Going down there to pave the way for the Group's visit, we found the Rector, the Rev. Robert Jennings, an enthusiastic and helpful guide. From him we learned that the parish of Newcastle has many interesting things to offer.

There are the remains of the New Castle, a Royal Castle built on a high mound, probably on the site of the original motte. The Castle is built on the lands of MacKynegan (evidently from Findacan, a member of a cadet branch of the Uí Briuin Cualann). A castle here is mentioned in the Annals of Loch Cé and a date in the tenth century is suggested for this entry. (Price - *Place Names of Co. Wicklow* - pp 338; 395)

The present castle was built in c 1200 and had a very chequered existence when the country around came to be overrun by the O'Byrnes. Several well-known names have been associated with it. In 1308 Piers Gaveston, sent to Newcastle when England became too hot for the King's favourite, had the castle repaired and used it as a summer residence. In 1566 Francis

Agard was made “Seneschal (of the castle) and to have the chief rule of the O’Byrnes’ country in Co. Dublin”. (Co. Wicklow had not yet been carved out of Dublin.) A memorial to this family in Christ Church Cathedral includes his daughter, Cecilie, wife of Sir Henry Harrington, also of Newcastle.

Shortly after the turn off the main road may be seen all that remains of the church of Killadreenan. The site of the church is an early one but the ruins to be seen now are late medieval. The site appears to derive its name from “the church of the field of the thornbushes” but it is also possible that the reference is to the personal name Draigian which occurs in the genealogy of the Briuin Cualann and may therefore refer to a founder or benefactor, (Price - *Place Names of Co. Wicklow* -pp 338; 394.)

The church is mentioned in the Papal Bull of Alexander III in 1179 confirming the extent of the Diocese of Dublin to Archbishop Laurence.

Although nothing now remains of it, another church, known as the Church of Newcastle, was built by Archbishop Comyn (d. 1212) after the erection of the castle, probably intended to cater for the spiritual needs of the garrison, Killadreenan, no doubt, being too small. Both churches are mentioned together in the Deanery of Bray list c. 1280.

In 1630 Newcastle Church was in ruins in company with so many others at the time. It was succeeded by the present church of Newcastle Parish built in a commanding position some time in the late 17th century (chancel and tower being added in the following century). The parish registers go back to 1698 and the oldest dated tombstone in the graveyard bears the date 1692.

The ancient highway to Wicklow before the present main road was built runs right past the parish church, and the old bridge over the river may still be seen beside its successor. J.D., who led the Group on the 28th July, says:

“Saturday, 28th July was one of the hottest days of this long, hot summer. Meeting at Dunne’s pub car park at 2.30 we proceeded to Newcastle Church where Mr. Jennings received the group and showed various items of interest, especially the parish records which date back to 1698. As Mr. Jennings had an important engagement at 3.30 he handed us over to Mr. McCormick who showed us over the New Castle - now in ruins which is on his land. We then went with him along the road past the church to see the old pack-horse bridge beside its new successor.

Mr. McCormick kindly invited us in to his house to have some sparkling cider which was most welcome on this, hot day.

Afterwards we browsed in the churchyard and then went by ourselves to see the old church and graveyard on the road back to Newtownmountkennedy - Killadreenan.”

**Sunday, September 23rd** The Maritime Museum, Dún Laoghaire

For this, the final visit of the summer, we met at the Museum where we were shown over by Mr. de Courcy Ireland and spent a most interesting one and a half hours. From a parking

point of view, Sunday is a good day to visit the museum as the way leading to it from George's Street is a cul-de-sac and is full of parked cars on an ordinary weekday.

The museum is housed in the building once the Mariner's Church (C. of I.) It was built in 1837 to cater for the spiritual needs of the sailors in the men-of-war, merchant ships, fishing boats and yachts frequenting Kingstown Harbour. Until 1971 the Mariner's Church was one of the best-known churches in Kingstown/Dún Laoghaire but it then became redundant and was purchased in 1972 by the Maritime Institute of Ireland.

The walls of the museum are covered with paintings, drawings and photographs of famous ships. Among the many models of sea-going vessels we noted especially the "Leinster", the mailboat sunk by a German torpedo within sight of the harbour with terrible loss of life almost at the very end of World War I; the "Great Eastern", and the Kerry currach, the largest type and the only one to carry sail.

One of the most interesting of the exhibits is the Bantry longboat, 38 ft. long, captured in 1796 from the French during an abortive attempt at invasion by a landing in Bantry Bay. It is claimed to be the oldest surviving ship's boat in the world.

The most spectacular exhibit must unquestionably be the Baily Light optic situated just under the high chancel arch where it dominates the whole scene.

The museum is open every day, except Monday, from 2.30 to 5.30 pm.

K . T .

### **Kilgobbin Church**

The ruins of the church stand on a glacial mound near the village of Stepside in County Dublin. This church is comparatively modern being built in the year 1707 by Archbishop King and falling into disuse in 1826 when the new church, in Kiltarnan was built; the parishes of Kilgobbin and Kiltarnan having been amalgamated.

It is known that an earlier church occupied the Kilgobbin site, but when and by whom, it was built is a mystery. Some light has, however, been thrown on the antiquity of the previous church by discoveries made when repair work was being carried out on the site by the Dublin County Council in the Summer of 1984.

At some time after the erection of the 1707 edifice a porch was added having two door openings, presumably so that the one affording the most shelter from the wind could be used.

As the porch was in a dangerous condition the Council decided to dismantle and rebuild it on better foundations. On examining the stones taken from the structure it was discovered that the slab of granite forming the lintel of one of the doorways was an early Christian grave slab, dating, probably, from the 10th or 11th century.

This slab measures 1.6 metres by .44 metres and is decorated on one side with incised lines, two running diagonally from corner to corner and one running longitudinally through the intersection of the diagonal lines. The reverse side is undecorated, leading one to believe that the slab lay horizontally on the grave.

It seems reasonable to assume that the slab, due to its size, was not brought to the site when the porch was being constructed, but was already there and had marked a grave in the vicinity of the previous church, thus giving it a date in the 10th or 11th century or earlier.

In addition to this grave slab, a fragment of another was found, decorated on one side with segments of four concentric circles; also a fragment of a small granite cross, showing traces of decoration; half the bottom stone of a rotary quern and some rectangular slabs with a notch at one end, the purpose of which is unclear.

R.K.C.P.

## **Summer School Course In Field Archaeology 1984**

The 10th course in Field Archaeology was held from the 13th of August to the 24th of August and happily the success of this venture continues undiminished from year to year thanks to the efforts of Joan Delany and Betty O'Brien.

Again the thanks of the Society must go to the Leeson family for their kindness and patience in permitting the excavation to continue on their lands at Ballyman.

As in former years, the Course was augmented by the lecture series held in the evenings of the final week.

Over the years the Society has been honoured by some singularly important papers in the lecture series and this year the Society is pleased to include notes on the papers delivered during the Course.

### **Monday, August 20th A Neolithic Burial Mound At Ashleypark - Conleth Manning**

Conleth Manning described to us how, in 1980, a farmer near Nenagh had disturbed a mound and found a chamber within it. The mound had been in woodland and had not been recognised before as a monument. The Office of Public Works excavated it and found a chamber formed with large limestone slabs based on a floor slab which sloped to the side. The chamber was covered with a cairn about 15 metres in diameter, this was in a mound about 30 metres in diameter and it was all surrounded with a double ditch and bank. The chamber contained three burials and some fragmented pottery and these were dated to the early neolithic period. The tomb does not seem to fit into any category - court, passage or portal - and it is in an area of the south midlands which contains very few court, passage or portal tombs. In fact, this find is another addition to an increasing list of tombs which have been investigated in the area and which do not fit into those categories.

### **Tuesday, August 21st Irish Neolithic Settlements - Dr. James P. Mallory**

Dr. Mallory pointed out how badly documented are our neolithic settlement sites, and suggested that there must have been a large population to support the tomb building. He showed how the neolithic culture spread north-westwards from the Balkans, leaving ample evidence of habitation - usually in villages with defences. The causewayed camps of south-east Britain seem to be the last identifiable settlements in this movement. In Ireland, known neolithic habitation seemed to have been isolated farmhouses, but why shouldn't villages have existed? At Knowth, the absence of construction workers camps suggests that the builders were local and for sufficient numbers to have lived locally there must have been a settlement. An excavation at Lyells Hill, near Belfast, yielded nearly as many sherds of pottery as had been found previously throughout Ireland. This site appears to have been a settlement. In 1983, a small excavation to the north of Lyell's Hill identified an early neolithic site. It had been identified through finding neolithic pottery in a ploughed field and its full extent had been shown in an air survey. The excavation continued in 1984 and by then had yielded twice as many potsherds as found at Lyell's Hill. The results so far suggest a settlement similar to the causewayed camps.

Dr. Mallory ended on an enthusiastic note by suggesting that there is no reason why this latest site should be unique in Ireland. It had left very little trace and was discovered purely by chance. Perhaps if more amateur archaeologists scoured the country using air photos, maps, soil information and field walking, more sites could be identified throughout Ireland!

### **Wednesday, August 22nd**

#### **Megalithic Art And Megalithic People - Br. Muiris O Sullivan**

Brother O'Sullivan showed us how few examples of megalithic art had been found - about 900 stones from about 190 sites. These can be divided into three zones: Iberia, Brittany and Ireland. A few in Britain would be included in Ireland's zone. The designs in Iberia and Brittany include anthropometric or representational art - such as human figures or axe-heads. In Ireland, the designs are geometric or abstract, and include spirals, chevrons, lozenges and sinusoidal. The quantities of decorated stones found in Ireland exceed by far the finds elsewhere, and the Boyne Valley has yielded the most - about 300 stones from Knowth and Newgrange. Before the present excavation at Knowth very few decorated stones had been found there," it has now yielded the most. The styles at Knowth show differences to those at Newgrange. Outside the Boyne area, decoration is found widely, such as at Lough Crew and Carrowmore. There are many theories about the reasons for the decoration or the possible representation in the designs, but nothing is known for certain.

### **Thursday/ August 2 3rd**

#### **The End Of The Neolithic At Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, Eoin Grogan**

Eoin Grogan described to us how he has been working on the information gathered during Professor Ó Ríordáin's excavations at Lough Gur which ended in the early 1950's. The land around the lake forms a perfect setting for neolithic settlement -the soils were the right type for neolithic farming methods and the large peninsula in the lake allowed good defence. The neolithic sites were located all around the lake, but with a concentration of settlement on the peninsula. Also around the lake are found standing stones, tombs and a stone circle. The finds of pottery have allowed the settlement to be dated and it appears that the site dates from the late neolithic, but with evidence of a transition towards the bronze age. Some of the house sites were round while others were rectangular. The houses had mud walls and the thatched roof was carried on a series of posts which ran on both sides of the walls. The round houses would look similar to the reconstructed houses at Craggaunowen. The location of the site remains a puzzle:-how and why did the neolithic settlers find this site and settle it in isolation, it being the only one of its kind outside the Ulster area?

### **Friday, August 24th**

#### **Excavations At Lisleagh, Michael Monk**

Michael Monk told us of the recent excavations at Lisleagh 1., which is one of two hill forts which are only about 40 metres apart and which are part of a group of hill forts in that area of Co. Cork. Finds from the excavation ranged from the early 6th to the early 9th centuries. The part of the hill fort which has been excavated so far has included the sites of three houses, each with its hearth, at the back of which was a vertically-placed flat 'backstone'. In the ditch around the hill fort was found a large mass of fused slag which appeared to have been very hot when it was dumped - it may have been slag from forging rather than smelting. Other industrial finds included spinning weights and larger weights which maybe from weaving. A fair selection of pottery was found, but the soil is acid and does not suit the preservation of

metal, so only small amounts of metal have been found. An inner bank and ditch proved to have been removed deliberately during the occupation of the hill fort and it is likely that the original hill fort was enlarged when it became outgrown. The excavation continues, and it is hoped that the future work should show the relationship between the two adjacent hill forts - were they occupied at different times or were they contemporary, and if so, were they used for different purposes?

### **Postscript**

This year's summer lecture series concentrated mainly on the neolithic and most were based on single excavations. However, they were not narrow in their scope, and a number of points cropped up in more than one lecture. Conleth Manning and Dr. James Mallory each demonstrated how much valuable evidence could result: from the excavation of sites which were unknown before the 1980's - and could suggest that old theories may need to be reviewed. Eoin Grogan's puzzle regarding the isolation of Lough Gur seemed to echo Dr. Mallory's theory that there are neolithic settlements waiting to be discovered throughout Ireland! Brother O Sullivan showed the tie-ups and differences between tomb art in different zones and after Dr. Mallory's description of the seemingly orderly neolithic move north-westwards, why should there be so much difference in quantity and style of art in the three zones, and why no art at all in the Paris basin? By contrast, Michael Monk's lecture concerned a later period and showed that while the excavation methods and the problems may be similar to those of neolithic sites, the more diverse industrial finds of the later periods add a new dimension to the archaeological remains.

RG

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### Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| DHR   | Dublin Historical Record                               |
| IB    | Irish Builder  |
| ILG   | Irish Literary Gazette                                 |
| JRSAI | Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland |



### **Miscellanea**

In March, the fine house at the top of Corbawn Lane, Dorney Court, was demolished after years of suffering at the hands of vandals. (See Editorial)

Originally called Claremont, it was built by a Mr. Thomas Clarke who held the land under lease dated 1829 from the Roberts family. In 1840 it was leased to Mr. William Charles Quin. In 1896 the property came up for sale, now known as Barry's Estate and the house as Claremont or Dorney Court.

On April 12th the new Corbawn Shopping Centre was opened. It occupies the site of the house known as "Clonasleigh" in recent times, but originally named Willmount, built by Mr. J.B. Middleton of "Athgoe".

In May an important event was the re-printing of Canon G.D. Scott's famous book, The Stones of Bray. This was first published in 1913 and had long been out of print, Mr. Henry Cairns of the Town Hall Bookshop, Main Street, Bray, and Mr. Colbert Martin are to be congratulated on their effort and especially on their generosity in donating the proceeds to the repairs to Christ Church, Bray.

On June 8th, the new Shanganagh Cemetery was officially opened and blessed. The ceremony was conducted by the Right Rev. Dr. G.O. Simms, the Very Rev. John O'Connell, P.P. Shankill, representing the Most Rev. Dr. Dermot Ryan, Archbishop of Dublin, the Rev. T.M. Kingston, Dun Laoghaire, and the Rev. David Gaskie, Dun Laoghaire.

In August a member of the Foxrock Historical Society re-discovered a cross-base or mortised stone in Glenamuck, the existence of which had been recorded in JRSOI 1959 by P. Healy although he had not been able to locate it at the time.