

NORTH MUNSTER ANTIQUARIAN JOURNAL,

VOL. 3.

FOGHMHAR—1942—AUTUMN.

No. 2.

NOTE—The authors of the various papers are solely responsible for the views expressed therein.

A Survey of the Antiquities in the Barony of Small County, County Limerick.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

The archaeological survey,⁽¹⁾ the results of which are to be described in this and subsequent articles, was carried out by the writer during the past year, 1941. This area was selected because it was felt desirable that a knowledge should be gained of all the monuments surrounding Lough Gur, which lies within the barony, and on which attention has been focused by the many recent discoveries made in the course of Professor Ó Ríordáin's excavations there in the period 1936-41.⁽²⁾ Previous to these, Lough Gur was known as a result of the great variety and number of the stone, bronze and other objects found in and around the lake at the time of its partial drainage in the nineteenth century, and by reason of the researches and publications⁽³⁾ of previous workers in the area. It was felt, therefore, that with so much knowledge already available to form a basis upon which to work, a detailed field survey of the whole district would be most useful in that it would help in providing the background against which the discoveries at Lough Gur could be studied.

Small County lies in the great Limerick plain—the Golden Vale—towards its east end, the centre of the barony being some 12 miles south of Limerick city. On the north it is bounded by the baronies of Clanwilliam and Coonagh; on the east by the County of Tipperary; on the south by the barony of Coshlea and on the west by those of Coshma and Pubblebrien. Its outline (see Fig. 1) resembles an hour-glass in shape, that is to say, it has two large expansions connected by a narrow neck. Its long axis runs north-west and south-east, and measures 14½ miles. The north-west expansion has a maximum width of 8½

1. The survey was carried out at the suggestion of Dr. S. P. Ó Ríordáin, Professor of Archaeology, University College, Cork, and for his encouragement and guidance I wish to offer my sincere thanks, as also for permission to summarise here yet unpublished excavation results.

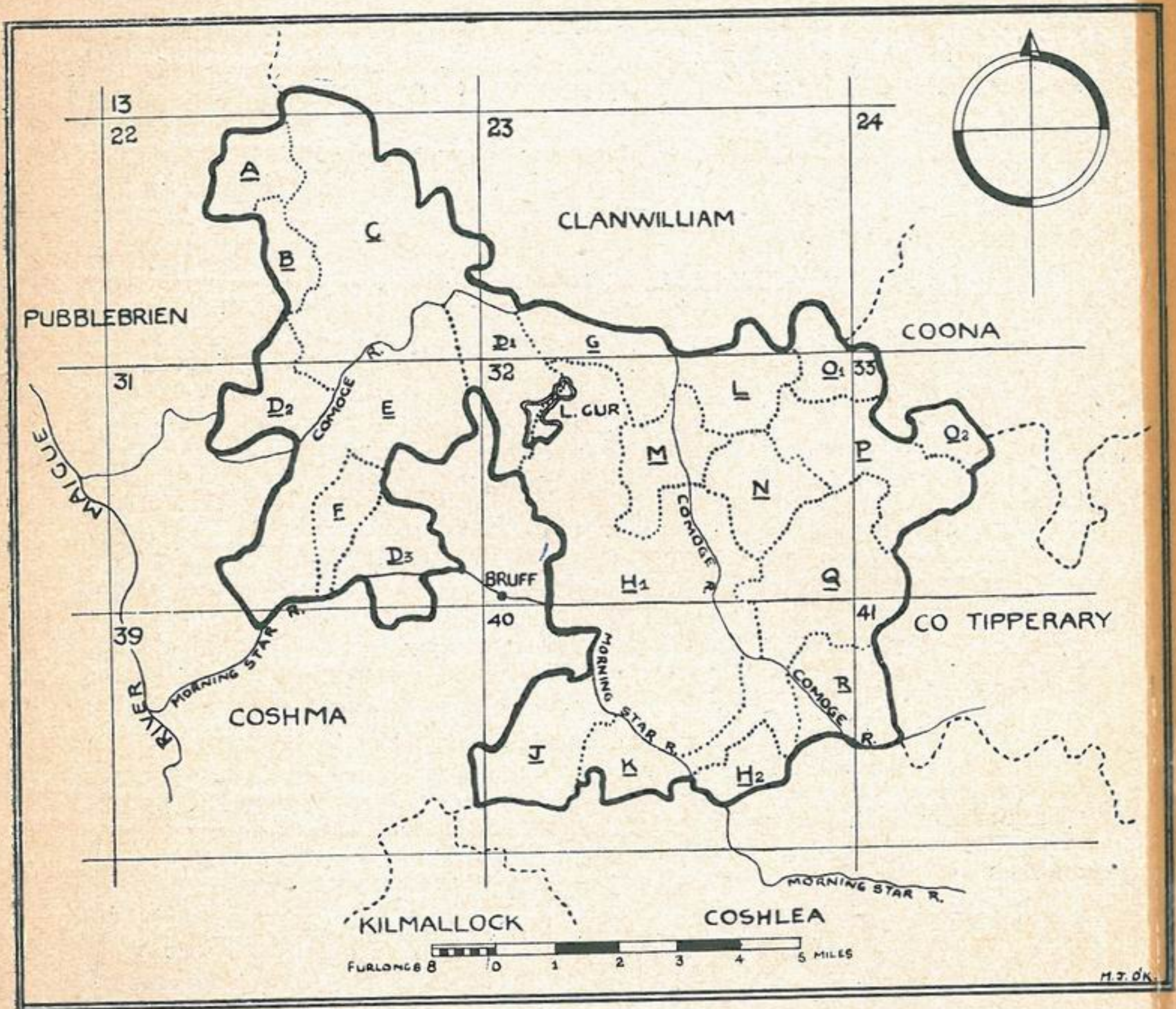
2. With one exception, the Lough Gur excavations referred to in the course of this paper are those directed by Prof. Ó Ríordáin. Previous to 1936, the only excavation carried out in the area, and of which any account has been published, is the small investigation of Stone Circle J by Prof. Harkness of U.C.C. *Quarterly Jour. of Science* (1869), 390.

3. Windle : *P.R.I.A.*, XXX, C, (1912-13), 284.
Harkness : *op. cit.*

Lynch : *J.C.H.A.S.*, I, (1895), 241,289; XIX, (1913), 8; XXV, (1919), 69.

miles, and the south-east a maximum width of 10 miles, while the minimum width of the connecting neck is 1½ miles.

The total area is 44,425 acres statute (to the nearest acre), which is equivalent to 70 square miles approximately. It contains ten whole parishes and parts of eight others, the total number of townlands being one hundred and twenty-five.



Barony of Small County, County Limerick.

Fig. 1. Based on the Ordnance Survey, by kind permission of the Minister of Finance of Ireland.

The barony has two rivers—the Camoge and the Morning Star. These rivers are tributaries of the Maigue, which is to the west of the barony. The courses of both the Camoge and the Morning Star are in general from south-east to north-west. At a number of points along their courses they form boun-

daries of the barony, but for the most part they pass through it, the Camoge being on the northern side and the Morning Star on the southern. In this connection Westropp (4) says, "It is probable that the river Camoge formed the ancient northern limit of Deisbeg (Small County), and the Saimer (the Morning Star) the southern, thus excluding the ragged fragments of Kilpeacon, Fedamore and Croom, now in the barony, and including those of Bruff and Tullybracky." Westropp has made a slight mistake here, for Croom is not now in the barony. At points other than those marked by the rivers, the boundaries seem mainly to be arbitrary.

The north-west expansion is rather flat and low-lying and has few hills. Its geological surface deposits consist largely of boulder clay with pits of sand and gravel. The greatest height of any of the ground in this region rises only to about 400 O.D., and by far the greater part of it lies between 150 and 350 O.D., approximately. Though the land is on the whole excellent, there are large areas of bog and marsh. This part of the barony is the least interesting, as the archaeological monuments are chiefly forts and standing-stones.

Lough Gur is situate on the connecting neck. Around it are a number of sharply rising limestone hills, Knockfennell being the highest with a maximum height of 531 feet O.D. The area of the lake was 232 acres statute at the time of the first Ordnance Survey, but it is now only 184 acres in extent, owing to the partial drainage of it after the Famine of 1847. The geological deposits here are contorted beds of limestone, over parts of which there is a drift, chiefly of limestone gravel. The immediate vicinity of the lake is free of this except for a small area on the south-west side. Igneous rocks occur some distance to the north of the lake, where supplies of volcanic breccia and ash are available. The former has been used for the building of many of the monuments for which large boulders were required. Archaeologically, this is the most interesting part of the barony, for here there is to be found a great variety of monuments, ranging from the "neolithic" period onwards.

The geological deposits of the south-east expansion are similar to those about Lough Gur, that is, lower limestone with an overlying drift of gravel, but on the tops of three isolated hills (Knockdirk, Barnanenagh and Cromwell) are to be found basaltic deposits.

Though the connecting neck and the south-east expansion are more hilly than the north-west, many of the valleys are occupied by large expanses of bog and marsh. The hills, however, provide excellent pasturage, a fact well appreciated by the ancient inhabitants for nearly every hill-top shows the remains of old field systems and other monuments.

Lough Gur is the megalithic centre, for in the immediate vicinity of the lake there are remains, or the sites, of no fewer than eight megalithic tombs and twelve stone circles. Outside of this area there is only one megalithic tomb (Cromwell td., Ballinlough ph.) and one certain stone circle (Ballynamona td. and ph.), both in the south-east expansion. This seems to indicate that the more hilly districts were the areas of earliest occupation. It will be remembered, too, that these regions are characterised by the predominance of light soils. Evans (5) has remarked a similar association elsewhere. The reason for

4. *P.R.I.A.*, XXVI, C, (1907), 174.

5. Evans : *U.J.A.*, (1938), 18. See also Evans and Gaffikin : *Irish Naturalist's Jour.*, V, (1935), 242 ff., and Mahr : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, (1937), 271.

it is that such soils would not have supported forest, and therefore were easy of settlement for prehistoric man, who could go straight into food production without any tedious and prolonged preparation of the ground. It is noteworthy that the later monuments are found on the heavier soils. An instance of this is the predominance of ring-forts in the north-west portion of the barony, where the soils are mainly thick drifts of boulder-clay.

HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS.

At a very early time the lands about Lough Gur were intensively occupied. The peoples of this time are known only from what survives of their material culture, and as yet little can be said regarding their anthropological, ethnological or other connections.

They first appear, as shown by excavation, as a people whose material culture was in a state of transition from what is called the neolithic, or late stone age, to that of the bronze age. The earliest remains so far discovered date from a period beginning about 2,000 B.C. The chief remains of these people are their houses, which were circular and rectangular, and some of their domestic utensils—large cooking pots with spherical bottoms excellently made from clay which was baked and burned. These pots are of a type called Windmill Hill ware, named after a site of that name in Britain. People using the same type of pots are known not only in Britain but also on the Continent.

In the early stages of the bronze age, another type of pottery makes its appearance—that called Beaker ware, the name being taken from the shape of the typical pot. The people who made it are called the Beaker Folk, who are known to have invaded England from the Continent some time after 2,000 B.C.

From evidence obtained at Lough Gur, it is thought that some of these Beaker folk had arrived in Small County by about 1,700 B.C., this date being within the early bronze age. It is not yet known to what extent the Beaker Folk came to Ireland, but so far, the indications show that their numbers were small, so that the older peoples were probably left undisturbed.

The structural remains of the early bronze age at Lough Gur consist of stone circles and megalithic tombs. The former were temples in which the religious rites of the people were practised and the latter were the burial places of their chiefs. Other material remains of this period are the many bronze objects and implements from the lake and its vicinity, examples of which are now to be found in almost every museum in Great Britain and Ireland.

Stone circles continued to be built in the later phases of the bronze age when new weapons and new ornaments came into use. It has been said that the attraction at Lough Gur was the lake, which came to be looked upon as sacred water, pilgrims coming from far distant places to pay homage to its gods. Having come, they settled in the beautiful valleys and rich lands around its shores.

With the end of the bronze age began the use of iron for implements and weapons, and with this knowledge came all the attendant changes consequent on the discovery of the superiority of iron over bronze.

Who all these people were—whether Celts or pre-Celts remains still undecided. Neither is it certain what language they spoke, whether it was Celtic or a pre-Aryan tongue.

Then comes the dawn of history, and from this on a little is known about the peoples who occupied East Limerick.⁽⁶⁾ The earliest political division of Ireland was that of the "five-fifths." The southern fifth had for its chief people the Érainn, to whom must be accredited the formation of this the first great Celtic state in the south. After a time Érainn power began to decline and by A.D. 300 had faded into insignificance. Another group of families now became supreme in Munster. These also were Celts and were called the Eoghanachta. It is thought that they sprang from a small group called the Dergthene, who had been a subordinate people, but who now rose to power at the expense of the Érainn, usurping their authority. An older theory held that the Eoghanachta were descendants of the Eburones of Gual (because eo- and ebur- are words meaning "yew"), but this is pure speculation, as is also the suggestion that they were a late band of immigrants from Gaul, a country that in the third century was thoroughly Romanized.

Mag Femin in southern Tipperary seems to have been the cradle of the Eoghanachta septs. Among these the Eoghanachta Áine had an important place, their seat being at Knockainy, a hill between Bruff and Hospital, and situate in the south-east expansion of Small County. This branch claimed descent from Ailell, son of Natfróich, son of Corc, brother of Oengus. This Oengus was the father of Eochaid, from whom were descended the Eoghanachta Glendornach (and the Eoghanachta Airthir Cliath, who gave Munster a couple of kings) and of Feidlimid, from whom descended the Eoghanachta Caisil. It seems, therefore, that the Eoghanachta did not occupy Knockainy until they had been settled for two generations at Cashel.

The chief period of Eoghanacht expansion was during the fourth century, and their first king who emerges from the cloud of legend into the light of history is Crimthann Mór mac Fidaig. From his uncle, Maine Munchain, were descended the Uí Fidgeinte, a great Eoghanacht people of Limerick, who held lands west of the Mague river. From another uncle, Dáire, were descended the Uí Liathain in east Cork and west Waterford. From another uncle, Lugaid, were descended not only the Eoghanachta Caisil and the Eoghanachta Glendornach, but also the Uí Luigdech Éile in Tipperary. Cairbre Luachra, brother of Natfróich, king of Cashel, was reputed to be the ancestor of the Aes Gréine in east Limerick, and of the Eoghanachta Locha Léin in Kerry. Finally, Mac Cass, another uncle to Mac Fidaig, became the ancestor of the Eoghanachta Raitlenn⁽⁷⁾ or the Uí Eachadh Muman, the people who occupied lands along the Bandon river in Co. Cork.

During the expansion they were aided by another group of families—the Dési,, whose name bespeaks subordinate status. Originally these people were settled near Tara, where their name is still preserved in the barony of Lower Deace. As a result of a dispute between them and the High-King, Cormac mac Airt, in the third century, many of them migrated southwards, where they eventually obtained grants of land. On the journey southwards they had in their keeping the daughter of the King of Leinster—Eithne—who had been given to them for fosterage.

The son of Natfróich, Oengus, who was then the Eoghanacht ruler at Cashel, is said to have made Eithne his queen, thereby uniting the Eoghan-

6. I am indebted to the Rev. John Ryan, S.J., for the material upon which the early history of east Limerick as here given, is based.

7. See Ó Ríordáin : Excavation of a Large Ring-fort in Co. Cork, *P.R.I.A.*, XLVII, C, (1942), 77 ff, with Historical Addendum by the Rev. John Ryan, S.J.

achta and the Déisi. It is probable that this is but a pleasant fiction, for it is believed that a union between these two peoples had taken place long before the birth of the two lovers, because much of what is now Munster belonged then to the Leinster kingdom. The states of Cliu and Osraige⁽⁸⁾ stretched from the Slaney across Kilkenny and Tipperary to the Shannon to the point where the Brosna river enters it, and the Shannon down to the Maigue at least, marked the boundary of the state on this side. Cliu, therefore, included Mag Áine, which itself included Knockainy and Hospital, and continued to Cluain Áine to the east of the Maigue in the barony of Pubblebrien, so that much if not all of Small County would have belonged to this state. However, Mag Áine stretched well beyond the present northern limit of Small County in the direction of Limerick city, because at a point about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles on the Limerick side of Carn Feradaig and not a hundred yards from the road-side is Domnach Mór Maige Áine—the parish church of Donaghmore.

But whenever the actual union between the Déisi and the Eoghanachta took place, it was during the time of Oengus that the pact of mutual assistance bore richest fruit. As a reward for their assistance in many campaigns, the Déisi received grants of land in Munster. The greatest of these was the Waterford territory, still recognisable in the baronies of the Decies, the baronies of Upperthird and Glenahiry along the Suir, the baronies of Iffa and Offa east, and Iffa and Offa west, from Carrick-on-Suir to the Galtees. From these mountains their lands ran by Sliabh gCláire, along by Ath na nDéisi (Athneasy—part of the parish of this name lies in Small County), Brugh na nDéisi (Bruff) and Bruree to Carn Feradaig, a short distance from Limerick on the Ballyneety road.

From Carn Feradaig the Déisi were able to look across the Shannon into Clare, and as early as 350 A.D., an attack was made on the then Connacht territory under the leadership of Lugaid Menn. Lugaid was successful and Co. Clare was annexed to the Munster possessions. After this, the term *In Déis Tuaiscirt* was used to describe the territory stretching from Carn Feradaig in Limerick northward into Clare, while the lands southward from Carn Feradaig were called *In Déis Deiscirt*. The latter expression, however, does not occur often, and in its stead is found *In Déis Becc*, a term from which it may be supposed the *Small* in Small County is ultimately derived.

In Déis Tuaiscirt and *In Déis Deiscirt* worked together in a spirit of friendship, though there were two distinct dynasties, one in the north and one in the south. The northern dynasty claimed descent from Lugaid Menn,⁽⁹⁾ while the dynasty in the south claimed descent from Dub Róis, brother of Lugaid. According to a genealogy in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, p. 436, many kings of the Uí Rósa ruled over *In Déis Deiscirt*. Many saints, bishops and confessors were also descended from Dub Róis.

A tract in the *Book of Ballymote*, 174, b 10, lays down the principle of absolute equality between the two dynasties and it would seem that up to the time of the Norse invasions *In Déis Tuaiscirt* and *In Déis Deiscirt* acted as one state, the king being taken alternately from each. But when the Norse settled at Limerick after the fall of the Eoghanachta at Belach Mugna in 908 A.D.,

8. Osraige seems to have been a small state which arose within the larger Cliu, probably in the first century of the Christian Era.

9. When the people of *In Déis Tuaiscirt* had become of national importance in the eleventh century, the "historians" credited Lugaid Menn with the alias Lugaid Cass, from which the term *Dál gCais*. This name, therefore is purely artificial.

the two territories became separated. The Limerick plain was over-run and the Déisi became so weakened that they finally lost their separate entity and passed into the power of the Uí Fidgeinte, who maintained their holdings against the invaders.

As the Eoghanacht power waned in the tenth century, the Dál gCais in their Clare Hills became more prominent. They made relentless attacks on the Norsemen and finally put Mathgamhain on the Munster throne. Mathgamhain's activities were surpassed only by those of Brian Boru, his brother, who finally made himself king of Ireland.

During Brian's rise to power he found it necessary to visit the Limerick Déisi lands to quell the Norsemen who had taken hold there. He also probably did a certain amount to break the strength of the native peoples, and it is recorded in the *Book of Rights* (10) that certain sites now in Small County were claimed by him, fortified, and presumably held as garrisons to maintain his power in that area. These forts were those of Áine, Dún Gair and Loch Ceann. The expedition is said to have taken place between 1002 and 1012 A.D.

Brian relieved Malcahy of the kingship of Ireland in 1003, but his beneficent rule was brought to a premature end when he was killed at Clontarf in 1014. Malachy resumed the High-kingship and held it till the year 1022. Though the power of the Norsemen in Ireland was broken by these two monarchs, the foreigners were by no means entirely eradicated, and in the year 1056, some of the Norse, assisted by their Irish friends, destroyed the Lough Gur fort reconditioned by Brian. (11) From the time of Malachy's death onward was a period of great strife among Brian's descendants because various members of the family sought the high king's throne. The chiefs of Thomond had many battles not only among themselves but also with the surviving Norse remnant.

It was during this period that Turlogh O'Brien, the then king, caused the Cistercian Abbey at Monasteranenagh to be founded (this lies on the Camoge river just outside Small County, but three separate parts of its old parish are within the barony). The date of the founding is given as 1148 or 1151, and the Abbey was supplied from Mellifont in Louth. The Cistercian Abbeys at Holy Cross in Tipperary and at Abbeyfeale in west Limerick are said to have been daughter houses of Monasteranenagh.

Speaking of the year 1178, Lenihan (12) says that "the interminable feuds of the Eoghanachts and Dalgais desolated the whole province of Munster." Donald O'Brien reduced all the Eoghanachts and laid waste their country with fire and sword and obliged them to seek shelter with the Uí Eachach south of the river Lee. Then also he routed the Uí Fidgeinte and drove them beyond Mangerton. This, of course, only cleared the way for the Anglo-Normans when the time came.

Previously to this, in 1172, Donald had surrendered to Henry II in person at Cormac's Chapel in Cashel. He made over to the English Monarch his city of Limerick, promised to pay tribute and swore fealty, which was the beginning of the end.

In 1185 King John came to Ireland. He granted Desmond and the Decies to FitzAnthony, whose daughter was married to John FitzMaurice Fitzgerald. Later FitzGerald was confirmed in these lands by Edward I., and was eventually created Earl of Desmond. From this time onward the history of Limerick is bound up with the various activities of the FitzGerald, and it

10. *Book of Rights*, 87, 91, 93. See also *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, 141.

11. *Annals Four Masters*, sub anno. 1056.

12. Lenihan: *History of Limerick*, 43, and f. note 1., p. 44. See also *An. Innisfallen*, quoted in *Four Masters*, sub. an. 1178, footnote M.

was during this period of strife, and particularly from the end of the fourteenth century onward, that all the castles now in Small County were erected. Among the earliest are those of Glenogra (built by Thomas, Earl of Desmond, between 1400 and 1420, and which was held by the Earls till 1483) and the Lough Gur Castles (built according to Westropp⁽¹³⁾ in the fifteenth century).

During the wars among the Desmonds in 1516, James FitzGerald laid siege to Lough Gur. At the end of the sixteenth century the rebellion of the Sugán Earl, James of Desmond, broke out. Though Lough Gur had passed from the possession of the FitzGeralds at this time, the garrison joined the forces of the Earl, but when Carew arrived on his way to Limerick, the Sugán Earl's Governor there surrendered for a bribe of sixty pounds.⁽¹⁴⁾

A few years previous to this, in 1579, a battle took place near Monasternenagh, between Sir John FitzGerald, bother of the Earl, and Sir N. Malby, a leader of the English forces. In this the Irish were defeated, the Abbey was destroyed, and the monks were massacred to a man.

So the struggles went on, the power of the Irish becoming less and less and that of the English growing, till finally the time came when the Irish lands were held by those petty kings—the Landlords.

GENERAL REVIEW OF MONUMENTS.

Most of the antiquities of the barony can be paralleled elsewhere, but there are some sites for which as yet few parallels are forthcoming.

In the north-western area the sites are rather small though not without interest. The Lough Gur area has many single and many very interesting complexes of monuments, and this applies also to the eastern expansion in general.

By way of an introductory survey, the various types of monuments will be reviewed briefly here and more detailed descriptions will be reserved for the parish by parish inventory which follows. The monuments will be dealt with in the following order, which does not imply a chronological sequence.

1. Megalithic Tombs.
2. Stone Circles.
3. Cists.
4. Tumuli.
5. Hut-Sites and Ancient Fields.
6. Standing Stones.
7. Forts : —
 - Stone Forts.
 - Earthworks Type A.
 - Earthworks Type B.
 - Earthworks Type C.
8. Crannogs.
9. Ancient Roads.
10. Fulachta Fiadh.
11. Monastic and Parish Churches.
12. Holy Wells.
13. Castles.
14. Caves.

13. Westropp : *P.R.I.A.*, XXVI, C. (1906-07), 179.

14. Westropp : *J.R.S.A.I.*, XXXVII, (1907), 155.

MEGALITHIC TOMBS.

While it would be unwise to draw any very general conclusions from the types and dispositions of the chambered tombs of such a small area, there are, nevertheless, some obvious remarks which can be made. The total number of sites which comes under this heading is sixteen, but of these only three are complete or nearly so. There are surviving remains of five others. There are two doubtful dolmens of a devolved type. There are sites of two of which nothing of the actual monuments remain, and finally, there are four sites classed as megalithic tombs by earlier writers, but which must be regarded with extreme suspicion.

Of the three examples which remain nearly perfect, two are at Lough Gur and the third on the hill of Cromwell. The latter is indisputably a wedge-shaped structure, having a long gallery divided into a large and a small chamber, closed at the east end and open at the west. The better of the two at Lough Gur is not certainly a wedge. Its sides seem quite parallel on plan, but other features of the wedge group are observable. Childe⁽¹⁵⁾ who has examined this tomb, agrees that it belongs to the wedge-shaped family. The third, called *Leaba na Muice*, is rather a poor structure, consisting of four stones only and so its morphology is rather uncertain. There is, however, a possibility that it, too, is a wedge, but one of a very devolved type.

There seems to be general agreement that this type of tomb belongs to a rather late phase of the megalithic expansion, and while I do not wish to enter upon a discussion of the general implications of the type, it may be mentioned that Hawkes⁽¹⁶⁾ regards the wedge-shaped type as "a direct extension by way of Brittany of the port-holed cists in the Paris Basin." With this, Childe⁽¹⁷⁾ seems to agree to some extent, but thinks it more likely that the Irish examples in general have closer parallels in the wedge-shaped double cists of Central Germany. The finds from the Lough Gur Megalith do not contribute anything to this.

Of the two dolmens of devolved type, there is little to be said. They both consist of one large boulder supported on a number of very small stones. The latter do not conform to any particular plan and their arrangement seems quite haphazard. A good parallel for these dolmens is to be found in the immediate vicinity of Kenmare town, where a dolmen of this type occupies the centre of a stone circle.⁽¹⁸⁾ These must be presumed to be very late.

STONE CIRCLES.

Of this type of structure there is a total of eighteen examples, but only ten of these are unquestionably stone circles. All of the latter number remain fairly well preserved except one. Of the eighteen sites all except two are in the vicinity of Lough Gur. One of the outliers is in the townland and parish of Ballynamona and lies to the north of the main road from Herbertstown to Hospital. The second outlier is in the townland of Caherguillamore and parish of Glenogra. This last is one of the poorly preserved and doubtful examples.

Eight of the ten definite sites can be divided up into a number of types, but two remain which cannot be fitted into this classification. Of these two

15. Childe : *Prehistoric Communities of the British Isles*, 60-61.

16. Hawkes : *Foundations*, 197.

17. Childe : *op. cit.* 60-61.

18. See Ó Riordáin : *P.R.I.A.*, XLV, C, (1940), 112 and foot-note 16.

latter examples the more important and more widely known one is the large circle in the townland of Grange (Ph. of Monasteranenagh). The monument lies just east of the road from Bruff to Limerick. This is circle B on Windle's list,⁽¹⁹⁾ where a detailed description of it will be found. Most important information was brought to light during an investigation of this site.⁽²⁰⁾

The second is one which might be described either as a stone circle or as a sort of truncated tumulus with a containing stone kerb. This is circle P on Windle's list⁽²¹⁾ and from the details as given by him it will be seen that the latter description above has some claim to acceptance. This circle also has been excavated,⁽²²⁾ the finds in this case being two burial urns.

The remaining eight circles fall into two types, four in each. First there is the type which consists of circles of free-standing stones with no supporting bank either inside or out. Three of these are in the Lough Gur area, the fourth being the above mentioned outlier in the townland of Ballynamona. The three Lough Gur examples of this type have been described by Windle under the letters C, D, and T.⁽²³⁾

The second type of circle consists of two concentric rings of contiguous stones having between the rings annular spaces of from three to fourteen feet wide filled up with earth and rubble. All are in the townland of Lough Gur, three (Windle⁽²⁴⁾—J, K, and L) being on Knockadoon Hill, and the fourth (Windle⁽²⁵⁾—O) on Knockruadh. The latter is the most imposing of the four and is singular in that it has in the centre a small circle of free standing stones, the circumference of which is concentric with the outer double circle. This monument has been excavated.⁽²⁶⁾

Of the other three circles in this group, one has been completely excavated⁽²⁷⁾ and another has been partially excavated.⁽²⁸⁾ The fourth circle of this group is not so well preserved, a large arc of its southern side having disappeared. It has not been excavated, but as it is very similar to the last two described above, it is probable that it is roughly of the same period—that is early bronze age.

Of the remaining sites of possible stone circles, four are on Knockadoon Hill, two are at the base of Knockfennel Hill, one is supposed to have been close to circles O and P on Knockruadh, and the last is in the townland of Caherguillamore and parish of Glenogra. Three of those on Knockadoon are arcs of structures similar to circles J, K, and L. That is they seem to have consisted of concentric rings of small stones with a rubble fill between, but in

19. Windle : *P.R.I.A.*, XXX, C, (1912-13), 284.

20. See prelim. report of : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, V. (1939), 249, also *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, II. (1940), 48.

21. Windle : *op. cit.*

22. See Prelim. report of : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, II, (1936), 220, also *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, I, (1937), 82.

23. Windle : *op. cit.*

24. Windle : *P.R.I.A.*, XXX, C, (1912-13), 284.

25. Windle : *op. cit.*

26. See Prelim. report of : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, III, (1937), 452, also *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, I, (1937), 82.

27. See Prelim. report of : *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, II. (1941), 172.

28. Harkness : *Quarterly Journal of Science*, (1869), 390.

these cases the structures never seem to have been complete circles but just arcs of circles. The fourth on Knockadoon (Windle—M) is a very doubtful site. The Ordnance Surveyors have made a slight mistake in the mapping of it, and have shown it much nearer circle L than it really is. This led to another mistake. The true position was shown on the map as well as the erroneous one, and the true position was called by them "Dun Gair" (site of). This means that the point marked Dun Gair is the position of circle M. Confusion has, therefore, arisen and it has been suggested that this site is the site of the Dun Gair fortified by Brian Boru. On the ground the site shows a number of moss-covered stones and these resemble more the remains of a cairn rather than a stone circle. It is, however, possible that they are merely natural outcrop.

Of the Knockfennel circles no trace of one now remains. The other consists of an arc of free standing boulders at the south-west base of the hill. This is a doubtful site and may never have been intended as a stone circle. The circle stated by Crofton Croker⁽²⁹⁾ to have existed beside circles O and P is no longer in existence, nor has any memory of its existence survived. Finally, the circle at Caherguillamore is so ruinous that it is not possible to say if this monument were a stone circle or a stone walled fort. If a stone circle it must have been of the same type as circles J, K, and L on Knockadoon. Only one very small arc of it now remains and this is not sufficiently well preserved to enable a decision as to its character to be made. Other sites which have been called stone circles by previous writers were either never in existence, or were outcropping boulders, or ancient fences mistaken for circles.

STONE CISTS.

These sites are not plentiful in the barony. At only one site⁽³⁰⁾ has it been definitely shown that the cists actually existed, while at two other sites at which previous writers have suggested the presence of cists I have been able to find no trace of any structure at all.

TUMULI (BURIAL MOUNDS).

This type of earthwork is to be found at eight sites, all except one being in the south-east expansion of the barony. The one outlier is in the townland of Rathmore South (Monasternenagh Ph.), and is a doubtful example. Five are of the orthodox type and can be paralleled at Cush⁽³¹⁾ and elsewhere. The other three show some individual peculiarities, which will be dealt with later in the detailed inventory which follows.

Besides tumuli of the above type there are many examples of what might be called more particularly ring-barrows. These all occur in the south-east expansion of the barony. They vary somewhat in outline. Some consist of a small low mound surrounded by a continuous fosse with sometimes an outer continuous bank. Others are just a flat circular space surrounded by a fosse and have no bank. Some of the latter type are situated on the tops of large low earthen platform structures, of which there are many examples in the barony, and which will be dealt with later. It is possible, in cases where the barrows are on platforms, that they are hut-sites, but for the most part I am of opinion that they are barrows. They also occur in groups, usually in low-

29. Croker : *Gentleman's Magazine*, (1833), part I, 110.

30. See Raftery : *P.R.I.A.*, XLVI, C, (1941), 299 ff, Pl. XX and fig. I.

31. Ó Riordáin : *P.R.I.A.*, XLV, C, (1940), 183 ff and 175.

lying situations. The diameters of the ring-barrows vary between twelve and one hundred feet overall, the majority being between twelve and thirty feet. Similar tumuli have been excavated at a site near the Limerick-Tipperary border⁽³²⁾ and parallels for them are also to be found in the Netherlands and western Germany. Similar examples occur frequently in southern England, in Wiltshire, Hampshire and Wessex.⁽³³⁾ Kendrick and Hawkes⁽³⁴⁾ give a summary of the excavation of one at Ibsley Common. One of those excavated at Lissard⁽³⁵⁾ in Co. Limerick produced the remains of a cremated burial under an inverted urn. Macalister⁽³⁶⁾ has given a description of one in the Co. Galway. No urns were found there, but pockets of cremated bone were found under the surface soil. In the case of a slightly different type of ring barrow excavated at Lough Gur nothing save pockets of cremated bone were found.

Ó Ríordáin in dealing with the barrows at Lissard has summarised the general conclusions drawn from excavations of this type of structure. He says, "We must see them as a general related phenomenon of that period marking the outgoing of the tumulus tradition of the early bronze age, but finding somewhat varying expression in different regions."⁽³⁷⁾

HUT-SITES AND ANCIENT FIELDS.

The greatest concentration of sites of this type is to be found at Lough Gur, but systems of ancient fences are to be found on almost every hill in the barony. The hut-sites do not conform to any one type of plan, nor do they all belong to one particular period as has been shown by excavation.⁽³⁸⁾ Those excavated at Lough Gur ranged in date from "neolithic" to the end of the first millennium A.D.

With regard to systems of ancient fences, these too, do not conform to any particular arrangement or type of field. The hill-tops and slopes are divided up into fields of many shapes and sizes, which at many places are associated with forts. There is one group, however, which can be paralleled in many parts of England. These are what are usually called "lyncheted fields." They are situated in a little sloping valley between the east base of Knockfennel and a small limestone hillock, the slope on which they lie falling gently to the lake edge. A detailed description of the site will be found under the townland of Lough Gur (Knockainey Ph.).

STANDING STONES.

There is a total of forty-five standing stones in the barony. Most of these are of limestone, but some are of volcanic breccia. It is not possible to be absolutely certain if some of the stones are ancient or merely stones erected

32. Ó Ríordáin : *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXVI, (1936), 173, with full list of references.

33. See L. V. Grinsell : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* VII, (1941), 73.

34. *Archaeology of England and Wales*, 111, and fig. 46.

35. Ó Ríordáin : *op. cit.*

36. Macalister : *P.R.I.A.*, XXXIII, C, 509.

37. See also, Raftery : *J.G.A.H.S.*, XIX, (1940), 16 ff.

38. See Prelim. Reports of : *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, V, (1937), 249, also *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, II, (1940), 48; II, (1940), 172.

comparatively recently by farmers as scratching-posts for cattle. In two cases I have been able to obtain proof of modern erection. One of these is in the townland of Kilballyowen and the other in the townland of Correenfeeradda, both in the parish of Knockainey. The usual Irish names, *gallán* or *liagán*, which are still applied to these stones in some neighbourhoods, have not survived at all in this area and, therefore, even this poor guide to their antiquity is wanting. Consequently one is forced to rely mainly on their general appearance—the amount of weathering, wear and polish on the edges from cattle scratching, and the situation with respect to other antiquities.

These stones are not confined to any particular area, but as with most other monuments, there is a marked concentration of them in the neighbourhood of Lough Gur. In the townland of Lough Gur alone there are twelve standing stones, while in Knockfennel there are two, and in Grange, on the west side of the lake, there are three. That is a total of seventeen stones in the near vicinity of the lake.

In the townland of Castlefarm (Hospital Ph.) there is one stone which is peculiar in that it has a small hole bored through near the top.

There is one interesting group of nine stones which seems to mark the line of an ancient road. This group will be dealt with later under the section on roads.

FORTS.

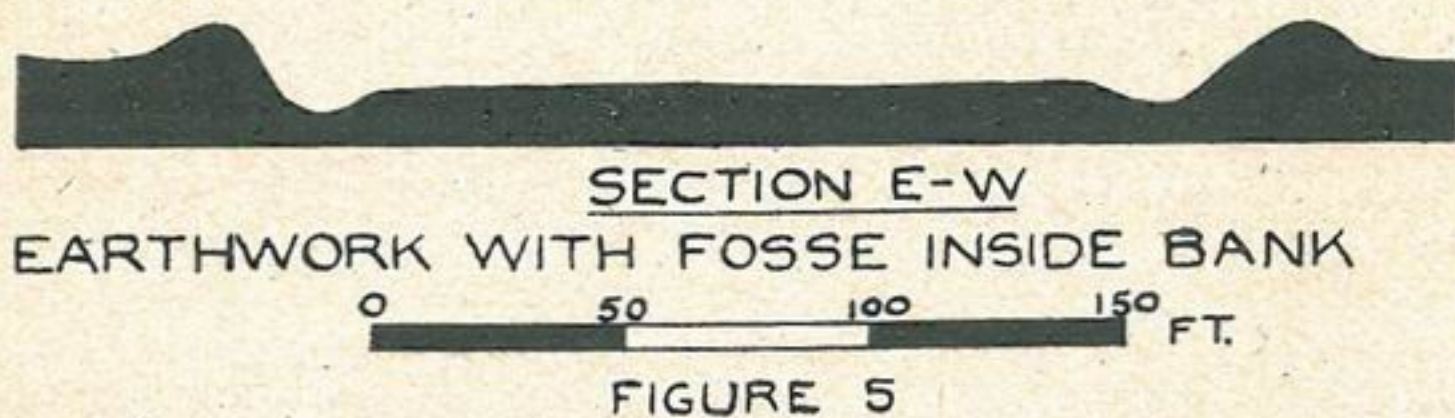
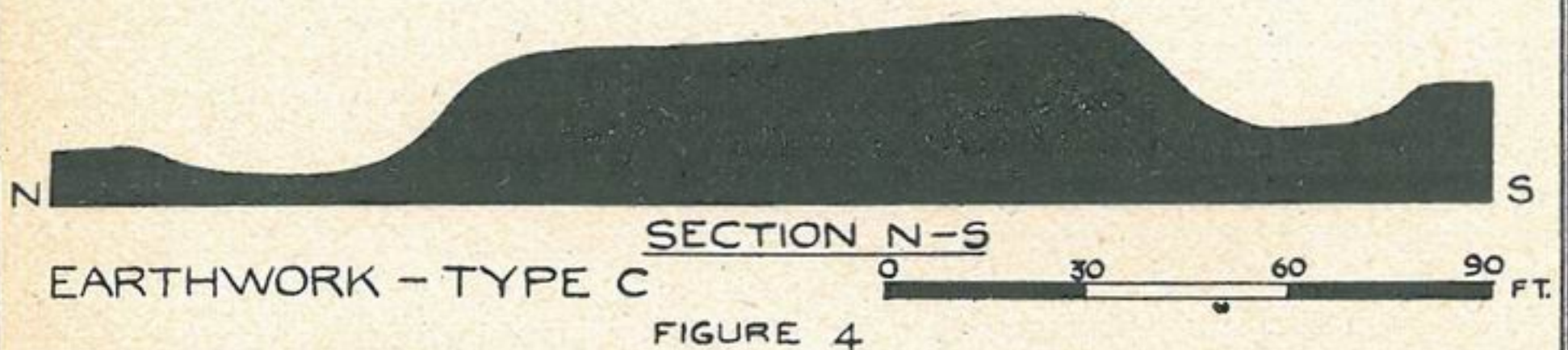
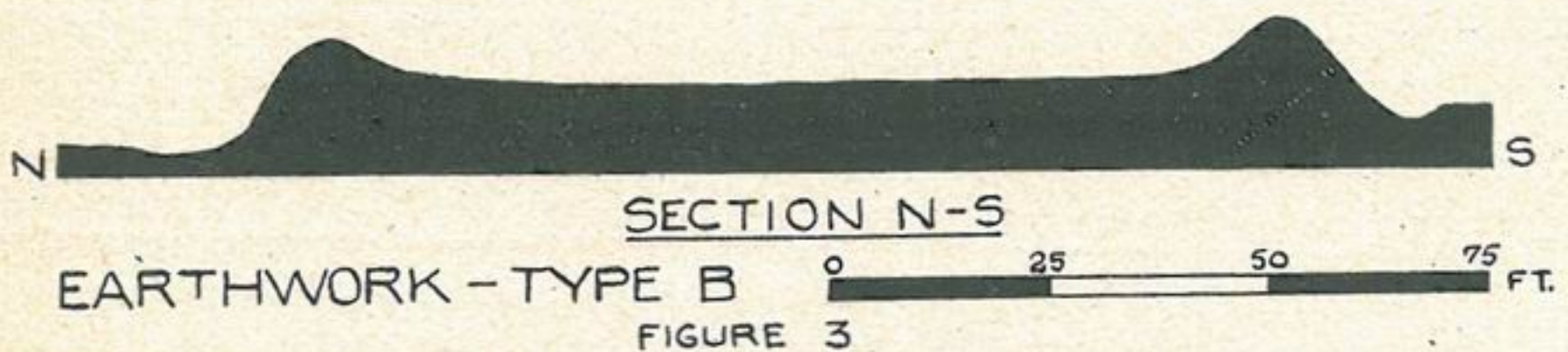
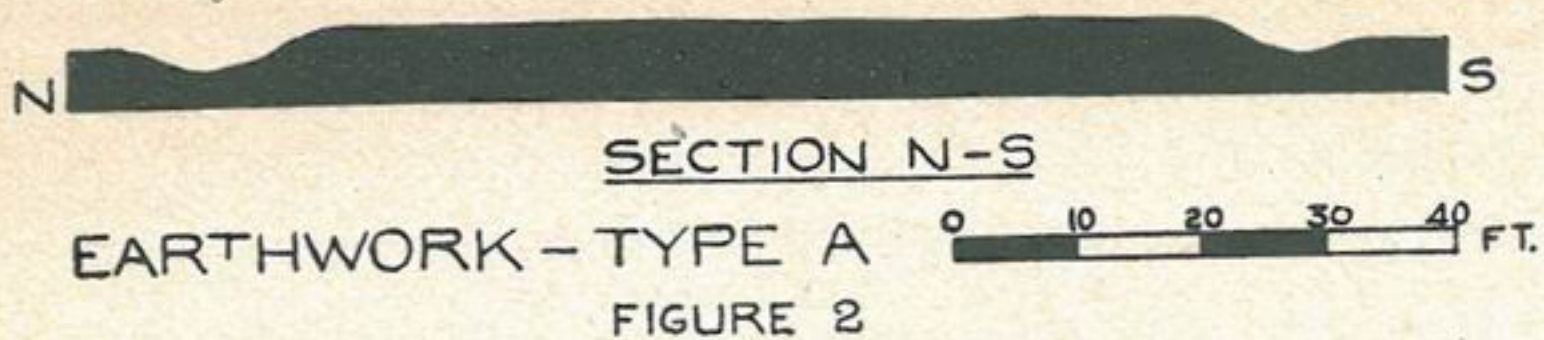
The number of structures which would come under this heading is somewhat under two hundred. Of these about ten have been completely obliterated since the original Ordnance Survey, but the rest for the most part remain in comparatively good preservation. Many forts have been tilled at various times and this has, of course, caused a certain amount of damage to the monuments. In the north-west portion of the barony, superstitious fears of the fairies and "the good people" have, up to the present, restrained landowners from interfering with such structures to a great extent, and so strong are these fears even yet that a good many sites have been allowed to become overgrown with black- and white-thorn bushes. Most of the people in this neighbourhood will not even break a twig from this undergrowth, and the undue spreading of these bushes has caused and is causing further damage.

So little is yet known of this type of structure that it is perhaps futile to suggest an elaborate classification or hazard any guesses as to the chronological sequence of the various types. It has been customary to regard rectangular or rectilinear structures as being later than those with circular plans⁽³⁹⁾ but that is by no means proven. However, if too much stress is not laid upon questions of chronology it is possible to suggest a few broad heads under which the structures can be divided.

Firstly, there is the obvious classification into stone and earthen monuments. Of the total number in the barony only thirty-nine are definitely stone, while the rest are of earth, or a mixture of stone and earth with the earth predominating. Stone forts show a slight tendency to occupy the higher levels and of these six are over four hundred feet O.D., while among the earthen structures only one is above the 400 foot contour, and most are between two and three hundred O.D. This distinction of levels is not of great significance as the barony lands on the whole show little variation in level, but in many cases it serves as an added indication that the stone forts are primarily military in

39. See Macalister : *Archæology of Ireland*, 161, foot note 1.

character, while a great many of the earthen structures must be looked upon, not as forts in the military sense, but as homesteads and cattle enclosures.



M. J. O'K.

Among the earthworks there are three broad types which can be distinguished. Type A, the first group (See Fig. 2), I have called "Raised Platform Earthworks." These consist of a low earthen platform, usually flat on top, and usually surrounded by a single fosse. The platform sometimes has a diameter of as much as one hundred and fifty feet, and the height of its top over the surrounding field can be as much as about five feet, but at many sites this measurement does not exceed three feet. There is no trace of a bank around the top edge

of the platform. In some cases there are two or three outer banks with fosses between. At most of these sites it is not possible to recognise the position of the original entrance as the fosses are usually continuous around the whole monument, and where there are outer banks they, too, are sometimes continuous. There are sites where the entrance is made obvious by a sloping causeway leading across the fosse and on to the platform.

Many of these structures have very low-lying situations—in or around the edges of wet marshy land, and there are a few on the slightly rising ground in close proximity to such poor land. It serves no useful purpose to give general indications as to the heights of these over the Ordnance Datum, as marshy land occurs at heights of as much as three hundred O.D. This in reality is low-land, for if one strikes a mean level between the highest land in the barony and the lowest, the average works out at three hundred and sixty eight feet O.D., and most of the land falls rather below than above this mean level. But that these monuments are fairly certainly a low-land type is indicated by the fact that they never occur on hill-tops and but rarely on the lower slopes of the hills.

It is probable that these structures are the outcome of the builders' preference for marshy situations. The natural inclination would be to construct a site such that its floor would be sufficiently high over the level of the marsh to remain dry at all times.

Quite a number of them have erected on the platform small tumuli of the type called ring-barrows. The details of these have already been dealt with, but a few further words must be said of them here. As has been said above, their diameters are quite small, often not exceeding thirty feet overall. Where they are situate on platforms such as these, they do not have an outer bank and consist merely of a flat or slightly convex circular space surrounded by a continuous and usually quite definite fosse. No particular preference in the matter of the positions of these on the platforms is observable, except that they do not occur at the centre, though sometimes they are near it. Sometimes also, there are two such barrows on the platform.

Professor V. G. Childe of Edinburgh, who has seen one of these monuments in the barony, has expressed the opinion that the structures are not barrows, but that they are the foundations of dwellings erected on the platform. In the particular example that he has seen (Grange Td., Monasteranenagh Ph.), and it is the only case where it occurs, the barrow is different from the usual type. Here it is marked chiefly by a circular low bank which has a break in it as if for an entrance, and this platform has itself a definite entrance. I am of the opinion that, on the whole, these small structures are barrows, and further, that owing to their eccentric positions on the platforms, they are secondary to, and quite possibly later than the platforms themselves.

With regard to the general distribution of these platform structures, it is noteworthy that by far the greater number of them occur in the south-eastern expansion of the barony where there is a total of fifty-one, while in the whole of the north-western area there are only eighteen. I suggest that this distribution of these monuments is an indication of their chronological priority over the more orthodox type of earthwork and stone fort. In the south-eastern expansion of the barony and in the central area about Lough Gur all the earliest types of monuments occur—"neolithic" houses, megalithic tombs, stone circles—while in the north-west none of the latter are recognisable, and the predominant structures there are the ordinary stone and earthen ring-forts. Further,

the use of the platform structures as sites for barrows which are presumably a feature of the late bronze age—early iron age urnfield expansion,⁽⁴⁰⁾ must mean that, in general, one can look upon these structures as having come into favour, with certain population groups at least, at some stage in the late bronze age. Great numbers of stone and earthen ring-forts cannot be nearly so old, though as has been shown by excavation at Cush⁽⁴¹⁾ earthen ringforts can be as old as the early stages of the late bronze age, even in Co. Limerick. However, all this remains to be proved or disproved by further excavation.

In type B, the second group of earthworks (See Fig. 3), there are under fifty monuments, all of which are of the type most usual over the whole country, that is, a simple earthen bank surrounding an open space. All are provided with an entrance and no particular preference for having this at one side more than any other is shown. Usually its position is determined by the nature of the ground in the immediate vicinity of the monument. That is, the entrance is placed at the point from which it can be most easily approached. Where fosses occur outside the bank a causeway is provided leading to the entrance. In no case does the proximity of a water supply seem to have influenced the selection of sites for these monuments, but as the barony is so low-lying, water is never very far to seek as marshes and marsh streams are in abundance almost everywhere, flowing on winding courses on their way to the two principal rivers. At one site a stone lined well had been constructed just outside the entrance of a simple earthen ring-fort surrounded by a fosse.⁽⁴²⁾ The well is still perfect and maintains a constant supply of water. In this monument the interior of the fort is considerably higher than the surrounding field, and may possibly be a military structure, though it has not a commanding position, a feature which would seem desirable in a defensive structure. It is situated at the north-west base of Kiltely Hill and lies well below the four hundred foot contour.

Most⁽⁴³⁾ of the monuments of type B show a feature just mentioned, a raising of the interior over the surrounding field level. They are, therefore, in a sense, platform structures, but they differ from the raised platforms of Type A in that they all have definite banks at the edges of the platforms, and in all cases the entrance is provided with a sloping ramp. The Type A structures seem to be entirely distinct. Furthermore the distribution of the ring-forts and the Raised Platform Earthworks is to a large extent complementary. The ring-forts predominate in the north-western area, while the Raised Platforms predominate in the south-east.

Three ring-forts which deserve special mention are sites which are peculiar in that the fosse is inside the bank (see fig. 5). This feature, when it occurs in other types of structures (stone circles, barrows) is usually taken as an indication of ritualistic purpose, but I am of opinion that this explanation is unsatisfactory in the present instances. Clearly, this position of the fosse is of no use as a defensive preparation, and in one (Mortgage Td, Fedamore Ph.—Fig. 5) of the three examples above, this is made very obvious by reason of the fact that the whole interior of the monument is considerably lower than the surrounding field, so that in case of attack, missiles could be very easily

40. Ó Ríordáin: *J.R.S.A.I.*, LXVI, (1936), 173.

41. Ó Ríordáin: *P.R.I.A.*, XLV, C, (1940), 183.

42. Kildromin Td., Kiltely Ph.

43. There are only seven sites in the barony where the interior is level with the surrounding field.

cast into the central space. In the other two cases the interior is level with the surrounding field. All three are in low-lying positions,⁽⁴⁴⁾ positions which could by no means be considered commanding, and on land excellent for the grazing of cattle herds. The explanation which I would offer for these sites is that they were neither military nor ritualistic, but were merely intended as cattle enclosures. If this were so, there is a supreme advantage in having the fosse inside the bank, namely, that it could be kept filled with water, thereby obviating the necessity of driving the cattle far from the enclosure in times of unrest. To the present day the fosse of the structure in Mortgage townland has remained waterlogged to a depth of about one foot, in spite of a considerable amount of silting up. In the other two examples the fosse is almost dry, but one of these has been partially levelled and so its fosse is almost filled up. All three sites have large overall diameters varying between one hundred and fifty five to two hundred and fifty five feet. The fosses are causewayed inside the entrances.

Besides these three sites there are a number of large enclosures. These vary in size and shape—trapeziums, rectangles, ovals, etc. They are enclosed by earthen banks and fosses, and their low-lying situations, usually in good land, seem to leave no doubt that they were intended as cattle stands or pens. One of them deserves special mention, that in the townland of Kilorath (Glenogra Ph.). The feature chiefly worthy of note is that in the south-east corner of the main enclosure there is what seems to be a *cillín*, which is the only definite one in the whole area. This consists of a slight mound, on the top of which is a small standing stone inscribed with a rude cross. The *cillín* was cut off from the main enclosure by a stone wall now very collapsed.

In type C, the third group of earthworks, are monuments such that they might be described as mottes. I have excluded them from the Raised Platform class for a number of reasons, though, of course, these also, are essentially raised platforms. There are altogether only thirteen monuments of this class. A typical monument (see fig. 4) consists of a high earthen platform, which in some cases is as high as twenty feet over its fosse-bottom, and the platforms are on the whole, higher than those of Type A. The sides of the mound are usually steeply inclined and well preserved, while the top is usually flat. Outside the inner fosse there can be one, two or three banks with intervening fosses, and, of course, there are examples where there is no outer bank. Their diameters vary from fifty to three hundred and sixty feet.

The use of the term "mote" in connection with these structures seems to imply a Norman origin, and while such an origin may be true in a few cases, it is not necessarily so with all. Only at one site (Boherageela Td, Glenogra Ph.) is there anything in the nature of an associated structure. In this case there are two enclosures, one irregularly shaped, and the other rectangular, but neither of these conforms to the usual Norman bailey. Again, it remains for excavation to show to what period and group these monuments must be referred.

Westropp⁽⁴⁵⁾ when dealing generally with the Irish forts, compiled some statistics with regard to them. In doing this he calculated the number of acres to each fort for each county. His result for Limerick showed that each fort would have had an available acreage of three hundred and seventeen. Pro-

44. Mortgage : 180' O.D. Rathmore N. : 210' O.D. Boherageela : 200' O.D.

45. Westropp : *T. R. I. A.*, 579 ff. Summarised by Macalister : *Archaeology of Ireland*, 176.

ceeding in the same manner and dividing the total acreage of the barony (44,425, to the nearest acre) equally among the total number (188, including those now obliterated) of structures of all types under the heading "forts," the result works out at a figure considerably smaller than Westropp's, the figure for Small County being only two hundred and thirty six acres per fort. A study of the Ordnance sheets for the high-land region of south-west Limerick will show that this part of the county is singularly lacking in all types of sites, whereas the maps of the low-land plain are thickly dotted with monuments. It is presumably this absence of monuments in the poorer high-lands which brings about the different results.

Before leaving the subject of forts, some reference must be made to what is possibly the last surviving trace of a "hill-fort" in the accepted sense of the term. This occurs on the west slope of the Hill of Knockainey. Running round the hill, a little way below the four hundred foot contour line and practically parallel to it, are the remains of a bank, partly of stone and partly of earth. This bank is not now traceable elsewhere on the hill, but there is a length of ancient fence on the south-east side of the eastern shoulder of the hill, which may possibly be a continuation of the western part. The eastern section lies between the four-hundred and five-hundred foot contours and is not quite parallel to either. I prefer to look on this part of the bank as one of the ancient field fences which abound on the eastern slopes of the hill. A detailed description will be found under the townland of Knockainey West in the parish of Knockainey.

CRANNOGS.

Seven sites only come under this head. Six of these are in Lough Gur and I have been unable to identify the seventh. The latter is supposed to have been in *Loch Cend* or *Lough Ceann*, a lake for which a number of identifications have been suggested by previous writers, but which has not been certainly recognised. It is a site supposed to have been fortified by Brian Boru between 1002 and 1012 A.D.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The more usual crannog construction consisted in driving wooden piles in the form of a circle in the lake or marsh, the interior space being then filled up with layers of brushwood and earth. At Lough Gur the method seems to have been to throw large stones into the water in the form of a circle which was afterwards filled up as described above. Detailed descriptions of these sites will be found under their respective parishes and townlands.

46. Westropp : *P.R.I.A.*, XXV, C, (1904-5), 434. In this article it is stated that "the King of Cashel claimed the forts of Aine, Dun Gair, and Lough Ceann at Lough Gur." In a later work, *J.R.S.A.I.*, XLIX, (1919), 17, he refers to the site of a drained lake near Knockainey and says, "The old lake of Any, named in Norman grants down to 1322, but now a drained marshy hollow." This is equally possible as the site of the crannog. I have examined the region but failed to find any trace of the monument. James Dowd in *The County of Limerick* offers also the above suggestion regarding the drained lake. Canon Lynch has referred to the crannog in three articles. In *J.C.H.A.S.*, I, (1895), 247 f. note 2, he says, "The King of Cashel had a seat in the island of Loch Ceann, a lake which formerly existed between Knockainey and Lough Gur . . ." In *J.C.H.A.S.*, XIX, (1913), 20 f. note 8, he says, "Inis Locha Ceann, where important discoveries have been made, is not far from Kilcullane church . . ." In *J.C.H.A.S.*, XXV, (1919), 79, he says, "Loch Cenn was first identified by Hennessy in the *Chronicon Scotorum*. The lake, now drained, was north of Knockainey and at the west side of the Comoge river, stretching towards Knockdirk. It was fully explored at the time of the Ordnance Survey when we identified Inis Locha Ceann."

Seymour in *The Diocese of Emly*, 34, says, "A lake which formerly existed north of Knockainey. This is now drained . . ."

ANCIENT ROADS.

The old roads of this part of the county would provide almost sufficient material for a separate study, so it will not be possible here to deal with them in any great detail. Much work has already been done in this field by Ó Lochlainn,⁽⁴⁷⁾ but, as his work is not yet completed and has not been published in sufficient detail, it is not possible to identify the various visible trackways with, say, the itineraries of St. Patrick as given on Ó Lochlainn's map. Sites mentioned by the above author as having been visited by St. Patrick, and which are within Small County are Kiltely, Lough Gur, and Holy Cross. Another site not mentioned by him, is Kilorath. It is, perhaps, just coincidence that in the latter townland occurs the cillin (described above) on which is the cross inscribed standing stone.

An interesting trackway mentioned when dealing with standing stones, is one which runs from Lough Gur Cross, approximately in a straight line, and in a north-north-west direction till it crosses the barony boundary. It is continued for some distance through the next barony, that of Clanwilliam, on the north of Small County. The track is only visible as such for a short distance in the townland of Ballingoola (Caherconey Ph.) where it consists of a slight ridge which is marked by three standing stones fairly widely separated from one another. Where the track ran across a freshly ploughed field in this townland, the plough had turned up much of the road surface which was of broken limestone. Elsewhere the track is shown by a total of twelve standing stones, nine in Small County and three in Clanwilliam.

Another definite but short piece of road is one called *Cladh na Leac* on the Ordnance map. This runs north and south on the west side of the lake. It consists of a sunken way marked on each side by low fences on which stand many low small boulders placed at intervals.

In the townland of Carrickettle (Kiltely Ph.), and at a distance of one and a half miles south-east of the hill, I was shown a short length of old road (running by the fences of three fields in a N.N.E.-S.S.W. direction) which is now visible only in certain lights. The local tradition has it that this was part of the road travelled by St. Patrick when he was en route for Kiltely Hill. Here, again, Ó Lochlainn's map is not sufficiently detailed to enable this piece of road-way to be fitted in to the route shown by him.

Yet another ancient track is to be found on Knockadoon Hill (Lough Gur Td., Knockainey Ph.). This runs north and south in the valley between the two parts of the hill and was presumably the track used by the occupants of the valley in going to and coming from the lake, because the southern end of it finishes at the old edge of the lake.

FULACHTA FIADH.

I have not been able to locate any sites of this type in any part of the barony, but reference is made to one such site on Knockadoon, not far from Bouchier's Castle.⁽⁴⁸⁾ This, I have not been able to identify with any certainty.

47. Ó Lochlainn : Féil-Sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill, 465 and map.

48. Windele MSS. Letters, XVI, 523-526.

CHURCHES.

Apart from the parish churches, there is a number of early monastic sites. These are to be found in Ballynagallagh and Knockainy West (Knockainy Ph.), Barrysfarm (Hospital Ph.), Fanningstown (Fedamore Ph.), Monastir (Monasternenagh Ph.). The last is just outside the boundary of Small County, but three separate portions of its parish are within the barony.

The foundation in Ballynagallagh is said⁽⁴⁹⁾ to have been for Augustinian Nuns and to have been founded for the first time in the year 941 A.D. The founder is not known. It was destroyed during the Danish wars but was refounded in 1283 by a branch of the Desmond family called FitzGibbon. Lewis says that it existed till the Dissolution. Only one small fragment of wall now remains. This house has been frequently confused with St. Catherine's Abbey in the barony of Shanid.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Of the other monastic foundation in Knockainey parish Westropp⁽⁵¹⁾ says that an Augustinian Priory was founded by John FitzRobert between 1190 and 1200. Nothing now remains of the fabric of the first foundation, but the tower of a later structure still stands on the site. Fixed to the base of this inside, is a slab to the memory of one of the O'Gradys, which is dated 1592, but the tower is not as old even as this.

In the village of Hospital are the ruins of a Commandery of the Knights Hospitallers founded under the patronage of John the Baptist, in the reign of King John, by Geoffry de Marescis, who was Chief Governor of Ireland in the year 1215.⁽⁵²⁾ The ruins of this site are extensive and consist chiefly of the Church portion of the Commandery. It is now vested in the State and is a National Monument.

The sites of eight parish churches are known. These are Kilpeacon, Fedamore, Glenogra, Ballinlough, Ballinard, Ballynamona, Caherconey and Kilkullane. Buildings or traces of buildings remain on most of these sites, but few, if any, are the remains of the original churches. The sites of eleven other churches are known, but again, nothing remains of the older buildings, and most of the sites are marked only by graveyards with no surviving trace of the church.

HOLY WELLS.

There is a total of thirteen holy wells in the barony. These may belong to almost any period from early Christian times onward.

At five of the wells all devotional practices have ceased and not even the traditions have survived. Modern pumps have been erected over two. Of the other eight, the most interesting is St. Patrick's Well in the townland of that name (Knockainy Ph.), where an elaborate ritual is still practised. At most of the others the devotion is dead or dying out, and there is no very specific ritual. Coins and medals are not usually left at the wells, but at a few, pieces of coloured ribbons are hung on nearby trees or bushes. No particular prayers are fixed for any of the wells, but those most usually said are

49. Lewis : *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, I, 27. ["there is by Loughgair a town called Ballynagallagh in the county of Limerick that pertaineth to the said nunnery and house of Keiloinne" : Inq. 33, Henry 8, in Arthur Mss., B.M.; cf. Lenihan, p. 91. For Killone, near Ennis, cf. *Journ. R.S.A.I.*, 1900. Ed.]

50. Westropp : *J.R.S.A.I.*, XXXIV, (1904), 43.

51. Westropp : *P.R.I.A.*, XXV, C, (1904-05), 447.

52. Quoted from Ware by Falkiner : *P.R.I.A.*, XXVI, (1906-07), 310; cf. *Journ. R.S.A.I.*, 1939, p. 112.

"Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys." Most of the wells are supposed to cure almost any disease, but some are looked upon as having special cures for diseases of the eyes and "inward pains."

CASTLES.

There are references by previous writers to no fewer than thirty-three castles in the whole of the barony. Most of these have now completely disappeared from one cause or another, and it has not been possible to find even the sites of many of them. They are fairly well distributed over the barony.

Extensive remains exist of only a very few. These are in Rathmore North (Monasteranenagh Ph.), Glenogra (Glenogra Ph.), Bouchier's and the Black Castle in Lough Gur, and Knockainy Castle in Knockainy West, the last three being in Knockainy parish.

Concerning the two castles at Lough Gur great confusion has arisen. Some writers call what is now Bouchier's Castle the Black Castle and vice-versa, so that in some references it is not possible to be certain which castle is in question.

Both castles guard the points of easiest entry on to Knockadoon Hill, which must have been almost an island at one time. The lake still surrounds it on three sides, and on the fourth there was a fairly extensive marsh, now partially drained. At each end of the marsh there was a strip of solid or nearly solid land connecting with the hill and it is on these strips that the castles are built, thereby converting the whole hill into a fairly impregnable fortress.

Brian Boru is said to have fortified or reconditioned the defences of the Island of Lough Gur. It is probable that Knockadoon is the island in question, in which case his defensive works would have been carried out at the same two points of access to the hill. If so, the castle builders have obliterated all traces of these, but near the present Black Castle there is a rectangular enclosure, which may be prehistoric or may be part of Brian's fortifications.

It would seem that many of the castles in the barony were Desmond possessions in the early stages, but with the decline of the power of this great family, the castles passed into other hands. Some of them suffered badly at the hands of the English during the rebellion of the Sugán Earl, and in later troubles, but the complete disappearance of most of them is due to the use of the stones for modern buildings and other purposes in very recent times.

CAVES.

Caves are sometimes of considerable archaeological interest. Because of this I thought it advisable to examine them where possible. The total number in the area is six and all except three of these are of little interest. One of the latter, called the *Red Cellar*, and situate on Knockfennel Hill (Knockfennel Td., Monasteranenagh Ph.), has been excavated, the finds consisting of animal remains only. These were bones of bear, elk, Arctic lemming, etc.

The next cave is a fairly large one on Knockadoon Hill. It is high up over the lake edge and is a site which might prove worth an investigation, as owing to the density of occupation of the whole hill, it is unlikely to have been left uninhabited.

The last site of interest is in Grange townland (Monasteranenagh Ph.). It is little more than a rock shelter with a south-western aspect, but what ren-

ders it of interest is the fact that many stone axes have been found in it and in the surrounding field. Most of these have been lost, but some have found their way into the museums.

FINDS.

Finds from the barony are very plentiful, and range from the "neolithic" period onward. The chief source of objects of all periods is Lough Gur and its immediate neighbourhood. There is scarcely a museum or a private collection in Great Britain or Ireland which does not include some object from the lake or its vicinity. Owing to the present European situation, I have been able to make notes only of the material available in Ireland and that which is published, but some of the best objects, which are in British museums are inaccessible.

The presence of such large numbers of finds in one small area is indeed a very striking fact, but as monuments of almost all periods are very plentiful in the same area, the presence of the finds is not so strange. This brings us to the question of why Lough Gur became the centre of such intense occupation. It has been suggested⁽⁵³⁾ that Lough Gur was a sacred lake and that as a result of this sanctity, people were attracted to it and settled down in its neighbourhood. This suggestion is quite reasonable, and in part at any rate gives a rationale for the concentrations of ritualistic monuments on Knockadoon (the stone circles), and similar structures (stone circles and megaliths) around about the lake on all sides. The above authors further suggest that many antiquities found in and around the lake are additional testimony to the sacredness of the water, and they suggest that such an object as the gold-chased bronze spear-head, now in the British Museum, was "most likely a votive offering cast into the waters of the lake, as the Continental Gauls cast gold and other precious objects into the ponds of Tolosse."⁽⁵⁴⁾ In the absence of any other explanation for the numerous finds from the lake itself, this is indeed a good one. But before it became sacred, it must have been discovered, and as the land around it was probably as good then as it is now, and free of forest owing to the lightness of the soil, it would have been a very attractive area for settlement. A colony, having taken up existence in such a favoured spot, would naturally build a temple in which to worship. As the congregation grew other temples would have been built, and finally, the religious fervour probably spread to the lake itself, which supplied one of the most urgent needs of the community—water. The god of the lake would have required propitiation from time to time, and religious devotees may have felt it necessary to cast into the water their most prized objects in order that the deity might continue to look with favour on their enterprises.

It may have been in this way that the circular bronze shield now in the National Museum, Dublin, came to be in the water. Maurice Lenihan⁽⁵⁵⁾ states that "the shield was found in a bog between Ballynamona and Herbertstown

53. *J.R.S.A.I.* : Antiquarian Handbook series, No. 7, 124.

54. In this connection I may mention an interesting folk-custom which survives to the present day. The information has been kindly supplied by Dr. Costello of Tuam. In the middle of *Loch Ciarán*, near Balla, Co. Mayo, there is a holy well which is said to possess cures for diseases in horses and cattle. As part of the ritual, which begins on Garland Sunday (the last in July) offerings of rolls of butter are brought and cast into the water. Garland Sunday is still called *Domhnach Crom Dubh* in that locality, so it is possible that the custom has its roots in Pagan times.

55. Lenihan : *P.R.I.A.*, I, (1873), 155.

in the County of Limerick, and not far from Lough Gur." The descendants of the original owner, who still live near the lake, are quite certain that the shield came from the marsh on the east side of Knockadoon (Lough Gur Td., Knockany Ph.), and that it was found after the partial drainage of the area. All the local traditions insist that the shield did come from this same marsh, and there are even people who claim to be able to point out the exact spot.

Another question which arises as a result of the number of finds from this area is whether these originated here or were brought by visitors to the religious centre. Many of the objects may have been brought, but there are indications that some at least were made here, for there is a stone mould for spear-heads from Lough Gur (now in the British Museum), and recent excavation on a habitation site produced half of a mould for palstaves. As yet, therefore, there is no evidence for large scale manufacture of objects at Lough Gur, but the possibility of such cannot be excluded.

Unfortunately, information as to the exact find places of much of the Lough Gur material is wanting. The lake runs into four townlands (Lough Gur and Ballynagallagh in Knockainy parish, and Grange and Knockfennel in Monasternenagh parish), so that in most cases it is not possible to give the townland. Among the finds from the immediate vicinity of the lake there are twenty bronze axes of various types, twelve bronze spear-heads, and a stone mould for spear-heads,⁽⁵⁶⁾ two leaf-shaped swords, a rapier, three daggers, and one halberd, and this is by no means a full list. Stone, flint and bone objects are almost numberless, but among the stone objects of which I have notes there are one hundred and twenty stone axes, and this again is not a full list. Pottery from the Lough Gur area has been shown by excavation and chance finds to be quite plentiful, the periods represented ranging from "neolithic" times onwards.

The rest of the barony has also produced many objects from various areas. Among these are seven bronze axes and twenty eight stone axes. Besides this there are various references⁽⁵⁷⁾ to the finding somewhere in or near Kilpeacon, of a gold crown or diadem. This was sold to a Dublin goldsmith and presumably melted down. Wallace suggests that the object may have been a gorget, as the description given of it says that it had the "form of a large oyster-shell." In the absence of the object, or of an adequate description of it, this find must be looked upon with some doubt.

In the next chapter of this article will begin the parish by parish inventory of the monuments in which will be found detailed descriptions of each site.

56. Evans : *Ancient Bronze Implements*, 436 and fig. 523.
Archaeological Journal, XX, (1863), 170.

57. Fitzgerald and M'Gregor : *Hist. of Limerick*, I, 302.
Lewis : *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, II, 198.
J.R.S.A.I., Antiquarian Handbook Series, No. 7, 144.
Wallace : *North Munster Ant. Jour.*, I, No. 3, 91-92.