

As an addendum to the above, I give a diagram (see plate on opposite page) showing the plan of the eastern tower, the "break" alluded to in Mr. William Robertson's Report, and the original hall and stair-case of the castle, as they existed before the alterations were commenced. Several small rooms and passages in the thickness of the ancient wall are also laid down on the plan, which is copied from an old drawing now in the possession of the marquis of Ormonde.

NOTES ON THE
EXCAVATION OF A RATH AT DUNBEL, COUNTY OF
KILKENNY.

BY JOHN G. A. PRIM.

HAVING ascertained that a rath, or ancient Celtic fort, was being levelled and trenched on the lands of Dunbel, in the county of Kilkenny, by Mr. Michael White, the tenant of the farm, the Rev. James Graves and I considered it our duty, as Secretaries to this Society, to make a personal inspection of the operations there carried on, and ascertain whether any, and what remains of ancient art, domestic utensils, weapons, or ornaments had been discovered in the course of the work. We, accordingly, lost no time in proceeding to the spot, and saw sufficient to interest us so far as to induce us to repeat our visits frequently, and carefully superintend the operations. The result of our observations on those occasions I now beg leave to report to the Society.

The townland of Dunbel—which name the people of the locality translate "the fort of Baal," or, according to some, "of fire," taking the emblem by which the Pagan deity was represented as expressed by the name of the deity himself¹—is thickly studded over with the entrenched habitations of the aboriginal inhabitants of this country; but in the neighbourhood of the Nore, along the elevated ground above the eastern bank of the river, these remains are particularly numerous, every second or third field usually containing one or two raths, located in close contiguity, and showing that this portion of the country was densely populated in the primæval period. On the farm of Mr. White, where it is intersected by the Waterford and Kilkenny Railway, within half a mile of Bennetts-bridge, there is, or rather was, a very remarkable group of circular raths. The principal one is con-

¹ I do not mean to vouch for the correctness of this derivation, which smacks very strongly of the Vallancey school, and

perhaps was picked up by the people from some visitor imbued with the etymological *mania* of the worthy general.

structed on so large a scale, and possesses its rampart and double fosse in such excellent preservation, as to be a prominent and most remarkable object in the landscape for miles around, and cannot have failed to attract the attention of all passengers by the railway, who are in the slightest degree imbued with an antiquarian taste. This was probably the residence and fortress of the chieftain of the district, whilst those surrounding it were occupied by men of subordinate rank in the territory. At a distance of two or three fields from the great rath, there were three other circular earth-works, situated each about four hundred feet from the other, having concentric ramparts and fosses, but by no means planned on such a scale of magnitude, or so well contrived for defensive purposes. One of these enclosures was levelled and tilled, without being trenched, a considerable time since. A second was partially trenched in the month of May, 1842, for the purpose of spreading out on the surrounding land, as a manure, the material of which it was composed, a rich black clay largely impregnated with organic remains. The third rath has now been subjected to the same process for a similar purpose, and thus each of these three forts is now nearly obliterated.

In the course of trenching the last mentioned rath many objects of great antiquarian interest were turned up, and the Museum of the Society has been much enriched by the discoveries made. It is, however, to be regretted, that owing to the ignorance of the labourers as to their value, several curious articles, found before our first visit to the locality, were either lost or wantonly destroyed. An enormous quantity of bones of animals was everywhere met with. These chiefly consist of remains of deer, oxen, horses, swine, the calf and domestic fowl, the two first being the most numerous. The deer were not those of the extinct gigantic tribe, but consisted of the red and fallow species, though apparently larger than the common deer of those kinds at the present day. The oxen were the ancient extinct species, termed *bos longifrons*, and there did not appear to be any remains of black cattle, except those of the short-horned kind, but, from the size of the bones, evidently belonging to a very small breed. Several perfect skulls, both of the deer and oxen, with antlers or horns attached, were turned up, but at the period of our first visit they had been all broken into fragments, and the greater proportion of them were already disposed of to the dealers in such commodities. In fact, such a vast mine of animal bones was here opened, that two men contracted with Mr. White to perform the greater portion of the work of trenching the rath, having only the bones therein contained for their remuneration; and he informed us that these two labourers had been enabled, for a considerable period, to earn from two to three shillings a day by the sale of the bones at eight pence per stone. It is right to state that no human bones were found, but the remains generally were evidently those of the cattle, which had been slaughtered, for centuries, by the inhabitants of the rath for their daily food. The largest quantity of

bones was found in the inner fosse, having, apparently, been cast there from time to time, when the feast was concluded, in order readily to put them out of the way. However, bones were found in thick layers all through the central mound of the rath to the depth of a couple of feet from the surface.

The cooking places, in which the flesh of these animals was dressed for use, were also found. They consisted of eight or ten small pits, circular in form, and not of greater diameter than a foot and a-half, or depth than two feet. Each was quite full of charcoal, burned stones, and charred bones. Some of the deposits of ashes were as white as turf ashes, whilst there were also remains of wood not entirely consumed. Fragments of a substance, resembling slag or clinkers, were also found in some of these pits, which appeared to have been used as furnaces wherein were forged the rude iron implements of which specimens turned up. These cooking pits and furnaces were not faced with stones, but were simply dug in the floor of the rath.

The ancient Irish mode of cooking flesh in those pits, as described by our annalists and historians, has often been brought under the notice of this Society,¹ and it differs little from the way in which many barbarous people, at the present day, prepare their food. Mr. Mac-Gillivray, in his "Narrative of the Voyage of H. M. S. Rattlesnake," thus describes the manner in which he saw the natives of Australia perform the operation in the neighbourhood of Rockingham bay:—"In the centre of the camp were four large ovens, for cooking their food. These ovens were constructed by digging a hole in the ground, about three feet in diameter, and two feet deep. The hole is then filled to within six inches of the top with smooth, hard, loose, stones, on which a fire is kindled, and kept burning till the stones are well heated. Their food, consisting principally of shell and other fish, is then placed on the stones and baked."²

It was evident, however, that the ancient occupants of the Dunbel rath did not entirely subsist on animal food. Their granivorous propensities were sufficiently testified by the discovery of a number of querns, or ancient hand-mills for grinding corn, of various sizes, and which were generally found in a broken state. A considerable quantity of other rude domestic utensils, calculated to be useful in preparing, cooking, or partaking of their meals, was also brought to light in the course of the excavations—but it may be well to arrange the various implements and ornaments discovered in separate classes, and I shall, therefore, enumerate them according to the material of which each was composed.

STONE ARTICLES.—1. Portions of nine querns, of which we took possession of three of the upper stones for the Museum, one being selected from the circumstance of some rude attempt at ornamentation,

¹ See *Transactions*, vol. i. p. 216.

² Vol. ii. p. 139.

consisting of concentric mouldings, being apparent on its surface, and another from its singular smallness, it being not more than a foot in diameter. The first stone, which seems of the average size, is one foot eight inches in diameter, and appears to have had two handles, which I believe was very unusual. The smaller stone exhibits the mark of the millrind, showing that there was an advance in the art of quern-making at the time it was made.

2. A large quantity of hones and sharpening stones, eight of which are now deposited in the Museum. They are composed, apparently, of the slate of the coal measures of the neighbouring Johnswell hills, and several of them have been much worn by the operation of sharpening tools or weapons.

3. Some piles of round pebbles, evidently intended to be used as sling-stones; they varied from the size of a hen's egg to that of a pigeon's egg, but were more globular. Some specimens have been retained for the Museum.

4. Several small, flat, rounded stones, pierced in the centre, of the class which are by some supposed to have been amulets, and by others declared to have been weights for the distaff, but are better known by the term applied to them by the peasantry—"fairy mill-stones." Many of these had been taken for playthings by the neighbouring children, but we secured a few for the Museum.

5. A quantity of small, flat stones, varying from four inches to two and a-half inches in diameter, and less than half an inch thick; some left in their natural state, others having a small hole drilled through the centre. It is difficult to divine their use, unless it may be suggested that those in the pierced state were in process of being formed into "fairy mill-stones," and that all were intended for that purpose.

6. An oblong stone, about five inches in length, and two inches in width, narrowing to an inch at the upper and thinner end, and rounded at bottom; the shape partly artificial and partly natural. On one side a rudely formed indented elliptical ornament. A hole drilled through the upper end, apparently, with the view of introducing a string to suspend it round a person's neck. It was, probably, a child's toy (plate, figure *p*).

7. Some fragments of circlets of black slate and jet. These exactly correspond with the circlets frequently discovered in England, and there known as Kimmeridge coal-money, and attributed to the Roman period. We have secured three fragments for the Society's Museum, which, when perfect, formed circles, respectively, three and a-half, three, and two and a-half inches in diameter. Two of these are composed of black slate and the third of jet (figure *r*).

8. A stone button, round, and in the shape of a flatted cone, measuring an inch and a-half in diameter, rudely ornamented with concentric circles of incised chevrons and wavy lines. There is evidence of a shank having been inserted, but it was broken away.

This button appears much more modern than all the other stone articles found. The material is blue slate. It is placed in the Museum (figure *h*).

BONE ARTICLES.—1. A very large number of bone pins, of which seven are now in the Museum. They were evidently intended for fastening the hair or dress, and measure from three and a-half to two and a-half inches in length. All have flat heads, some of which are pierced through.¹ They may have been all intended to be thus perforated, but some have remained unfinished (figure *c*).

2. An instrument of bone, polished and brought to a sharp point at one end, at the other shaped so as to be received into a handle of wood. It is five inches long, and may have been used as a kind of awl to make holes for stitching hides together. It is lodged in the Museum (figure *o*).

3. Three or four flatted beads of bone, two of which are in the Museum, respectively measuring an inch, and an inch and a-half, in diameter, showing concentric ornaments, and evidently turned in a lathe.² They are pierced in the centre, as if for the purpose of being strung together, and bear a strong resemblance to the “fairy mill-stones.” The first of these which was turned up was taken by the finder for nothing less than a *gold watch*, and a woman present was so angry at being thus disappointed, that she broke it to atoms, by hurling a large stone upon it (figures *h* and *l*).

4. A comb, formed of several pieces of bone, each about an inch and a-half long, fastened together by being rivetted between two half rounded strips of the same material, rudely ornamented with cross and transverse incised lines. The portion of the back projecting above the strips was regularly scolloped; the teeth appeared to have been cut with a fine saw after the whole had been rivetted together, and were about the eighth of an inch asunder. The rivets were of iron. This interesting relic, which was quite perfect when found (and which bore a strong resemblance to the ancient combs belonging to Mr. W.

¹ The use of the hole in the head appears to have been the insertion of a wire ring. In the excavation at Barrow Furlong, in Northamptonshire, bone and brass pins of this type were found, both of which had rings of brass wire inserted in the perforated heads.—See *Archæologia*, vol. xxxiii. p. 332.

² Amongst the many interesting articles found in the Barrow Furlong excavation, before referred to, was a bone bead of the same size, shape, and style of ornament as the larger of those found in the Dunbel rath, and now in the Kilkenny Museum. Sir Henry Dryden, in his report to the Society of Antiquaries, on the Barrow Furlong discoveries, says of the bead referred to, that it “appears to have been cut

from a large bone. It was found by the arm of a skeleton, about the neck of which there were other beads [of glass]. In the Chinese collection now in London (184), there is a Chinaman with an ivory ring, somewhat resembling this, used to fasten his cloak at the left breast, by the rings being hooked to one part of the cloak; and one of two strings fastened at the other corner of the cloak, being passed through the ring and tied to the other string. It appears very probable that this bone-bead may have been used instead of a brooch, no brooch having been found with this skeleton.” Brooches of the usual Anglo-Saxon type were found with several other skeletons at the spot.—See *Archæologia*, vol. xxxiii. p. 331.

F. Wakeman, discovered in digging in Fishamble-street, Dublin, and exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1853), was unfortunately broken by the finders before we visited the scene of operations, but a fragment (figure *f*) was procured for us by Mr. White, and is now in the Museum. Subsequently, there were some fragments of a comb turned up, having a double row of teeth, like the modern small tooth comb (figure *e*). It, also, was formed of several pieces joined by connecting strips, and rivetted as in the former case. A portion of one of the strips of bone, used in joining some of these combs (figure *e*), was obtained for the Museum, bearing an elegantly incised pattern of that form termed by architects the "fret," and of which we have an example amongst the sculptures that ornament the door-way of the ancient church of Freshford.¹

5. A number of knife-handles (figure *g*), rudely formed from the tines of deers' horns. There were also several fragments of antlers cut up, apparently with the object of being manufactured into such handles. Two specimens are in the Museum.

BRONZE ARTICLES.—1. A bronze pin, described to have been about three inches and a-half long, with a solid knob as a head, ornamented with a zig-zag pattern. This pin was given, before our arrival, to a member of Mr. White's family, and unfortunately lost. That gentleman made every effort to recover it for our Museum, but without success.

2. Two bronze fibulæ, with moveable rings inserted in the heads. The pin of one of them is six inches and a quarter long, and very slender; the ring, one inch four-tenths in diameter, inserted in a square head rudely ornamented (figure *a*). The pin of the other is three inches long, and also very slender, but having a much smaller and more massive ring, nine-tenths of an inch in diameter, fastened by the head of the pin being beaten out thin, and looped round an indentation made in the ring for the purpose (figure *d*). Both of these interesting articles have been secured to the Museum.

3. A piece of bronze, which has partially undergone the process of being shaped into a pin.

4. A fragment of a bronze pin, one and three-fourth inches long, the head shaped into a rude dodecahedron, and pierced; by some conjectured to have been a harp-pin (figure *b*). It is in the Museum.

IRON ARTICLES.—1. A small square bell, being a fac-simile of the ancient Irish religious hand-bells, of which so many exist; but it is

¹ In the discovery of Saxon remains at Barrow Furlong, a double comb of bone, such as that above described, composed of small pieces fastened together by iron rivets passing through bone slips at either side, ornamented with small incised roundels, was found amongst burned human bones in a baked clay urn. The teeth of this comb were very imperfect, and Sir Henry

Dryden says—"the bones were carefully washed and sifted, but no more teeth than those could be found, and therefore it is probable that it [the comb] was in that state when put into the urn. We may suppose it was the most precious article of a lady's toilet whose bones are contained in the urn."—Report of Sir Henry Dryden, *Archæologia*, vol. xxxiii. p. 332.

much smaller than any which I have ever seen. Its height is one and a-half inches; at the mouth it measures one and a-half by one and a quarter inches, and it tapers upwards to the top, like the roof of a house, the ridge being half an inch wide, and retaining the fragments of a handle, partially broken away before the discovery (figure *m*). The tongue was found with the bell, but detached from it, and is one and a-half inches long (figure *n*). This extremely interesting relic, which was, apparently, a small bell used for religious purposes by the inhabitants of the rath, has been secured for the Society's Museum.

2. An iron fibula, much resembling the smaller of those of bronze (figure *d*), except that the ring is not so massive. It is four and a-half inches long. There were also several other iron pins, or fibulæ, all imperfect and much corroded. They are placed in the Museum.

3. An iron javelin-head, well formed, measuring four inches in the length of the blade, by one and a quarter inches at the widest part (figure *g*).

4. A massive axe-head, measuring six inches from the edge to the back, and three and a-half inches broad in the blade. The haft-hole is two and a-half inches long, by one and a-half inches wide. This, when found, must have been a good specimen of the Irish battle-axe, of which, according to Giraldus, they made such destructive use; but, I regret to say, before we succeeded in securing it for the Museum, it had suffered somewhat by having been put to use in chopping timber by the finders (figure *i*).

5. A number of knife-blades, measuring from three and a-half to two and a-half inches in length, irrespective of the spike which ran into the haft (figure *q*). Amongst twelve specimens which have been obtained for the Museum, there is one which had been in process of formation, showing that they were forged on the spot. These knife-blades, to which the bone hafts before noticed belong, fully resemble those described as having been found in the curious artificial islands discovered in the drainage works in Roscommon, and at Lough Gur, county of Limerick, as well as at Dunshaughlin, county of Meath, in papers recently read by Dr. Wilde and Mr. Kelly before the Royal Irish Academy.

6. An iron goad, apparently intended to be fastened on the end of a staff, for the purpose of driving cattle.

7. A chisel, six inches long, rounded, but brought to a square edge.

8. A fragment of a small iron reaping-hook, of the antique shape and character.

9. A light horse-shoe, which evidently had been worn for some time.

10. Some nondescript pieces of wrought iron, of various shapes and sizes, of which there are eleven different specimens in the Museum.

Besides the foregoing, there were a few fragments of a very coarse

baked and glazed pottery ware found, which had evidently formed portions of the household utensils of the ancient inhabitants. There were also turned up some rather modern matters, which must have been dropped on the spot at a comparatively recent period. These consisted of a copper half-penny of William and Mary, with the date 1692; a soldier's button, of brass, apparently of the same period; a Kilkenny tradesman's token, being that struck by John Beavor in the latter end of the seventeenth century, and an ear-ring of brass, which had been gilded, of a pattern which does not seem to have been more ancient than about a century. With respect to the coin of William and Mary, I may mention that it was found about a foot beneath the surface; but in the neighbouring rath, when it was being trenched in 1842, a half-penny of the reign of Charles II., bearing date 1683, was turned up at a depth of seven feet, showing that either the fort had been previously disturbed in the seventeenth century, or that the coin, having been dropped accidentally on the surface, had sunk from its own weight to an extraordinary depth.

The result of our investigation with reference to this rath-opening has thus served to supply us with a not uninteresting glimpse of the *vie privé* of the ancient inhabitants of this country, at least so far as their domestic economy is concerned. Barbarous enough must we esteem their condition, notwithstanding that the ornamental work of their combs, fibulæ, and other articles prove them not to have been without a considerable acquaintance with the arts, and possessed of what may be termed ornamental luxuries; still their provision for domestic comfort, and their ideas as to sanitary arrangements must have been limited in the extreme, seeing that it was evidently their habit to squat round their rude hearths, upon the soft earth, which must have been in so slimy a state as that their personal ornaments, household implements, or warlike weapons, when dropped upon the ground, sank beneath its surface; and when their meals were concluded they carelessly flung away the bones of the animals from which they had gnawed the flesh, suffering them to lie on or sink into the floor in every direction, or to accumulate in heaps in the fosse, which surrounded the habitation, decomposing and emitting the most noxious effluvia. The finding here of articles of stone, bone, bronze, and iron, promiscuously scattered about, may, perhaps, be taken as another proof of the incorrectness of the classification made by some antiquaries, who consider that the use of these different materials in their utensils, weapons, and ornaments must be taken as marking different stages of progression in civilization. But, on the other hand, it must be admitted as very obvious, from the different matters found in the "diggings," that the rath was used as a place of habitation, not only in primæval times, but also within the mediæval period. The bone and bronze pins, the "fairy mill-stones," the bone beads, &c., clearly pertain to the primæval period; the iron knife-blades and other implements evidently are early mediæval; and the querns may belong

to either or both periods. The copper coins, and the soldier's brass button, are of a time when the raths must have long previously been discontinued to be used as dwelling places, and they were, no doubt, casually dropped there—perhaps at the time when the great encampments of the royal armies were held at Bennetts-bridge by king William III. in person, and in the reign of queen Anne, under general de Jean. That these raths were taken advantage of as affording good intrenched positions for out-posts on those occasions may be fairly surmised, not only from the commanding position which they occupy, but also from the fact that the inner rampart or bulwark of the great fort at Dunbel, which I have before supposed to have been the habitation of the aboriginal chieftain of the district, was undoubtedly embrasured for the use of cannon, which was, of course, no part of the original design or work of the fortification.

GLEANINGS FROM COUNTRY CHURCH-YARDS.

BY RICHARD HITCHCOCK.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.—*Gray's Elegy.*

DURING a tour in quest of Ogham inscriptions, in the years 1847, 1848, and 1849, I have had opportunities of visiting many of the church-yards in the south of Ireland. In these sacred places I found numerous remarkable monumental inscriptions, a few of which I have copied; and from these examples I have selected the following, which I now beg leave to present to the Kilkenny Archæological Society. I do this, not from any confidence in the worth of the communication, but in the hope that it may induce other and more competent members of the Society, who may have copies of curious monumental inscriptions, or who may be in the way of obtaining them, to send them to the Secretaries, if for no other purpose than deposit in our Library. I believe that many persons possess copies of inscriptions, the originals of which do not now exist, or, if they do, which may soon give way to modern "improvement." Indeed, the subject of a **MONUMENTARIUM** of even the county of Kilkenny alone, which I believe is rich enough in inscriptions for such a work, appears to me to be one well worth the attention of the Society. Independently of their great historical value, many of the church-yard inscriptions are exceedingly curious; but—and is it not a sad fact?—even these hallowed remains are every year