

Title: Notes: Ancient hand-anvil from Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY CUSTOM.

Mr. John O'Donoghue, *Member*, Lomanaugh, Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry, writes of a St. Patrick's Day custom in his area :—

"On every St. Patrick's morning we get a fresh branch of sally, cut it into a *kippen* (cipín) of about a foot in length, put one end of it into the fire and when it is red, dip it into a vessel of water and then rub the black or burnt end like a pencil so as to make the Sign of the Cross on our clothes over our left breasts, saying at the same time, 'In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' This custom is also in vogue in West Berehaven, where my mother comes from, but as no sally grows there any sort of stick is used instead, and the custom is called 'The Cross of the Kippen.'"

Mr. Seán Ó Suilleabháin, Archivist of the Irish Folklore Commission, kindly supplied the following note on this custom :—

In County Tipperary (Clonmore district) the father of the family cuts a sally rod on St. Patrick's morning, "reddens" it in the fire, and makes a cross with it on the right arm of each member of the family. Around Fermoy area men make a little black cross that morning on the right-hand sleeve of their shirts before putting on their coats, saying "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." A burnt cipín taken out of the fire is used. The custom appears to be observed fairly generally all over the South. In Co. Kildare, young girls and small children formerly wore on the right shoulder a St. Patrick's Cross on the Saint's feast-day. For a description of this Cross see *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society*, Vol. v., No. 6, p. 443. Whether the two types of cross had any close connection I cannot say.

ANCIENT HAND-ANVIL FROM THOMASTOWN,
CO. KILKENNY

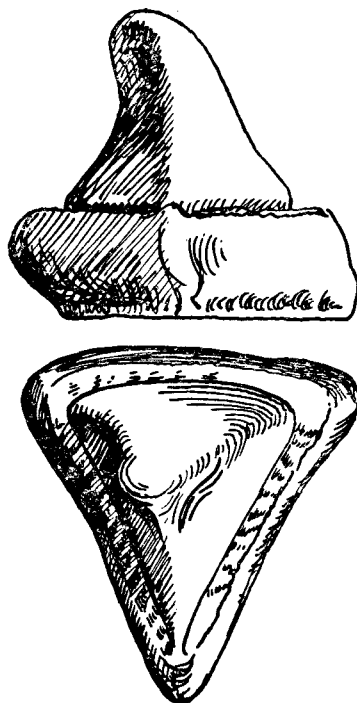
Through the kind offices of Commander D. B. O'Connell, K.M., Vice-President of the Society, the Museum of University College, Cork, has recently been presented with the stone hand-anvil shown in the accompanying illustration, by Mr. Daniel Dilworth, Dromquimma, Kenmare, Co. Kerry. Mr. Dilworth picked up the object by the roadside near Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. The height of the implement is 6.5 cms. and the greatest dimension of the triangular base is 7.5 cms. Mr. Herbert Maryon (King's College, University of Durham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) the well-known authority on prehistoric metallurgy, contributes the following note on the anvil.

S. P. Ó R.

The stone implement shown in the illustration originally belonged to one of those early metalworkers of Ireland who have left us so fair a legacy

of fine craftsmanship. It is the hand-anvil of a smith, one of those skilled workmen who made the weapons, the domestic utensils, as well as the gold ornaments of a community.

The material is Lydian stone, better known as Touchstone. Pieces of this black stone are commonly used to-day by jewellers for testing gold.



Goldsmith's Hand-anvil from Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (§).

Lydian stone is a hard quartzite rock, such as may be found in the Magillicuddy Reeks and in Connemara.

The beak of the anvil is a triangular pyramid with rounded corners, rising from a flat base. When in use the tool would be held in the palm of the hand, the fingers holding both it and the wire or other piece of metal which was being shaped.

The tool appears to have been in use for years, for the surfaces where the hammer blows fell are worn into smooth shallow hollows.

In a crevice on one of these surfaces there remains a flake of yellow metal. It is almost certainly gold, but the fragment is so minute that it was thought better to leave it in position rather than to dislodge it in order to make certain.

HERBERT MARYON.