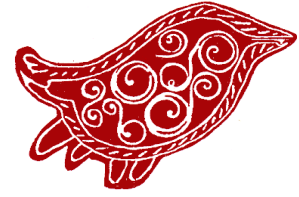


Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

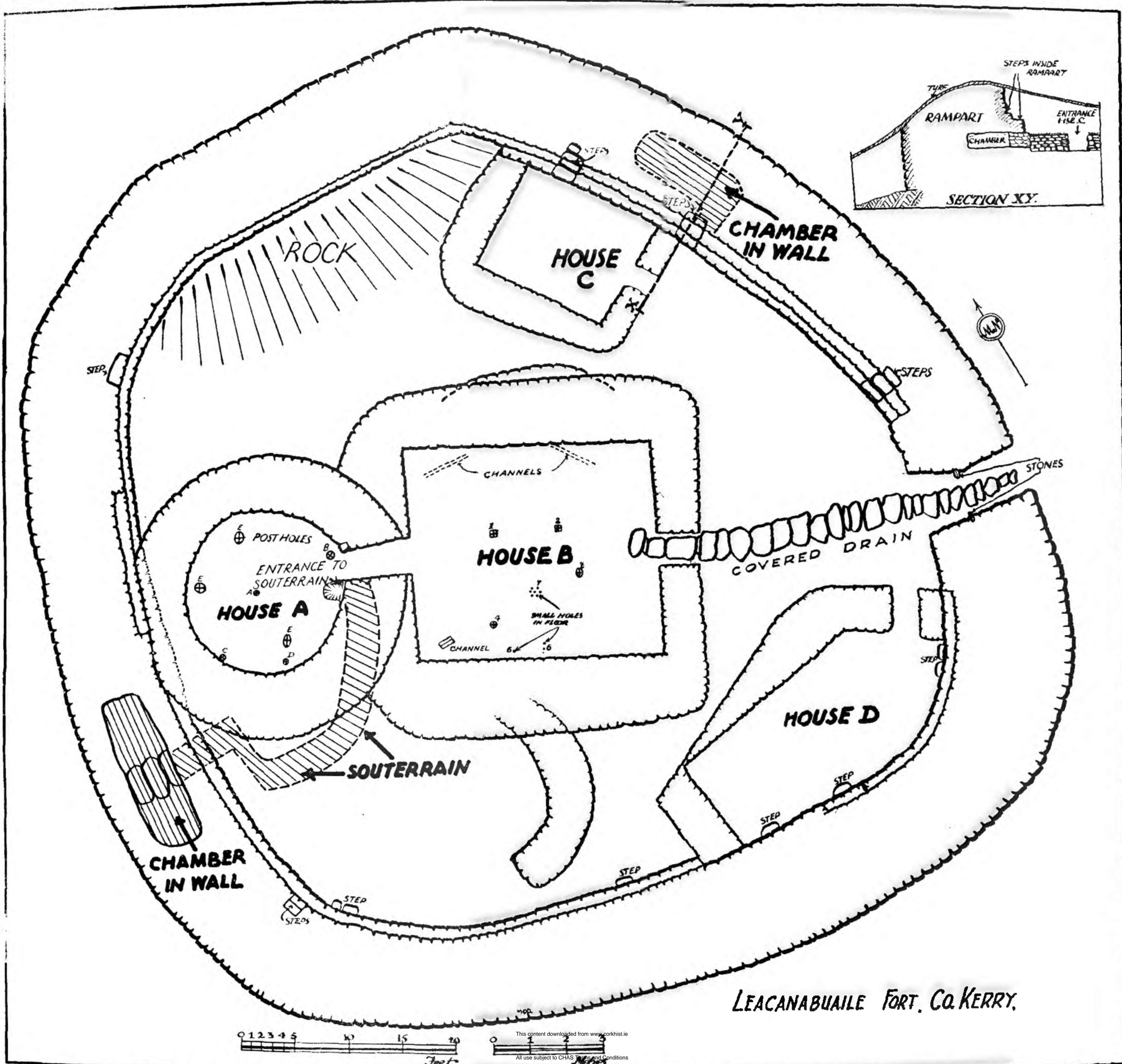


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LEACANABUAILE FORT, CO. KERRY.

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Journal of the Cork Historical and Archæological Society.

(Forty-ninth year of Issue)

The Excavation of Leacanabuaile Stone Fort, near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry.

By SEÁN P. Ó RÍORDÁIN and J. B. FOY.

The stone fort known locally as Leacanabuaile, the excavation of which, carried out during the summers of 1939 and 1940, it is proposed to describe, does not appear on the later editions of the O.S. map¹ of the district, though it was shown on the 1842 Survey. Although not very conspicuous before excavation, the external wall face of the enclosing wall was clearly visible in a few places. Perhaps, the absence of *cathair* from the name accounts for its being omitted in the surveys,² since *Cahergal* and *Caher na Gath* (the latter not any better preserved than Leacanabuaile) are shown.

Leacanabuaile is one of the "cathairs" or stone forts which are numerous on the western coast of Iveragh, and which are typical of the western coast of Ireland in general. Quarter of a mile to the south-east is Caherghéal,³ the walls of which are still well preserved and serve as a landmark in the district. Three hundred yards to the north from our site is Cathair na gCath (O.S. *Caher na Gath*). Slightly more than a mile and three-quarters in a south-easterly direction stands the site of Cathair Saidhbhin, from which the capital of Iveragh takes its name.

Like many other Iveragh forts, Leacanbuaile is situated on a massive rock-eminence, one of the masses of rock which are a feature of the geology of the district. The fort, therefore, commands an excellent view of the sea—with Valentia Harbour on the south-west and Dingle Bay and Coosrom Harbour on the north-west—and of the neighbouring district. The rock on which the fort stands is steep-sided on three sides, and only on the east, where the entrance was placed was there a comparatively easy ascent.

¹ Co. Kerry 6" sheet 79—it is to be found 8.2 cms. from the north of the map and 43.6 cms. from the east. It is in the townland of Kimego West, Barony of Iveragh, and is about two miles from Caherciveen. Several forts shown on the early edition of the map are not marked on the later editions.

² The translation given locally to the name of this fort was "the flags of the fighting." Three large flags were visible, lying haphazardly near the centre of the fort. This translation is hardly correct. The accepted meaning of *buaile* is "an enclosure for cattle" (a use of the word not now known locally). The meaning of the name is, therefore, "the flags of the enclosure"—*Leaca na Buaile*.

³ Described Westropp: *T.R.I.A.* XXXI (1896–1901), 699. Dunraven: *Notes on Irish Architecture*, I, 22.

The nearest water-supply is provided by a well which is half way between Leacanabuaille and Cathair na gCath. This well gives an almost unfailing supply of water.

While the site could, before excavation, be recognised as a stone fort, there was little to indicate the nature of the structures subsequently discovered. The walls had fallen and the whole structure was covered with a light earthen sod. The inner wall-face of the enclosing wall was discernible in two places only, and only a few feet showed there. The external wall-face could be traced around most of the circumference.

Inside the external face, the ground rose to form, along the enclosing wall, a slight bank surrounding the fort. The side of this bank sloped steeply inwards for a distance of about ten feet and then rose gradually to indicate the main inner structures. The outline of a circular house was marked by a slight rise in the western area of the site (House A). A rectangular structure (House B) in front of that structure could also be traced. What appeared to be a dividing wall in this latter structure proved, on excavation, to be merely fallen stones higher than the surrounding area. On the eastern side, the surrounding bank was low and the top of one erect stone marked the site of the entrance across which two large flags were lying.

During the excavation, the whole of the area enclosed was cleared of collapsed stone and debris. The surrounding wall was completely uncovered, as was also a strip at the base outside it so as to expose the whole of the outer wall-face. Excavation revealed that the site on which the fort had been built was not level. It sloped as much as five feet from west to east. On the northern side of the fort, the surrounding wall was built on a large boss of rock. These irregularities of the site caused the outline of the fort to be irregular (as may be seen from the plan Pl. VIII). Its internal diameter varied from slightly under 60 feet to somewhat over 70 feet. The wall was about 10 feet thick at the base but narrowed towards the top. The batter on the inside was, in places, almost one-in-four, while that on the outside was almost one-in-three. The batter was not uniform, however, and in places the wall-face was approximately vertical, (*e.g.*, on section XY on the north-eastern side of fort). The wall was well faced with skilfully-placed stones on the outside and the inside surfaces, but the interior was filled with a rubble filling. The stone used was the thin shale slabs of the local rock, and the excellent surface resulting from its skilful use was characteristic not only of the surrounding wall but also of those of the buildings in the fort. In general, under the outer wall-face was a foundation layer of large slabs which projected beyond the surface of the wall. As well as the narrowing caused by the batter, the wall-top was also narrowed by reason of the inner face being stepped, thereby leaving an 11" wide ledge, or narrow parapet on which to stand, and to look out over the wall-top. It is notable that this terrace did not run horizontally but was influenced in level by the contours of the ground, and, while the top of the wall had collapsed, one may presume that it also failed to run horizontally but was



LEACANABUAILE FORT.

1. General view of site before excavation ; 2. View of entrance before excavation ; 3. House B ;
4. Souterrain Chamber in S.W. wall ; 5. Outside of rampart showing large foundation stone.

rather built parallel to the terrace. This ledge ran round the greater part of the circumference of the fort. A second ledge existed below this on the northern side of the enclosure and ran from the common termination of both for a distance of about 44 feet. These ledges did not reach the entrance on either side but stopped about 5 feet from it.

At ten points along the inside of the enclosing wall steps were constructed to give easier access to the terraces or wall-top. These were constructed by leaving steps in the wall above the first terrace or by leaving stones jutting out from the wall surface between this terrace and floor level.

The entrance is on the eastern side of the fort. The southern side of the entrance passage is straight and runs approximately east and west. The width of this passage-way at the outer end is 4'6"; the two sides run parallel for a distance of 6', where two upright stones were erected. These stones are about 3' high over floor level, one is 6" thick and 15" wide, the other 5" thick and 21" wide. They project from 6" to 8" from the surface of the wall. At the inner side of the entrance the passage-way widens to a width of 6' at the inner end, by reason of the northern side of the entrance passage bending back at an angle. Large stones were selected for building the sides of this passage-way as well as for the external wall face; these surfaces are inferior in finish to the internal wall-face where smaller stones were used.

It is possible that the entrance was originally lintelled,¹ and that the two large slabs, which lay on the surface here, once served as lintels.

Inside the fort four houses were revealed by the excavation as well as a souterrain, a wall-chamber and the traces of houses under House B. The structures are described under the letters as used on the plan.

House A. (*Pl. X: 1 and 3*).

Opposite the entrance and built against the western side of the enclosing wall is a round house of clochán type, 14' 9" in internal diameter. The inner surface of the wall of this house was very well finished, but the stones are now badly cracked. In contrast to this is the poor finish of the outer face. The wall is over 5' in thickness. The wall of the house is built directly against the inner face of the wall of the fort and hence its thickness is reduced considerably where it meets the latter on the western side of the house. The height of the wall as found, was 5' 6" above floor-level. From a height of 4', the wall was corbelled, which would suggest that the house was roofed in clochán style, but the finding of several post-holes in the floor gave evidence to the contrary. A total of seven post-holes was found, which are shown by letters in the plan. The diameters and depths in inches of these post-holes were respectively: (a) 7, 12; (b) 9, 10; (c) 7, 9; (d) 8, 8; (e) three larger oval post-holes, the long axes of which varied 13" to 18" and the depths from 5" to 10". While it is possible that these post-holes represent merely structural supports used during the building of the clochán, we are more inclined to think of them as evidence of roof supports, which show that the structure was narrowed by corbelling a certain distance only and then was roofed by means of thatch or such material, supported on posts set in the floor.

¹ For examples of lintelled entrances, see Westropp, *op. cit.*, 658.

Immediately at the inner (northern) corner of the entrance to House A was a post-hole, 1' square and 1' deep. A small upright stone embedded at one side was obviously a packing stone and, from the position of the post-hole, it is clear that it held the door-post.

House B. (*Pl. IX: 3 and Pl. X: 3*).

This is a rectangular house which covers the central area of the fort and gives entrance to House A. Its internal measurements are 23' 4'' by 20' 2'' and the walls were preserved to a height of 5' above floor level in the west and to a height of 3' in the east. It is not perfectly rectangular—being rather trapeziform in shape—having an angle at the southern corner of 88°. In the north-east corner the rock outcrops above floor level. The wall of this house is 6' thick but, as it was built later than, and against the round house, it is only 10'' thick outside the entrance to the round house. Great care must have been taken with the erection of this wall because as it stands to-day, its excellent finish would do credit to any tradesman. At the corners the walls bonded into each other. The internal face of the wall overhangs 1 in 12, while the inward slope of its external face is 1 in 3 at the base, and 1 in 8 at a height of about 3'. Four large post-holes were discernible in the floor. Two of these were round and two were square. Small stones stood upright at the sides of the square holes. A number of smaller stake-holes was also found.

The post-holes in this house are denoted by numbers on the plan; their respective dimensions in inches are as follows: (1) 7 x 7, depth 10; (2) square 7 x 7, depth 9; (3) oval 12; depth 10; (4) round, diameter 8, depth 12; (5) round, diameter 3, depth 7; (6) group of three holes, 4'' apart, forming arc, diameters 3, depth 6; (7) group of seven holes, six forming circle of radius 6, one hole at centre of circle, diameters 2, depths 5.

In three corners there were channels with flagged sides but they did not lead to the main drain (described below). The two which run by the northern wall, forming angles of approximately 28° with it, are each about 5' long, and the end of the eastern one goes under the wall. The purpose of these channels is not clear.

Lying near the centre of house B, over the habitation layer, was found a large slab, irregular in outline (33'' by 27''; thickness 8''), having a hole (diameter 8'') in the centre. The hole is not regularly circular, being in outline a square with rounded corners. The purpose of this slab is not certain. It may possibly have acted as a device for steadying a central post set in it, or it may have been set in the roof to allow the egress of smoke from the fire. Its having been found *over* the habitation layer points to the latter alternative.

The entrance to the rectangular house is 3' 1'' in width, and is opposite the entrance to the fort. A peculiar feature is noted here. A characteristic trait of early Irish architecture is that doors and windows slope inwards so that the top is narrower than the bottom. At this entrance the characteristic slope is present; it is absent from the round house entrance and from the main entrance.



1. General View of Fort from West after excavation.



2. House D.



3. Central and Northern portion of Fort.

LEACANABUAILE FORT.

Through the main entrance, across the eastern area of the fort, through the entrance to House B, and extending about 2' into the interior of this house, was a covered drain, dug in the clay.¹ This averaged about 15'' in width and 4'' in depth. It was covered along its whole length with flags and had a double covering of flags from the entrance of House B outwards, the upper layer being larger and thicker than those underneath. The eastward slope of the fort would have caused this drain to carry off water to the outside of the fort.

The method of roofing House B must be largely a matter of conjecture. A house as wide as this could scarcely have been successfully roofed by corbelling in the manner of the Gallerus Oratory.² The internal width of House B is 20' 2'', while that of Gallerus is only 10' 2''. We must, however, remember that while the side-walls at Gallerus are about 4' in thickness, those of House B are about 6' thick. This thickness of wall would enable the structure to be corbelled inwards to such a height as to give ample head-room. From this height it is possible that the roof was completed by means of a thatched timber construction and that the larger post-holes helped to support such a roof. The purpose of the small stake-holes must have been different. They were probably used to support pot-hangers or for some other domestic purpose.

House C. (*Pl. X: 1 and 3*).

For this structure in the north-eastern side of the fort the enclosing wall was utilised as one side wall. The house-wall was 2' 9'' in thickness and the entrance 2' wide. The internal measurements are about 13' by 11'.

The corners were right-angled internally but were rounded externally, as was also the case with the corners of House B. The walls remained to a height of nearly 2'; they do not batter.

House D. (*Pl. X: 2*).

This house was built between the south-eastern corner of House B and the enclosing wall of the fort. The entrance is 2' from the enclosing wall and is 3' wide. The wall at the entrance is 4' thick and it narrowed to a thickness of 1'. This narrowing was necessary to give access to the south-western portion of the fort, showing that House B was in existence when House D was built. The western wall is 4' thick and rather poorly built, especially on the outside. The floor, for the most part, is underlying rock.

Circular Houses prior to House B. (*Pl. VIII*).

Remains of two other circular houses were also discovered. One, very definite, was found south of House B; the other, not so distinct, just appeared under the wall of House B on the northern side. The wall of the former is 2' 9'' in thickness. The floor level of the house enclosed by

¹ For description of similar drains in "courtyard" houses, see H. O'Neill Hencken: "An excavation by H.M. Office of Works at Chysauster, Cornwall, 1931," *Archaeologia*, 83 (1933), 242.

² For plans and sections of Gallerus see H. G. Leask: "The Characteristic Features of Irish Architecture . . ." in *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, I (1936), 13.

this wall is lower than that of House A. At excavation, the height of this wall was 4"—being the height of one course of stones on the outer face. Both the houses represented by these wall portions predated House B, since the walls of this house were built upon the remains of the earlier round structures.

Souterrain. (*Pl. IX: 4*).

To the left-hand side of the entrance to House A, and immediately under the inner wall-face, was an aperture in the floor, giving access to an underground passage which led to a chamber under the wall to the west. When discovered, it was difficult to enter this passage as the flag overhead had slipped out of place. Once safely inside, a man could crawl along without any great difficulty.

Earth had accumulated in the passage. The passage is 3' wide and varies in height from 25" to 34"; its length is 36'. The side walls are built of small flags and it is flagged overhead. The floor descends as one proceeds from the entrance. It runs southwards for a distance of 10', then curves and goes westwards for a distance of 13', turns and goes northwards 3'. This short length cuts through the underlying solid rock and is very narrow, 1½' approximately, and low. Where the passage was thus difficult to go through there is a flag 2" thick and 18" high placed askew overhead. A semi-circle of radius 9" was cut out of the base of this flag, allowing one to pass without risk of a head injury. Having got through the narrow passage, the souterrain turns westwards, is 30" wide and continues 12' to the end. For the last two feet the side walls approach each other to form an angle.

The souterrain goes under the enclosing wall at the western end for a distance of 7', where there was an opening left in the overhead slabs to give access to a chamber which was constructed in the enclosing wall of the fort. This chamber, 15' long, 4' to 5' wide and over 3' high, showed remarkable ingenuity in its construction, being roofed with a series of lintels which ran across the breadth of the chamber.

Wall Chamber near House C.

Immediately outside House C and on the south of it, there were three steps, the lowest formed by a projecting stone, the second and third built in the enclosing wall. Under the lowest step was an opening, 18" wide by 15" high, leading into a chamber under the wall. This chamber is 10' long, 4' wide and about 27" high, its long axis running parallel with the wall facing. It has a lintelled roof and the corners were rounded. The sides were well built with small flags. It was damp inside and roots had penetrated through the roof and the sides.

The relative dates of the buildings.

While, as will appear from the description of the finds, the occupation of the fort cannot with certainty be given an absolute date, it is possible to say something of the relative dates of the structures contained in it. The wall-chamber and the souterrain were evidently built at the time of the

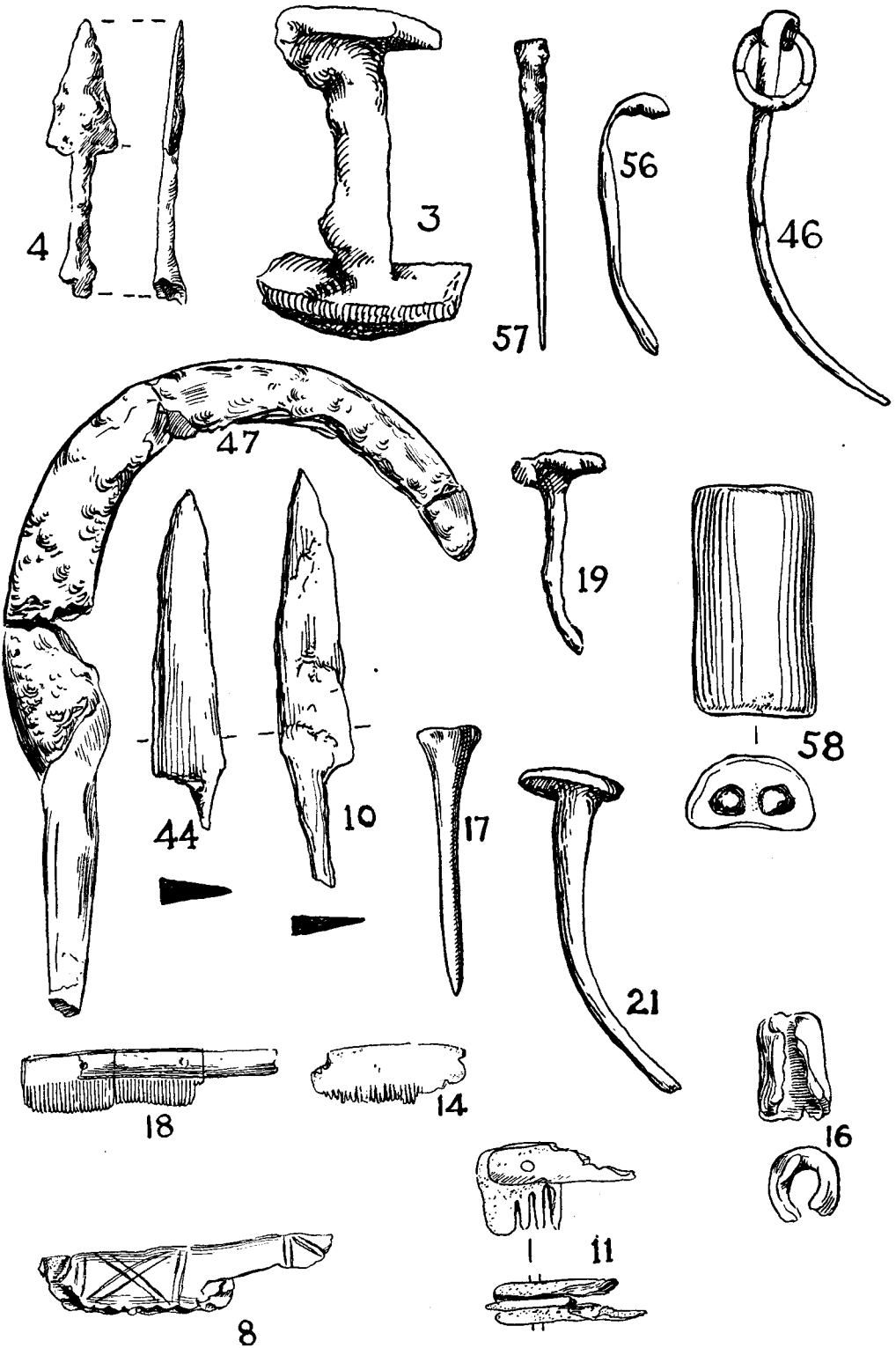


Fig. 1.—OBJECTS FROM LEACANABUAILE FORT.

(Nos. 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, 58 : bone ; No. 16 : lead ; all others : iron.
No. 47 : $\frac{1}{4}$; all others : $\frac{2}{3}$).

construction of the fort itself, since both structures involve the incorporation of a chamber in the rampart, and since the stone-work of the latter gives no indication of this having been done as a secondary work. The three round houses (House A and the two represented by remains under House B) are the earliest houses in the fort. They are clearly earlier than House B since the collapsed walls of two of them lay under the walls of House B and since this house was built against, but not bonded into, the wall of House A. House D is later than House B since its wall was narrowed to leave a passage between it and the wall of B. House C, because of its similarity to D, we would regard also as a late structure.

Finds. (*Figs. 1 and 2*).

The objects found will be described in groups, under the material of which they are composed. (The numbers used in describing the objects and on the illustrations are those given them when they were catalogued after discovery).

IRON.—The majority of the finds were of iron, but some were mere fragments and many were so rusted as to make it difficult to decide what the objects were.

12. Plough-sock, length 254 mm., breadth 124 mm. Found in habitation layer in House A. A plough-sock of this type would have been used on a wooden plough. A similar specimen was found in the (Viking Period) stone fort, Carrigalla II, at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick.¹

Knives.—Three iron knives were found. Two are illustrated, the third is very badly corroded. One (No. 10) originally had a long tang which was found broken from it and was in contact with a piece of bone which may have been portion of the handle. The knives are similar to those produced by almost all Early Christian period sites in Ireland (*e.g.*, Carrigalla, Garranes, Cahercommaun, Ballinderry) and are of a type that survived into mediaeval times. (Caherguillamore).

4. An object which may be an arrow head or may be a barb from a barbed implement, such as a fish-spear,² came from the habitation layer on the western side of House B. It is 58 mm. long and seems to have had a round socket at the lower end.

Nails.—Two identifiable iron nails were found, lengths 72 mm. and 42 mm. respectively. Both have large flat heads.

3. An iron bolt having a large flattened head at either end. Found as No. 4. It looks like the iron-work of a door or possibly of a boat.

Pins.—One straight pin (No. 57), length 65 mm. and one bent piece of iron (No. 56) which may have been a pin were found. A very rusted object was at first thought to be an iron fibula (of Iron Age type) but when it was cleaned (in the National Museum, by the kindness of Dr. J. Raftery), it gave no indication of its original form.

¹ Another is figured by Wood-Martin. *The Lake-Dwellings of Ireland*, XXXIII, 8.

² *cf.* Wood-Martin, *op. cit.*, 145.

47. A sickle was found inserted in the wall of House D, length 280 mm. It may be modern but it was, however, covered to a depth of 18" by collapsed stone.¹

As well as these identifiable iron objects there are a number of fragments so oxidised that it is not possible to say what they were. In general, the iron from the site is in very bad condition. A quantity of iron slag was also found.

BONE. *Combs.*—Fragments of four bone combs were found. They are all of the one-sided type—having a row of teeth on one side only. Each comb consisted of three bone pieces—a central flat plate in which the teeth were cut, to which was fitted with iron rivets two side pieces. The two-sided bone comb is much more common on Early Christian sites in Ireland,² though the single-sided type has also been noted. Two of the Leacanabuile combs (Nos. 14 and 18) have markedly fine teeth, another feature which distinguishes them from the majority of bone hair combs in Ireland. We cannot find that these features have any chronological implications.

17. Bone, in length 56 mm., pointed at one end.

58. Piece of bone, length 48 mm. of semi-circular cross-section, pierced along its length.

BRONZE.—Only one object of bronze was found. This is a bronze ring-headed pin of which, though broken in several fragments, it was possible to have a restored drawing made. The pin is 95 mm. long and the ring is 17 mm. in external diameter.

LEAD.—A piece of metal (No. 16), very oxidised, curved to a tubular shape, proved on examination to be lead with a trace of iron in it.³

STONE.⁴ *Whetstones.*—Seven whetstones were found; all except one are figured. Some (48, 51, 53) are naturally suitably-shaped stones, little altered by use. On the other hand, Nos. 49 and 50 are carefully shaped, of square cross-section, tapering to either end. No. 34 suggests an axe in shape and may be an axe which had lost its cutting edge and which was used as a whetstone.

33. *Stone Disc.*—This is part of a well-shaped flat circular object of fine-grained sandstone, 110 mm. in diameter and 9 mm. in thickness. It may be paralleled by similar finds from other excavations⁵ of various periods, though it is better finished than is usual. Such objects are generally regarded as pot-covers, though there is some doubt if this be a correct suggestion as to their use.

45. Spindle-whorl; diameter, 28 mm.

20. Loom weight; diameter, 83 mm.

¹ Wood-Martin, *op. cit.*, 176. The outline of the Leacanabuile specimen is nearer that figured by Wood-Martin (said to be from Lisnacrogher) than it is the present-day sickle.

² Hencken: *Cahercommaun* (Extra Volume R.S.A.I., 1938), 42. Wilde.

³ Information kindly supplied by Mr. J. R. O'Donoghue, M.Sc., Chemistry Department, University College, Cork.

⁴ Ó Riordáin, *P.R.I.A.*, 45 (1940), 159.

⁵ Mr. C. S. O'Connell, B.A., B.Comm. (University College, Cork) has kindly examined the stone objects and informs us that Nos. 20, 34, 45 and 50 are of shale; No. 48 is micaceous sandstone; all the others are sandstone.

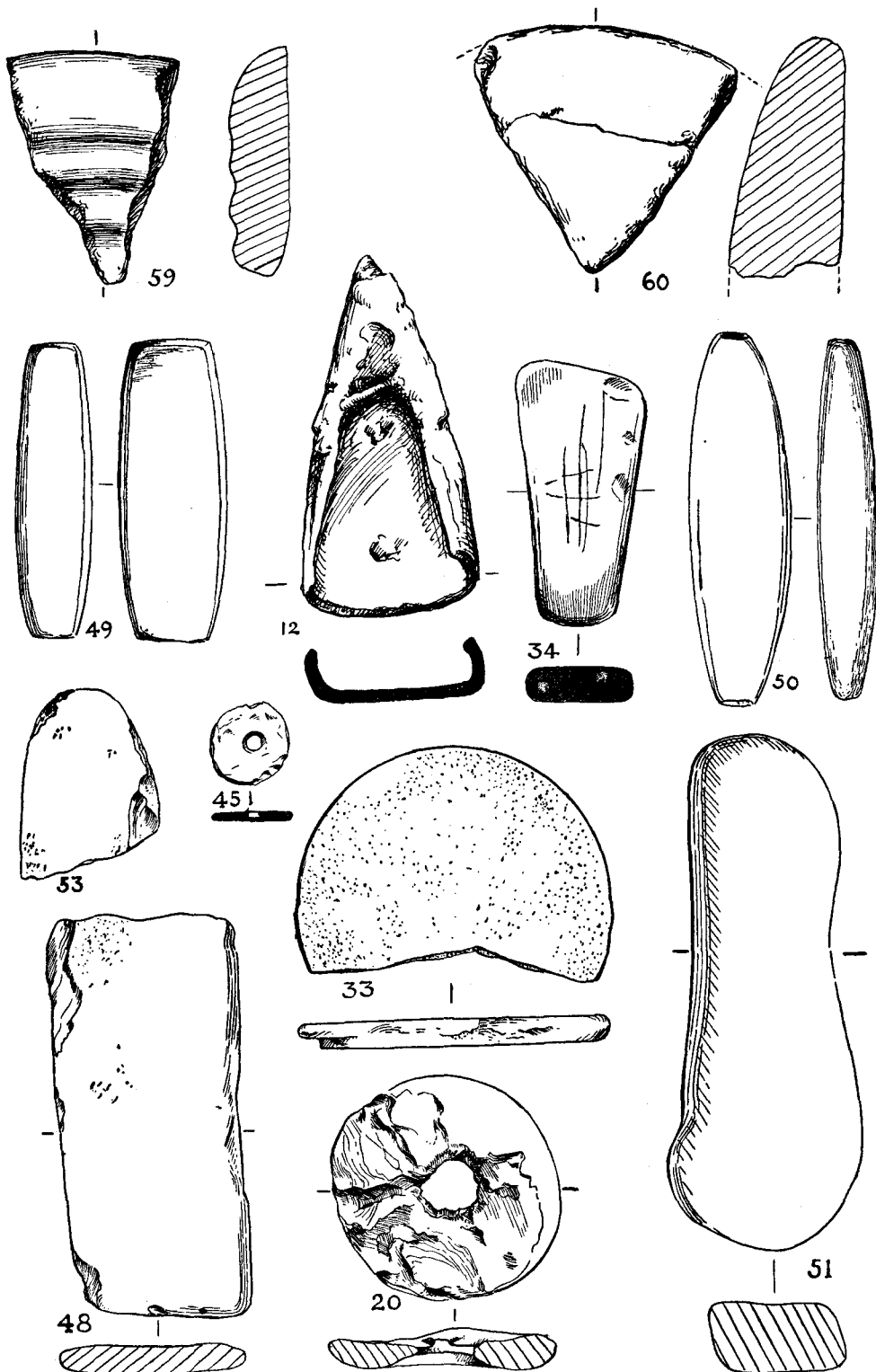


Fig. 2.—OBJECTS FROM LEACANABUAILE FORT.

(All stone except No. 12: iron. Nos. 59, 60 and 12: $\frac{1}{2}$; all others: $\frac{2}{3}$.)

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Querns.—Five fragments of querns were found ; two (Nos. 59 and 60) are figured. All were pieces of upper stones. One (59) is ornamented with concentric grooves on its upper surface. As well as these fragments which are from comparatively small querns one stone was found which is unusually large and flat ; its diameter is about 700 mm., thickness 7.6 mm. This stone was found lying on the ground in the angle formed by the wall of the rectangular house with the foundation of the round house over which its southern wall was built. This large flat quern therefore pre-dated both buildings.

As well as the stones described there were also found some (six) round stones, such as might have come from the sea-shore, which showed signs of having been used as hammer-stones, the ends being abraded by use.

Stone Mortar.—A stone, approximately rectangular in outline (320 mm. long ; 240 mm. broad ; 120 mm. greatest thickness) with portion of a long hollow (20 mm. deep) worn in it, as from use as a mortar, was found in the wall of House B. The stone was broken so that only portion of the hollow (90 mm. by 80 mm.) remained.

FLINT AND QUARTZ.—Three fragments of flint and three pieces of crystalline quartz were found. The flint appears to be from glacial pebbles and does not appear to have been worked.

Bones and Marine Mollusca.

The report on the bones and shells found (there was a sack-full of each) is kindly provided by Mr. A. W. Stelfox, M.R.I.A., to whom we wish to offer our best thanks for his co-operation.

The remains comprised a miscellaneous collection of bones of mammals, birds and fish, as well as shells of marine mollusca. All probably had been used as food by the inhabitants of the site, as most of the larger bones had been much broken, no doubt to get at the marrow contained in them.

The details of this collection of bones are as follows, arranged roughly in order of quantity :

Mammals.

Ox.—The remains of this domestic animal must have formed about 90 per cent. of the bulk of the bones. Both young and old animals were represented.

Sheep (or Goat).—Numerous remains : mostly of young animals. It is probable that most, if not all, of the remains belonged to sheep ; but there is one first thoracic vertebra which agrees best with that of a goat in the Museum collection. I cannot, however, say that it represents goat.

Pig.—Rarer than is usual in "middens" and the remains mostly belonged to young animals.

Red Deer.—Three toe bones and a few fragments of bones and antler, all of which could have come from one individual.

Grey Seal.—One tooth and three bones from a hind flipper.

Horse.—A small horse—pony size—is represented by three bones and nine teeth, all of which could have belonged to one individual.

Dog.—One left metacarpal. Very short and stout.

Badger.—One bone of a young animal.

Birds.

The bird remains amount to thirty-three bones or fragments thereof, mostly broken, chipped or in some way damaged. Therefore their identification has been difficult and the result must be taken with caution. I believe, nevertheless, that the following birds are represented :

Heron.—Two fragments : young.

Duck.—Eight bones or fragments that will fit those of the Garganey, but may have belonged to a very large teal. The latter is a common bird in Ireland at present and the former a rather rare straggler.

Goose ?—One bone, badly broken, which may have belonged to a small goose (Barnacle Goose ?) or to a very large duck.

Cormorant.—Seven bones or fragments.

Puffin.—Eleven bones fit those of this bird well.

Razorbill ?—Two fragments that may belong to this species of sea-bird.

Species ?—The tibia of a large nestling that might possibly have belonged to a fledgeling gannet—a bird which was formerly much eaten in Scotland, near its nesting colonies. The Little Skellig and Bull Rock are well-known Kerry resorts of this bird.

Marine Mollusca.—The most abundant of the shells is the common Periwinkle, which represents about 75 per cent. of the shells, Limpet comes next (about 20 per cent.). The other 5 per cent. is represented by Oyster, Limpet, “Bucky” (= *Buccinum undatum*), Edible Cockle, Mussel, *Tapes decussatus* L., *Tapes virgineus* L.

Conclusions.

The finds from Leacanabuaile are comparatively poor in number and character and are, further, such as give no good chronological data on which the occupation of the fort might be dated. Most are types that have a long archaeological history in this country. The general nature of the finds and particularly the evidence of the bronze ring-headed pin suggests a date in the Early Christian Period. The large flat quern, mentioned as having been found under the wall of the round house that preceded House B, might be used as an argument for a late date but that such querns were used early in the Christian Period in this country is shown by the finding of one in the large fort at Garranes, Co. Cork¹ the occupation of which is dated to about 500 A.D.

The close dating of the Leacanabuaile site is not possible, but it may be noted that the finds correspond to material from sites dated by more significant objects to the ninth and tenth centuries A.D.²

The poverty of the finds suggests the poverty of the inhabitants. This

¹ Report in the press, *P.R.I.A.*

² Cahercommaun, Ballinderry Crannog No. 1, Carrigalla (Lough Gur).

statement must, however, be qualified; the poverty reflected by the find evidence is a poverty of the more valuable objects of ornament and utility which have come from other sites elsewhere in Ireland. Elaborate brooches and glass objects, for instance, are notable by their absence. Bronze is rare and there is no evidence of its having been worked on the site—crucibles are not forthcoming; iron working is evidenced by the iron slag found. On the other hand, the inhabitants were probably quite well provided with the more vital necessities of life. They had, as has the western sea-board to-day, a dual source of supply—the sea and the land. The plough-sock and the querns show that grain was cultivated, the bones show that domestic animals were kept and eaten, while the fare was added to by the collection of shell-fish from the coast and by the capture of birds, particularly sea-birds. Some of the charcoal from the fires has kindly been examined in the Chemistry Department of University College, Cork, and by Mr. G. F. Mitchell, Trinity College, Dublin. While it was not possible to be definite, the opinions expressed suggest that the fuel was peat.

In the matter of houses, the inhabitants at Leacanabuaile were comparatively well provided. The technique of the building, and, particularly the large size of House B bear favourable comparison with structures from other excavated sites. The evidence of the structures shows that on this site the rectangular house, built in corbelling technique, is later than the similarly constructed circular house—a conclusion already suggested on typological grounds.¹

We thus see in the Leacanabuaile inhabitants a community leading a self-supporting existence, comparatively well housed, as judged by primitive standards, fed on the products of their land and the neighbouring sea-coast, but poor in articles implying trade or other connections.

Conservation.

We are glad to state that Leacanabuaile has been taken into State Guardianship and so is afforded protection as a National Monument. As part of our second season's work on the site, the walls of the fort and the enclosed buildings were restored by building up, to some extent, the destroyed portions, so as to provide a level top surface which should stand the better the ravages of time. The lines of the old work have been carefully followed and the new building has been marked off from the old with a thin line of concrete.² An easy means of access to the souterrain has been provided from the outer face of the enclosing wall. The roof of the wall-chamber of the souterrain was re-built by replacing the lintels. The only other feature it has been found necessary to add is a stile at the entrance which prevents animals from entering. The large holed stone found in House B, the stone mortar and the large quern were set in cement in House B, so that they may be conveniently inspected.

¹ Campbell: "Notes on the Irish House," *Folklore*, 1928: 2, pp. 180, 189. Campbell's suggestion that the rectangular corbelled building developed from the juxtaposition of two clocháns may be correct, but one must not regard this as the beginning of the rectangular house-plan in Ireland as is shown by the discovery of a rectangular house of Neolithic date at Lough Gur.

² The skill with which the workmen used the material to build in the old manner is a good example of survival of a technique in a given environment.

Acknowledgments.

As well as those whose help is mentioned in the report, we wish to thank Mr. E. Brown, B.A., and Mrs. S. P. Ó Ríordáin for the drawings of the finds, and Mr. M. O'Dwyer for preparing the plan for publication. Permission to excavate was granted by Messrs. W. O'Neill and T. W. O'Connell, executors, on behalf of the owner, Mr. P. O'Connor. The site was brought to our notice in the first instance by Captain D. B. O'Connell, K.M., and Mr. P. F. O'Neill of Cahirciveen. The excavation was carried out by means of a Government Special Employment Grant. Mr. H. G. Leask, Inspector of National Monuments, visited the site and made valuable suggestions.

Structure in Emlagh Townland. (*Pl. XI and Fig. 3*).

During the excavation of the Leacanabuaile fort, a structure situate less than a quarter of a mile to the north-west of the fort was also examined. The site in Emlagh townland,¹ is on a rocky plateau and the

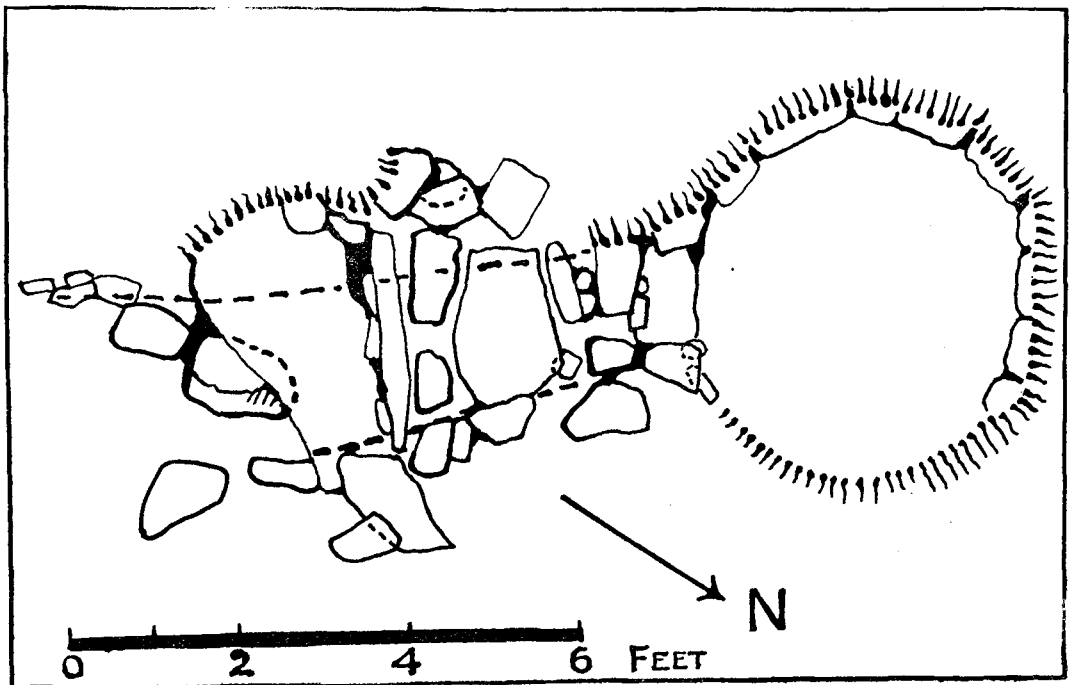


Fig. 3.—STRUCTURE IN EMLAGH TOWNLAND.

structure which was covered by a growth of gorse, was brought to notice by reason of its accidental discovery by men quarrying stones for road-work. It was reported by Mr. P. J. O'Neill to Captain D. B. O'Connell, who brought it to our notice.

¹The site is on the land of Mr. M. Golden, who not only kindly gave permission to excavate, but also gave every assistance in the case of this excavation and that of Leacanabuaile.



1. Outerend of Passage (before excavation).



2. Roof of Passage.



3. Circular Portion.

STRUCTURE (kiln ?) IN EMLAGH TOWNLAND.

The structure consisted of a lintelled passage, which opened into a circular area, all sunk below the ground surface. The passage was 5' 10" long and at the mouth was 25" wide and 19" high; it became narrower and lower towards the entrance to the circular area, where it was 15" wide and 15½" high. This passage was covered with flags on which were placed smaller stones; the floor was also flagged but it was not completely covered, as the flags, which were small and centrally placed, did not extend to the sides where the yellow clay was visible. The sides were built with upright flags, average width about 1' and about 1" in thickness. In some cases where the tops of these lining-stones were low, smaller stones were laid above them to secure a uniform height.

The round portion, which was elliptical rather than circular, and about 4' in diameter, was lined with stones standing on edge (eight stones remained, they had been removed from about one-fourth of the circumference). The top of these stones reached to the height of the tunnel. The height was increased by the addition of further building with smaller stones—three or four, laid horizontally. The stones were held in position by a packing of clay. There was no evidence of the circular area having been covered.

Charcoal remains were found a foot outside the mouth of the passage, in the passage and in the circular area near the entrance. The black burnt deposit was particularly noticeable in the passage.

The only finds forthcoming were a pebble (of fine sandstone) which may have been used as a whetstone, and three flint fragments, of which only one showed signs of working. There is, therefore, no evidence of date and very little as to the purpose of the structure. It appears probable that it was used as a kiln, a conclusion to which the charcoal found gives weight, though there was no evidence of considerable heat on the surface of the stones, and there is nothing to indicate for what purpose such a kiln was intended. A flax-drying kiln in Co. Tyrone is described by Mr. O. Davies;¹ it is larger, though, in general, of similar construction to the Emlagh example.

¹ *U.J.A.*, I (1938), 79.