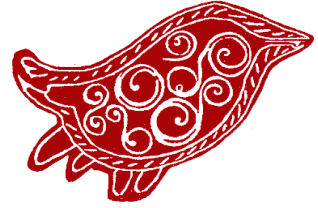


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Holy Wells of East Muskerry, Co. Cork

By P. J. HARTNETT, M.A.

(The main body of the following article was first published in *Béaloides*, x (1940), 101 ff., and is reprinted here by kind permission of the editor of that journal, Professor Séamus Ó Duilearga. Some additional matter not available to me in 1940 has been incorporated in the present paper, the introductory remarks have been expanded and illustrations included).

By way of introduction to this account of the holy wells of East Muskerry, a few observations on the wider aspect of water worship may be of interest.¹ The phenomenon is widespread in time and space. Water is so vital a commodity, so full of life and so suggestive of movement, that it is easy to understand why prehistoric man should have regarded it as one of the great elemental powers without which existence would be impossible. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and still more among the oriental nations, water was revered as the fount of life and purity; while among the more 'barbaric' peoples it was worshipped as the symbol of revival and strength. Springs, rivers and lakes had their resident deities who had to be propitiated by periodical offerings and sacrifice. The universality of the practice and the fundamental sameness of the associated ritual wherever it appears suggests a common source from which it was diffused. We should expect this source to be a region where water was at a premium and so likely to be an object of adoration (e.g., Egypt or Mesopotamia) and such a supposition would appear to be borne out by the archaeological evidence. Certainly, the existence in pagan Ireland of water worship and its survival in an emasculated form in the cult of the holy well requires some such explanation in view of the abnormally wet climate obtaining here.²

We know from the 'lives' of the saints that the pioneers of Christianity in Ireland found water worship firmly established among the natives, certain fountains and lakes and streams being sacred to one or other of their pagan deities. Many of these sites were blessed and adapted to Christian uses (as places where converts were baptised, as sources of water supply for the little communities, etc.) and this process of de-paganisation went on until all memory of the whilom guardian spirit of the shrine had faded into oblivion. But although the local saint had superseded the heathen genius, many elements of the pagan ritual persisted and must have seriously embarrassed the Christian authorities for we read of ecclesiastical and civil ordinances directed against those who, among other pagan practices,

¹ The serious student will find much useful information on the subject in Wood-Martin's *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*, ii, 46ff. In an interesting paper, 'The Cult of the Holy Well,' in *U.J.A.*, ix (1946) 24ff., W. S. Corder discusses certain features of well worship still extant, and gives a good bibliography. Ó Suilleabháin's *Handbook of Irish Folklore*, published in 1942 is indispensable for the field worker interested in holy wells.

² cf. Dr. Mahr's suggestion for a megalithic origin for the cult in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, iii (1937), 418.

engaged in well worship. In England, Scotland and Wales these condemnations were of frequent occurrence ; but it was not until the Reformation that the problem was really tackled, and then only because the practice smacked of 'Romanism.' Yet, despite the opposition of church and state, vestiges of the cult remain to-day in many parts of Britain. In Ireland, especially in the more remote areas, the cult has lost little of its vitality.

'Rounds' are made at the holy well usually on the feast day of the associated patron saint. In making the rounds the suppliant approaches the well from the north and walks around it in a clockwise direction, at the same time reciting certain prayers. This is done three times ; more rarely nine times. Normally the exercise is performed by the person himself (or herself), but it can also be done by proxy : it is quite common on the occasion of the 'pattern' day to find an obliging individual who for a small consideration will make the rounds on your behalf. Before departing, the pilgrim drinks some water from the well, a cup being provided for the purpose. Very often too (at any rate in East Muskerry, and at most of the wells I have seen in co. Cork) there is a flat slab conveniently situated on which the visitor traces the Sign of the Cross with a sharp pebble along grooves already deeply incised by generations of devotees. Niches and shelves are provided for the reception of the tokens ; it is also usual to find small articles ranging from medals and rosaries to pieces of rag suspended from the branches of a nearby tree.

Of the many instances of pagan survivals in the present day cult of the holy well the following are the more obvious : the approach from the north, the sunwise circuit (the pagan *deiseal*), and the token offerings of pins, medals, buttons and small coins—pale shadow of the votive offerings of pagan times. The leaving of souvenirs at the well no doubt symbolises the leaving behind of illness, pain and worry by the sufferer, and this magic transference of disease to inanimate objects is not unknown among modern primitive peoples. The custom of tying rags to trees is known from Africa, India and Mexico and is explained as follows : the fluttering rag typifies the wish or prayer winging its upward way to the deity ; it is also symptomatic of the pains of ague, and sufferers from that malady are said to find solace in the belief that while the rag which they have tied to the tree is shaking in the breeze, they will have relief. Offerings left at holy wells are strictly taboo and few would have the temerity to meddle with them for fear of contracting the disease for which these articles are the 'scapegoats.' The water from the well will not boil (it seems to be particularly allergic to women), the wood from the nearby rag-bedecked tree will not burn, and woe to him (or her) who wittingly or unwittingly desecrates either.

The following short notices of holy wells and analogous sites (graves, 'bullauns' and other places where rounds are paid) were compiled by me mainly from information acquired at first hand³ during the years 1937

³ My chief sources of information were the local residents. I also found the 'Name Books' of the 1841-'42 Ordnance Survey particularly helpful. These are preserved in manuscript form at the Survey headquarters in Phoenix Park, Dublin. For permission to consult them, as well as the recent revision slips, I have to thank the Assistant Director, Major Niall MacNeill.

to 1939 while engaged in making a survey of the antiquities of the barony of East Muskerry—an area corresponding roughly with the basin of the river Lee in its course between the town of Macroom and Cork city. In the western half of the barony the land is wild and rugged, and it is here that the old traditional customs still flourish. Nearer the city the land becomes more fertile, the people more sophisticated and the younger generation more sceptical about the time-honoured custom of making (or paying) rounds at the holy well. In the inventory below I shall give where possible the ritual, beliefs and legends peculiar to each site. The position of the site is indicated by giving its co-ordinates on the 6" O.S. map. These co-ordinates are measured in centimetres from the most convenient margins of the sheet. Thus W.24.2, S. 8.8. means that the monument will be found by measuring 24.2cm from the west (left-hand) and 8.8cm from the south (bottom) margins respectively. The nomenclature of the maps is here repeated for convenience of reference; for the same reason I have used the O.S. map form of townland and parish names, though in many cases this does not correspond with the popular spelling.

AGHABULLOGE PARISH

Derryroe Townland

Cork 60 (W. 24.2, S. 8.8). The site is marked O.S. *Toberderg*, but the appellation is not locally known. The well is situated at the western side of a narrow bye-road, and is surrounded by a modern circular earthen fence within which enclosure shrubs have been planted. Five stone steps lead down from the road level. A beehive-shaped arrangement of dry stones partly covers the spring well. In one of these stones is a deeply incised cross cut by persons who make rounds there. Quite a collection of religious objects—medals, statuettes, crucifixes, beads—as well as some fragments of broken cups lie about.

Rounds are paid at this well to the present day. There are, so far as I could gather, no fixed days or dates for making these visits; neither are there any set prayers. Local tradition is silent regarding cures and the well is not associated with the healing of any specific ailment.

At the opposite side of the road is a similarly enclosed area near the centre of which is a slight depression. Here, I was told, the well was situated originally, but in consequence of an act of desecration it 'shifted' to its present position. It appears that 'a foolish young girl' washed her clothes in it, and, according to my informant (Mr. Richard Cotter, Caherbaroul) 'hadn't luck nor grace ever after.' The same story is told of many other wells in the district which have mysteriously 'shifted.' What the ultimate fate of the Derryroe maiden was, or when the act was perpetrated, I could not find out. At the same time I could not help thinking that there might be a natural explanation for the alleged 'miracle'—that the construction of the old road might have diverted the course of the spring.

Dromatimore Townland

Cork 61 (W. 6.6, N. 31.9). This well is in a little recess at the western side of the road and is marked O.S. *St. Olan's Well*. Except for a narrow opening in front, the well is covered by a dome-shaped construction of dry stone from the top of which springs a stumpy whitethorn (Pl. III, 1). Until quite recently there stood nearby a large ash tree whose branches overhung the well.⁴ Scattered about are the usual votive offerings consisting of medals, coins, pins, crucifixes, personal trinkets—among the latter a few rosary beads and pieces of cloth. An ogham stone which stands some thirteen feet to the south has crosses cut in it by devotees who make the rounds. On a visit to the well in October, 1946, with Miss F. Gamble, I was shown a carved stone, 7½ inches long, obviously part of a capital of an engaged column, which had crosses incised on two of its faces. The ogham stone was discovered in the foundation of a demolished flour-mill which had been erected on the site of an erased ring fort in the adjacent townland of Mount Rivers. It was for a time used as a footbridge over the Delehinagh stream, and was erected in its present position in August, 1851, at the expense of Mr. John Murphy of Rocklodge, under the direction of the noted Cork antiquary, John Windele.⁵

St. Olan's Well is one of a chain of three 'stations'; the other two—St. Olan's Stone and St. Olan's Cap—being located in the neighbouring townland of Coolineagh. The Olan whose name is here perpetuated was the patron saint of the parish of Aghabulloge and the preceptor of St. Finnbar of Cork. His name is recorded in the Martyrology of Donegal as Eolang, Eulang, or Eulogius, and his feast-day occurs on September 5th. It is on this date that rounds are paid at all three stations.

St. Olan's Cap stands at the head of a grave 22 yards S.E. of the ruined church in Aghabulloge graveyard (Pl. III, 2). It is 5 feet in height and 11 inches by 9 inches at the base, tapers slightly towards the top, and has crosses cut in it by 'round payers.' It bears an ogham inscription.⁶ Resting on top of this stone is a lump of quartzite 10 inches in diameter and 5 inches deep at its mid-point, being roughly oval in cross-section. This is the 'cap' which is referred to locally as *Caipín Olainn*. The present 'cap' is not the original one.

Smith,⁷ writing in 1750, refers to St. Olan's stone as follows :

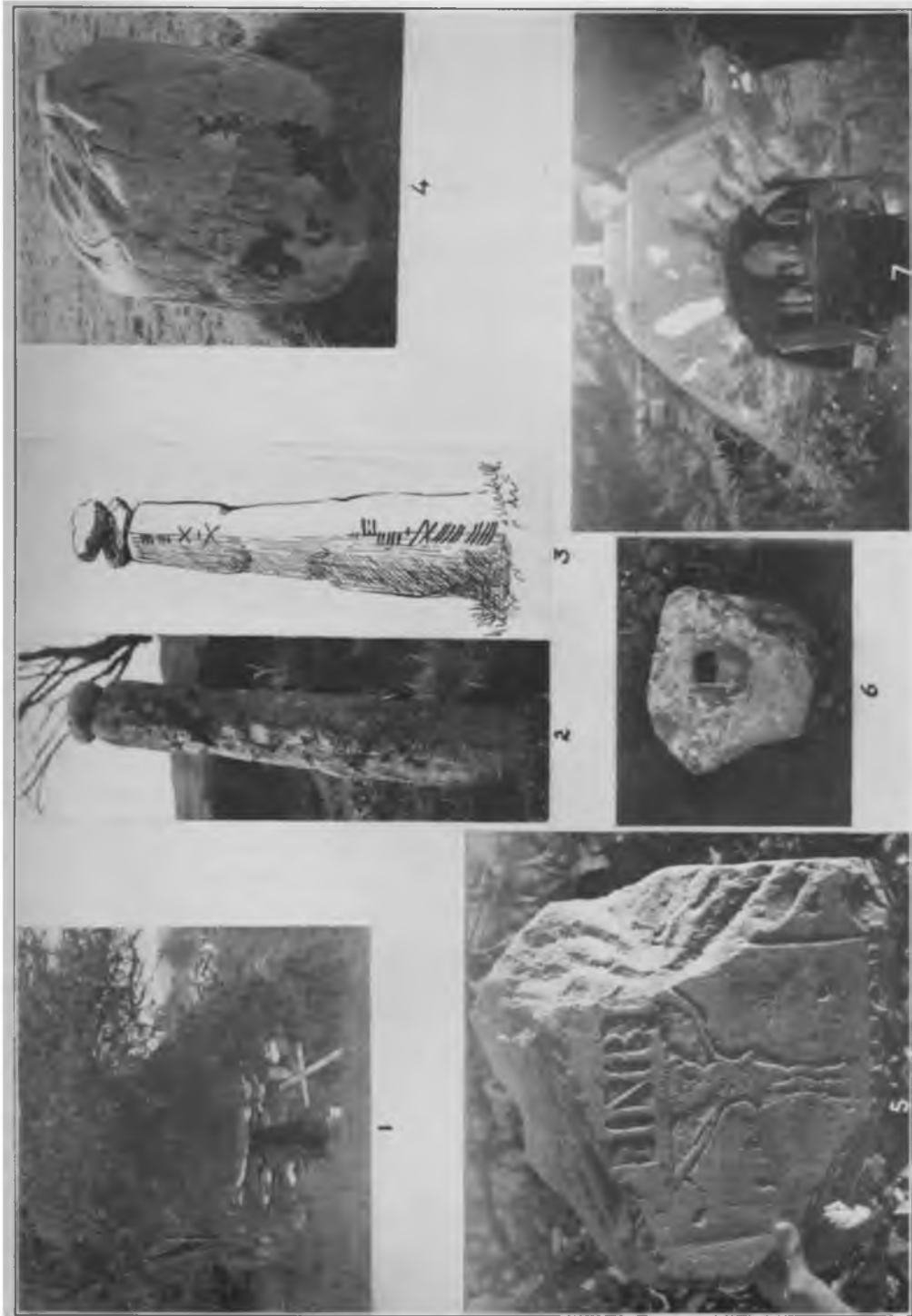
... In the churchyard is a stone, called St. Olan's cap, by which the common people also swear on all solemn occasions; and they pretend that, if this stone was carried off, it would return of itself to its old place...

⁴ This tree was cut down by order of the parish priest, the late Rev. Father Aherne, but those who took away the wood found it would not burn and 'never had a day's luck since.' A story is also told of a maid (stranger to the locality) who drew water from the well. It would not boil.

⁵ The inscription reads, according to Dr. Macalister, MADORU MAQI DEGO—*Irish Epigraphy* iii, 144. See also *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, i, p. 120, where the same author gives MADORA MAQI DEGO. The MADORA scores are extremely doubtful.

⁶ Some of the scores are badly worn. See Dr. Macalister, *Irish Epigraphy*, iii, 127 and *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, i, 103.

⁷ *History of Cork* (1893 ed.) i, p. 158.



1.—St. Olan's Well, Dromatimore townland.
 2.—St. Olan's Cap, Aghabulloge graveyard.
 3.—St. Olan's Cap in 1831 (after a sketch by Crofton Croker).
 4.—St. Olan's Stone, showing the saint's 'footprints'.
 5.—Stone from holy well, Walshestown townland.
 6.—Bullaun stone, Cappanagroun townland.
 7.—Holy well, Roovesbeg townland.

Brash⁸ has a note on the stone which is worth quoting—‘ . . . This stone was formerly held in great veneration, and was called St. Olan’s stone ; it *had* a movable cap of a semi-globular shape, known as the “Cappeen Olan”, that was supposed to be endowed with miraculous powers, having the gift of locomotion, so that if removed to any distance it would find its way back again to its old quarters. To place it on the head and walk three times round the church was a specific for headache. It was believed to be efficacious in certain female complaints, and was frequently borrowed as a talisman for women in travail. The “Cappeen” became an object of such superstitious practices that the original was made away with by the clergyman of the parish ; another, however, soon made its appearance, but much inferior to its predecessor ’

A sketch of the stone made by Crofton Croker about 1831 is reproduced here⁹ (Pl. III, 3). It shows that the uppermost rounded stone fitted in a sort of ‘cap’ which in turn rested on the lower pillar, and leaves no doubt as to the inherent phallic implications. The observations of Brash show clearly that here we have in the nineteenth century a faint echo of a pagan fertility cult.

St. Olan’s Stone is 150 yards to the north in the next field but one from the graveyard. It is a rounded boulder 31 inches in maximum height and 103 inches in girth. On its sloping upper face are two foot-like impressions believed locally to be the imprints of St. Olan’s bare feet (Pl. III, 4).

I have already remarked that rounds are officially paid on September 5th, but visits may be made at any time during the year. The full ritual demands that each station be visited, beginning with St. Olan’s Cap and finishing at the Well. As in the case of Derryroe, there are no prescribed prayer-forms, but people whom I questioned told me that they recited decades of the Rosary as they made their rounds. There are no traditions of cures effected, and I was given to understand that the curative properties of the well are not confined to any one ailment (mental or physical) but are of a more general character.

AGHINAGH PARISH

Caum Townland

Cork 71 (W. 44.3, S. 23.0). In the field to the north of the graveyard attached to the old parish church there is a spring well. It is marked on the O.S. maps *Toberatemple* (*Tober a’ Teampaill*—The Well of the Church), and, though it is considered a holy well, rounds are not now paid at it. Instead, rounds are made at the grave of a priest (Rev. Father John O’Callaghan) which is a few yards south of the eighteenth century ruined church which now occupies the site of the earlier foundation. The procedure is as follows : water from the well is brought in cups and a little earth from the grave is dissolved in it. This is then applied to the affected part ; but I was told that in the case of internal ailments the sufferer drinks the mixture. Many broken cups lie about, as well as the usual votive

⁸ *Ogham Inscribed Monuments of the Gaedhil* (London, 1879), p. 123.

⁹ Traced from Smith’s *History of Cork*, (1893 ed.), i, p. 190. For the tracing, as well as for the arrangement of the illustrations on Plate III, I am indebted to Mr. E. J. Fahy, Cork Public Museum.

offerings, and a deeply incised cross in the headstone testifies to the prevalence of the custom in modern times.

A short distance to the west of Father O'Callaghan's grave there is a second tombstone at which rounds are also made. Here too are to be seen the souvenirs left by devotees. Apart from the cross cut in the stone by persons who make rounds at the grave, there is no other inscription visible on its weathered surface; but that it marks the resting place of a priest is evidenced by the fact that its smooth side (the side which would normally bear the inscription) faces west. There is a fairly strong tradition that Bishop McEgan, the heroic martyr who was murdered by Cromwellian forces at the siege of Carrigadrohid castle in 1650, was interred in Aghinagh graveyard,¹⁰ and it is interesting to note in passing that, not alone were local people whom I questioned firmly convinced of this, but they went so far as to say that the stone in question marks the site of his grave. However, a re-examination of the stone in 1944 brought to light faint traces of an inscription which, as far as it goes, seems to contradict the local belief.

In making the rounds at these graves three visits are paid, one on each of the following days: Sunday, Friday, and the succeeding Sunday. There are no standardized prayer-forms, and as far as could be ascertained, the curative powers are not confined to specific diseases.

Mashanaglass Townland

Cork 71 (W. 23.3, S. 13.9). This well is marked O.S. *Toberbaun* but is locally known as *Tobar an Rátha Bháin*. It is a spring well surrounded by a dry stone, ivy-clad wall about 4 feet in height. It is visited to the present day and its waters are said to be efficacious for the curing of violent headaches, rheumatism, and various body sores and cuts. It is said that in former years it was not uncommon to see crutches, sticks and other surgical apparatus left by those who were cured, lying about. There are many local traditions relating to cures effected through intercession at the well. There is the case of one Michael Looney who, practically crippled with rheumatism, made rounds at Toberbaun and recovered the use of his limbs. A small box containing statuettes was placed here by him in thanksgiving for his cure.

According to the Name Books of the 1840 Survey, the well was resorted to for various ailments, and its waters 'speedily kill or cure infirm children.' This laconic piece of information, collected by the Ordnance Survey men over 100 years ago, required some elaboration, and from enquiries on the spot I gleaned the following details. The well was apparently endowed with remarkable powers of 'divination.' It was customary for new-born or delicate children to be brought there and immersed in its waters before sunrise. If the body turned red the infant would live; but if, on the other hand, the skin assumed a pale or pink colour the child would die. Certainly this 'ordeal by water' was a testing one, and the subject who survived it should have a fairly good expectation of life! Somewhere about the middle of the last century the son of the local landlord, a sceptical youth, desecrated the wall. Retribution followed immediately on his act and he was struck blind.

¹⁰ *Waterford Arch. Jour.* (1900), 199. See also *J.C.H.A.S.*, xviii (1913), 70.

Cappanagroun Townland

Cork 71 (E. 21.7, N. 21.0). A little over half a mile to the north of the village of Carrigadrohid, at the side of a narrow bye-road, there is a spring well built up, except for a small opening, with dry stone. The site is marked O.S. *Toberanoonan* (Noonan's Well—*Tobar na Naoidheanán*—Children's (Infants) Well). It is not a holy well. Beside it, lying on the ground, is a flat sandstone slab, 36 inches by 33 inches by 6 inches. This has a basin-shaped depression $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter cut in it. The bottom of the 'basin' has chipped and broken, leaving a jagged opening. (Pl. III, 6).

Stones having artificially formed basins in them are fairly common and are usually referred to as 'bullauns.' They are found associated with prehistoric monuments as well as in Christian contexts. The Cappanagroun stone resembles the holy water stoups which are a feature of old churches throughout the country. There is no tradition of a church having been in the townland, but about a mile to the north-east, in the townland of Carrigathou, there is the site of one, and probably the stone came from there. According to an old lady (Miss Crowley) the stone was removed and built into a wall some distance away, but it had returned to its original (and present) position the following morning. This was alleged to have happened over 40 years ago.

Carrigathou Townland

Cork 71 (E. 11.5, N. 7.8). According to the Name Books a church stood here. It was then (1842) in ruins and only the foundations were visible. The only indication at present is a raised oblong platform 45 feet by 28 feet, the longer axis orientated east-west. People are said to have been buried in and around this area during the famine period.

Lying on the ground within the platform is a large dressed slab 45 inches by 25 inches by 7 inches which was evidently used as a holy water stone; it has in it, approximately at the centre, a hemispherical hollow. Water which collects in the hollow is believed locally to be effective for the curing of warts.

AGLISH PARISH

Roovesbeg Townland

Cork 72 (W. 16.3, S. 16.8). This is a spring well marked O.S. *Sunday's Well*. It is also known (generally) as *Tobareen Aifrinn* (*Tobairín Aifrinn* ? or *Tobar Rí'n Aifrinn* ?), and there is a local tradition that Mass was celebrated there during Penal times. The well is surmounted by an arch of masonry beneath which, on wooden wall shelves, are the usual votive offerings. Resting on a ledge is a limestone slab on which the person who pays rounds traces with a pointed pebble the Sign of the Cross (Pl. III, 7).

Rounds are paid at this well. There are no prescribed prayers, neither is the well identified with the curing of any special disease. Three visits are necessary, and these are paid on two successive Sundays and on the intervening Friday. A story is told locally of a woman 'from the west' who dreamt that she would be cured if she made the rounds. This she did, and in due course was restored to perfect health.

ATHNOWEN (Ovens) PARISH

Walshestown Townland

Cork 72 (E. 3.8, S. 28.0). There are two wells here adjacent to each other, and marked O.S. *Sunday's Well*, *Mary's Well*. A sunken 'boreen' some 8 feet below the ground level runs by the wells which are actually at the foot of the cutting thus formed. Each well is enclosed (except for an opening towards the road) by a circular wall of masonry $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter and $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, the upper courses of which curve inwards to form the beginnings of a dome.¹¹ In the northern (*Mary's*) well there are two rectangular recesses in the masonry. There is no water in *Sunday's Well*, and to explain this deficiency, a story is told which I shall give later on.

Between the two wells and built into the face of the escarpment, is an arched recess 7 feet wide at the opening splaying inwards to 5 feet. Its rear and side walls, 7 feet in height, are formed of flat stones and lime mortar. A series of twelve steps begins at road level outside each well and leads to the high ground at the top of the central arch. The whole arrangement is very symmetrical and resembles an altar—indeed the local people refer to it as 'the altar.' Set into the masonry of the back wall is a dressed slab of limestone 30 inches by 16 inches, in which are inscribed in false relief the letters I. H. S. Underneath the H is an incised line forming a heart-shaped pattern. A similar stone, with a deep cross cut in it by generations of devotees, rests on one of the ledges under the arch.

To the right of the altar, also lying loosely, is a polished limestone plaque. It carries a somewhat crude and conventional representation of the Crucifixion cut in false relief. The figure is 7 inches in height; the span of the arms is about the same. While the figure has been deeply outlined, the carving appears to be unfinished and a close examination of the photograph (Pl. III, 5) shows the scribing lines put in as guides by the carver for the transome and shaft of the cross. In the spaces above the arms of the figure a start has been made at cutting out the background in a pock technique; the upper part of the body shows this treatment also.

As is usually found among Irish stone cutters, the mason's ability to depict the human body did not equal his mastery of lettering, and this, no doubt, explains why the inscriptions have been tackled first before beginning the harder task of the human form with which the sculptor was evidently on less sure ground. An unusual feature of the inscription is the very exaggerated size of the I.N.R.I.

There appears to be the upper part of an inscription at the base of the stone.¹² With regard to the curious convention resembling hair above

¹¹ Mr. John Healy of Castleinch told me that the wells were once roofed in, and that there was a door in each facing on to the road. When, or by whom, this had been done was not quite clear, but it is believed to have been the work of a Protestant landlord (Mr Colthurst?). Unfortunately, the Name Books do not throw any light on the subject.

¹² This suggests that it is a fragment of a tombstone, related to some members of the large series of Leinster examples discussed by A. K. Longfield (Mrs. H. G. Leask) in *J.R.S.A.I.*, lxxiii (1943), 29–39; lxxiv (1944), 63–72; lxxv (1945), 76–84; lxxvi (1946), 81–88. I am indebted to Mr. John Hunt, M.A., for pointing this out to me, as well as for many valuable observations on the Walshestown stone.

the head of Christ, this occurs on tombstones over the wig-like chevelure, and also above the rounded heads of the silver figures on eighteenth century rosaries. It is not intended to represent hair but is merely a convention for a glory or multi-rayed nimbus.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the treatment of the figure of Christ changed little and it is difficult to put a close dating on this stone. A cautious estimate would be a period about the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century.

None of the local inhabitants had any idea where these stones came from. However, there is a strong tradition that an altar (or perhaps a church) was situated in the glen a quarter of a mile to the south of the wells, and that it was destroyed by Cromwellian soldiers. The glen goes by the names of Glounaglory and Glounalorach—the latter appellation is probably a corrupt form of *Gleann na h-Altórach* (Glen of the Altar). If a church or altar did exist in this glen—the placename and folklore are mutually corroborative—then we are provided with a clue to the provenance of the inscribed stones.

As regards rounds, three visits must be paid, and these may be on Sunday—Friday—Sunday, or Friday—Sunday—Friday. Mr. John Healy, a middle-aged man whose ancestors lived in the locality for several generations, told me that there were two recognised methods of making the rounds, and Mr. Herlihy and others with whom I spoke bore out his remarks. I understand, however, that the ritual is a flexible one, and that the younger generation is inclined to simplify and shorten the proceedings very drastically. The two methods are :

- (a) One Rosary at each station.
- (b) Ten Paters, ten Aves and ten Glorias at each station.

The stations are as follows :

- (1) Begin at the central arch or 'altar.'
- (2) *Sunday's Well*
- (3) Foot of the steps to the left of *Sunday's Well*
- (4) Top of steps
- (5) Top of central arch
- (6) Top of steps leading to *Mary's Well*
- (7) Foot of steps to the right of *Mary's Well*
- (8) *Mary's Well*
- (9) Finish at the central arch or 'altar'

Thus the wells are circumscribed, and it will be noted that the stations are followed in a clockwise direction, thereby fulfilling the ancient principle of *deiseal*.

Persons pay rounds at these wells mainly for the cure of toothache, earache, and all such affections of the head. There are the usual objects—medals, crosses, beads, etc.—on little shelves within the central arch.

To explain the absence of water from *Sunday's Well*, the following story is told. It seems that there was a trout in *Mary's Well* and an eel in *Sunday's Well*, and that, 'a long, long time ago', a poor woman—a newcomer to the district—wanted water to boil the potatoes for her husband's supper. Being in a hurry, she drew some water from Sunday's Well, poured it into the pot and waited for the potatoes to boil. Hours passed, but the water remained stone cold. More fuel was added to the fire which by now was blazing fiercely—yet the water remained cold. The suspicions of the husband were aroused, and on being told that the water came from one of the holy wells, he immediately drained it into a bucket. Imagine his horror when he saw the eel swimming at the bottom of the vessel. He ran to the well and poured the contents of the pail into it. The well dried up and since then has never held water.

CANNAWAY PARISH

Bawnatemple Townland

Cork 71 (E. 15.1, S. 20.5). The site is marked O.S. *St. Bartholomew's Well*. Local inhabitants had never heard the name, and nobody recollects rounds having been paid at the spot. The well is at present dried up, and a few small stones mark its position. The Name Books of the 1840 survey have the following: 'Tubar Parrinane. A holy well frequented on the 24th of August, and is considered by the superstitious capable of curing the ague.' A marginal note reads: '*St. Bat's Well*, J.O.D.' (The initials are those of John O'Donovan).

DESERTMORE PARISH

Kilcrea Townland

Cork 84 (E. 20.0, N. 6.0). In the south-western corner of the transept-aisle in Kilcrea friary there is a recess for a tomb, sealed by a large upright slab. This tomb contains numerous skulls and bones which are said to have been removed from burials within the church and placed here at the beginning of the present century when Kilcrea friary was restored subsequent to its being vested as a national monument. In the closing slab is cut a deep cross, and rounds are paid at the tomb. Many offerings are strewn about. Beyond the fact that rounds are infrequently paid I could get no further information.

DONOUGHMORE PARISH

Kilmartin Lower Townland

Cork 61 (W. 26.2, N. 5.8). The well is marked O.S. *St. Bartholomew's Well*. It is now dried up, and I was told it had 'moved.' Rounds are no longer paid at it, and the site is overgrown with brambles. Two white-thorn trees grow—one at either side of the well—and from the branches of these still hang faded shreds of cloth, broken rosaries and other objects of a religious or personal nature left by former devotees,

Knockyrourke Townland

Cork 50 (W. 46.6 S. 12.2). This is marked O.S. *St. Laghteen's Well* (*site of*) and is described in the Name Books as follows: 'Said to be the original spring well which was dedicated to the patron saint of Donoughmore. It has removed itself (according to tradition) to the townland of Garriden, parish of Grenagh, because an unclean act was committed at the well, offensive to the saint'.

The story of the desecration of St. Laghteen's Well has been handed down from generation to generation. It has gained, rather than lost, in the process of transition, and several highly picturesque versions are extant. That which has widest currency concerns a young woman who washed her garments¹³ at the well. This unseemly conduct is said to have aroused the anger of the saint, and the well moved to its new position in the neighbouring parish of Grenagh.

There is no tradition of rounds having been paid at this well, the site of which is indicated by a soft muddy patch covered by a thick growth of briars and willows. A gnarled, lichen-covered whitethorn stands close by. It is said that the wood of this tree does not burn, and the story is told of an old man who, short of firewood, attempted to cut it down. No sooner had he struck the first blow than he was seized with violent pains and had to abandon the work forthwith. The mark made by the axe is, I was told, still to be seen, but I failed to find it as the tree is covered with moss and lichen. However, the story has a sequel, for my informant added in all seriousness that so great is the awe in which it is held 'even the County Council' would not touch the tree, although its branches overhang the narrow bye-road.

INISHCARRA PARISH

Agharinagh and Magooly Townlands

Cork 72 (E. 20.6, N. 13.5). A small stream separates the two townlands. The O.S. maps show *Sunday's Well* and *Lady's Well*, the former in the townland of Agharinagh; the latter, 20 yards to the east, is in the townland of Magooly. Both are visited jointly.

Sunday's Well is covered by a horizontal flagstone. Above this, supported by two stones on edge, is a second slab, and the intervening space contains the customary religious objects found near holy wells. The transverse stones have crosses cut in them. In particular, that which seems to be the older (the underneath stone) has a deeply incised cross in the form of an X.

Lady's Well, too, is almost sealed by a large flagstone. Here I did not find any inscribed cross; nor, save for a few faded flowers and ferns placed on top of the covering stone, were there any votive offerings. Rounds are made at both wells, though the custom is gradually dying out. The visits

¹³ Some accounts say that it was her feet, cf. The holy well at Derryroe in Aghabulloge parish,

are paid on three successive Sundays. The Rosary is recited first at *Sunday's Well*, and a circuit of the well is made after each decade. This formula is repeated at *Lady's Well*. Local tradition has it that Mass was celebrated here during the Penal days. The place is in every way ideal for such a purpose—a remote glen flanked on either side by steep rocky slopes.

Inishleena Townland

Cork 72 (E. 13.4, N. 25.3). In the south-western corner of the graveyard which occupies the site of what is said to have been a sixth century abbey founded by St. Senan,¹⁴ there is a 'bullaun'¹⁵ resting on a low pedestal of masonry. It is of red sandstone, 30 inches by 25 inches, with a bowl-shaped hollow 12 inches in diameter. Apparently it was used as a Holy Water stoup and may be contemporaneous with the earliest building on this site. It is known as the 'Christening Stone,' and the water which collects in it is believed to cure warts.¹⁶

There is a well immediately to the north of the graveyard. It is marked O.S. *Holy Well*, but as far as I could gather, there are no traditions concerning it.

KILBONANE PARISH

Aherla More Townland

Cork 84 (E. 28.8, N. 23.9). Situated in a deep glen by the side of a streamlet is a large sandstone¹⁷ boulder 2 feet in height and 4 feet by 5 feet in cross section. The upper surface is comparatively smooth and level and has at the centre an artificially formed oval hollow 14 inches by 11 inches and 9 inches in depth. It is said that there is always water in this hollow and that rounds were made there within living memory. Either seven or nine visits were paid. There were no set prayers, and, according to informants, it was resorted to by people 'in bad health.' One man—the local blacksmith—volunteered the information that he never passed the stone without saying a prayer or two at it. There are some religious medals, nails, pins, and other small objects lying in the basin. The stone is not marked on the O.S. sheets. Its existence was brought to my notice by Miss Annie Walshe, of Aherla. It is locally known as 'The Holy Water Stone', and is believed to be the altar at which the Holy Sacrifice was offered in the Penal days. A townland about a mile to the east of the site bears the suggestive name of Clashanaffrin (*Clais an Aifrin*—The Mass Hollow).

Rearour Townland

Cork 84 (E. 20.9, S. 2.6). This is marked O.S. *Tobernasul* (*Tobar na Súil*—The Well of the Eyes) and was, according to the Name Books, resorted to for the curing of sore eyes. The land-owner, Mr. Murphy, told me that

¹⁴ Gillman in *J.C.H.A.S.*, iv (1895), 218.

¹⁵ This stone was found within the graveyard and was set in its present position about 1900. See Gillman, loc. cit.

¹⁶ cf. the stone at Carrigathou (Aghinagh parish).

¹⁷ The district is a limestone one, so this stone is an 'erratic.'

rounds were formerly paid there, though not within living memory. There are no votive offerings. The site is completely overgrown, and the name *Tobernasul* is not generally known here.

Cork 84 (E. 20.4, S. 4.4). This well, marked O.S. *Toberacalleen*, is not considered to be a holy well, and its waters are at present being pumped by means of a hydraulic ram to supply Mr. Murphy's farmhouse. I failed to find anybody who could explain why the name *Toberacalleen* was applied to the well. Most of those whom I questioned had never heard of it. Others thought there was some name and, when I suggested the above, said it was 'something like that.'

KNOCKAVILLY PARISH

Kill Townland

Cork 85 (W. 0.4, S. 3.6). Within the burial ground attached to the old (ruined) parish church there is the grave of the Rev. Patrick Murphy, P.P., Moragh, Templemartin, who died in 1845. A cross has been cut in the headstone by persons who make rounds at the grave. The following outline was given to me by the caretaker of the graveyard, an old man named William Hawkes. People suffering from rheumatism, toothache and neuralgia, pay rounds here—the visits being made on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Earth from the grave,¹⁸ mixed with water, is applied to the affected part; but (Mr. Hawkes says) sometimes it is actually swallowed by the sufferer. The pilgrim then recites a few prayers after which he makes the Sign of the Cross on the headstone, using a pointed stone for the purpose.

MATEHY PARISH

Kilclogh Townland

Cork 62 (W. 3.9, N. 20.0). Marked O.S. *Tobernamnafinne*. The well is surrounded by a low stone wall, and a large whitethorn tree, the wood of which is believed to be impervious to fire,¹⁹ grows beside it. Rounds were paid at the well in the olden days. The name *Tobernamnafinne* is fairly well known locally, and the following translations were given to me: 'The Foxy Woman's Well', 'The Fairy Woman's Well', and 'The Well of the Fianna'. The first of these seems the most likely, for I was told that a woman was drowned there and that, as a result, the present enclosing wall was erected to prevent a recurrence of such accidents.

¹⁸ cf. the grave at Caum (Aghinagh parish).

¹⁹ cf. St. Laghteen's Well, Knockyrouke (Donoughmore parish).