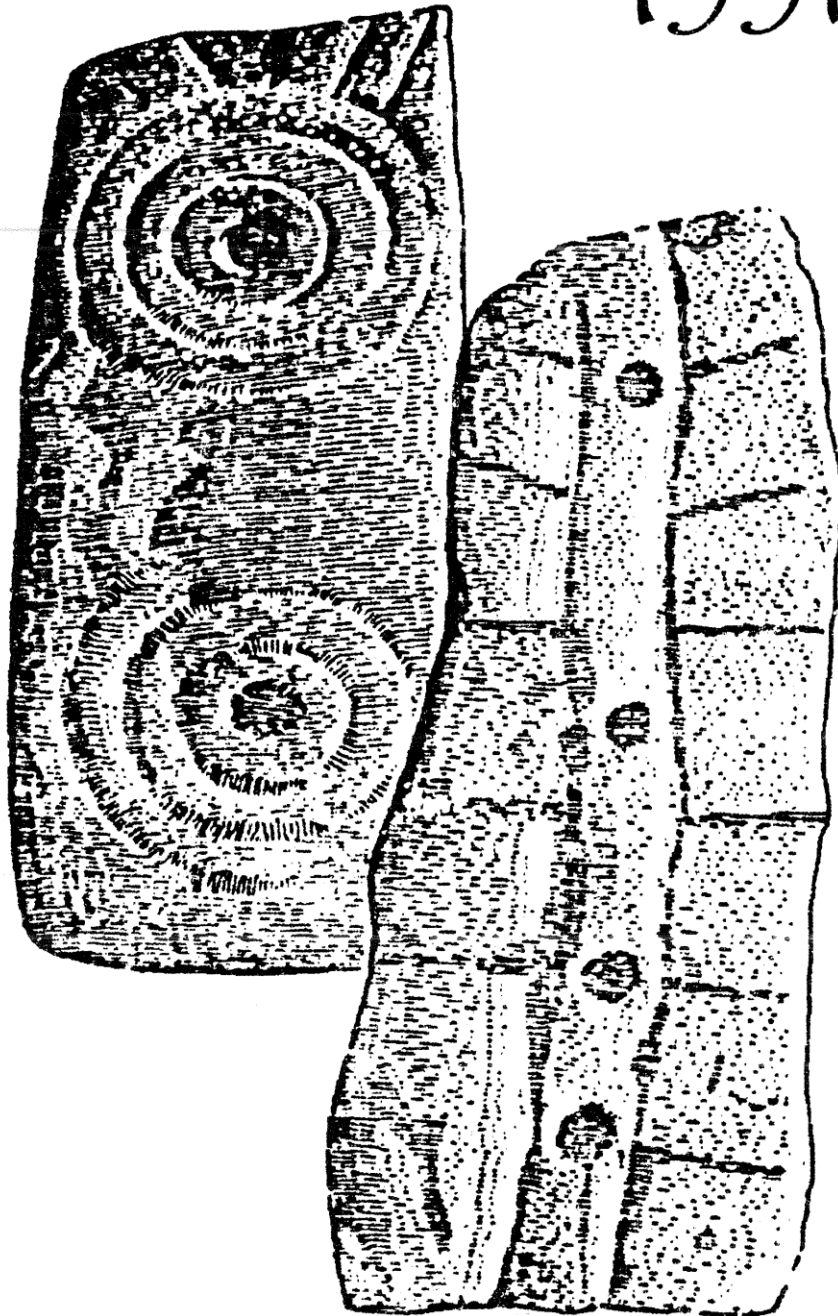


RATHMICHAEL HISTORICAL RECORD

1997



The Journal of the Rathmichael Historical Society

Editor: Rosemary Beckett Assisted by Rob Goodbody
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Secretary's Report, 1997

1997 proved to be a busy year for Rathmichael Historical Society, perhaps most particularly for its committee. Following the AGM in January the Secretary was persuaded to address the society on the subject of "Viking age and its bosses" in February, while June Burry, also a committee member, was similarly persuaded to address the Society in April, presenting a detailed and absorbing study of "Settlement in Medieval Fingal" The final lecture of the winter series was given by Aideen Ireland of the National Archives (not a committee member) who gave a fascinating paper on the history of the Public Record Office.

The summer programme was equally busy, with the Society organising trips to Celbridge in May, Dunamase and Emo Court in June, Belvedere House and Corlea Bog in August and on National Heritage Day in September a trip to the lead mines at Glendalough. All of these day trips were well attended, as was the annual weekend away at the end of September. This year the Society visited north Clare and south east Galway with the trip being organised by Damien and Edie MacGarry. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank all those people who helped organise such a busy and varied summer programme on our behalf.

An equally big thank you should be extended to all those who helped to organise and run the Society's two summer courses. The first of these "How and Where to Source Local History" was attended by sixteen students while no less than thirty-two students enrolled for the second course, entitled "Visual Sources for Local History". Despite being chronologically separated from these two courses, the summer lecture series was, as al-ways, a great success, with a substantial attendance by both members and visitors.

October saw the beginning of the current winter series, and the return of the committee, with our outgoing President, Rob Goodbody, addressing the Society on "Shankill in 1837", an examination of the local area in the period immediately before the Great Famine. In November Robbie Brennan gave us a talk on The History of the Irish Naval Service, while the December meeting gave members the chance to shine with the opportunity to present the fruits of their own research.

On a similar theme, I am pleased to be able to tell the Society at large on behalf of the Committee that after some years of planning, & festschrift for one of our oldest and most valued members is finally nearing completion. I refer of course to Paddy Healy in whose honour no less than twenty-nine papers by colleagues and friends have been assembled. The

resulting tome will hopefully be published in Summer 1998 and members will, of course, be given the opportunity to order copies in advance.

Given the excitement generated by this forthcoming work it is with some regret that I must announce that I will not be standing for re-election as Secretary, pressures of work and study mean that I would not be able to give the position the time and concentration which it deserves. Any (unlikely!) loss the Committee may feel at my departure after a scant two years in office will how-ever be overshadowed by the decision of the President, Rob Goodbody, to stand down. He admitted recently that he has spent no less than thirteen years on the Committee, one as an ordinary member, nine as Secretary, and the last three as President. In all these capacities he has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Society and while I understand that he will not be disappearing from the scene entirely. I know that the absence of his hand on the helm will be noted and regretted by us all. On behalf of the Society I would like to thank him for all his work on our behalf in the last thirteen years.

As a final note, I would like to thank all of you, and the committee members in particular for all your help during my time as Secretary. This was greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Stephen H. Harrison
Secretary
5th January 1998

8th January 1997

Annual General Meeting

The 21st Annual General meeting of Rathmichael Historical Society was held in the Burton Hall, Rathmichael School, on 8th January, 1997 with the President, Rob Goodbody, in the chair.

The minutes of the 20th AGM were read and signed. The Treasurer, Kay Merry, reported that there was a balance of £1,239.39 in the Summer School account. Sales and interest on the book account had resulted in a balance of £1,708.79. The main society account had made a slight profit, narrowly avoiding a loss. The society had 95 paid-up members, having gained 11 new members and lost 3 others during the year. A further 12 members who had not paid their subscription for a considerable period of time were to be sent final reminders with their next notices. Rob Goodbody commented that the Summer School Account money was being held in reserve to help cover the publication costs of the Society's two excavations in the future.

The Secretary, Stephen Harrison, read his report. The Editor, Rob Goodbody, reported that no new volumes of the Rathmichael Record had been produced that year, although the 1987 volume was almost ready.

It was proposed that the Committee be allowed to increase the Society's fees to a maximum of £12 for individual members and £16 for family membership, with the maximum for student members being held at £4, with these figures being effective from 1st January 1998. After some discussion, this motion was carried unanimously.

Rob Goodbody pointed out that the quorum had remained the same since the early 1980s, when total membership was much lower than it is currently. It was also suggested that the Committee might consider holding the AGM at another time of year, or combine it with a lecture or lectures, in order to boost attendance. The President and Committee agreed to consider these proposals. Another proposal was that the Society might include an insurance disclaimer with its broadsheets, but Rob Goodbody pointed out that such disclaimers had no real legal standing.

Rob Goodbody stated that there was no summer school report due to an oversight. Joan Delany would not be organising the "Art and Archaeology" course this year, and it was to be

replaced with a course entitled “ Visual Sources for Local History”. Kay Merry proposed a vote of thanks to Rob Goodbody and Seamas Ó Maitiú for their work on the “Sourcing Local History” course last Summer. Rob Goodbody pointed out that for the first time ever, the evening lecture series had made a profit, despite the fact that there had been no concurrent field course.

Elections to the posts of Officers and Committee positions were then held. The following names were put forward-

Officer	Nominated	Proposed	Seconded
President	Rob Goodbody	R Beckett	Joan Delany
Secretary	Stephen Harrison	Alison Riseley	J McCaughey
Treasurer	Kay Merry	Del Lundy	Muirin Ó Briain
Editor	R Beckett	Rob Goodbody	June Burry
Committee Members	J McCaughey	Rob Goodbody	Sylvia Desmond
	Muirin Ó Briain	ditto	ditto
	June Burry	S. Harrison	Paddy Healy
	Aida Whelan	Kay Merry	J McCaughey

All of the above were elected unopposed. The meeting was then closed, and Joan Delany and Joan McCaughey showed a number of slides of Dublin and the Ceide Fields weekend, respectively.

An Appreciation of Gerard Slevin our esteemed President for many years who died on 18th January 1997.

It was not until my husband Paddy and I joined The Rathmichael Dramatic Society that we came to know Gerard and found that he was such a caring and kind person.

When Kathleen Turner started Rathmichael Historical Society, Gerard was a member of the first committee, and when Kathleen retired he was the obvious person to become President.

In 1983, with Gerard's help, Kathleen Turner's book *If You Seek Monuments* was published, the title was his contribution. The Society hosted a great party in "Llanmawr", Kathleen's beautiful house, now demolished, and Dr. Caird, then Arch-bishop of Dublin and former Rector of Rathmichael, launched the book. It was a great night,

For many years Millicent and Gerard allowed the society's committee to have meetings in their house and their warmth and kindness and Gerard's erudition and sense of fun made for many memorable meetings.

As time went by we learned more and more of Gerard's achievements, and when my daughter Helen came from New Zealand for her father's funeral, Gerard gave her this poem:

Godchild

Helen they said her name was at the font.
Into the fertile mind there sprang at once
Images of dangerous beauty.
Zeus and Leda betrayed, Menalaus bereft,
and Troy in flames.

How wrong I was, I learned as time went by,
I grew to know a milk-skinned dark-haired child,
Welcoming a guest on flitting feet.
Playing her part at home and on the local stage.
Then she disappeared, to build her own world elsewhere.

But she came back and set my mind at rest,
My early fantasies were justified,
Not those of war and trouble making, those of beauty,
Much to my delight, a fabulous woman strode into my room.

Joan Delany

Wednesdays February 1997

Viking Age Dublin And Its Bosses

Stephen Harrison

Stephen Harrison addressed the Society on the topic of “Viking age Dublin and its Bosses”. He began by explaining that the “bosses” in question were actually shield bosses, but justified his title by pointing out that such shields were actually very important status symbols for the human “bosses” of the early medieval settlement.

In most cases bosses are the only part of a wooden medieval shield to survive to the present day and hitherto they have received very little attention, being heavily oxidised and generally undecorated artefacts. In Norway, all known early Viking age shields are hemispherical in form, with the type being typified by the bosses from the Gotstad ship. When one turns to examine the shield bosses from Scandinavian type graves in the British Isles however, the picture is very much more complicated. While hemispherical bosses are found in these graves, there are also a substantial number of conical bosses. Most previous commentators have believed that such bosses represent exceptionally early activity (i.e. pre- 800 AD) in the British Isles, but it was argued instead that such large conical “Irish Sea type” bosses represent the adoption of Anglo-Saxon bosses by Scandinavian settlers in the British Isles. In the case of Dublin in particular, this adoption is further complicated by the small size of the typical Dublin bosses, which comprise 75% of the total Dublin assemblage. In this case it was proposed that the Dublin Scandinavians adopted this small size from contemporary Irish bosses, while the conical form was borrowed from the neighbouring Anglo-Saxons.

In conclusion, it was suggested that the blending of these two boss forms at Dublin represented a high level of cultural interaction with the surrounding Christian milieu, even at a point when the Dublin Scandinavians were themselves still using pagan burial practices, giving new significance to these previously ignored, largely functional artefacts.

5th March 1997

Medieval Settlement In The Fingal Area

June Burry

Promontory forts and tomb building suggested a late Bronze Age population expansion from earlier scattered coastal dwellers, known only for their artefacts.

It is thought that the lack of ringfort construction may indicate widespread unenclosed settlement in an area where tillage was the predominant pursuit.

By the mid sixth century there were Christian foundations at sites such as Lambay, Inishpatrick, Ireland's Eye, Lusk, Swords, Finglas and elsewhere. These sites were crucial to early settlement patterns. Their importance continued throughout the medieval period and beyond. Almost all provide the basis for later tillage settlement. It is more difficult to find field evidence for the extensive Scandinavian occupation of the area, which place names and documentary evidence would suggest.

Norman mottes at Castleknock, Howth, Malahide etc. can be linked with their Anglo-Norman builders and used to trace the pattern of Norman fiefdoms in the area. Early stone castles were built at Castleknock, Swords, Malahide etc. but the meagre distribution of these castles and later tower houses suggests a lack of concern with defence and a continuing confidence in the peace and stability for which the region was noted.

The remains of so many churches and graveyards (over sixty) must be the greatest indicator of population density in the area, and the re-building of larger double-aisled churches in the 14th and 15th centuries, at locations such as Lusk, Howth and Swords indicates continuing population growth and wealth.

There is doubt that a study of the field monuments of Fingal confirm its reputation in the 17th century as a land "that for four hundred years or more had known neither conflict nor war"

9th April 1997

The Public Record Office

Ms Aideen Ireland

Ms Aideen Ireland of The National Archives addressed the Society on the subject of the Public Record Office. She began by pointing out that the meeting was being held 75 years (almost to the day) from Holy Thursday 1922, when so much of the contents of the Public Record Office were destroyed.

The Office was originally set up in 1867 with the intention of organising and centralising the "public" records of the country. By law, all the records of defunct bodies and all records more than 20 years old were to be sent to the newly established Public Records Office. The purpose-built Record Office was built by the OPW on a site adjacent to the Four Courts, and was divided into a six storey treasury where the records were kept, and a Record House where these papers could be accessed by members of the general public, with the two being separated by a fire break. Every precaution was taken against fire, with the wooden shelving

being made of fire-resistant sycamore. In the first two years records poured in, with a quarter of a million documents coming from the Court of Chancery alone, while on Disestablishment almost all the records of the Church of Ireland were given to the office. By 1922 the Record Treasury was almost full.

On Holy Thursday 1922 a small group of anti-treaty forces seized the Four Courts buildings, including the Public Record Office in a dramatic gesture, the caretaker was allowed stay provided the Corporation continued to collect the rubbish! When the Corporation stopped collecting the rubbish the caretaker was removed, there hasn't been one since!

Things got worse. The Public Record Office was used as a munitions factory because of its isolation. At the end of June, the Four Courts was stormed, guns from Winetavern St. and the Phoenix Park fired on it, but the guns in Haymarket and Smithfield had greatest effect! Records and finding aids were used to block up the windows. After a 60 hour siege the complex exploded on 30 June.

A snow of documents blew all over the city and as far out as Howth. Only a very small amount of material survived.

In 1923 once the mess was sorted out and moved to the Record Tower, the Public Record Office did its best to work around this loss of material and continued to gather new archive material. In 1988 The Public Record Office was effectively abolished and became part of The National Archives, moved to Bishop Street and came under the control of The Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht.

May 1997

Outing To Celbridge

Our Spring outing was to the gardens of Celbridge Abbey Co. Kildare and then to two memorials of the great but seldom heard of famine of 1740-41: Conolly's folly and The Wonderful Barn.

Celbridge Abbey was built by Bartholomew van Homrigh about 1690. He was a Dutchman and supporter of King William of Orange. When Van Homrigh became Lord

Mkyor of Dublin in 1697, the King presented him or, rather the City ,with a golden mayoral chain, which is still worn by the Lord Mayor.

After Van Homrigh's death, the property was inherited by his daughter Esther. She had met Dean Swift in London, became friendly with him and is often known as Vanessa, a name made up for her by the Dean. She seems to have fallen in love with him but after a misunderstanding with him because of his friendship with another Esther, Esther Johnson, known as Stella; Vanessa died in 1723 from what seems to have been a combination of a broken heart and tuberculosis.

The grounds of the Abbey are tastefully laid out with beautiful flowers and trees. Of special interest are figures made of plywood, of Dean* Swift, Vanessa and others associated with them.

We then went to see Conolly's folly a peculiar-looking obelisk erected in 1740 by the widow of William Conolly, who at one time was the Speaker of the pre-union Irish parliament. He it was who built the great Palladian mansion at Castletown. He died in 1729, soon after it was built.

In the early months of 1740, a fearful frost (the worst recorded to date) fell upon northern Europe. Much of the staple food of the Irish people, potatoes, was destroyed along with thousands of cattle and sheep. Mrs. Conolly provided relief for the people of her area by building this obelisk, which had the additional advantage of closing off a two mile long vista from the rear of Castletown House. In recent years the obelisk was restored by the Irish Georgian Society under the auspices of the Hon. Desmond Guinness.

Then we went to the Wonderful Barn. It is a massive cone-shaped structure, some 130 feet high. It also was built for Mrs. Conolly, to contain stores of corn, possibly in case of another famine. Compare the case of Joseph in Egypt long ago. At the entrance is a stone plaque which reads "1743 Executed by John Glynn"

Only about 14 people came on this outing, for the weather was very wet and cold. Yet by a strange coincidence, the rain eased off each time we got out of our cars to view the sites.

Jack Whelan

21st June 1997

Outing To Dunamase, Emo Court And Coolbanagher Church

14 members and friends braved the atrocious weather conditions to visit the rock of Dunamase.

Ongoing excavations have confirmed the rock's long history from ancient Irish fortress to its abandonment by the Parnell family sometime after 1795 when John Parnell had built a banqueting hall and developed gardens.

The Rock was plundered by the Danes in 843 A D, held by Dermot McMurragh in the 12th Century and passed to Strongbow through his wife Aoife. Mayler Fitzhenry, William Earl Marshall and the Mortimers all added to its defences.

It was fought over by settlers and natives. The O'Mores held the fortress for some time. In 1650 Cromwell's Generals Hewson and Reynolds blew it up.

Excavations have identified: 1180s gate tower and keep associated with Fitzhenry. Early 1200s inner gatehouse and curtain wall associated with William Marshall End 1200s outer bailey and barbican associated with de Broase or Mortimer.

We went next to Emo Court where in improving weather conditions we were able to stroll in the extensive gardens, followed by a tour of the house, which was designed by Gandon in 1790 for the Earl of Portarlington. The family occupied the house until 1920 when it was bought by the Jesuits to serve as a novitiate.

Cholmondley Harrison bought the house in 1960s and carried out some wonderful restoration work. The drawingroom is particularly fine, spanning the full length of the house to the rear. Emo Court came into State ownership in 1994.

The day ended with a visit to the Parish Church of the Portarlington family at Coolbanagher. The Church was built by Gandon and with the Georgian Inn on the Main Portlaoise Road, forms a trio of Gandon buildings in the area

Monday 7th July - Friday 1st July 1997 23rd Summer School

How And Where To Source Your Local History

The course was held in the Helen Roe Theatre, Merrion Square by kind permission of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland

The course secretary was June Burry, who was assisted by members of the society. Our lecturers were Rob Goodbody and Séamas Ó Maitiú. There were 16 students on the course

who were given lectures and project work on the places where information may be found to assist the local historian. Some of the places visited were, The National Archives in Bishop Street, The National Library in Kildare Street, The Registry of Deeds in Henrietta Street, The Valuation Office in Ely Place and the Gilbert Library in Pearse Street.

Monday 14th July - Friday 18th July 1997
Visual Sources For Local History

This course was also held in the Helen Roe Theatre, there were the same lecturers and assistants from the society.

There were 32 students on this course, which covered the visual sources for local history. These included looking at engravings, watercolours, photographs and maps. The places visited were The National Gallery, Merrion Square, The National Library, Kildare Street, The Architectural Archive in Merrion Square, The Print Museum in Beggar's Bush and the Film Archive in Eustace Street. Both these courses were recognised by The Department of Education and were very enthusiastically received by the students. We are all very grateful to Rob and Séamas and the members of the society who gave up their precious time to this project.

26th July 1997
Outing To Maynooth

On Saturday 26* July it was a drizzly dull day journeying to Maynooth College and we were glad to watch the inevitable video when we arrived. To get to it we entered through one of the arches in the long corridor, in a room which also contained a display of recent materials donated.

Luckily we did not need umbrellas when we started the tour and were shown around by an exceedingly charming, kind and entertaining lady, who was a final year student.

The oldest building - although there had been an earlier one - is Stoyte House, built in 1795 by John Stoyte. Forty students for the priesthood and their professors made up the original college. In the entrance hall there is very fine plaster work. Long Corridor was built in 1796/98, it was rebuilt completely during massive restorations in 1850s, and a top floor was added to Stoyte House. The inventor Rev. Nicholas Callen, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy invented the induction coil, in the 1830s, in this building. This invention

was to be of great importance in the development of electricity as a source of power. Later we saw this in the museum.

Long Corridor leads out into St. Joseph's Square, the finest prospect in Maynooth, with a wonderful garden. On the left hand side The Humanities and Dunboyne House, named after Lord Dunboyne, and the Institute for Post Graduate students, (now principally in Theology and Canon Law). The Curran Buildings on the right hand side, 300 ft. in length contained student dormitories. It was demolished before the present "New House" was built in 1830 which was damaged by fire in 1940 and later extensively renovated.

Although not joined to St. Joseph's Square, St. Patrick's House forms the front of the second quadrangle. It was designed by A. W. Pugin in 13 century gothic style. In the main entrance (the sides of which stand out from the square) on the first floor above the entrance are the President's rooms which look out on to St. Joseph's beautiful Square. On the north end of the Gothic Square stands the college chapel, the finest of all its buildings, its spire is the highest in Ireland! There are no benches only carved stalls facing each other across the aisle. The outstanding feature of the church are these carvings. It is an amazing building in which a whole day could be spent. Luckily one of the students was practising on the magnificent organ while we were there. Going out it was surprising to see a modern garden. There were lots of stones and pathways which had meanings according to which way one walked.

The museum was well worth seeing, starting with some beautiful vestments, including a set of gold vestments bearing the arms of Austria, Bavaria and Lorraine, under the Austrian crown which was presented by Empress Elizabeth of Austria.

As the college knew we would be late going to the Refectory, two large thermos flasks were laid out for us together with some biscuits which was very acceptable. Outside the college gates are the remains of Maynooth Castle, built by the Fitzgeralds. Aida Whelan gave us a very good talk about its history.

Monday 18 - Friday 22 August 1997
23rd Summer School 1997

Evening Lectures In Archaeology

Monday 18th August
Hillforts And Henges
- Community-built monuments of the Prehistoric Era

Tom Condit

This paper draws together two disparate types of monument and examines possible relationships.

Tuesday 19th August
Irish Ring Forts

Matthew Stout

The author has recently published a book on this very common, but little understood, monument type.

Wednesday 20th August
Irish Stone Axe Project

Steve Mandal

From the arrival of the first people in Ireland in the Mesolithic period (c. 9000 years ago), to at least the beginning of the Bronze Age, almost 5000 years later, stone and flint were the most important resource used in the production of tools. The Irish Stone Axe project commenced work in 1990, receiving substantial funding from the Heritage Council from 1991. The main aim of the project is to compile a comprehensive computerised database of all Irish stone axes incorporating archaeological, geographical and geological information. To date, over 21,000 axes have been recorded, made from a wide range of lithologies including igneous (gabbro), sedimentary (shale) and metamorphic (porcellanite) rock types. A programme of taking core samples from axes for thin section and geochemical analysis has provided very interesting results. The most important group of axes, porcellanite, account for over half the total number. A geo-chemical discriminant has been identified for the two known sources at Tievebulliagh and Rathlin Is. Shale accounts for over 3,500 axes, concentrated in the south and west of the country, but here a wide range of secondary sources, such as storm cobbles at Fisherstreet Beach, Co. Clare, appear to have been used rather than isolated outcrop sources. In the east of the country there are concentrations of porphyry axes, and a source for porphyry has been discovered on Lambay Is. Finally, the work has shown that there was a high degree of exchange between Ireland, Britain and Europe, as evidenced by the occurrence of porcellanite axes in Britain, and out of British tuff, gabbro and European jadeite axes in Ireland.

Thursday 21st August
The Role Of The Dublin City Archaeologist
Dáire O'Rourke

The work of an Archaeologist working in a busy office in a fast developing Medieval City.

Friday 22nd August
Wetland Archaeology

Sarah Cross

This session is based on work carried out on a site in the midlands and shows the variety of aspects of the study, including excavation, conservation and pollen analysis.

Saturday 9th August 1997**Outing to Belvedere, Co, Westmeath and Corlea Trackway, Kenagh, Co-Longford**

For our August outing a party of nine members and friends met in the grounds of Belvedere, near Mullingar. Situated on the shores of Lough Ennel, Belvedere was built circa 1740, by Richard Castle for Robert Rochfort, Lord Bellfield and later 1st. Earl of Belvedere, it comprises two stories over a basement with a long front and little more than one room deep, it is believed to be the earliest bow-ended house in Ireland. In its beautifully wooded parklands stands the Jealous Wall the largest gothic “sham” ruin in the country, built by the 1st Earl, following a quarrel with his brother, to obscure the view.

We subsequently journeyed north west through Ballymahon and thence to Kenagh, where we viewed the oak trackway found underneath the bog during turf cutting operations over a decade ago. Dating from 148 BC, this Iron Age trackway across the boglands close to the river Shannon, is the largest road of its kind to have been un-covered in Europe.

Despite soft rain on the lakeshore and mist over the bog, it proved to be a most enjoyable day.

Heritage Day 7th September 1997**Mining Outing In Glendalough.**

About eight members of the society met at Glendassan, Co. Wicklow, where we were joined by geology students. We crossed the river and walked up to the ruins of the mining complex.

The lead-bearing rock was mined in Glendasan, it was then crushed, some of the crushing floors are still visible. We saw the remains of a wooden sluice which transported water to a centrifuge which did the work of separating the ore from the crushed rock.

The ore was then transported to Ballycorus lead works to be smelted. There it was made into lead shot, sheeting for roofs and water pipes.

The outing ended at the head of the Upper lake in Glendalough, below the area known as Van Diemen’s land where there were many more lead mines.

Saturday 27th - Sunday 28th September 1997**Annual Weekend Trip**

Eddie and Damian MacGarry organised the society’s 21st annual weekend discovery expedition to south Galway and north Clare. Our rendezvous was at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Athlone.

We climbed the ivory tower Thoor Ballylee, the former home of W. B. Yeats, it is perfectly situated alongside a pretty river, and if you walk downstream through the woods, a recently conserved old mill with a large stone fireplace, may be found.

We travelled onwards towards other towers, this time of a monastic style at Kilmacduagh, Co. Galway. This site founded in the 7th Century is a most interesting collection of buildings including a cathedral, round tower, St. John's Church, a glebe house and three other churches.

From there to Corcomroe, an O'Brien foundation of 1195 AD. a Cistercian abbey.

We were happy to retire to Mrs. Burke's house following a delicious supper.

Sunday, as appropriate for the day, we visited St. Nicholas's Collegiate Church in Galway and then wandered through the nearby streets looking at the local buildings and the new monument to Christopher Columbus. Then it was time to turn towards Dublin. We spent a considerable time at the Aughrim Interpretive Centre, an intriguing time capsule of a difficult time in history, we walked to a height and viewed the actual site of the 1691 battle. A grand way to end our eventful weekend, with many thanks to the MacGarry duo.

Wednesday 1st October 1997
Shankill, Co, Dublin In 1837

Rob Goodbody

Rob Goodbody's talk took the audience on a guided tour of Shankill in the years before the Famine and the coming of the railway. He talked of education, agriculture and lead mining and the social conditions of the ordinary people in the area at the time. He also showed the contrasting conditions in Shankill and the houses of the gentry.

Wednesday 5th November
Early Years In The Irish Naval Service In Dublin

R. Brennan

In 1908 in the Liffey dockyard Helga was built for the Department of Agriculture for surveys and for lighthouse service. Helga patrolled the Irish coast for submarines. In 1916 she was coaling in Dun Laoghaire and was ordered to shell the GPO and the distillery. The Helga was reputed to have sunk a submarine in the Isle of Man.

In 1922 Ireland took over 16 ships ranging from trawlers to the Helga whose name was changed to Murchú. The Murchú was used for fisheries protection but wasn't allowed to have a gun. A "gun" was rigged up from wood and a boiler tube, needless to say the trawlers took no notice. Later a real 31b gun with solid shot was allowed.

When the Second World War broke out, coastal protection was important, ports had to be controlled to check cargoes for the Geneva Convention on account of our neutrality. Up until this time the army had manned the pilot boat.

The new intake for the navy at the beginning of the war, assembled in Collins Barracks. It contained many trained mariners. There were no uniforms so they wore boiler suits, bandoliers, helmets and army boots and were trained in the use of arms. They left Collins Barracks for Alexandra Basin and were stationed in the ferry building. Uniforms finally arrived modelled on the British navy.

Dubliners didn't know they had a navy, so when a special cargo of arms and ammunition arrived in the port and 20 men in uniform marched up the quays to guard it, there was panic and the army turned out with armoured cars and they were all arrested!

The Irish navy has gone from strength to strength since the early days and is now a service to be proud of.

3rd December 1997

Short Talks By Members. Restoring A Village

Tom Moran

Tom Moran spoke to the Society on his involvement in restoring country houses in Mullaghede or Monastraveen village 16 miles from Boyle, Co. Roscommon. The village was founded in 1796 and thrived up to the First World War. It was isolated but self-sufficient during its active life. It is at the end of a botharin, the width of two cows, which is off a stoney road 3A of a mile long, too narrow for a horse and cart.

All the houses are of a very similar design and dimensions with similar window openings and doors. The front door and back were opposite one another so cows could be brought through from the botharin to backyard. There was a high gable end to make a good angle for the roof to help cast off the rain and wind This had a small hole high up, partly ventilation and partly peep hole! The stone masonry is of a very high quality and still standing despite the mortar

having been washed away long ago. The hearth head in most of the houses weighed a couple of tons! There was usually a haggard or shelter for ducks, geese or hens. There are 14 houses of which 9 are still standing, naturally a lot of stone has been taken for other houses in the area.

Excellent crops were grown and the people of the village supplied labour to the King Harmons and to Lord Lucan. Rental included a certain number of days labour on the bog to produce turf for the fires in the main houses, each house used one cart load per day. 107-108 people attended church each week and alcohol was only for special occasions which was unusual. There was a lot of movement between England and the village for vegetable lifting.

The group Tom is involved with hopes to restore one house and conduct interviews on the way of life. In the future they hope to restore more to accommodate visiting anglers on Lough Gara.

The Last Tram To Dalkey James Scannell

It is perhaps ironic that nearly 50 years after the last city trams were withdrawn from service on the grounds that buses could provide a faster and effective service, Light Rail Transport vehicles are returning to the city streets in an effort to improve public transport which is suffering from traffic congestion.

Up to the 1930s Dublin and its suburbs were served by an extensive tram system which was fast and efficient and pollution free, as the trams were powered by electricity drawn from overhead cables. The southern limit of the service was Dalkey.

On March 31st 1938 Dublin United Tramways Company announced its intention to abandon the tram network with buses on some routes and abandoning others. By 1941 this programme was halted due to the Emergency coupled with the scarcity of fuel. Two hundred and twenty trams and single deck buses had been replaced with double deckers.

Routes 14 and 15 were closed in November 1948 with buses being substituted and the large crowds who turned out to see the trams departure was a clear indication of what was to come when the routes 6 to 8 were abandoned in 1949 however no-one took heed of the warning signs and of the great affection Dublin people had for their trams.

For the July 9th 1949 withdrawal of the final trams, elaborate plans were drawn up to see off the last trams from Nelson's Pillar, which included the Irish Transport and General Workers Union Band which was to lead them through the streets while Radio Éireann made plans to record the event for posterity. No-one planned for the arrival of thousands of people though and what should have been a historic event became one of extraordinary scenes as people began to strip the trams of every removable item, while an inadequate force of Gardaí on duty were helpless to intervene when confronted with the crowds in O'Connell Street.

The last tram for Dalkey managed to slip away on time at 11.35pm but while it made its final run to Dalkey it was systematically stripped of every removable item by the passengers on board, who engaged in a frenzy of souvenir collection so by the time it reached Castle Street in Dalkey it was nothing more than a shell. Seats were slashed, light bulbs removed, destination boards taken, even the handbrake was taken, which meant the tram had to be driven in reverse to the Blackrock depot, with the conductor up front calling out directions and instructions to the driver at the other end. It took nearly an hour and a half for this shattered and stripped tram to make it to the Blackrock Depot where a very relieved crew were able to sign off.

But worse was to come, in O'Connell Street the thousands present meant that plans to lead off the last tram from Nelson's Pillar at 12.15 a.m. had to be cancelled due to the massed crowds in the street and from 11p.m. an orgy of public vandalism took place, with each tram that arrived there suffering at the hands of souvenir hunters. Two trams which arrived in Westmoreland Street were turned around there, but before they could depart were plundered by the crowds which surged forward and surrounded them.

The tram scheduled to depart from Nelson's Pillar at 12.15 a.m. was held at Trinity College and was sent back to the Blackrock depot in reverse on the inward line. But when it arrived at the depot crowds were waiting for it and it too was plundered of fittings before a lot of effort by the staff on duty got the tram through the gates of the depot which they closed with difficulty in the face of the pressing crowd.

There was great disquiet about the scenes of lawlessness seen on Dublin's streets with questions being asked in the Dáil. The Minister for Justice stated that on the night in question a force of 60 Gardaí including 2 superintendents, 1 inspector, 8 sergeants and 3 motor cyclists had been engaged in duty over the route but that the crowds were so large that even this force

was unable to prevent damage to the trams. He concluded by stating that no-one was being charged in connection with this matter.

So the era of trams in the streets ended. Some tram car bodies have been preserved in the National Transport Museum in Howth Castle Demesne where the Irish Transport Museum Society has managed to restore some, while others are undergoing restoration for future display.

The tram depot buildings in Dartry, Blackrock and Dalkey are still in existence and in Dalkey one can still see the tram rails in the yard and the gate pillars where the corner was cut off one of them to enable longer-bodied trams to turn into the yard.

A Fragment Of History

Reminiscences on the early beginnings of Rathmichael Archaeological Summer Schools written by Joan Delany in 1978.

I had very little interest in archaeology until in 1961. I read two books by Mary Chubb “Nefertitti Lived Here” and “City in the Sand”. Here, at last, I thought is what I should have done. In and out of the School of Art, two years in Architecture at UCD, Abbey School of Acting, Payne School of Dance and Mime, “lady gardener” at the Botanic gardens, through a job making jewellery, to market gardening and matrimony, that had been my career so far.

Luckily the first excavation I saw was the one at Dublin Castle directed by Marcus Ó hEochaidhe, a beautiful piece of excavation technique, carefully trowelled. Marcus showed me how if the section was scraped it came up clear again and in it could be traced all the layers of occupation. Where the ash from a fire place spread out getting thinner and thinner the farther it went until its abrupt end marked where there had been a wall.

At a party I met Mrs Cearbhall Ó Dalaigh on whose advice I became a member of RSAI. Then a newspaper reported that buses passing the High Street excavations had nearly been overturned as people on the upper deck all rushed to one side to see over the hoarding which concealed the excavations. The popular interest in archaeology which is now so widespread, had begun.

Old enough to be thick skinned, Breandán Ó Ríordáin, had difficulty in keeping me out of High Street, eventually he allowed me to try a little trowelling.

From information in the C B A Calendar of excavations, I applied and was accepted for the British Museum excavations at “High Lodge” in Suffolk, it was a palaeolithic excavation directed by Gale Seiveking. That was the hardest work that I have ever done, lifting four gallon buckets of wet sand to the berm, high above our heads and pick-axing through boulder clay and chalk. This was on part of Lord Iveagh’s estate and hunting lodge. I have never seen so many rabbits and pheasant just grazing in the fields. The volunteers were international, including French, German, Swedish, American and Irish. In two weeks I earned my keep and £6 10s which just paid my fare from Dublin.

Although I was asked to go to “High Lodge” again, a dig nearer to Lincoln, where I could visit my relatives, was more convenient. Nottingham University had bought a field in a small Lincolnshire town, Ancaster, which contained about three-quarters of a Roman town. This was used for training students. During the summer the university ran three excavation training courses, each two weeks long, one of which I attended two years running. Since then I have spent at least two weeks each year helping on excavations. If there had been a training excavation here I should have preferred it to just joining a team. So feeling that there might be others who would enjoy working on digs in the Spring of 1975 I asked permission from the committee of Rathmichael Historical Society to organise a course in field archaeology. This was granted and it was hoped that a small excavation could be undertaken on which the course could take place.

My next step was to talk to every archaeologist that I knew. These included Dr Michael Herity, who gave me a long interview and encouragement, and his final advice was “do it and do it well and nobody can criticise”. I also spoke to Breandán Ó Riordáin, Peter Harbison, Liam de Paor, David Newman Johnston, David Sweetman, Claire Foley and Dermot Twohig of Cork. I had already been in communication with Marcus Ó hEochaidhe and Richard Haworth. I had also explored previously the possibility of sponsorship. Mr Ian MacCarthaighe of McConnells Advertising suggested Cement Ltd and as a result Cement Ltd has sponsored the course each of the four years, and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the company.

Marcus who was formerly Assistant Inspector of National Monuments and the only archaeologist not fully involved in his own excavations, agreed to direct the course. Claire Foley then in the Office of Public Works promised to look up some sites for which Barry Murphy MA, a member of Rathmichael Historical Society, could apply for a licence to

excavate. One way or another this fell through and up to 1979 we were not able to get an excavation on which a training course could be organised. However, the programme consists of five days basic instruction on the rudiments of surveying and planning, tours of local sites and one whole day when Dr Eogan allows the group to go to Knowth, and other sites in that area are visited. There are also lectures each evening by a visiting archaeologist.

The first year (1975) the course in field archaeology went so well with Marcus making such a marvellous director, that many of those who attended wanted to continue with the activities they had begun. So Marcus suggested that they did a survey of the damage done to Rathmichael hill fort by a forest fire earlier that year, and so the Rathmichael Survey Group was formed. The group worked at weekends during the winter of 1975/76 on the hill fort.

Still looking for an excavation, Liam de Paor suggested that we should help at Inis Cealtra. An offer which was taken up eagerly, working there for two weeks in 1976 and 1977. As there was no excavating going on there in 1978, members helped in Killeel. In October of that year Mr. Howard Kilbride-Jones rang me up. He was looking for a site in this area to excavate. When he saw the hill fort on the south east side, he was shocked by the damage done by tree planting and said all archaeological evidence had been destroyed but on seeing the circle on the top was delighted. He applied for a licence to excavate and asked the Rathmichael group to make a contour survey of the site as a preliminary step. This seemed to be the realisation of all our hopes, but the licence was not granted.

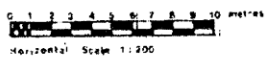
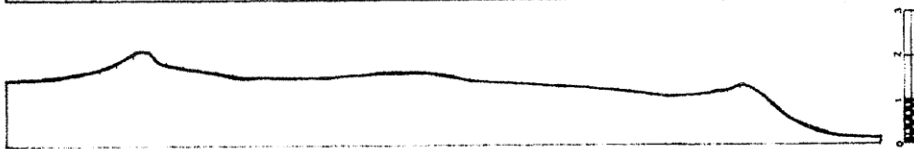
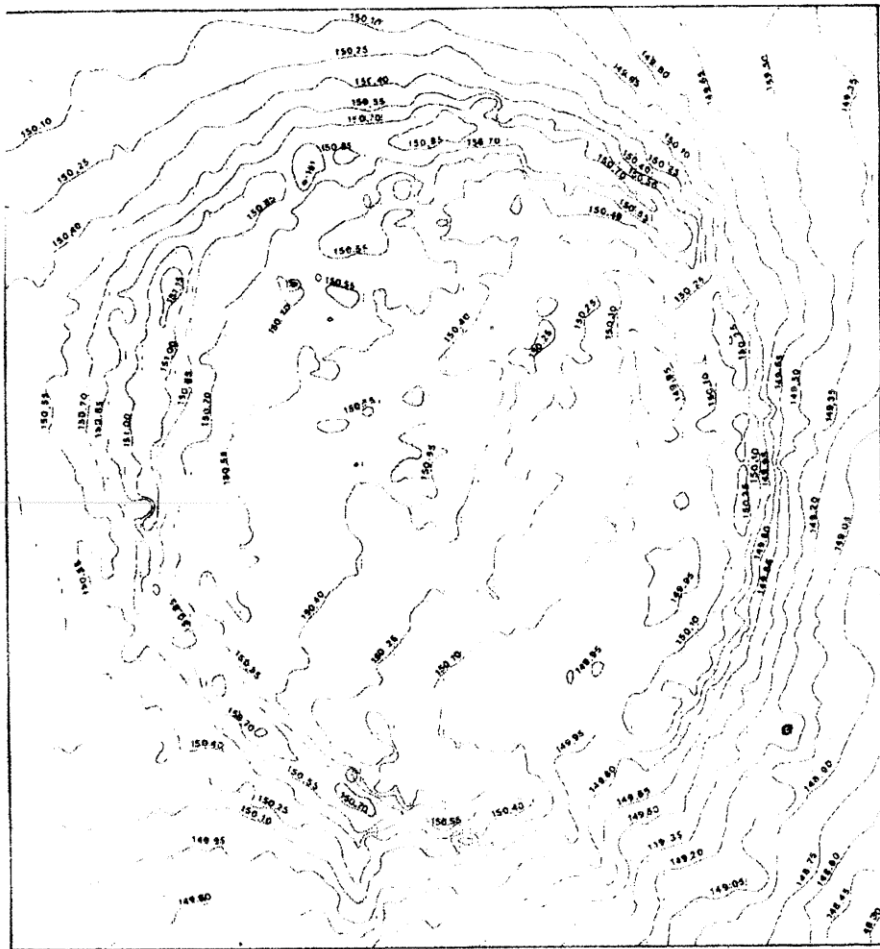
For 1977 it was felt that a new approach was needed and Leo Swan agreed to direct the course. The earthworks at Ballybetagh were chosen as the site (by kind permission of Mr James Linehan). A more difficult site it would be hard to imagine, this was really going in at the deep end. But Mr Swan was so good that a survey has been made and he hopes to get it published. Another thing that happened that year was that the Department of Education recognised the course for personal leave for primary school teachers.

1978: This year Leo Swan again directed, and one of the ring forts at Newtown Hill was surveyed.

A feature of the course in field archaeology has always been the evening lectures, which may be taken apart from the full course, but are included in it. Lecturers have included Breandán Ó Ríordáin, Michael Herity, Leo Swan, Joan Duff, Ann Hamlin, Sean O Nuallain and Seamus Caulfield. Mr George Eogan has given a lecture each year before the visit to Knowth.

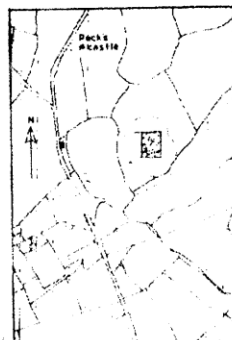
Editor's note In the year after these reminiscences were written, the Summer School finally got its excavation. Betty O'Brien directed excavations at Ballyman, near Bray from 1979 to 1986 and at Dundrum Castle from 1987 to 1991. The Summer School moved to Drimnagh Castle for the 1992 to 1993 seasons under the directorship of Claire Mullins. The field courses lost their link to excavations in the following year and ceased altogether in 1995.

The results of the 1978 contour survey of Rathmichael hill fort may be seen in Kathleen Turner's book *If You Seek Monuments*, published by this Society in 1983.



SECTION A-A

Vertical Scale 1:100



Rathmichael Historical Society
 Survey Group⁽¹⁾
 project
 CONTOUR SURVEY RATHMICHAEL HILLFORT

Key Plan

Contours Survey Rathmichael Hillfort

Rathmichael Historical Society 25th. Summer School
Lectures In Archaeology
in
The Burton Hall
Rathmichael School
Stone bridge Road
Shankill
on
16th - 20th August. 1999

Mon 16th	Heather King.	Late Medieval Crosses in Ireland and their European background.
Tues 17th.	Mairéad Dunlevy	Two Millennia of Fashions and Textiles in Ireland.
Wed 18 th	Mary MacMahon.	Industrial Archaeology and the development of Dublin Port.
Thur 19th	Sarah Foster.	Shopping in 18th. Century Dublin
Fri 20th.	Howard Clarke.	Medieval Suburbs of Dublin

All Lectures at 8.00 p.m. Admission £3