

NOTES

Miscellaneous Stones of Various Origins in Limerick City and County

There are at least eight stones in Limerick city which exhibit what is known as 'the broad arrow'. The 'broad arrow' is a heraldic device with two tapering blades, known as barbs. King Henry VIII created the Office of Ordnance in 1544; the office became the Board of Ordnance in 1597. It supplied guns, ammunition and equipment to the King's navy. Since at least the seventeenth century, the Board of Ordnance used the broad arrow to signify objects purchased by the monarch's money, and later to indicate government property. The introduction of the symbol was probably the inspiration of Henry Sydney, 1st Earl of Romney, who served as Master-General of the Ordnance from 1693 to 1702. What is known as the pheon appears on the Sydney arms. A pheon is a broad arrow whose barbs are engrailed or jagged on the inside. While 'the broad arrow' is very similar to an Ordnance Survey benchmark, it has one significant difference. The benchmark consists of three strokes, shaped like an arrowhead, with a fourth stroke across the top. These are to be found on many buildings and bridges in Limerick city, such as Thomond Bridge and Mathew Bridge. 'The broad arrow' does not have the fourth stroke across the top of the arrowhead.

The 'broad arrow' mark is on a stone situated at ground level in front of the east tower at King John's Castle, Castle Street. The stone is approximately three feet in height [92 cm] and carries the following inscription: NO 3/20 FEET/ FRONT. The castle was used as a barracks for Crown forces through many centuries until 1922 hence the marker indicating that it was government property. Another such stone is at ground level in front of the west tower, just beside Thomond Bridge and the river Shannon. It carries the inscription: No 4/20 FEET/Front. It is somewhat smaller in height than stone No. 3 and is approximately two and a half feet [61cm].

A stone at the corner of Roden Street and O'Connell Avenue contains the initials WD, which stand for War Department. The position of Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was created in 1794 and his department was unofficially known as the War Department. The Department changed its name on a number of occasions but was again officially, the War Department from 1855 to 1857.¹ It is therefore probable that this stone was erected between those two years. Its inscription reads: No 10/F... the rest of the lettering has been worn away. It is also approximately three feet in height [90cm]. Roden Street leads to an entrance of what is now Sarsfield Barracks or as it was known, the New Barracks which was built 1795-7.² A stone with 'the broad arrow' and WD inscribed upon it is to be found half way along Roden Street near the piers of a blocked-up gateway. In the mid-nineteenth century, the land inside the gate was part of the complex of military buildings.³ Apart from the WD and 'the broad arrow', the stone has only 'No 9' carved on its face. It is approximately two and a half feet in height [76cm]. At the top of Barrack Hill beside another closed-up gateway of Sarsfield Barracks there is WD stone containing 'the broad arrow'. It also carries the following inscription: FRONT/No 13/ ? Ft. The

¹ James Chambers, *Palmerston, The People's Darling* (London, 2004) pp 59-63.

² Maurice Lenihan, *Limerick; Its History and Antiquities, Ecclesiastical, Civil and Military* (Limerick, 1866) p. 465.

³ Eamon O'Flaherty, *Irish Historic Town Atlas No. 21, Limerick* (Dublin, 2012) Map No. 4.

figure referring to the distance in feet is very worn and difficult to decipher. The stone is approximately three feet in height [90cm]. Further down Barrack Hill, just before it connects with Wolfe Tone Street, a stone, approximately three feet in height [90cm] has 'the broad arrow', WD and the information 6 Ft/FRONT. Near another gateway connected with the barracks, this time on Lord Edward Street, the stone contains the initials WD, 'the broad arrow' and the following: 11 FEET/FRONT/No 22 (Fig. 1). It is also approximately three feet in height [90cm].

The Artillery Barracks once stood on Mulgrave Street, but it is now a derelict site. A walk around the perimeter yielded one stone with the initials WD, 'the broad arrow' and the number 8 upon it. It is a relatively small stone, being approximately two feet in height [61cm]. It is situated outside the wall, which surrounds the garden of what was once the house of the commanding officer on Upper William Street where it joins Mulgrave Street.⁴

While the stones are not consistent in height, it appears from those that survive that they are numbered consecutively, when relating to a particular building or property, which certainly in Limerick city always belonged to the military.⁵ The stones can be found marked as BS on Map 4 of The Irish Historic Town Atlas.⁶ BS are the initials for boundary stone, here referring to the boundary of the barracks or military property.

In a survey article in this Journal in 2010 jostle stones in Limerick city were discussed.⁷ Since then it is possible to add four more such stones to the list. There is one stone beside a shop on Parnell Street; it is very small, coming to little less than one foot in height [30cm]. There is one at each side of the gateway to Sarsfield Barracks on the top of Barrack Hill. Both are approximately three feet in height [90cm] and there a small one of approximately two feet [61cm] at the gateway to the barracks on Lord Edward Street.

A liberty stone, in a relatively good condition, stands in Ballyneety village, County Limerick.⁸ The Liberties of Limerick were originally created by King John after the Norman conquest and redefined by a charter of King James I in 1609 as the 'County of the City of Limerick'.⁹ Patrick O'Riordan of Ballyneety informed the writer in a discussion on September 2009 that he rescued the stone from a ditch when building his house in the late 1970s and he re-erected it by the side of the road. It was his opinion that a liberty stone had originally been put in place at a spot where four townlands meet: Knockbrian, Scart, Ballyneety and Ballyogartha. In a telephone discussion held on 30 June 2013, Mr. Brian Hodkinson, Curator of the Limerick city museum, was of the opinion that the stone could be in the correct site because three-quarters of a kilometre north of the cross roads



Fig. 1

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Charlotte Murphy, 'Some Surviving Jostle Stones in Limerick city' *NMAJ*, vol. 50 (2010) pp 151-4.

⁸ Sheet 65 Ordnance Survey Discovery Series, 62-63 Longitude by 49-50 Latitude.

⁹ Brian Hodkinson, 'A History and Archaeology of the Liberties of Limerick to c.1650', *NMAJ*, vol. 47 (2007) p. 39.



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¹⁰ Ibid., pp 5

¹¹ Charlotte

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Fig. 2



Fig. 3

leading into Ballyneety, the townlands of Scart and Ballyogarth, meet. Both are listed as townlands in the south liberties of Limerick.¹⁰ A liberty stone is marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map which is displayed on the National Monuments Service website, under the title of 'historic'. However, while it is in almost the exact place where the stone has been re-erected it is on the opposite side of the road. As one travels from Limerick the stone is now on the right-hand side of the road. However, on the six inch 'historic' map it is on the left-hand side as one travels from Limerick. It has been moved from the townland of Scart to the townland of Ballyogarth. The bottom left-hand corner, as one looks at the stone, is gone as is a portion of the support into which it was placed in order that it could stand upright and be in clear view (Fig. 2). The following inscription is carved upon the stone:

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In a survey of some of the remaining milestones in County Limerick, published in this Journal¹¹ it was stated that two milestones still stood on the road between Limerick city and Kilmallock. However, since that information was published, another has come to light. It is situated approximately one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards, on the left-hand side of the road from Ballyneety, before one reaches the turn up to the ruins of Cahernarry church and graveyard.¹² On the Taylor and Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland* it is positioned where milestone 46 is marked.¹³ However, the stone on the map is situated on the opposite side of the road; the right-hand side. The design used on the

¹⁰ Ibid., pp 56 & 59.

¹¹ Charlotte Murphy, 'Milestones in County Limerick', *NMAJ*, vol. 10 (2009) pp 125-9.

¹² Ordnance Survey Discovery Series No. 65, longitude 62, latitude 52.

¹³ George Taylor and Andrew Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland Surveyed 1771* (London and Dublin, 1778) p. 184.

stones along the Kilmallock to Limerick road is very unusual. The other stones in County Limerick are triangular in shape. Information is provided usually on each of the three faces of the triangle. However, the surviving stones on the Kilmallock to Limerick road are rectangular, approximately two feet in height (60cm) with the number of miles to the city set into a recessed square. The stone near Cahernary follows this pattern (Fig. 3). It is without the name of any town or village and merely has the number 4 carved within a square; indicating that it is four miles to Limerick city.

Charlotte Murphy

Correction

In Dr Murphy's article on the Instruments of the Passion on County Limerick gravestones published in this journal vol. 51 (2011) the caption for **Fig. 7** on page 92 should read Connelly gravestone, Adare cemetery (Hon. Editor).

Bóthar na nUltach

The stretch of road from Manister to Croom was once commonly known as Bóthar na nUltach (the Road of the Ulstermen). This note illustrates why the roadway was so aptly named and fondly remembered in former times. In September 1601 a Spanish force of about 3,500 men landed at Kinsale to aid the rebellion in Ireland led by the Ulster Gaelic chieftains, Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell against the attempt to complete the conquest of Ireland by Elizabeth I. This forced the Ulster leaders to march south to link up with the Spaniards. By mid-December, O'Donnell and his army had progressed as far as Holycross in County Tipperary when he learned that Lord Mountjoy, the Lord Deputy of Ireland had dispatched Sir George Carew, the new President of Munster to confront him there and to impede any further progress. In addition, another English army was advancing from Leinster to cut off any retreat by the Irish. Unwilling to engage the English in battle O'Donnell found that his only possible means of escape was to travel westwards. Scouts informed him that this was impracticable because the terrain was predominantly mountainous and swampy with bogs stretching in all directions. The Irish leader and his troops appeared to be caught in a trap from which there was no escape. However, help was at hand in a most unexpected and fortuitous manner. A frost of extraordinary severity set in during the night, which made firm ground of the impassable swamps. When told of this O'Donnell roused his sleeping forces and hastily set out and, under cover of darkness, travelled over the frozen bogs and through mountain valleys until they reached level ground at Abington, County Limerick. Carew became aware of the flight, but not anticipating such rapid progress by O'Donnell's men, reached the old Cistercian abbey at Abington to learn, to his horror, that his prey had already passed through earlier without pausing for rest. The bedraggled army reached the safety of Croom that day without any further interference or hindrance having travelled along what then became known as Bóthar na nUltach.

Despite the passing of more than four hundred years, a fragment of Bóthar na nUltach still survives in its primitive form. When the railway line from Limerick to Cork, which later became known as the Cork Direct Line, was planned in the early 1860s the route chosen was along the eastern end of Croom and crossing the road from Manister to Croom. To obviate the necessity of a level crossing it was decided to bridge the proposed railway track. This necessitated the building of a high embankment for the bridge and a realignment of the existing road (Figs 1 & 2). The section of the old road then left unused



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