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 Cahernarry 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
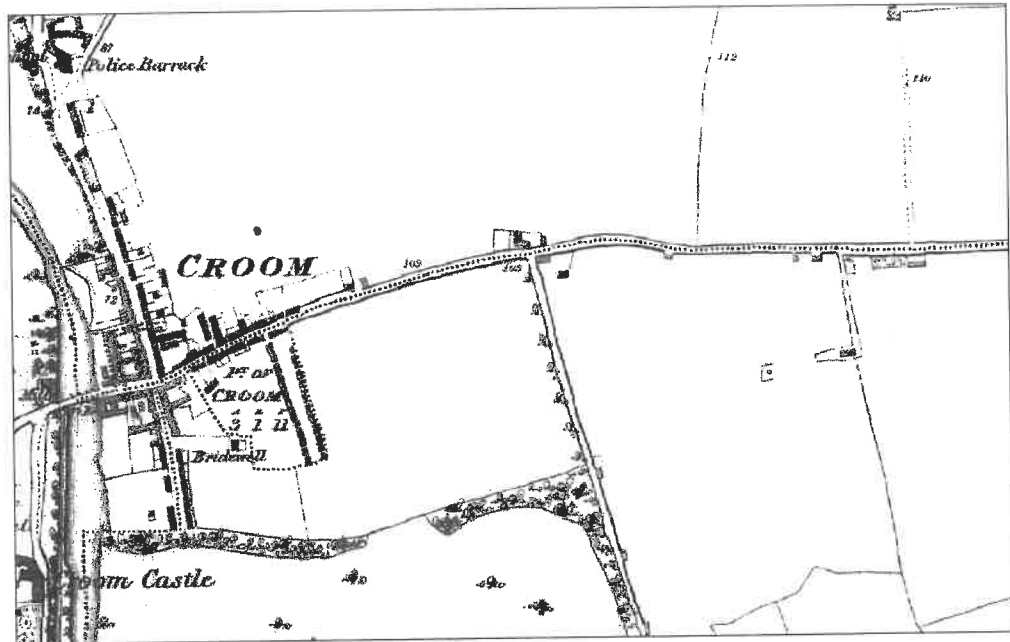
Fig. 1   1840 Map showing the road from Athlacca joining the Croom to Manister road at a T-junction, prior to changes in 1862.
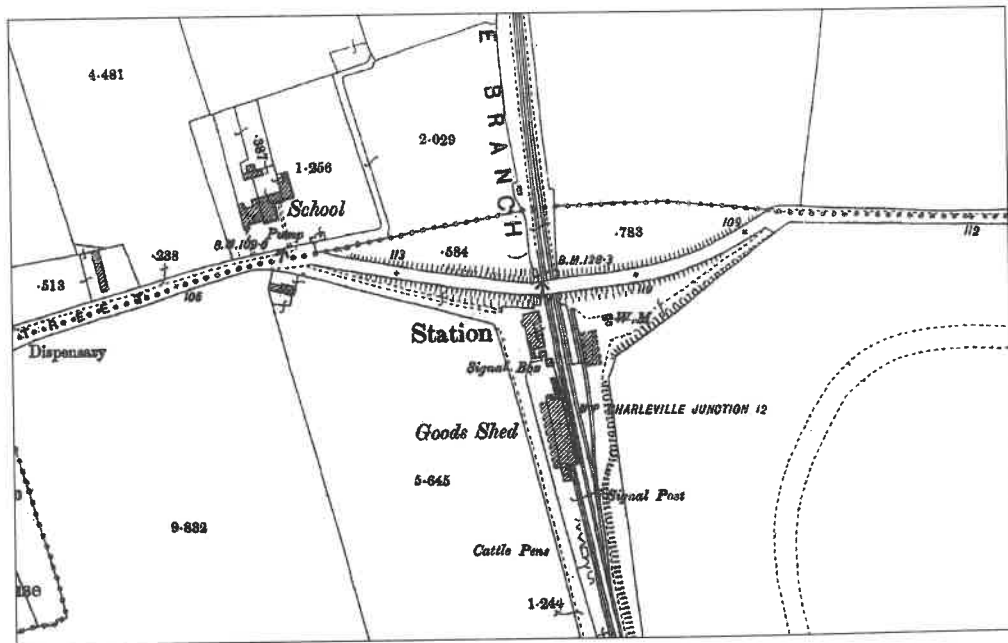

Fig. 2   1899 Map showing the realigned road. The hatched line marking the boundary of the townlands of Skagh (to the north) and Toureen is on the centre of the old road. The curved trackway shown on the bottom-right is part of the circuit of the old Croom race-course, now defunct.

Fig. 3   View of old road (right hand side) approaching Croom.

Fig. 4   View of old road (left hand side) leaving Croom.

is extant and is still to be seen, as one approaches Croom from Manister, to the right of the new roadway that ascends towards and over the bridge. On the village side of the bridge the imprint of the old road can also still be made out (Figs 3 & 4).

Local tradition tells that the common soldiers of O'Donnell's army rested in the fields to the right of the disused roadway while the officer corps was entertained in Croom Castle. The following morning the Ulstermen set off for Kinsale along the old Cork road and their rendezvous with destiny. The ignominious defeat inflicted at Kinsale on the Irish forces and their Spanish allies, on 24 December 1601, proved disastrous for the Irish nation in the short term and its reverberations arguably can still be felt in the Ireland of today.

The authentic surviving fragment of Bóthar na nUltach recalls the memorable march and fortuitous deliverance of Red Hugh O'Donnell and his gallant army and, at another level, offers an insight into the make-up of country roads in the early modern period of Irish history.

<div align="right">**Milo Spillane**</div>

Stones Standing or Standing Stones?

Two articles in previous volumes of this Journal attract attention.[1] Two stones included in them are of interest to this writer and are both in the Barony of Kenry, namely in Court, Kildimo and within Curragh Chase Forest Park, in Kilcornan. The contention here is that the Court stone, is not 'prehistoric' or a 'standing stone' from the Bronze era as is suggested, but merely a scratching post of modern times. The second 'standing stone' in the parish of Kilcornan within the Curragh Chase Forest Park, is also identified here as modern and in fact not even a stone at all!

In relation to the stone in Court, local lore defines this as a scratching post, which Gerard Curtin noted, has been used as such by cattle. His photograph looking at its northern face, does not portray the important features of this stone that support its definition as a scratching post.[2] My drawing of all four sides of the Court stone shows from left the southern face and then all other sides in an anti-clockwise direction (Fig 1). Midway down the southern side the semi-circular remains of a drilled hole can clearly be seen: this is a common quarrying method of forcing apart by wedges the natural grain formation of stone (Fig 2). This practice may be viewed in modern examples of quarrying, such as prevails in Liscannor and elsewhere. There are two other possibly man-made grooves to be seen in this stone in Fig 1, and these were likely used for the same purpose of forcing apart with wedges the natural grain of this stone. The drilled hole as indicative of modern quarrying practice therefore defines this stone as simply a 'stone standing' rather than a 'prehistoric standing stone'. There is therefore good reason why the Ordnance Survey did not include this as a 'standing stone' on its maps.

The second stone considered here is included on OS Maps as a 'standing stone', namely that in Curragh Chase and endorsed as such by Gerard Curtin.[3] Again having recourse to local knowledge, this stone is known as a 'pillar stone' and its geographical location as 'pillar hill'. This is to be found within a grove of trees and is dwarfed by them

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[1] Gerard Curtin, 'Two unrecorded Standing Stones in West Limerick', *NMAJ*, vol. 48 (2008) p. 143; idem, 'The geographical position of standing stones in northwest County Limerick', *NMAJ*, vol. 49 (2009) p. 130.

[2] Curtin, *NMAJ*, vol. 48 (2008) p. 143.

[3] Curtin, *NMAJ*, vol. 49 (2009) p. 131.