

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.

Milo Spillane

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

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.

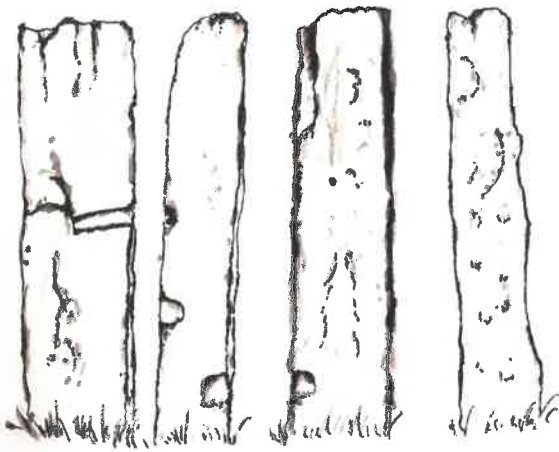


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

(Fig 3). It stands about ten feet high and is clearly constructed of small stones bonded by lime masonry into a circular pillar with several small regular stones protruding from the pillar just below its top. Stones at its base are constructed as if to provide a foundation for the pillar. The inclusion of this edifice as a 'standing stone' on OS Maps, is clearly not borne out by these constructional details. The area is heavily overgrown and difficult of access but prior to the planting of trees before the estate of the De Vere's was taken over by the State, this hill and pillar was clearly visible from Curragh Chase House.

It was known to the poet Aubrey De Vere, (1814–1902) as recorded in an incident recounted in his 'Recollections'. It happened upon the passing of the Bill granting Catholic

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Emancipation in 1829, when he noticed celebratory bonfires on the hills around: 'I was then fifteen and I well remembered climbing to the top of a high pillar on the summit of a hill opposite our house, though how the feat was achieved I cannot conceive, and standing upon it for many minutes, waving a lighted torch round my head in the gathering darkness'.⁴ The well-informed local historian Tom Pierce regarded it as a memorial grave marker, erected by one of the De Vere family to a number of unwilling recruits whom he had confined to a barn on his property and who died there of fever.⁵

While there is a profusion of stones standing in the gardens of houses built in recent times in this area as in others, one other such stone near the N69 and west of Kildimo in the private grounds of Bolane House, may be worth mentioning. This stands on a rise of ground to the south west of the above house and according to its owner, is one of a former pair, the other now not to be found. Such a stone or stones were already in situ when these lands and house was bought by the owner's grandfather. An outcrop of limestone to the east of its position may suggest the source of this stone. The same owner of the farm has no history regarding its purpose, but given the nature of this stone as seen in the photo (Fig 4), we wish to suggest another reason for its edification, namely aesthetic. Natural erosion is the sculptor of this and its contours may be the reason for its choice and presence in this position. However, no respecters of the *objet trouvé*, bovine admirers have imparted a polished patina to its scratchable parts.

This note, in describing the above stones, bears out the importance of local knowledge and the value to be gained by the close scrutiny of even an untrained archaeologist.

Michael O'Halloran

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⁴ Aubrey de Vere, *Recollections of Aubrey de Vere* (3rd edition, London, 1897) p. 21. In Wilfred Ward, *Aubrey de Vere a Memoir* (London, 1904) p. 5 the author retells this anecdote but in this instance has Aubrey waving his hat.

⁵ Tom Pierce, *Limerick Association Yearbook* (Limerick, 1984) p. 11.