

Excavations at Liathmore - Mochoemog

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FURTHER to the report of the excavations of 1968-69 (*Old Kilkenny Review*, No. 22 (1970), 31-4) work in the third and final season on this Early Christian monastic site was concentrated on the investigation of the circular foundation found in 1969 and on new excavation south-east of the later-medieval church.

The circular foundation proved to be, without doubt, the base of a round tower. As there is no historical record or oral tradition of a tower here it is thought that it must have fallen, and its stones been removed, sometime before 1500. A few of the shaped stones of the outer face of the tower were found elsewhere on the site and showed the diameter to have been about 15ft. 6ins. No dressed stones were found *in situ*; the circular foundation of rough limestone boulders was 8ft. 6in. in depth, its bottom stones set deep down into the natural boulder clay. As in some other excavated round towers, such as that of St. Canice's, Kilkenny, the tower was erected on an area of earlier burials.

The main work 1970 season was the excavation of a large area of ground (approximately 13,000 sq. feet) south-east of the later-medieval church. All the surface earthworks of this area were found to be associated with re-occupation of the site in the late seventeenth century. While wall footings and associated finds of pottery and iron objects were found, no complete house plans were identified. Beneath this late seventeenth-century occupation were several trenches and pits of earlier date. It is likely that these were associated with Early Christian activity and had been filled in the seventeenth century or earlier. Apart from these features nothing was found of the monastic site.

A raised platform, a conspicuous earthwork of this site, was sectioned and found to be a burial ground. As there were no small finds no precise dating can be given. Shaped stones of the round tower were found on the surface of this burial ground and if we presume a pre-sixteenth century date for the fall of the round tower then it is probable that the burials are either of later-medieval or Early Christian date.

The final season of excavation confirmed the interpretation of the first two seasons, namely that following the abandonment of the monastery about 1050 the site was not re-occupied until the late seventeenth century when a few flimsy houses were put up near the church ruins. There is no archaeological evidence for the continuity of settlement throughout the medieval period at Liathmore and whatever group of people was maintaining the fabric of the church, and perhaps burying their dead there, must have been living at some distance, perhaps in the Norman settlement of Two-Mile-Borris two miles away.



THE THREE SISTERS

“The first the gentle Shure that making way
 By sweet Clonmell adornes rich Waterford
 The next the stubborne Newre whose waters gray
 By fair Kilkenny and Rosseponte boord;
 The third the goodly Barrow which doth hoor
 Great heaps of Salmon in his deepe bosome,
 All which long sundered, doe at last accord
 To joyne in one, ere to the sea they come;
 So, flowing all from one, all one at last become.”

Spencer's description of the three rivers, the Nore, the Suir and the Barrow, which all have the same source — and all flow together into Waterford Harbour. He calls them “three faire sons” — in Ireland, we regard them, and call them the “three sisters.”

The verse comes from Book 4, Canto 11, Verse 40, the “Faerie Queene” by Edmund Spencer.