

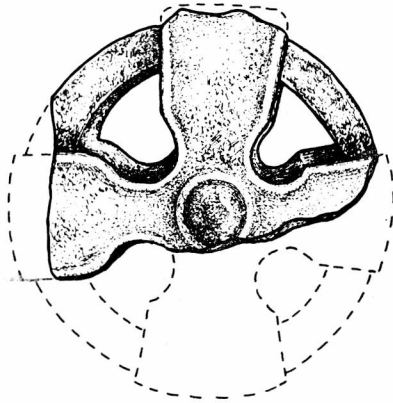
A New High Cross at Leggettsrath near Kilkenny

ELLEN PRENDERGAST, M.A.

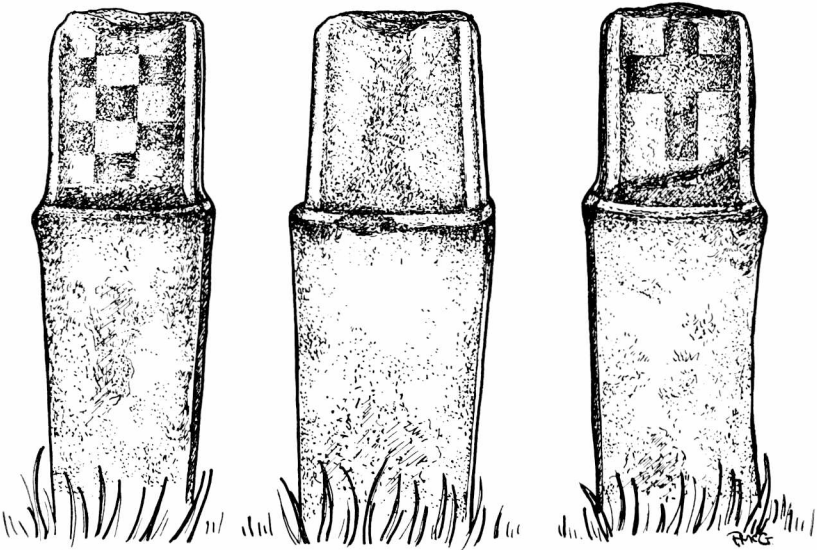
Less than a mile to the east of Kilkenny city and just off the main road to Gowran is the traditional site of an old church in the townland of Leggettsrath East (1). It is on Mr. Frank Fitzgerald's farm in a field still known as "The Church Field". There are no visible remains of the church structure now but the circular enclosure within which it stood is still distinctly preserved and the old trees around it continue to give it protection. Not much is remembered of the history of the place beyond what is recorded by Canon Carrigan in his *History* (2). and before him by the Rev. J. F. Shearman in his *Loco Patriciana* (3). When Canon Carrigan wrote, nearly sixty years ago, he said that all traces of the church have been obliterated but "the circular earthen rampart . . . that enclosed it is still distinctly traceable." He mentions that "in the very centre of the enclosing ring, is an ancient pillar-stone of granite" with "a plain sunk cross" carved "on the south face and a very peculiar cross of the cheque pattern, on the north face" and the photograph he reproduces gives a good impression of the "pillar" and the enclosure. The "pillar-stone" is the only object he mentions in the place and it seems to be in the same condition then as it is now. A search through his manuscript notes yielded no further information about the site.

Father Shearman's account published just ninety years ago scarcely differs at all from Canon Carrigan's in describing the remains of the site as it was in his day. He notes that "This

1. In the parish of St. John's and barony of Gowran. It is marked as a circular enclosure on the 1928 edition of the Ordnance Survey six inch sheet number 19, at 6.60 cm. from the East margin and 26.50 cm. from the North margin. On the old edition of this map this enclosure is shown with what appears to be some stones at the centre and on the Fair Plan of this map in the Ordnance Survey Headquarters the words "fort" and "stone" appear at this spot.
2. Rev. Wm. Carrigan: **The History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory**, vol. III (1905), 266-7.
3. Rev. J. F. Shearman: **Loco Patriciana VIII**, *Jour. Royal Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland*, 13 (1874-5), 394-397.



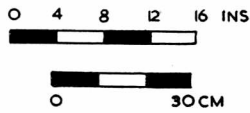
Recovered damaged cross head.



WEST FACE

SOUTH FACE

EAST FACE



Existing section of shaft.

neglected church site occupying an ancient rath, has within its ambit the shaft of a Celtic granite cross, standing four feet above the surface, it is much injured and weather worn the western face has the remains of a chequered-pattern ornament and the eastern panel has a plain Latin cross in relief and in fair preservation. This is the only relic of antiquity apparent above the green sward of the enclosure; there are no ruins of the church, nor are there any traces of interments”.

Last winter, during a visit to the Churchfield enclosure, members of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society — Rev. J. Ciohosey and Mrs. Margaret Phelan — noticed two large carved stone fragments partly exposed in the ground near the upright pillar. In the spring of this year (1963) another member — Eoin O Ceallaigh — freed the stones, having made sure that they were not attached in any way underneath. During the summer (19th August) the remains were carefully examined measured and photographed by Mrs. Phelan, Mrs. J. Norman and the writer. The smaller fragment was found to be very damaged and featureless though it would appear to be portion of a dressed stone. The larger fragment proved to be about half of the head of a ringed High Cross, badly damaged too but with clearly recognisable features (see illustration). All three stones — the pillar, the cross-head and the featureless fragment — are of fine granite or sandstone and may well belong to the same High Cross, the so-called pillar being a section of the shaft.

The maximum dimensions of the shapeless fragment are about 15 by 18 inches; it might perhaps be from the cross base or socket. The upright pillar or shaft is firmly bedded in the ground and it was not possible to measure how much is underground; it seems to have been exposed to the same extent in Canon Carrigan’s photograph as it is to-day. It stands 1.17 metres high or about 4 ft. over the ground as Rev. J. F. Shearman states. It is rectangular in cross-section and divided, superficially, into two portions by a slight projection around the present middle. The lower portion is dressed but plain and narrows a little below the projection. The maximum dimensions of the cross-section at the projection are 46 cm. by 35 cm. The upper portion of the shaft tapers slightly upwards but it is more uniform in its proportions; here the average cross-

section measures 35 cm. by 30 cm., the narrower faces as on the lower half are east and west (4). The ornamental design of the upper shaft may never have been fully carried out or, perhaps, weathering may account for what appears to be obliterated; the shaft is broken off at the top and, almost certainly, more of it is missing than is present. The north face is quite flat and unadorned; the corresponding south face is similarly flat and unadorned with the exception of a slight moulding along the upright edges—these mouldings it shares with the adjacent faces (see illustrations). The east and west faces show these vertical mouldings but, again, they do not appear on the north face as far as can be seen now. In addition, the east face has a plain Latin cross carved in recess or sunken just slightly below the surface (Shearman mistakenly says "in relief"). A flaw in the stone appears as an oblique line below this Latin cross. Likewise, the west face, what remains of it now, is covered with a large chequer pattern, alternate squares being sunken slightly below the surface.

The cross-head is not of large proportions. The projection of the arms beyond the ring has been damaged so that it is not possible to estimate its original height and width, the maximum height at present is 48 cm. while it is 68 cm. wide. The head is pierced; the arms are hollowed at the intersection and splay towards their extremities giving bell-like openings; the ring is narrow and thinner than the arms which are up to 18 cm. in thickness. There is a single, central boss in each face giving a total thickness here of 22 cm. The boss of the reverse face is very small and insignificant, it is not more than 7 cm. in diameter and 2 cm. in height. It is quite plain and there is no other ornament on this face. On the obverse face, the boss is 15 cm. in diameter and approximately 4 cm. in height. It has a moulding around the perimeter and faint traces or ornament may, perhaps, be detected all over it, though it is not possible to recognise any patterns. The arms are outlined by shallow mouldings on the edges and it is not possible to be certain if there are traces of other ornaments on this face of the cross

4. This orientation corresponds with that of Rev. J. F. Shearman but it differs with Canon Carrigan's description insofar as he takes what we call the South face to be the West face and so on accordingly.

or not. The proportions of the head suggest that it may have belonged to the fragment of shaft which survives and, judging by the taper of the shaft, that the cross did not reach any great height.

The enclosure seems to be as well preserved today as it was when Father Shearman and Canon Carrigan made their observations. It is clearly defined by its outer rim and measures about 34 metres in diameter which is about 30 yards across as the Canon stated. The area enclosed is a little above the level of the surrounding field; it is not possible to detect any superficial features in its present overgrown condition.

Apart from the notices of Shearman and Carrigan of this old church site at Leggetsrath, there seems to be nothing additional recorded of the remains here. Apparently, the cross-head was not visible when these records were made though the shaft stood in its present position. Crawford in his very thorough *List of High Crosses* (5) did not advert to the fact that such a cross was represented by the so-called pillar at this site; it is recognised as a cross-shaft in the *Shell Guide to Ireland* (p. 326); otherwise it seems to have escaped notice, even by Miss Helen Roe in her recent admirable booklet on *The High Crosses of Western Ossory* (1958).

It is understandable enough that the rather uninspiring broken "pillar" should have escaped attention but now that its long lost head has been restored it can be better understood and appreciated for what it is, the latest addition to the Ossory group of High Crosses — latest in being recorded that is. Now it remains to be seen if it is not also the latest in point of time. In the absence of relevant historical documents, the cross itself must tell its own history, through its style of workmanship and ornament and by comparison with what has been learned of High Crosses as a whole. In this respect it is fortunate that a specialist on the subject has devoted so much attention to the Ossory group and Miss Roe's booklet is the greatest help in placing this new cross in its setting. She is of the opinion that all the other seven Ossory High Crosses were erected within the period 735-790 A.D., a mere sixty years; that the two Ahenny crosses are the earliest and are followed by the two

5. *Jour. Royal Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland*, 37 (1907), 187-239.

Kilkieran crosses, then the Killamery cross and the cross at Kilree may be the latest of the lot. In many respects this new cross at Leggettsrath differs remarkably from the others; its ornament is in no way as fine as the elaborate Ahenny crosses and it can scarcely claim to be related to them beyond being in the Ossory region. It bears more resemblance to the simpler crosses of Killamery and Kilree though it might be many years later than Miss Roe's estimate of their date.

The kind of stone from which this new cross is carved (granite or sandstone) corresponds with that of the great majority of High Crosses throughout the country; a local type of limestone with a granite quality was used for a group of late crosses in Clare and Aran (6). The stone used in Leggettsrath cross, since it is not local, may have been an erratic or may have been brought from the nearby granite area of Carlow-Wicklow. Limestone was not as suitable for these bulky carved crosses but found favour in the subsequent Gothic architecture as may be seen in the Abbeys of St. John, St. Francis and St. Dominic in Kilkenny.

The comparisons in size and proportions of the shaft and head, incomplete as the cross is, show it to be most at home in the south-eastern region of the country, among the Ossory and the Barrow Valley crosses. It is not possible to estimate its original height or whether it stood in a base or pedestal, its general proportions were probably much the same as that of the east cross at Kilkieran or the Kilree cross. The lower half of the cross is exceptional, as it now stands. Perhaps it had been inserted into a high base, though the vertical edge between the N-E faces might not slip into a prepared socket very easily. It is possible, of course, that the cross was never completely finished or has been altered. The most probable size of base is suggested by Kilree, Lorrha, Nurney and others—none of them a very early cross.

In shape the head is well executed and balanced, with its narrow ring, its bell-like openings, the splaying arms with small mouldings along the edges similar to the moulding on the shaft, and the large hemispherical boss on one face echoed by a smaller one of the reverse, both centrally placed at the inter-

6. de Paor: *Jour. Galway Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, 26 (1955), 53-71.

section. Good parallels may be seen in the crosses at Killamery, Kilkieran and Kilree in the Ossory group, at Drumcullin in Offaly (7), Old Leighlin, Nurney and others of the Leinster crosses and further north at Finglas and even as far as the Island Cross at Tynan, near Armagh (8). Instances of crosses with a single boss at the intersection of the arms may be seen at Killamery, Nurney and Tynan; the crosses of Ossory usually have five bosses on each face and bosses are rare outside this region. The single boss may indicate a fading out of the more elaborate and highly ornate fashion.

Consideration of the art ornament carved on these Leggets-rath fragments provides another approach to the problem of the period background. The Latin Cross on the east face is quite exceptional, strange as that may seem. Related cruciform patterns may be found on the sculptured crosses, on grave-slabs, on the metalwork and illuminated MSS of the Early Christian period but, apart from one or two early grave-slab examples (9), a simple Latin cross does not seem to occur in this context. It might be thought, rather apologetically, that this plain cross was carved onto the shaft in later medieval time but there seems to be no good reason for not accepting it as contemporary with the pattern on the opposite face. It is in the same strong, uncomplicated character and similarly sunken a little below the field of the face of the shaft. However, since no straightforward parallel is forthcoming, it is of little help in attributing the motif to any particular period.

The chequer pattern on the west face is more promising although if diaper patterns other than simple squares are left out of the reckoning, it is by no means a usual motif. There is a small patch of a similar pattern on the pedestal of the east cross at Killamery though this might also be seen as a double Greek cross. In the Ossory group too, those extraordinary urn-like caps on the Killamery and Ahenny crosses appear to have traces of a chequer pattern on them; this, however, is of little value for our purpose since no one feels able to accept these caps as contemporary with the crosses or indeed as properly related at

7. Crawford: *Jour. Royal Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland*, 38 (1907), 187-239, and Purser: *J.R.S.A.I.*, 48(1918), 74-77 (Drumcullin).
8. Roe: *Seanchas Ardmacha* (1955), 107-114, pl. VIII.
9. Lionard: *Proc. Royal Irish Academy*, 61 (1960-'61), 95-169.



Cross shaft and head on site at Leggettsrath.

Photo by L. McAdams.

all. There are only two other High Crosses, to my knowledge, which have such a pattern, that at Tuam and that at Kilfenora, Co. Clare (the Dooarty Cross) (10). At Tuam the chequer covers the entire flat surfaces of the under-arms and may also appear in the background behind the head of the Crucified Christ (11). On the Dooarty Cross there is a narrow panel on the north side. Both these crosses are of late 11th or 12th century date and are good examples of the provincial renaissance in Irish art after the recovery from the Viking intrusions and, indeed, show the adoption of Scandinavian artistic influence to a remarkable degree.

There is a panel of chequer pattern of a similar character on the decorated Romanesque doorway at Kilmore, County Cavan (12), which can scarcely be much earlier in date than the 12th century too, showing as it does how Scandinavian interlacing has been absorbed into Irish art. On Cormac's Chapel at Cashel (13), the areas between the arcading inside are covered with a pattern resembling the chequer design but set obliquely; it might be better described as a lozenge pattern but it is close enough in character to the Leggetsrath chequer and, similarly, ornaments a large area of stone. Thus, it is somewhat relevant here and, again, points to a 12th century date. It is not surprising to find chequer pattern on Romanesque architecture further afield and a panel in a Romanesque Church in North Jutland which we visited during last September so closely matched the Kilkenny panel as to be rather startling.

Diaper and key patterns are common enough on Irish Early Christian metalwork, generally of the 11th and 12th centuries. The closest parallel is an unequivocal chequer on the Shrine of the Stowe Missal, on the portion which was made before 1051 A.D. as Crawford points out (14).

Thus it seems that whatever clues there are to the dating of this new cross point to date late in the High Cross series

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10. de Paor: *Jour. Galway Arch. and Hist. Soc.*, 26 (1955-6), 53-71.
 11. O'Neill: *The Sculptured Crosses of Ancient Ireland* (1857), p. 6 and pl. 12, no. 7. and Stokes: *Early Christian Art in Ireland* (1932), fig. 65, p.20.
 12. Henry: *La Sculpture Irlandaise* (1933), pl. 148, 4.
 13. Stokes: *ibid.*, fig. 101, p.65.
 14. Crawford: *Jour. Royal Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland*, 53 (1923), 77, 152 and fig. 2.f. and Stokes: *ibid.*, 77.



and within the limits of decorated Romanesque architecture, probably the eleventh-twelfth centuries, during the revival of the old artistic traditions reinforced with new exotic elements.

It remains to examine the ecclesiastical history of the site, insofar as that has survived. Some comment may be made here on the appearance presented by the actual remains of the site today. There is a circular area delimited by a slightly raised edge, like the rim of a platform or like the traces of an enclosing bank. It suggests a cashel boundary to the ecclesiastical structures or the denuded bank of a ring-fort homestead. It is possible that traces of both are to be found here and that the ring-fort or rath of the placename, Leggetsrath, may have been incorporated in the subsequent church enclosure. None of the old maps shows any other rath in the townlands of Leggetsrath East or West.

The family name Legget or Ligget occurs in historical documents as far back as the beginning of the 13th century at least. It is clear from the *Ormond Deeds* that about 1200 John Legget owned all the land around the present Leggetsrath. In the second volume of the *Ormond Deeds* the placename appears in a Roll which Curtis attributes to the early 15th century.

The association of this area with St. Malog goes back even earlier in tradition but apart from the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick there is lack of documents until the Norman records. In the *Red Book of Ossory* it is stated that a Legget was a tenant of Kilmalog Manor in the 13th century. The Prior of St. John's Abbey was a tenant of Kilmalog Manor and it is known that the church was appropriated to St. John's some time before 1300 A.D. Certainly, the memory of St. Malog survives to this day in the name Aghmalog where there was a ford and there is now a bridge over the Fennel stream at the crossing of road and railway, in the vicinity of the Leggetsrath church site. Kilmalog is vaguely recalled, probably due more to the historians Carrigan and Shearman than to a genuine folk memory.

St. Malog (Malach, Mologga, Mo Elloc) was a Welsh missionary who came to Ireland with his brothers to help St. Patrick, about the middle of the 5th century. His associations are with Munster and the dioceses of Lismore and Ossory. Fr.

Shearman says "The ancient church sites connected with Malach are almost lost to memory and erased — a state of things which was perhaps true even in the ninth century, when the tripartite life of St. Patrick was written, and interpolated from older records". In attempting to identify the traditional Cill Malog Father Shearman has no hesitation in identifying it with the site under discussion here at Leggetsrath. He quotes an Elizabethan Inquisition of 1572 which mentions the manor of Kilmalog near Fennell's Hill (15) and says "This interesting record restores the lost name of a very ancient church and disused cemetery north-east of the Dublin road, now called Leggettsrath . . . This old cemetery must have been long disused and abandoned; in the immediate vicinity at Purcell's Inch, west of the railroad near the viaduct over Aghmalog are the ruins of a small fourteenth century church, which, though it probably supplanted the still older church, is now itself quite as desolate and forgotten. The primary or older church shows that Malach or Mo Elloc was "culted" in very remote times in Ossory".

Canon Carrigan describes the remains in Leggetsrath but does not mention any association with Malach here. At the same time he identifies Cill Molagga with the ruined church in Purcell's Inch which he thinks may be 11th century. It may be that both old sites preserve the memory of the Welsh missionary and that the earlier church at Leggetsrath was replaced by the later one of Purcell's Inch, the ruins of which are still to be seen, underneath the ivy. Our efforts to get independent and indisputable evidence were unsuccessful.

There is a third old church site in this Fennel Hill area, it is in the nearby townland of Garrincreen a little upstream on the Fennel to the north of Aghmalog. John O'Donovan in his *Ordnance Survey Letters* (1839) writes that this old ruin in

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15. **Loco Patriciana**, VIII, 396-7. The date of the Inquisition is, correctly, May 25, 39th Elizabeth.
 16. The members of the Kilkenny Archæological Society who have brought this new find to notice—Rev. J. Clohosey, Mrs. Margaret Phelan, Mrs. J. Norman, Eoin O Ceallaigh, Leo MacAdams and the writer, wish to thank all those who helped with their inquiries and especially Miss Helen Roe, Eamonn de h-Oir, Director, Placenames Commission, and his wife Siobhan, Professor R. de Valera, U.C.D., and also Miss P. McGurk who prepared the drawing.

Garrincreen is "remarkable for nothing more than its having been often seen to go to the neighbouring stream to drink water at night and come back again"—perhaps all three old churches indulged in this curious habit and got a little confused. Now there is no knowing which is which (16).

The Butlers of Lower Grange, Viscounts Galmoy

SEAN O'BRIEN, B.A.

Of the descendants of Theobald Walter who accompanied Henry II to Ireland in 1171 and who assumed the surname of Butler from the chief Butlerage of Ireland conferred on him in 1177, six branches were raised to the peerage under the titles of Ormond, Cahir, Mountgarrett, Dunboyne, Ikerrin and Galmoy. The last five have disappeared; some as a result of 17th century attainders, others through the failure of heir's male.

The family of Galmoy who resided at Lower Grange, was an illegitimate branch of the house of Ormond and a comparatively latecomer to the peerage. Today, hardly a trace of the Galmoy mansion remains though it was an extensive and imposing residence less than 200 years ago. The author of "The Compleat Irish Traveller" writing in 1778 says of it. "From Bagenalstown I repassed its bridge, re-entering Kilkenny County and keeping the Barrow to my left entered Low Grange within a mile of Gowran. How shall I describe this place. Imagine as you approach this seat you view the walls of a town and at last enter by the gates, pass by several noble arches, partly built with marble and partly of a hard stone dug out of a quarry within its precincts. You advance by these arches which lead you to an ample courtyard fronted with a handsome canal. The building, of a modern and elegant taste is fronted with marble; the spouts that throw off the water are of the same materials and so contrived as to appear an additional beauty to the building. Part of this noble dwelling was formerly the tower of an old castle and it now wears a modern face. Any person would take this place for a town on the inside of the