Burials at Gallowshill

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Some human bones were found by County Council workers in Murphy's Sandpit at Gallowshill in the suburbs to the South of Kilkenny, in September, 1969. The matter was reported through the local Garda authorities to the National Museum and I visited the site on September 21. The townland of Gallowshill is in the parish of St. Patrick's and the co-ordinates of the site on the six inch Ordnance Survey map, sheet 19, are: 24.25 cm. from the south margin and 22.90 cm. from the east margin. No monument or antiquity is marked on any map of the place. The bones had been deposited near the top of the sandpit under the covering of soil. There was no trace of a formal grave and no object was associated with the burial.

The Museum is indebted to Professor C. A. Erskine of the Department of Anatomy, Trinity College, Dublin, who examined the bones and reported that they represent " one adult male of unusually strong build, over six feet in height and about 30 years old." Other human bones are said to have been found in the same sandpit in the past, in similar circumstances.

No reference to this site has been made in the publications of Canon Carrigan, John Hogan or John O'Donovan on local histories and antiquities. Local opinion regards these burials as belonging to the 1798 insurrection period or later and the townland name appears to confirm this association. It is not known when the name Gallowshill began to be applied to the area in official documents but it was not in use at the time of the Down Survey (1660-1680): the names 'Sense,' 'Cento' and 'Ceuts' being recorded for that land in the latter half of the 17th century. The earliest record of the townland name Gallowshill here, located by Mr. P. Nyhan of the Irish Placenames Commission, is that of the Boundary Survey sketch map made about 18.30. The form 'Gallow's-hill' in the **House of Commons Survey and Valuation Report,** 1826, p. 216, is the earliest form of the name noted in published works.