

14. A society in turmoil—as seen in a 17th-century coin hoard from Ballinvinny South, Glanmire, County Cork

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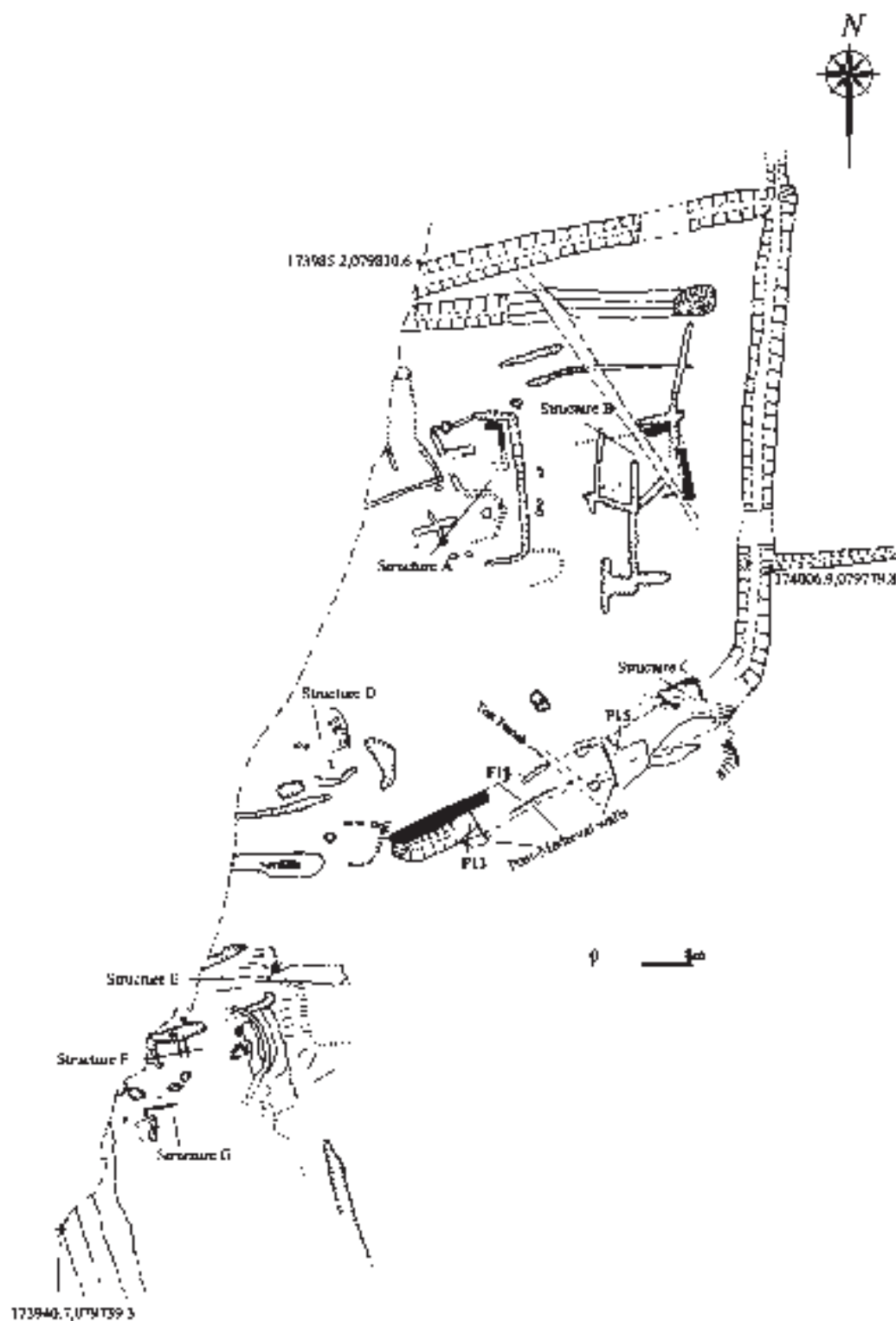
Illus. 1—Site location map of Ballinvinny South coin hoard following construction of the N8 Glanmire–Watergrasshill Road Scheme (based on the Ordnance Survey Ireland map)

The following paper aims to highlight both the excitement and potential of archaeological discovery and the importance of rigorous archaeological investigation as part of the road design and delivery process.

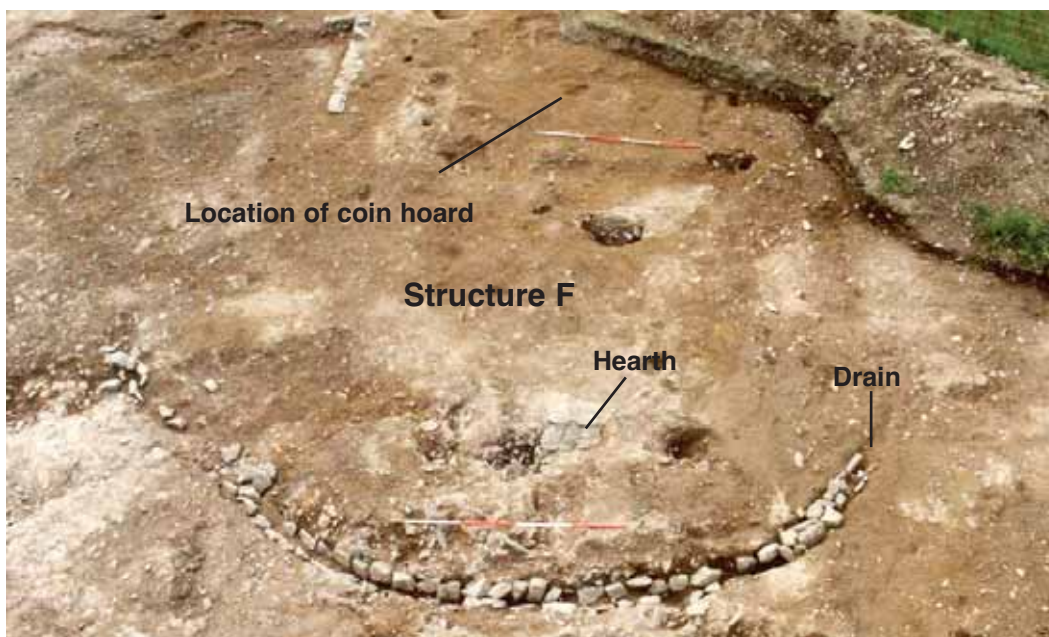
In 2001, archaeological investigations, in advance of the N8 Glanmire–Watergrasshill Road Scheme, revealed a site steeped in history and intrigue. Sheila Lane and Associates carried out the excavation on behalf of Cork County Council. The site director was Eamonn Cotter.

Local information had directed archaeologists to an elevated site on the upper west-facing slope of a small valley, in the townland of Ballinvinny South, north-east of Glanmire village (Illus. 1). Subsequent investigations partly exposed a medieval moated settlement, enclosing a roughly D-shaped area of approximately 2,000 sq m. This is believed to have been built by Anglo-Norman settlers in the late 13th century, possibly as part of a prolonged second wave of Anglo-Norman colonisation of the territory that was to become County Cork. Centred within the enclosure, archaeologists discovered the foundation

¹ NGR 173953, 079681. Height 94.6 m OD. Excavation Licence No. 01E0111.



Illus. 2—Plan of moated site and other excavated features at Ballinvinny South. The coin hoard was discovered in association with Structure F at the bottom left of the plan (Sheila Lane & Associates)



Illus. 3—Aerial view of hoard findspot and other features associated with Structure F (Sheila Lane & Associates).

imprint of two rectangular houses (Cotter 2005, 5–7).¹ The surrounding moat was fed by spring water channelled to the site, although the moat is unlikely to have filled. The site was entered from the south via a defended gap in the moat. In all, the settlement would have represented a significant symbol of colonial authority in the area. However, the excavated evidence suggested that the site was not settled for long. What is not clear is why. It is possible that Irish resistance or the ebb and flow of local power politics forced the settlers to abandon the site (*ibid.*, 24–5). What is clear from the excavation results is that the next phase of identified activity was not until the late 17th century when the site, now dilapidated with its moat backfilled, was re-occupied by a small post-medieval settlement.

The excavation revealed the partial remains of three houses and three outbuildings (Illus. 2). The largest house measured approximately 11 m by 5 m and is thought to have been a timber-framed building, perhaps with packed clay infilling. It had a stone-built hearth located in the east gable (*ibid.*, 10–11).

Just when it was thought that the site had offered up all its secrets a remarkable discovery was made. Concealed in the floor of the largest house (Structure F) was a hoard of 67 coins dating to AD 1689 and AD 1690 (Illus. 3). Careful analysis of traces of attached textiles revealed that the coins had been stored in stacks, each stack having an inner wrapping of twill weave linen cloth and an outer wrapping of tabby weave wool cloth. The analysis suggested that the entire hoard had been wrapped in a small twill wool cloth bag, minute traces of which survived (Wincott-Heckett 2005). To the archaeologists this was a fascinating discovery that would connect the site to the desperate struggles of a king.

The hoard consisted of seven half crowns, 27 shillings and 33 sixpences (Illus. 4), in all a significant amount of money, clearly hard earned and jealously guarded. The coins are of a type commonly termed as brass money or gun money and stem from arguably one of the most turbulent and remarkable periods in Irish history, a period whose effects are still to be felt in modern Ireland.

The story of how the hoard came to be deposited at Ballinvinny South begins on the early Spring morning of 12 March 1689,² when the deposed Catholic King James II landed unopposed with a French fleet at Kinsale, County Cork.³ James was accompanied by a lieutenant general of the French army, Conrad von Rosen, and a following of French, Irish, English and Scottish supporters (Simms 1991, 491). His aim was a decisive victory over his son-in-law, William of Orange, who had been made King of England and Ireland in the previous year. James was supported by the predominantly Catholic Irish and William by the predominantly Protestant English. James' forces quickly marched to Cork and then on to Dublin, a 12-day journey, unchallenged by any opponents and cheered by enthusiastic crowds (*ibid.*, 489).

The lack of immediate opposition is understandable given the general anxiety felt among those in support of William. This anxiety, particularly amongst the landed and merchant (mostly Protestant) classes, led to an outpouring of coinage and raw bullion from Ireland. If James was to fund a sufficiently large army he would require money, huge sums of money.

One of his first acts on arriving in Dublin on 24 March 1689 was to issue a proclamation regulating the wildly varying value of foreign coins that had flooded the Irish market (Colgan 2003, 140). In April 1689, eager for progress, James moved against William's supporters in Derry. However, any notion of a swift assault failed and James returned to Dublin leaving his forces to besiege the city. James summoned an elected (mostly Catholic) parliament who met on 7 May 1689. The parliament passed an act, among a raft of others, asserting that the parliament of England could not legislate for Ireland (Simms 1991, 489). Meanwhile, William ominously began to mobilise his forces. Determined to maintain the pressure, and keenly aware that the supply of foreign coinage and bullion was insufficient to fund his efforts, James issued a proclamation on the 19 June 1689 ordering the minting of copper and brass sixpences (Colgan 2003, 141). This desperate measure sought to use coins struck from base metals as legal currency, but to be redeemed to the holder with gold and silver on James' re-accession to the throne. On the same day, James ordered the confiscation of two coin minting presses (known as the Duchess and James presses), and other necessary equipment, and a mint was soon established at 61 Capel Street, Dublin (*ibid.*, 141).

For the new coinage system to work it was vital that it had public support and confidence both in the coinage itself and in the prospect of an early victory against William (Dolley 1991, 419). Therefore, the new coins were designed as per the proclamation with the bust of James and the legend 'IACOBVS II DEI GRATIA' (latin for 'James II by the grace of God'). The obverse side had the King's royal crown symbols, his initials (J R for *Jacobus Rex*, latin for 'James the King') and the value of the coin denoted as VI (sixpence). These were surrounded by 'MAG BR FRA ET HIB REX 1689' (Great Britain, France and

² For consistency, the dates given are based on the Gregorian calendar, which was not adopted in Britain and Ireland until 1752. At the time of James II, the Julian calendar was in use, where the 24 March 1688 was followed by the 25 March 1689, i.e. the first day of the new calendar year. This is explained in more detail by Colgan (2003, 139–40). Hence, under the Julian calendar, James II would have landed in Kinsale on the 12 March 1688.

³ The efforts of King James to fund his Irish campaign are well documented by Colgan (2003) and to a lesser extent by Simms (1991) and Dolley (1991). The following offers a summary of these accounts.



Illus. 4—Gun money half crowns from Ballinvinny South (Cork County Council)

Ireland King 1689). The month was also included, probably to allow for the coins to be redeemed in the order in which they were issued (Colgan 2003, 142).

On 27 June, a second proclamation was issued ordering the issuing of shillings and half crowns following the same general design as the sixpence. The need for coinage and metal was incessant. Staff at the Capel Street mint worked in shifts around the clock. It is estimated that James required £100,000 per month to fund his campaign, which required 13 tonnes of copper per month for coin production alone (ibid., 143). Requests were sent far and wide to commandeer materials for coinage. Cannons, church bells and even old kitchen furniture were used, hence the term brass money or gun money (Dolley 1991, 418).

The first cracks appeared in the system in August with the accounts of significant dissent and refusal to accept the coinage. Soon after, in November, counterfeiters at the Capel Street mint were sent to the gallows (Colgan 2003, 143–44). Public confidence began to waver, lowering the economic value of the currency and fuelling inflation. James frantically tried to stem the ebb in public confidence by introducing favourable loan terms for brass money and repeating his pledge to fully redeem the coins upon victory.

The following year, on 25 March 1690, a second mint was established in Limerick using the Duchess press from Capel Street (ibid., 149). Coins made from pewter had begun to be minted and production was aided by the Limerick mint. The need for currency and raw materials was relentless. On 15 June 1690, James issued another proclamation ordering the reduction in size of sixpences and shillings in order to make supplies of metal go further (ibid.). James, now stretched and vulnerable, faced disaster when William's forces broke out of Ulster in June. James was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne in July and, while he returned to France, his depleted forces fled west, pursued by William's forces, who by now had captured the Capel Street mint (ibid., 152). On 10 July, William issued a proclamation drastically devaluing brass money. By September 1690 Cork and Kinsale had fallen. Meanwhile, in Limerick, forces loyal to James held out and continued to produce James II

brass money until October 1691 when, under the command of Patrick Sarsfield, the city surrendered, leading to the Treaty of Limerick. Some 11,000 Irish soldiers and commanders were allowed to return to France in what has been called the 'Flight of the Wild Geese' (ibid., 154). William proclaimed the formal demonetisation of the gun money currency in February 1692 (Dolley 1991, 419).

The legacy of the James II gun money period includes both the profound and the curious. The events of those turbulent three years would forge the shape of modern Irish politics. As a monetary system, historians see it as having influenced the foundation of the Bank of England in 1696, with the issuing of paper money and bonds redeemable from central reserves (Colgan 2003, 155). The defeat of James and the collapse of the brass money system left his supporters destitute, demoralised and bitter. So much so, that the Irish term for the 'soft metal' was '*uim bog*' (ibid., 149), which would be immortalised as 'Bah, humbug' by the disdainful bark of Dickens' character Ebenezer Scrooge.

The coin hoard at Ballinvinny South reinforces the old saying that 'all politics is local politics'. The hoard contained sixpences dating to James' early proclamation, which began the issuing of brass money in June 1689. The most recent coin dated to May 1690, when the tide was beginning to turn against James. Although we may never know who deposited the coins in the floor of the house at Ballinvinny South, its discovery has reinforced the fact that many new and exciting discoveries await us during the course of the roads programme.