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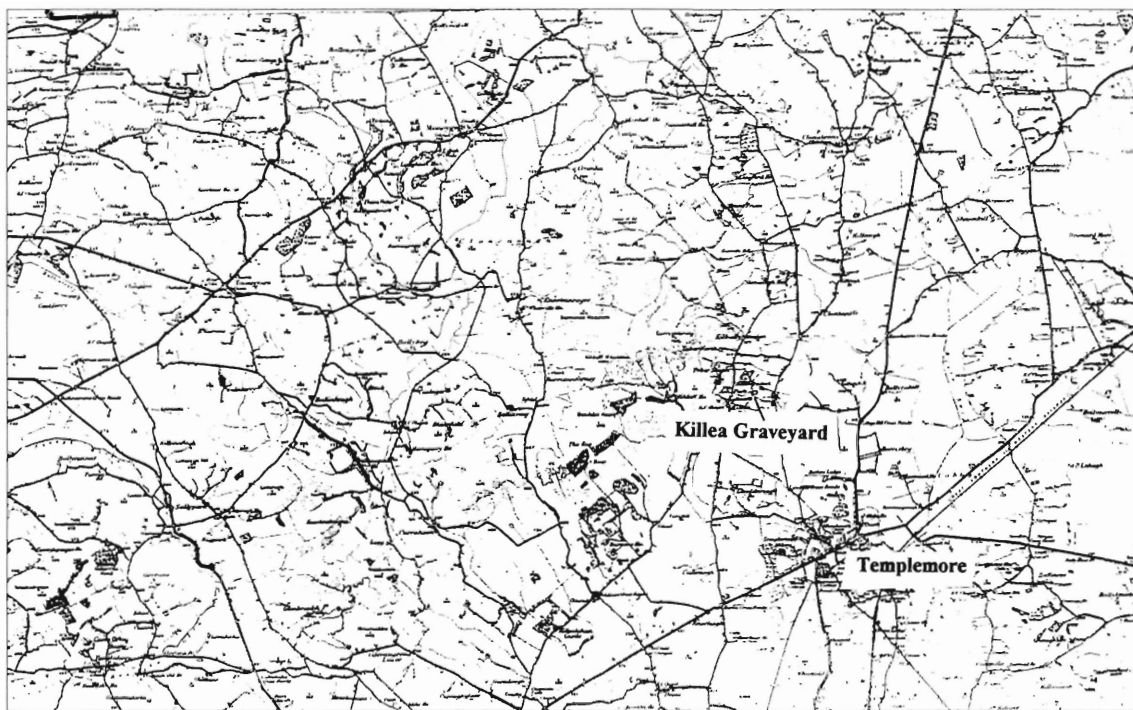
# *New archaeological finds at Killea Graveyard*

By Richard O'Brien

The graveyard of Killea is located in the townland of Park, in the parish of Killea, and the barony of Ikerrin. The co-ordinates of the graveyard are OS29 E19.8 N53.9, SO87748, OD152m (Stout, G. T., 1984, 105). In the Sites and Monuments Record of North Tipperary the graveyard is listed as Mon. No. 6, Sheet 29, PL/TR 01/3, NAT GRID 20872/17490. In Irish the name "Killea" is spelt *Cill Aodha*, i.e. the Church of Saint Aidius. This name suggests a strong monastic or early church link.

Killea is mentioned in the Papal Taxation List of Parishes of 1302-6, and in a later list of 1437 (Stout, G., *ibid*, 105). This proves the existence of a pre-fourteenth century church on the site of the present graveyard. At the time of the Royal Visitations of 1607 and 1615 the church is described as being ruinous (Stout, G., *op. cit.*, 105). The parish of *Kyllea* is mentioned in the Civil Survey of 1654-56 having Glebeland of four acres valued at 10 shillings, the vicar being the proprietor (Simington, R. C., 1934, 373). By the time of O'Donovan's Ordnance Survey of the 1840s the church was a complete ruin. There is a detailed survey of the church in the Archaeological Survey of the Barony of Ikerrin (Stout, G., 1948, 105).

As part of a FÁS scheme graveyard improvement the author was employed by the Killea



Map extract from 1/-inch series, 1901 edition. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey Permit No. MP003699.

Committee to oversee the work, in accordance with directions from *Dúchas*, the Heritage Service. As a result of this work a number of previously unknown architectural finds were made in the graveyard.

A portion of a quern stone was located c. 7m from the longer church wall. It is of green/grey sandstone, a stone common on the graveyard walls. The stone is disc-shaped in section, measuring 35 x 45 cm in diameter, 8 cm thick, with a single, central perforation 9 x 9 cm in diameter, and 7 cm thick. There is a concentric line drawn around the perforation, 16 cm in diameter. About three quarters of the stone survive intact.

The upper portion of a two-light, paired ogee-headed window was found about 10 m from the entrance gate. One full light survives, and a slight portion of the second. The whole piece is 32 x 44 cm in diameter, and 14 cm thick. The stone may have been once used as a grave marker, but had been lying loose on the surface.

A font or bullaun stone was also found near the north east boundary wall. The stone is sandstone, and is 35 x 59 cm in diameter. A central hollow on one face only measures 30 cm wide. This gives the stone a distinctive "scooped-out" appearance. There is a curved "lip" at one edge of the stone, 26 cm wide, and 11 cm thick. There may be a smaller "lip" on the opposing edge.

Various dressed stones had been built into the graveyard boundary walls, a common practice in old graveyards. These include a number of possible door or window jamb stones. These stones came originally from the church ruins, as did the architectural stones described above.

It is not uncommon to find architectural stones like these in old graveyards. Ogee-headed window stones were a common feature of churches from the fifteenth century onward (Leask, H. G., 1978, 114; Maher, D., 1991, 228). The author knows of many examples of such stones used as grave markers in Tipperary graveyards. It is also not very uncommon to find a bullaun stone at an early church site, as the artefacts were associated with the early church.

The rotary quern is a fairly diagnostic find from ringfort contexts, and can date from the late Iron age to the Medieval period (Edwards, N., 1990, 63). Its presence in the graveyard may signify nearby habitation evidence, but a firm date cannot be affixed to the Killea example.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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