

VALUABLE FINDS

In County Limerick

LINKS WITH VERY REMOTE PAST

The excavations at Cush, near Kilfinane, County Limerick, which began early in August, have just been concluded. The investigations on this reputed site of Temair Erana under the direction of Mr. Sean T. O'Riordan, M.A., have yielded results which add considerably to our knowledge of conditions of life in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age times, and the whole excavation, which is one of the major excavations under the new Government scheme, has shown the monuments to be of such interest as to justify further research.

Here on the flank of the Ballyhoura Hills, between 700 and 800 feet above sea level and overlooking the Limerick plain, are a large and very complex series of forts, burial mounds and other earthworks. The finding of several burials, some of Late Bronze Age and others of Early Iron Age type, gives a date for the main occupation of the site. Some of the urns discovered are particularly fine specimens and the finding of a small cist containing two food vessels with a cremated burial suggests that the date may be pushed back even as far as the Middle Bronze Age (say 1,300 B.C.).

AN AERIAL SURVEY.

An aerial survey of the site was undertaken by the Army Air Corp and the photographs taken have yielded some interesting results. Partly by means of those and partly by a survey and excavation on the ground an ancient field system has been revealed—a feature known in Great Britain but not hitherto noted in Ireland.

Another discovery unique in Irish archaeology was that of several of the prehistoric houses. These were varied in type, and in places one was superimposed on the other in such a manner as to show that habitation on the site must have been continuous and intense over a considerable period. This fact, together with the existence of the fields and the evidence for the practice of agriculture given by the very numerous querns which everywhere come to light, present a valuable picture of the economic life of the Ireland of over 2,000 years ago.

Besides the urns and burial remains, other finds were various objects of iron and bronze, very numerous bone, a small bone plaque with La Tene ornament, a stone axe and several bracelets of jet. All finds go to the National Museum.

UNDERGROUND HOUSES.

Each of the forts excavated contained one of those peculiar underground houses known to archaeology as souterrains, and the Kilfinane excavations have given new knowledge regarding these puzzling structures, since it has on this site been possible to show that the types date back to as early a period as late Bronze Age times—a fact proved from the position of one of the urn burials.

At the conclusion of the excavation twenty-eight workmen were employed. They showed great keenness in the work, which for its success required an intelligent interest on the part of every man employed.

The local landowners and others, particularly Mr. J. Galvin, on whose farm the excavations were carried out, were most kind in giving every assistance in the work.