

Instruments of the Passion on the gravestones of South Tipperary

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Introduction

The 'Instruments of the Passion' are a series of objects used in the torture and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Their depiction was a common feature of medieval Christian art throughout Europe and they appear as a background to religious scenes, in conjunction with the crucifixion or on their own as an aid to meditation. The collection of Instruments, when depicted as symbolic images, was known as the *Arma Christi*.

The *Arma Christi* became a common subject on gravestones in South Tipperary from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the early examples were deeply carved with a large number of Instruments displayed. The decoration on later gravestones in the nineteenth century had fewer images and was often incised, using templates. Many different sculptors were involved in the production of these gravestones throughout the period, some producing large numbers of the same design, others only creating one.

There seems to have been a major spread of *Arma Christi* gravestones in the eighteenth century in the Suir Valley and its immediate hinterland, which would include east County Waterford and south County Kilkenny. Of the three districts, the use of the Instruments of the Passion as gravestone decoration in South Tipperary is the most enduring, continuing into the nineteenth century and spreading out of the Suir Valley into areas to the north and west.

Previous Work

The study of eighteenth-century gravestones is not one that has attracted much scholarly attention. A.K. Longfield, in a series of articles in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians of Ireland*, documented many decorated gravestones of the period from various parts of the country (Longfield 1943; 1944; 1945; 1946; 1948; 1954), and this is still the seminal work. Walton (1980) and de hÓir (1997) more recently have added to the corpus. Grogan's (1998) article on the work of the sculptor Denis Cullen in counties Wexford and Wicklow (a subject covered previously by Longfield in 1943) is a welcome addition.

Gravestone decoration in the nineteenth century has not been studied in any detail. As an archaeological topic it may be seen by many as being too recent and local historians seem more interested in recording inscriptions. Consequently this area has been relatively untouched.

Although no specific work has been done on the Instruments of the Passion gravestones in South Tipperary, one particular type, **Kilsheelan-Kilmurry Type B**, has been noted by previous researchers. Longfield (1954) referred to these gravestones as having their centre in Kilsheelan and noted in particular the sculptor's use of three stars. She did not produce a comprehensive list of the gravestones and only refers to examples in accessible graveyards. Consequently, the importance of the graveyard of Kilmurry was not noted. Subsequent references to this type by Walton (1980), de hÓir (1997) and Grogan (1998) used Longfield's

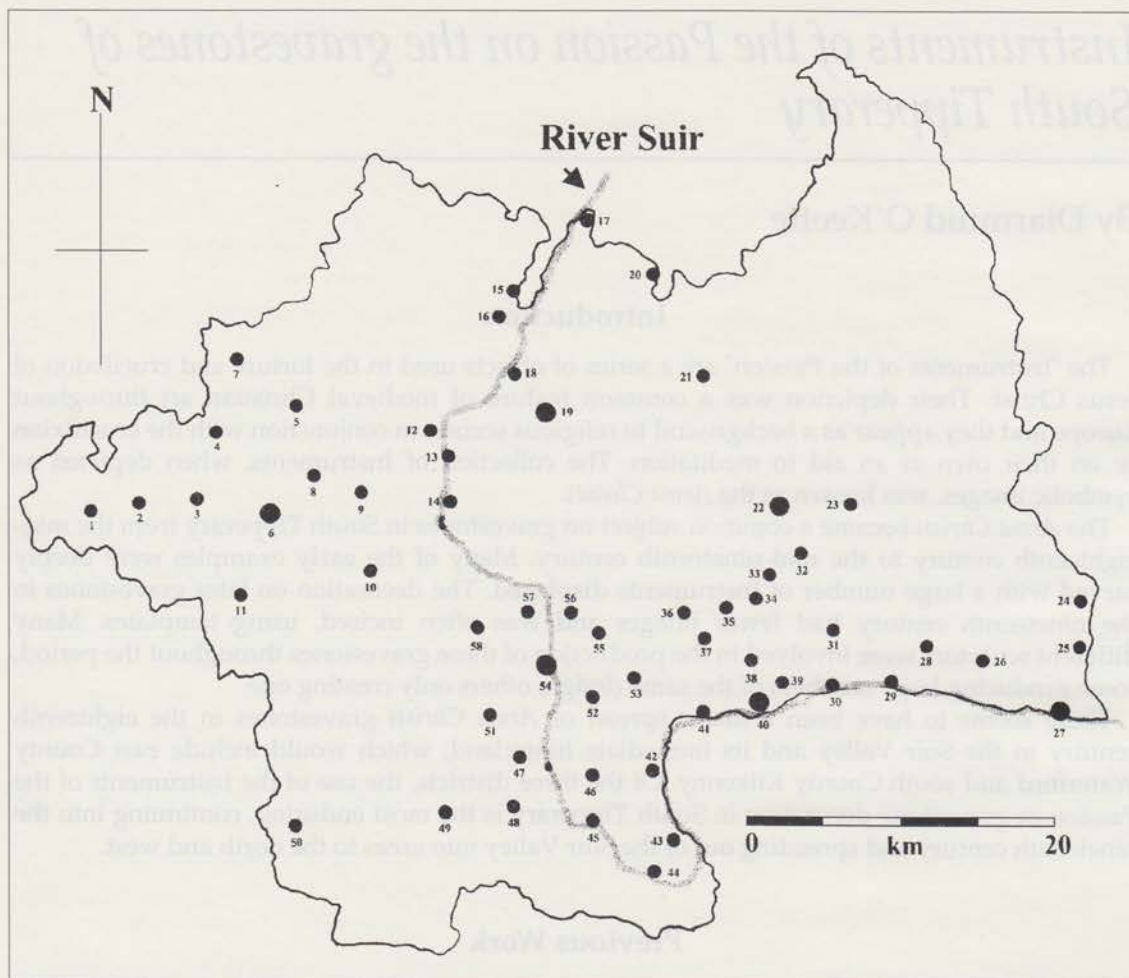


Fig. 1: South Tipperary – Location of graveyards with *Arma Christi* gravestones.

incomplete information as a basis. O’Keeffe (1998) in the article “8th-century decorated gravestones: the Kilsheelan-Kilmurry group” attempted to update the information about this type of gravestone and produce the first inventory.

The decorated gravestones of the related areas of east Waterford and south Kilkenny have been examined in some detail. Walton (1980) documented all types of pictorial decoration on the tombstones of east Waterford and noted that the most popular of these was the Instruments of the Passion (Walton 1980, 68), particularly in the eighteenth century. It was Walton’s opinion that two gravestones in Christchurch Cathedral in Waterford City, carved by the famous sculptor William Kidwell, appeared to have had a large influence on the development of later gravestones in the immediate area. De hÓir (1997) studied the instances of *Arma Christi* decoration on the headstones of County Kilkenny. It was her contention that the Kidwell gravestones of Waterford influenced many of these and that the main spread of examples was in the south of the county close to the River Suir.

Numerous researchers have documented the use of the Instruments of the Passion as a subject of medieval Christian art (Twining 1885; Hulme 1976; Schiller 1972; Marrow 1979). Twining (1885) detailed the more common symbols of medieval Christianity, which included the *Arma Christi*. Schiller (1972), in *Iconography of Christian Art: volume 2*, gave the most comprehensive account of the development and use of the *Arma Christi* in medieval Europe. Hulme (1976) and Marrow (1979) similarly discussed the iconography and symbolism of Christian art and they also referred to the significance of the *Arma Christi*.

Lucas's (1954) work on 'Penal' crucifixes contained one of the most detailed accounts on the Instruments of the Passion in an Irish context. The Instruments were common motifs on small portable crucifixes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the same repertoire of Instruments occur on gravestones of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *Arma Christi* were used to decorate medieval tombs, especially in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At the same time they decorated altar fronts, baptismal fonts and other church objects. It is in these contexts that Phelan (1973), Roe (1976), O'Farrell (1980), Bradley (1985) and Maher (1997) discussed the Instruments of the Passion. Bradley (1985) and Maher (1997) documented the decorated medieval graveslabs in St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny City and County Tipperary respectively, which were of particular relevance to the subsequent use of the *Arma Christi* in the area.

Roe (1983) examined the Instruments of the Passion in a broader context, tracing their development in Europe and their subsequent use in medieval Ireland. She concluded that their use on tombs in the pre-Cromwellian period in Ireland was a declaration of defiance by the Irish gentry in the face of English Protestantism (Roe 1983, 532). She advocated that a study be carried out of the use of the Instruments of the Passion on all Irish gravestones, utilising the many historical societies in the country (ibid., 533). O'Farrell (1983) in a companion piece illustrated the more common Instruments used in tomb decoration and attempted to explain the more unfamiliar symbols.

In addition to such studies there has been a lot of work undertaken by local groups in collecting inscriptions from gravestones in the recent past, and Tipperary is no exception. The inscriptions for most gravestones in both the diocese of Waterford and Lismore for the south of the region, and the diocese of Cashel and Emly for the north, have now been documented. These are now available for genealogical research and were created in particular to cater for the rise in the popularity of researching the 'family tree', especially among the descendants of emigrants.

There was no effort made to note the decoration on individual gravestones at the time, an aspect which has been seen by many as secondary. Unfortunately in the process of cleaning gravestones a lot of damage was done to the decoration. It would be hoped that, as many of the churchyards are being renovated for community purposes, this level of damage would not be repeated. These renovations would provide ideal opportunities for local groups to document gravestone art and thus create a catalogue of decoration throughout the country, as Roe envisaged.

History of Instruments of Passion

The use of symbols relating to the story of the Passion has a long history. Roe (1983) stated that they are the "longest enduring single expression in Western Christian art of popular devotion and belief in man's salvation through the Passion and Death of Christ". (p. 533)

Some of the Instruments of the Passion began to be depicted in the fourth and fifth centuries

as symbols from the story of Christ. Their popularity grew from this point on, not just as symbols of Christ and his life, but as a reminder of the suffering he endured for the sake of all Christians.

Fascination with Christ's suffering increased in the twelfth century and consequently the depiction of the Passion in art became more graphic (Marrow 1979, 1). Aspects from the Old Testament that could be related to Christ's life were incorporated into the story of the Passion, particularly passages that depicted cruelty and suffering (*ibid.*, 5). The pathetic nature of Christ's death was emphasised and this became a new focus of devotion, the purpose of which was to inculcate a sense of sorrow for the pain and suffering of a loved one. To this end the brutal and cruel nature of the Passion was accentuated in art and literature (*ibid.*, 8), while in 1264 the feast of *Corpus Christi* was inaugurated (Schiller 1972, 11). This fuelled the further glorification of the Passion (Roe 1983, 528) and led to "systematic programmes of devotional piety" (Marrow 1979, 25).

The depiction of the story of the Passion in Christian art began as a series of narrative images depicting the various events in turn. The story was so central, however, that single objects related to the Passion could also function as symbols of individual occurrences in the narrative and could be used as mnemonic reminders of events. These symbols became known collectively as the 'Instruments of the Passion', or the *Arma Christi*. The earliest occurrence of symbols depicting the Passion story were on the Utrecht Psalter (c. AD 830), where the crucifixion was represented by a cross, a lance, a crown, a scourge, a rod and sponge (Schiller 1972, 185, fig. 643).

In this context the symbols were seen as weapons in the war against evil (*ibid.*, 184) and consequently were often carried by angels as weapons. Even though they were the objects that caused Christ's suffering, they were also symbolic of his victory (*ibid.*). Thus the cross was seen as a symbol of victory in the fourth century. By the twelfth century it had become a symbol of judgement, and by extension the objects associated with the cross in the Passion also became symbols of judgement in their own right (*ibid.*, 186). The pain endured by Christ that was inflicted by the objects and events symbolised by the Instruments justified the damnation sinners would endure (*ibid.*, 189).

The image of the Crucifixion itself without the addition of the Instruments of the Passion had been a common subject in Christian art from early times. One of the earliest depictions in Ireland was on the bronze plaque found at St. John's Abbey, near Athlone (Harbison 2000, 7). This tylosed piece shows Christ crucified and the area around divided into four quadrants with an angel shown in each of the upper sections. Depicted in the lower sections are two Roman soldiers, Stephaton with the vinegar pole and Longinus with the lance. Both these occur in the *Arma Christi*.

The quadrant arrangement seems to have its origins in earlier manuscripts like that of St. Gall from around 800 (*ibid.*, 3) and an eighth-century manuscript from Durham. It is also used on the ninth-century high cross at Monasterboice. This arrangement continues to be used on later bronze plaques from the tenth and eleventh centuries, like that from Clonmacnois (*ibid.*, 12). The depiction of Christ in these Crucifixion scenes differs from that which occurs with the *Arma Christi*. Christ is shown as a human and is, in the main, fully clothed. There is no attempt to show suffering of any kind. The main focus of the *Arma Christi* on the other hand is Christ's suffering.

The relics of some of the Instruments – the reed, sponge and nails – were believed to have been in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem until it was destroyed in AD 614 (de hÓir 1997, 152). The origin of the veneration of relics of the Passion lies in the fourth century

when Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, was reputed to have found the cross and nails (Schiller 1972, 189). In the succeeding centuries splinters of the 'True Cross' appeared all over Europe, including Tipperary, where a piece was venerated at Holy Cross Abbey, having been brought there sometime in the early twelfth century (Harbison 1991, 162).

Throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries relics of the nails, inscription plate, lance, sponge, crown of thorns, reed, whip and pincers were all apparently discovered (Schiller 1972, 189). The Crusades of the twelfth century flooded the west with more relics of the Instruments of the Passion (*ibid.*, 190), which further fuelled the devotional zeal. Nevertheless only the cross, the nails and the 'Five Wounds' were actively venerated (*ibid.*) until the fourteenth century, when Pope Innocent VI instituted the festival of the 'Feast of the Lance and Nails' (Hulme 1976, 87) decreeing that "the lance and nails and other instruments of the Passion are everywhere to be held in reverence of all Christ's faithful people" (*ibid.*)

Also in the fourteenth century the *Medationes Vitae Christi*, a Franciscan work, and *Vita Jesu Christi* by Ludolf of Saxony encouraged the meditation on each episode of the Passion. These books, which were widely read at the time, advised Christians to involve themselves in the suffering of every event in the Passion (Schiller 1972, 190). With the Instruments of the Passion symbolising each of these events in visual form, their importance grew such that the number of relics increased dramatically during the fourteenth century to include the bandage, the tufts of hair, the birch whips, the pieces of silver, the rope, the curtain of the temple, the lantern, the sword and many others (*ibid.*, 191).

As a result, these symbols began to appear in artistic representations from this time. In fact, the Instruments were now seen, independent of their source, as being worthy of veneration, and meditation on individual symbols was rewarded with indulgences (*ibid.*). The independence of the Instruments was reflected in the fact that they are often depicted separately. A twelfth-century manuscript from Regensburg-Prufening, for instance, depicted a crown, three nails and a bucket side by side and one above the other, emphasising this new independence (Schiller 1972, 187, fig. 647). In the succeeding centuries the importance of the Instruments was reflected in their being made special offices of the Church (Roe 1976, 256).

The indulgences offered on the *Arma Christi* were not only for prayers of meditation but also for contemplating the Instruments themselves (Robbins 1939, 418). To this end images for contemplation were occasionally depicted on rolls, some of which were five or six feet long and five inches wide. Each image was depicted in colour to make it easier to observe from a distance. Beside each image was a short verse about the Instrument. The design of the roll meant that it could be displayed for the public to view, probably at a service or in a church (*ibid.*, 417). The images focus on the more gruesome and bloody aspects of the Passion, reflecting the nature of the devotion at the time (Robbins 1939, 415; Morris 1871).

In the twelfth century the Passion symbols also began appearing on the coat of arms of Christ (Roe 1983, 528), generally depicted on a shield. This was in keeping with the long-standing view of the *Arma Christi* as weapons against evil (Schiller 1972, 184). In an illustration accompanying a Middle English poem from the fourteenth century an angel was shown holding a shield on which are depicted the *Arma Christi*. Another angel was quoted as saying:

Arme me thú with ye schelde,

My foes yat I may fell in felde. (Twining 1885, 46)

Due to their popularity as devotional symbols the *Arma Christi* were depicted on many different objects. The roof erected by Bishop Fox in the sixteenth century at Winchester

Cathedral in England included bosses that were decorated with the Instruments of the Passion (Hulme 1976, 87). Seals such as that of the Guild of Corpus Christi at Oxford (*ibid.*) and that of Stephan de Derby, Prior of Holy Trinity in Dublin in 1379 (Roe 1983, 530) also portrayed the Instruments of the Passion. Objects within churches such as altars, stained glass and baptismal fonts all afforded opportunities for the Instruments to be displayed (de hÓir 1997, 152), as did vestments and wall hangings (Hulme 1976, 88). An old church inventory of the period listed:

Ij steyned clothes for above and beneathe w the tokenis of the passyon
In tyme of lent we ij curtyns accordyng of ye same. (*ibid.*)

By the fifteenth century the Instruments were associated with other devotional images such as the 'Man of Sorrows' (figs. 7; 8) and the 'Mass of St. Gregory' (Roe 1983, 529). The composition of the 'Mass of St. Gregory' (fig. 5) detailed a story in which Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) is portrayed celebrating Mass. Christ was depicted over the altar, usually in the form known as 'Our Lord's Pity', and distributed around him were the *Arma Christi*. This composition has its basis in the theological discussions of the time. As such it was designed to be "A miraculous manifestation to confute and confuse those who doubted the Real Presence of Christ on the altar and to bring home to them the fact that the sacrifice of Cavalry and that of the Mass were the same". (O'Farrell 1980, 33)

Woodcuts of the scene were being made by 1500 with prayers and lists of indulgences pending attached (*ibid.*). The invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century led to these devotional images becoming very common in prayer books and leaflets in the succeeding centuries (Roe 1983, 529).

Instruments of Passion in Ireland

The extent to which veneration of the Instruments of the Passion occurred in Ireland is uncertain, but it seems likely that Ireland would have been no different from the rest of Europe in this regard. Evidence for the widespread use of devotional imagery in the twelfth to the fourteenth century in Ireland is extremely sparse. Due to the superstitious nature of the *Arma Christi* and the indulgences associated with them, they seemed to have been particularly targeted during the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

In the third year of the reign of Edward VII there was an order to remove all pictures in churches not yet disturbed (Marrow 1979, 91). If they could not be removed they were to be destroyed or defaced. The enforcement of this order was even more fervent in the reign of Elizabeth I (*ibid.*). Whatever images may have survived the initial zeal of the Reformation were destroyed in the Cromwellian era (*ibid.*, 87) and it is remarkable that any monuments survived in Irish churches. Even fewer examples of the *Arma Christi* remained in churches in Britain (Roe 1983, 530). The practice of carving the Instruments on to stone objects such as tombs ensured some survival. While Cromwellian soldiers sacked the Cathedral of St. Canice in Kilkenny in 1650, most of the carved tombs survived, including those with Passion imagery (Bradley 1985, 49).

The earliest surviving example of the *Arma Christi* in Ireland is on the *Domhnach Airgid* book shrine dated to c.1340–50. The decoration of this shrine contained a small shield on which are carved a cross, crown of thorns, nails and scourge (Roe 1983, 530). The practice of carving the Instruments on tombstones did not seem to start in Ireland until the fifteenth century, but the

Instruments used and the manner in which they are depicted indicated that Irish masons of the time were well aware of contemporary Continental imagery (Lucas 1954, 161). By implication, the patrons who commissioned the tombs must have been aware of the Instruments' significance.

Irish tombs of the fifteenth century showed Instruments of the Passion included with the personal coat of arms of the deceased. These tombs occurred mostly in the eastern counties of Meath, Kildare, Louth and Dublin (Roe 1983, 530), in areas closest to English and European influences. Tombs of this period with *Arma Christi* decoration can be found at Kilcooley Abbey in South Tipperary. The tomb of Philip O'Molwanayn, Abbot of Kilcooley, who died in 1463, is the most impressive of these. It contains a shield on which are carved two nails, a crown of thorns on a cross, a ladder, pincers, a cock on a pot, a spear, a pillar, a seamless garment, three dice, two scourges and a hammer (Maher 1997, 63). The tomb of Donnell O'Heyden and his son, dated 1452, was also decorated in this manner. In this instance the Instruments themselves create the shape of the shield (*ibid.*).

By the end of the fifteenth century compositions such as the 'Man of Sorrows' and the 'Virgin's Pity' were in use in Ireland, often coupled with the *Arma Christi*. Altar pieces like the 'Man of Sorrows' at Great Connell, Co. Kildare (Roe 1983, 531) and 'Our Lord's Pity' in the Franciscan Friary at Ennis, Co. Clare (O'Farrell 1980, 33) may have generated the same devotion as had similar images in Europe.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the pinnacle of tomb carving in Ireland (Walton 1980, 68). In these centuries the *Arma Christi* replaced the more traditional iconography of saints as the most common motif on tombs (Roe 1983, 531), with the Instruments continuing to be displayed on shields. The tomb of Piers Butler and Margaret Fitzgerald (1539) in St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny City is one example. A side panel was carved with a flagellation scene and beside it is a large shield containing a crown of thorns on a cross, a spear, ladder, three nails, three dice, two scourges, a hammer, pincers and the seamless garment (Bradley 1985, 75-76). Although this may not have been the original side panel to this particular tomb, the carving dates none the less to the sixteenth century.

On other tombs of the period Instruments were no longer confined to shields and were now carved as part of the overall decoration. The tomb of James Purcell and Johanna Shortals (d.1552), also in St. Canice's, has a shield containing a number of Instruments; but the ladder, vinegar cup and scourging pillar were placed outside the shield (*ibid.*, 83). The front panel of the altar tomb of Richard Butler (d.1571) at St. Canice's shows his own coat of arms with the *Arma Christi* depicted beside it (*ibid.*, 87). In fact, as the sixteenth century progressed the Instruments were less likely to be associated with a shield. The ledger tomb of William Donoghough (d.1597) in St. Canice's has Instruments carved throughout the surface around a central cross with no shield in the decoration (*ibid.*, 91).

During the Reformation and afterwards as religious positions became polarised the *Arma Christi* were seen as overtly Roman Catholic symbols. In some parts of England they continued to be used occasionally in tomb decoration in conjunction with mortuary symbols (Burgess 1963, 165). In these cases their significance had probably gone unnoticed. In Protestant churches, however, there was great suspicion of any symbol deemed 'papist', including the cross itself:

The fears of possible Roman Catholic Ascendancy in England left its mark
...we find a virtual absence of the Cross as the prime instrument of Salvation
(*ibid.*, 187).

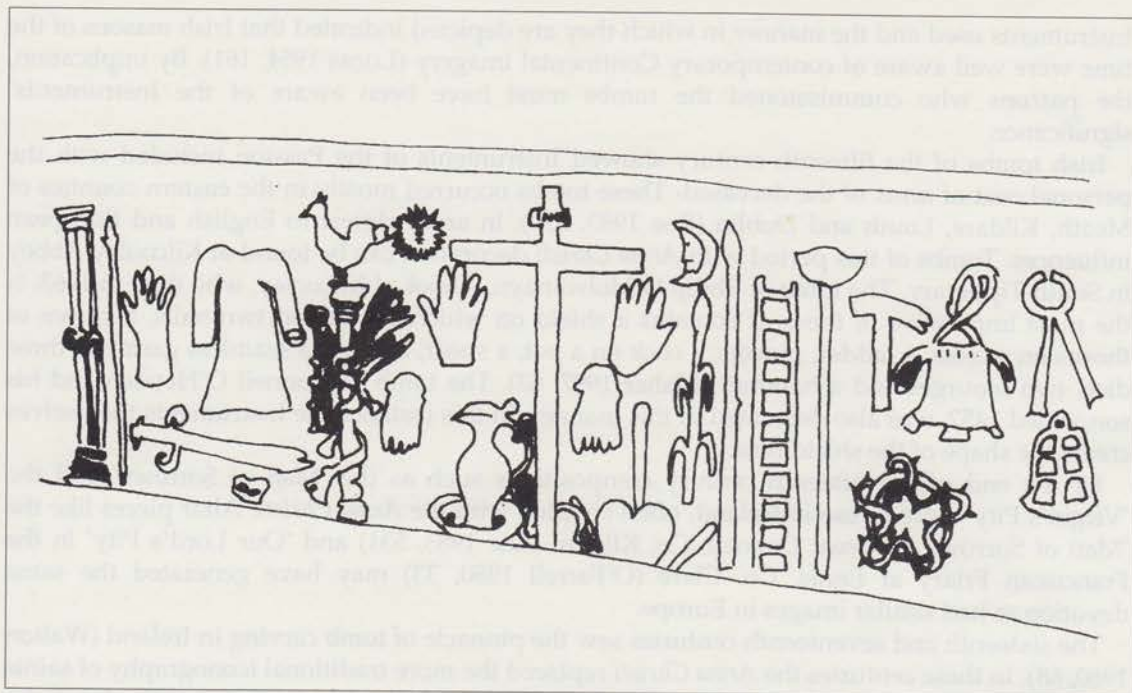


Fig. 2: Tomb frontal in the Franciscan Friary, Clonmel; seventeenth century.

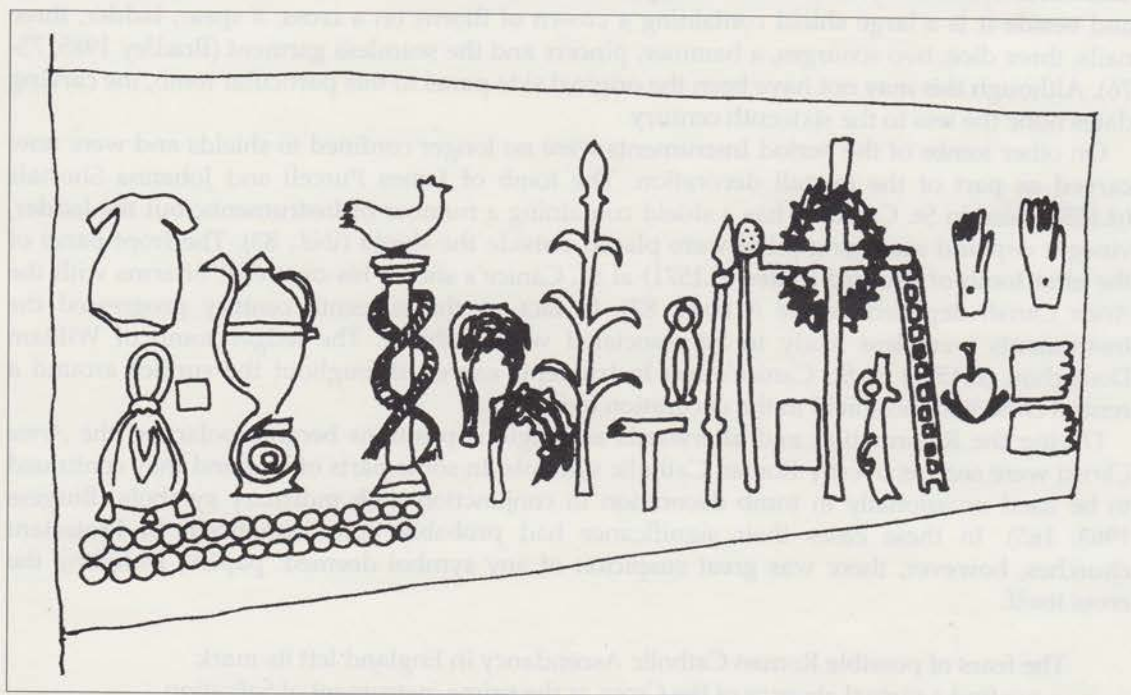


Fig. 3: Tomb frontal in the Neale and Purcell grave, Kilmurry; seventeenth century.

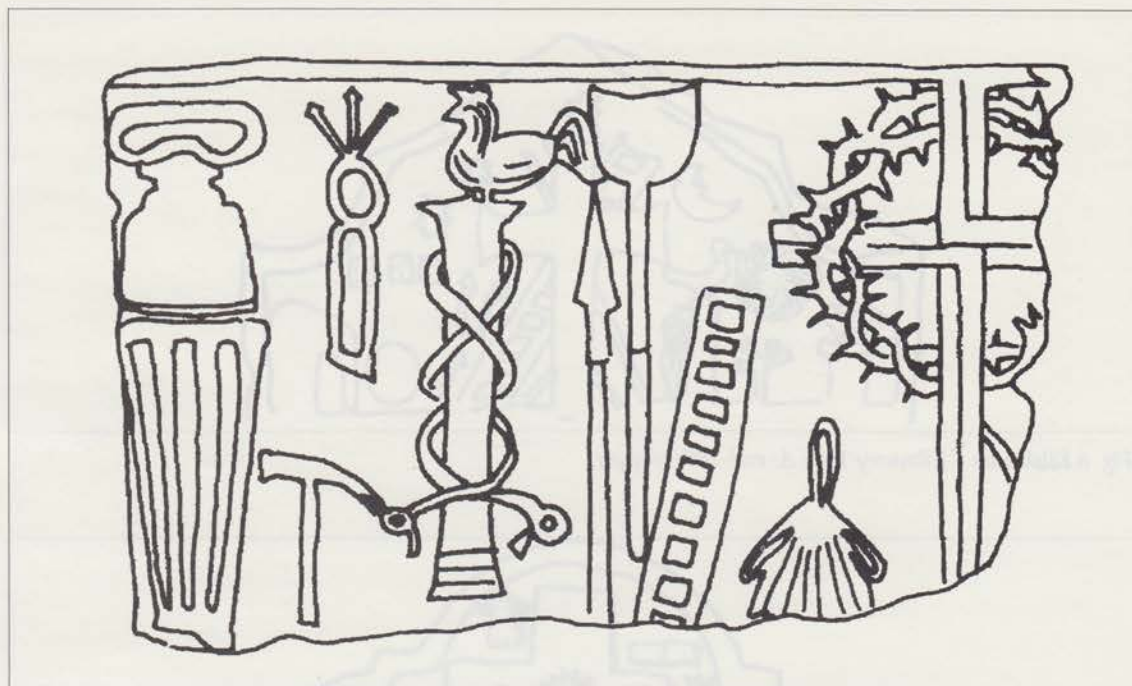


Fig. 4: Tomb frontal from St. Nicholas' Church of Ireland, Carrick-on-Suir; seventeenth century.



Fig. 5: Fragment of headstone for Dobbyn 1724 in Christchurch Cathedral, Waterford City. Another fragment is dated and signed Kidwell 1711.



Fig. 6 Kilsheelan – Kilmurry Type A; mid-18th century.



Fig. 7: Kilsheelan – Kilmurry Type B; mid-18th century.



Fig. 8: 19th century gravestone found in the Tipperary town area.

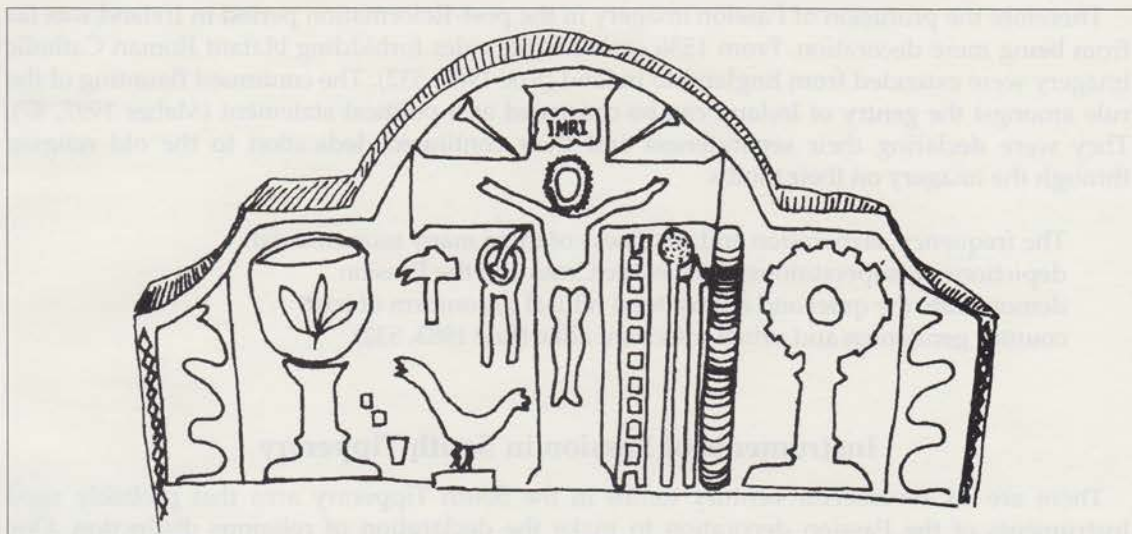


Fig. 9: Nineteenth century design from the Tipperary town area, signed J. Byrne.

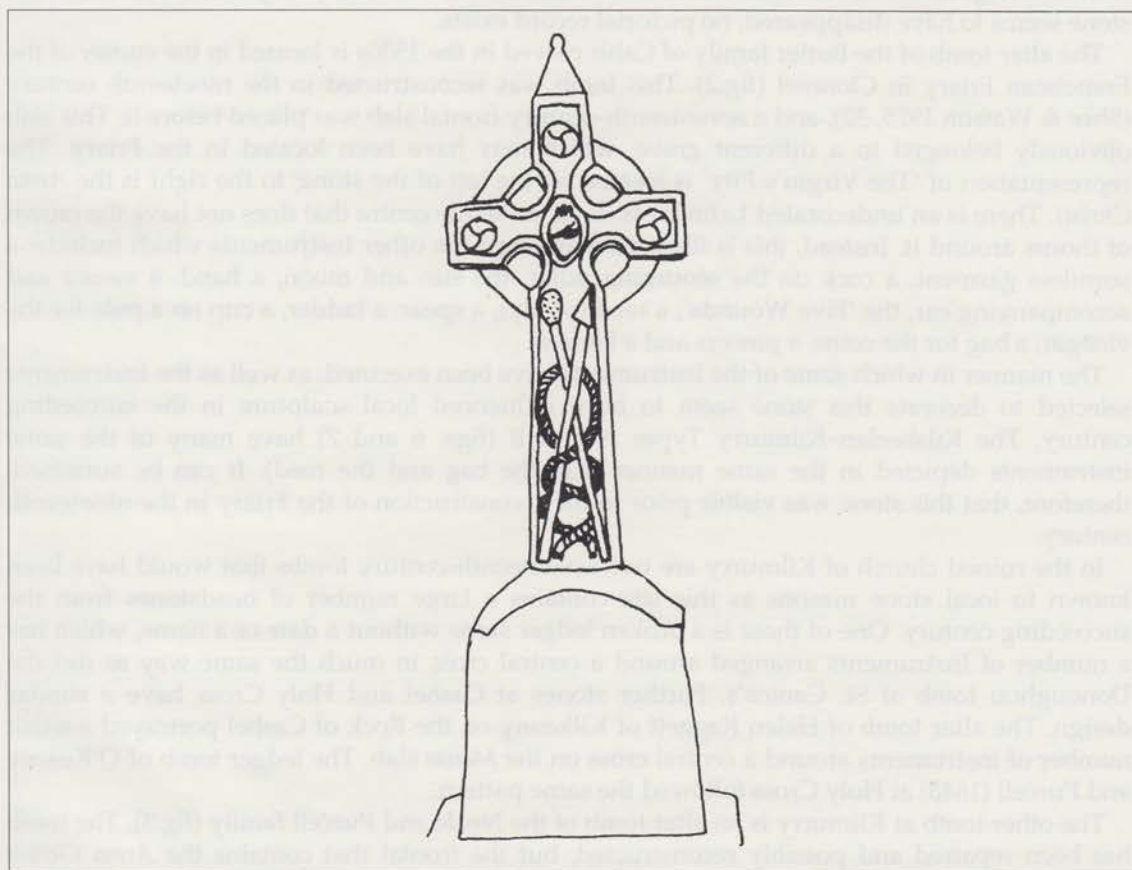


Fig. 10: The Bergin tomb, New Inn, erected between 1915 and 1919 by Egan of Cashel.

Therefore the profusion of Passion imagery in the post-Reformation period in Ireland was far from being mere decoration. From 1536 onwards the rules forbidding blatant Roman Catholic imagery were extended from England to Ireland (Roe 1983, 532). The continued flaunting of the rule amongst the gentry of Ireland can be construed as a political statement (Maher 1997, 47). They were declaring their separateness and their continued dedication to the old religion through the imagery on their tombs:

The frequency, elaboration and costliness of these many monumental depictions of 'superstitious idols' of the Cross and the Passion demonstrate the quiet and almost total refusal to conform of Irish country gentlemen and urban merchant alike (Roe 1983, 532).

Instruments of Passion in South Tipperary

There are six seventeenth-century tombs in the South Tipperary area that probably used Instruments of the Passion decoration to make the declaration of religious distinction. One further example, noted but not recorded by Longfield in the 1940s or 1950s, was situated in a wall in the grounds of the Sisters of Charity convent in Clonmel (Longfield 1954, 174). This stone seems to have disappeared; no pictorial record exists.

The altar tomb of the Butler family of Cahir carved in the 1530s is located in the corner of the Franciscan Friary in Clonmel (fig.2). This tomb was reconstructed in the nineteenth century (Shee & Watson 1975, 32), and a seventeenth-century frontal slab was placed before it. This slab obviously belonged to a different grave, which may have been located in the Friary. The representation of 'The Virgin's Pity' is located on the left of the stone; to the right is the *Arma Christi*. There is an undecorated Latin cross depicted in the centre that does not have the crown of thorns around it. Instead, this is illustrated amongst the other Instruments which include: a seamless garment, a cock on the scourging pillar, the sun and moon, a hand, a sword and accompanying ear, the 'Five Wounds', a reed (or lily), a spear, a ladder, a cup on a pole for the vinegar, a bag for the coins, a pincers and a lantern.

The manner in which some of the Instruments have been executed, as well as the Instruments selected to decorate this stone seem to have influenced local sculpture in the succeeding century. The Kilsheelan-Kilmurry Types A and B (figs. 6 and 7) have many of the same instruments depicted in the same manner (e.g. the bag and the reed). It can be surmised, therefore, that this stone was visible prior to the reconstruction of the Friary in the nineteenth century.

In the ruined church of Kilmurry are two seventeenth-century tombs that would have been known to local stone masons as this site contains a large number of headstones from the succeeding century. One of these is a broken ledger stone without a date or a name, which has a number of Instruments arranged around a central cross in much the same way as did the Donoughou tomb at St. Canice's. Further stones at Cashel and Holy Cross have a similar design. The altar tomb of Helen Raggett of Kilkenny on the Rock of Cashel portrayed a small number of instruments around a central cross on the *Mensa* slab. The ledger tomb of O'Kearny and Purcell (1643) at Holy Cross followed the same pattern.

The other tomb at Kilmurry is an altar tomb of the Neale and Purcell family (fig.3). The tomb has been repaired and possibly reconstructed, but the frontal that contains the *Arma Christi* seems to be the original. There are a total of twenty-two separate Instruments shown, though it

is interesting to note that the style of their depiction is not mirrored in the later headstone carvings in the same graveyard. The sculptors who were working in the Kilmurry area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries must have been open to other influences that were more powerful than these graves.

Mounted in the wall of the former St. Nicholas (Church of Ireland) Church in Carrick-on-Suir is a fragment of an uninscribed seventeenth-century frontal slab (fig. 4). The ladder, spear, cock on a pillar, vinegar cup on a pole, pincers with three nails, hammer and bag for the coins can still be seen. This slab is not the only Roman Catholic gravestone in the graveyard and it is obvious that Roman Catholics, probably townspeople, retained burial rites here after the church became Protestant.

The seventeenth-century tombs, judging by the names and the complexity of their execution, were the product of a wealthy Roman Catholic upper class. The coming of Cromwell in the mid-seventeenth century and the disempowerment of the Irish and Anglo-Norman Roman Catholic gentry created a hiatus in the development of the *Arma Christi* in Ireland. Without Roman Catholic patrons there was no demand for monuments decorated with what was seen as such overt anti-establishment imagery. The resumption in their use in the mid-eighteenth century implies that throughout this period they must have remained as important symbols (Roe 1983, 532), possibly on smaller mobile items carried by itinerant priests. They appeared regularly on small crucifixes of the period and many of these 'Penal' crucifixes still survive (Lucas 1954, 146).

Importance of William Kidwell

In 1711 the "foremost monumental sculptor in Ireland" (Walton 1980, 72), William Kidwell, came to Waterford City to build a tomb at Christ Church Cathedral for Bishop Nathaniel Foy, a prominent Protestant reformer (Foster 1988, 156). William Kidwell had trained and worked in late-seventeenth century London and had only just arrived in Ireland when he was employed in Waterford (Potterton 1975, 9). He was credited with bringing the baroque style of sculpture to Ireland and he was "unrivalled as a sculptor of tombs" (ibid., 52).

Whilst in Waterford to work on the tomb for Foy he carved simple ledger tombs for two Waterford merchants (fig. 5). These had a profound influence on the resurgence and development of *Arma Christi* decoration in counties Waterford, Kilkenny and South Tipperary. Kidwell's designs for William Dobbyn (d.1724) and Peter Synott (d.1714), both dated and signed *Kidwell Fecit 1711*, are totally unlike any of those carved in the earlier centuries, and it appears these were the only two he carved in this way (Walton 1980, 72). Both tombs were broadly similar in design, with the Instruments placed within a cross-shaped panel near the top of the ledger. A plain cross was central to the design and the longer Instruments, like the ladder, spear, and vinegar sponge on a pole, along with the new symbol of a broken staff, were arranged diagonally behind the cross. At one side of the cross was what looks like a colonnaded temple, and at the opposite side was a tomb.

Distributed within the panel were: the crown of thorns, three dice, a basket with the hammer and a pincers placed inside, a scourge, a garment in the style of a contemporary coat, and a scourging pillar. The arrangement of both the long Instruments and the tools was copied on many later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century headstones in all three adjoining counties. Within a generation the *Arma Christi* were again popular motifs on tomb sculpture, most of which owed more to the designs of Kidwell than to that of the earlier altar and ledger tombs.

Headstones

Prior to the eighteenth century a certain level of wealth was needed to erect a tomb due to the size and the amount of ground within the churchyard needed to accommodate it. The late-seventeenth century saw the introduction of headstones from England (Walton 1980, 75). Headstones could be of any size and the majority of the examples of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are quite small. The earliest occur in urban settings (*ibid.*), but by the mid-eighteenth century they had become increasingly common in all churchyards. Wealth and status was no longer needed to erect a memorial and most of the new headstones were memorials to farmers and merchants – the middle classes of the eighteenth century. The earliest headstones in South Tipperary that date to the early years of the century had no decoration beyond a simple IHS. The earliest mortuary date on a headstone with the revived *Arma Christi* decoration was 1715, but this headstone was carved later than this, probably in the late 1720s or 1730s.

A discrepancy between the date of death and the date of the erection of the memorial is a complex issue and unfortunately it does not involve a consistent period of time. This problem is encountered when dating medieval tombs also. In some cases, as with the two Kidwell tombs, the client commissioned the tomb before his death. Here the availability of such a well-known craftsman was probably the deciding factor. Often, however, the 'early' commissioning of a tomb could be inspired by the suspicion that an heir would not make the appropriate effort to fund a suitable memorial (Bradley 1985, 51).

In other cases the sculptor might carve a decorated 'blank' for later use. This would appear to be the explanation for the grave of Daniel Keeffe at Ballygriffin, where the date of death was 1860 but the decoration was of a type common twenty years earlier. The inscription itself was noticeably more 'modern'. Production post-dating death was the norm but the difference between the date of death and the date of production could be anywhere from two to twenty years (Longfield 1943, 31). The practice of including long-dead relatives in the inscription confuses the issue even further. Only when comparable styles and common sculptors can be identified can approximate production dates be assigned.

Distribution

The revival of the *Arma Christi* as grave iconography in the eighteenth century was by no means exclusive to the areas of South Tipperary, south Kilkenny and east Waterford. West Clare at this time was also quite rich in Passion imagery (Walton 1980, 68), and examples can be found elsewhere in graveyards in Wicklow (Grogan 1998, 42), Wexford, Offaly and Roscommon (Longfield 1954, 173). The use of the *Arma Christi* on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century headstones however, was far from universal in Ireland. The tradition of carving that flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries around Kilkenny City, as evidenced by the tombs of St. Canice's Cathedral, did not survive the hiatus of the seventeenth century, and few headstones bear any decoration of note in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Phelan 1973, 26).

The erecting of tombs for Catholic merchants in Waterford by Kidwell also created a new desire in the surrounding area in the following years to express both religion and relative wealth in the form of headstones. There are approximately fifty-five *Arma Christi* headstones in the south Kilkenny region (de hÓir 1997, 152), most of which are eighteenth- or early

nineteenth-century. They are also common in east Waterford but numbers began to decline in the late-eighteenth century (Walton 1980, 81). In graveyards to the south and west of County Waterford such imagery was very scarce. Regionalism was also evident in South Tipperary, where most of the east of the county had no *Arma Christi* headstones.

Arma Christi headstones of South Tipperary

In South Tipperary the first major reawakening of *Arma Christi* tomb decoration probably occurred in the 1720s, and this date coincided with the relaxing of anti-Roman Catholic laws (Connolly 1982, 7). A number of headstones survive in the general vicinity of the village of Kilsheelan on the River Suir from this date onwards and it was from this area that two major stylistic types emerged (O'Keeffe 1998). These groups are Kilsheelan-Kilmurry Types A and B and seem to have been produced for almost thirty years until the 1750s (*ibid.*). Type A (fig. 6) showed the direct influence of Kidwell and can be found as far south as Fiddown in Co. Kilkenny, which is only 12 km from Waterford City. Type B (fig. 7) had some features reminiscent of Kidwell, but the local seventeenth-century stones also influenced these monuments.

The domination of the crucifix over the *Arma Christi* on the Type B stones became the normal method of depiction by the nineteenth century (Walton 1980, 81). There is no obvious single source for this design, and while it may have come from a contemporary mass book or other religious object (Longfield 1943, 32), the design may simply have been pure innovation (*ibid.*, 173). The Instruments used in the decoration of both types differed from headstone to headstone but a common repertoire of symbols can be noted. Type A monuments date from the 1720s to the 1740s. Type B date from the 1730s to the 1750s.

A further related type occurred in east Waterford and south Kilkenny and, as this had so many similarities with its Tipperary counterparts, some previous writers have categorised them as the same (Walton 1980, 76; de hÓir 1997, 155). Nevertheless the pattern of differences is consistent and, as no examples occur in the vicinity of Kilsheelan, they should be regarded as an entirely separate type. A possibility is that a relative or an apprentice of one of the original masons worked in Waterford City in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The date range of 1740s to 1760s on these headstones makes them slightly later in date.

By the late-eighteenth century *Arma Christi* headstones appeared in many different forms, especially in the south of the region around the towns of Clonmel and Cahir. Many of the examples from around Clonmel show distinctive influences from the seventeenth-century tombs, especially the example in the Franciscan Friary. By the turn of the century the use of urns as the main symbols became fashionable and most headstones of the early-nineteenth century include them (fig. 8). A central crucifixion scene is depicted between the urns and the *Arma Christi* were depicted around it. The number of Instruments included is less than was common in the previous century. The headstones were now larger and more formal with a longer inscription taking up a large part. The average height of a headstone from the end of the period was 150cm, compared to 60-90cms in the eighteenth century.

In Co. Waterford the use of *Arma Christi* headstones was out of fashion by the nineteenth century as Roman Catholics abandoned old burial grounds for the areas around the new churches (Walton 1980, 81). In South Tipperary the old burial grounds remained in use and new, more sophisticated forms of the crucifixion and the *Arma Christi* developed and remained popular around Cashel and Tipperary Town (figs. 8 and 9), until mass-produced headstones replaced them and the Celtic crosses of the nationalist revival came to dominate. The last

monument in the area with *Arma Christi* decoration was a Celtic cross made by Egan of Cashel situated at New Inn (fig. 10). John Bergin erected it in memory of his son (d. 1898). He himself died in 1919. Within the design on the cross are a spear, a vinegar sponge on a pole and a rope.

Social History

The development of the *Arma Christi* as a repertoire for artists and craftsmen in Medieval Europe was based on their significance as devotional objects. When these symbols transferred to gravestones in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland the devotional aspect remained but was paralleled by a new political significance. The Reformation had led to the formation of a separate Protestant Church in the sixteenth century and the expectation was that all loyal subjects would adhere to the new order. By using *Arma Christi* on their graves the Irish gentry were declaring their non-conformity (Roe 1983, 532). In the 1690s the first of the Penal Laws were enacted to quell any Roman Catholic upsurge in the wake of the Jacobite era (Foster 1988, 205). The power of the Irish Catholic gentry had been greatly reduced by this time and many had conformed to the new religion. The new laws demanded an oath of Supremacy to the King as both 'spiritual' and civil ruler and anyone who refused to swear this, under the 'Popery Act' of 1704, could not buy or lease land for more than thirty years (O'Donoghue 1989, 38). By the same Act all priests had to be registered and only one per parish was allowed (Power 1989, 85).

These laws limiting the power of all non-conformists stayed in force for most of the century and were finally repealed in the late-eighteenth century. As the anti-Jacobite paranoia, which was a feature of the early-eighteenth century, had dissipated by the second half of the century most of the laws had not been enforced for years (Foster 1988, 205; Power 1989, 102). Even by 1718, according to some accounts, the enthusiasm behind the enforcement of the laws had waned (Connolly 1982, 7).

The first of the post-Penal gravestones with *Arma Christi* symbolism were the Dobbyn and Synott graves in Waterford carved by Kidwell in 1711. Both graves referred to the deceased as "merchants of Waterford" and their personal coats of arms were displayed. There is no doubt that they were declaring status, and by including the *Arma Christi* they were also declaring religion. Walton (1980) stated that "The inclusion of passion symbols was intended to stress their consciousness of descent from the pre-Cromwellian merchant oligarchy of Waterford". (p. 72).

As these gravestones are so important in the development of the *Arma Christi* headstone in the area, it is tempting to assume that patrons later in the century and in the subsequent century were claiming somewhat similar connections. It is extremely difficult to identify the class and occupation of the deceased listed on headstones as civil death records only began in Ireland in 1864. Roman Catholic parish records did not include a record of death or burial, and identification of individuals by baptism records is virtually impossible. However, the expense of a marked burial singled out these individuals or their immediate descendants as reasonably wealthy. The size and scale of the images, especially on eighteenth-century headstones, coupled with the absence of personal information, showed the continued importance of the *Arma Christi* in the devotional sense.

South Tipperary was a prosperous place in the period of erection of the *Arma Christi* headstones of the eighteenth century. The land from Carrick-on-Suir to Tipperary was one of the most productive in the county (Nolan 1985, 288). In fact the land was particularly rich from Carrick to Cahir along the Suir valley (Smyth 1985, 106), which broadly corresponds with the main area of eighteenth-century *Arma Christi* headstones. The River Suir from Carrick to Clonmel

was improved and made more suitable for river traffic from the 1750s (Power 1989, 93).

Corn subsidies, granted in 1757, benefited the economy of the area greatly (Neely 1991, 136), and this prosperity affected large sections of the population, especially the urban Roman Catholic middle class (Foster 1988, 205). Dispossession in the previous centuries had only affected a small group of Roman Catholics and the legal restrictions imposed by the Penal Laws affected only the professionals (Whelan 1985, 218). Tipperary had thus managed to maintain a large Roman Catholic social structure.

The main landowners and patrons in South Tipperary were the Butler family. Their main base was Kilkenny Castle, but other branches resided in Kilcash and Cahir. In 1640 there were seventy branches of the Butler family spread from Kilkenny to Cahir, most of them living in south and east Tipperary (Smyth 1985, 111). The Cahir line, which died out in 1788, had clung to Roman Catholicism throughout the period without any semblance of conformity (Cullen 1983, 90). The other branches, although conforming, supported and sheltered dissident Roman Catholics throughout the period (Whelan 1985, 216).

Indeed, on much of the Butler lands the head tenants were Irish Roman Catholics (Smyth 1985, 114). Head tenants could command a considerable amount of wealth and land. Intermarried with the Butlers were the Roman Catholic families of Ryan of Clonmel, Fogarty of Castlefogarty, McCarthy of Springhouse, Mandeville of Ballydine and Scully of Kilfeakle (Whelan 1985, 216). Each of these farmed moderate to large amounts of land. Young noted in 1771 that a Roman Catholic farmer named Keating from Springhouse, which is located between Cahir and Bansha, had a farm of ten thousand acres (Neely 1991, 137).

An oath of loyalty devised by the Irish Parliament in 1774 listed a relatively large number of 'esquires' among the Roman Catholic signatories of Tipperary (Cullen 1983, 122). In fact the number of Roman Catholic gentlemen and esquires in Tipperary was strong enough to form a considerable political interest against local Protestants (Foster 1988, 206).

Younger sons of the powerful Roman Catholic families of the eighteenth century, like the Keatings of Cahir, became middlemen, maintaining large estates for absentee landlords. Others started businesses in towns and these in turn formed a potent Roman Catholic urban middle class (Whelan 1985, 217). All towns in South Tipperary in the eighteenth century were predominantly Roman Catholic and Catholics controlled much of the business interests. In 1831 Clonmel had the highest non-Roman Catholic population at 11.1% (McGrath 1985, 256). Similarly, towns like Cahir, Cashel and Carrick were almost totally Roman Catholic, with non-Catholic populations of 3.5%, 3.6% and 2.8% respectively.

In the 1790s, when the Volunteer units were being formed, some of the town units were predominantly Catholic. The Cahir Union and Carrick Union companies were almost wholly Roman Catholic. The Corn Laws and the improvement of the River Suir for transport opened eighteenth-century South Tipperary to the North Atlantic trade routes and the towns benefited greatly (Whelan 1985, 217). These benefits were not confined to the wealthy. Tenant farmers in rural areas and the shopkeepers and artisans of the town also enjoyed the fruits of this prosperity (Whelan 1985, 217).

In the eighteenth-century minor gentry and richer tenants were commemorated with broadly similar graves. By the nineteenth century the rich Roman Catholic landowners and wealthy merchants no longer used headstones and expressed their wealth instead with large opulent funerary monuments. The middle class of both town and county continued to be commemorated by headstones. Those that can be identified from contemporary commercial directories include a corn merchant and publican, a gentleman and a baker. Most of the surnames that occur on headstones appear many times in the commercial directories of the period.

In late seventeenth-century Europe craftsmen and professionals began using gravestones and detailing on them not only names, dates and addresses, but also occupations (Ariès 1985, 211). Commerce had led to a revival in calligraphy, which in turn had led to its use as an embellishment on gravestones (Burgess 1963, 211). The ability to produce a memorial that was both practical and aesthetically pleasing led to the increased use of decorated gravestones and later headstones. Occupations were never listed on South Tipperary headstones but occasionally a lineage was included — father's and mother's names and where they came from. The inscriptions on many headstones began with *Erected by...* and then gave the name of the erector. This suggests that it was considered important to be seen as having the status to erect such a memorial; the memory of the deceased was secondary.

The popularity of the *Arma Christi* as a headstone motif in the South Tipperary area seemed to be connected to these social factors. The buoyant local economy created a successful and affluent middle class, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. The use of *Arma Christi* on headstones followed the new prosperity from the Waterford City hinterlands upriver to the areas around Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel. It is here that the first use of the Passion motifs can be found, and they subsequently spread to the other towns further up the Suir valley and into the surrounding countryside.

The benefactors and patrons of both towns and countryside were mostly either Roman Catholic or sympathetic to Roman Catholicism. There was no inherent danger in the area associated with publicly declaring and practising this faith. It is interesting that the heartland of Roman Catholic land control in mid-eighteenth-century Tipperary spread from Kilkenny west to Cahir and Cashel. The area to the north and south of this band was predominantly Protestant (Cullen 1983, 122). It was in this Catholic area that the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *Arma Christi* headstones are to be found.

In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the 'Irish identity' was formed which linked 'Irishness' with being Roman Catholic (Whelan 1985, 219). The display of Roman Catholic symbolism was in itself, therefore, an example of proto-nationalism. The lack of established churches and priests throughout the eighteenth century had led to the development of a vernacular religion (*ibid.*) and the 'Instruments of the Passion' were part of this.

The late-eighteenth century saw the first of the new Roman Catholic churches. The Roman Catholic cathedral in Waterford, called by Whelan (1985, 227) the "natural capital" of the area, was finished in 1792. The 1790s also saw the completion of the new churches in Cashel (1795) and Cahir (1790). In Clonmel the Franciscan Friary was re-acquired by the Friars in the 1790s and reopened in 1828 (Shee & Watson 1975, 31). Old churches were also re-opened in Carrick-on-Suir and Fethard. The religious affiliation of the majority was once again on display and its adherents were now wealthy and socially adept people. The *Arma Christi* continued to be used in some of these new graveyards in the west and north of South Tipperary, but at this stage it had fallen out of fashion in the south.

The *Arma Christi* had been the last motifs in use on the gravestones of prosperous Roman Catholics before they had been outlawed. The prosperity of a new class of Roman Catholics in the eighteenth century led to their revival, probably as a way of connecting with their perceived aristocratic past. Their continued use in the nineteenth century had probably more to do with the strong links between Roman Catholicism and nationalism, which fuelled the Repeal movement in that period. The combination of these social and religious factors led to South Tipperary being unique in the long use of the 'Instruments of the Passion' on headstones.

Location and number of *Arma Christi* gravestones – see Fig. 1

1. Emly	6	30. Killaloe	6
2. Lattin	5	31. Templetny	4
3. Shronell	4	32. Kiltinan	2
4. Solohead	4	33. Baptistgrange	3
5. Donohill	2	34. Lisronagh	1
6. Tipperary Town	24	35. Donoughmore	1
7. Toem	1	36. Ballyclerihan	6
8. Templemoe	4	37. Newchapel	1
9. Kilfeakle	16	38. Rathronan	4
10. Bansha	23	39. Kilgrant	7
11. Clonbeg	14	40. Clonmel*	5
12. Ballygriffin	1	41. Marlfield/Inisloughaght	1
13. Golden	7	42. Tullaghmelan	6
14. Athassel	2	43. Mollough Abbey	1
15. Clogher	5	44. Newcastle	5
16. Clonoulty	2	45. Ballybacon	7
17. Holy Cross*	6	46. Ardfinnan	2
18. Ardmayle	5	47. Tubrid	8
19. Cashel*	16	48. Castlegrace	3
20. Moycarkey	1	49. Shanrahan	1
21. Ballinure	2	50. Templetenny	1
22. Fethard	1	51. Whitechurch	9
23. Cloneen	1	52. Loughlohery	2
24. Ahenny	2	53. Derrygrath	10
25. Faugheen	2	54. Cahir*	12
26. Kilmurry	20	55. Mortlestown	1
27. Carrick-on-Suir	3	56. Outeragh	3
28. Kilcash	5	57. Knockgraffon	5
29. Kilsheelan	13	58. Kilmoyler	17

* denotes a place with more than one graveyard with these gravestones.

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