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A Souterrain at Corran, Co. Cork

By J. P. McCARTHY

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This site was first discovered when the weight of a mechanical digger overhead caused the roof of the main chamber to collapse. This was in November 1975 and it was first reported in the *Cork Examiner*¹ where it was described as a *lios*. The land-owner is Mr. Cornelius Crowley to whom I am most grateful for his co-operation in allowing the site to be surveyed.

The souterrain² is situated on the slope of a hill above the 300ft. contour and 3½ mls. north of the village of Leap. It consists of four chambers joined together by three low creepholes. It is almost totally rockcut. The rock here is shale. In cutting the chambers into the rock, the original excavators did not disturb the overlying soil which forms the roofs of the chambers. This overlying soil is a glacial drift. There was no evidence to suggest that this earthen roofing had been lined with built stonework. The creepholes were totally rock-cut.

The main chamber (see plan: CH I) measures, 3.50m. long, 2.40m. wide, 2.00m. high approximately. It is sub-rectangular in plan. The floor at present is covered by the collapsed material from the roof. A dry stone-built facing has been used on three sides of the chamber. The eastern and southern sides have drystone walls built from small slabs derived from the excavated shale and this gives them a smooth, surface finish. These walls are built vertically to ceiling height—there is no evidence for corbelling. On the western side there is also a dry built wall in which water-rolled field stones are used. This wall did not appear to conceal a shaft through which the excavated spoil might have been taken to the surface. The northern side of the chamber does not have a built facing—the rock-cut surface sufficed.

Leading north from chamber 1, a creephole measuring 80cm. long, 1.10m. wide, 80cm. high, opens into a roughly circular chamber which has a diameter of 2.00 (CH2) and a height of 1.20m. Joining chambers 2 and 3 is a second creephole measuring 1.20m. in length, 90cm. wide, 80cm. in height. Chamber 3 is oval in plan and its long axis is orientated E-W. Its dimensions are 3.40m. long, 2.10m. max. width, 1.00m. high. On its SW side there is an area 1.95m. long occupied by a vertically built facing of large rounded field stones. This facing is seen to taper upwards occupying a shaft through the overlying soil. Such shafts were used as a means of transporting excavated spoil to the surface during the construction of a souterrain. Finally, there is a short creephole on the NE side of chamber 3 which leads into chamber 4. Positioned at the entrance to this chamber are both a jamb- and a threshold-stone. The creephole measures 40cm. long, 90cm. wide, 65cm. high. The dimensions of chamber 4 are 2.30m. long, 1.70m. wide, 80cm. high. On the southern side of the chamber occupying

¹ *Cork Examiner*, Monday, 10 November 1975.

² Location: O.S. 6" sheet No. 133, 15.5cm. from E margin, 29.00cm. from S margin, O.S. 1" sheet No. 24, National Grid reference W220402, Td. Corran South, Ph. Kilmacabca, By, East Carbery, O.D. 300-400.

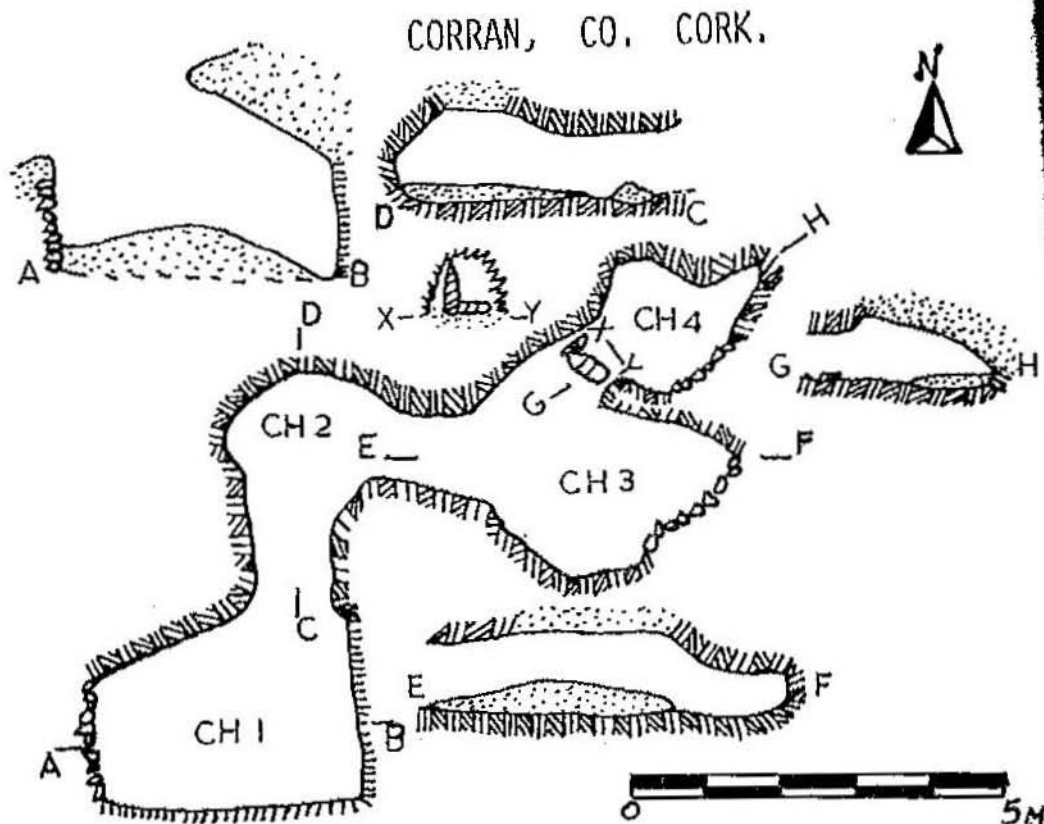
an area 1.10m long there is a facing, again of large water-rolled fieldstones. This facing extends upwards through a shaft cut into the overlying soil.

There was no visible indication of an entrance anywhere. Chamber 1, which is the most well-built and the largest of the four chambers, appears to have been that part of the souterrain intended for most use. As there is no evidence for an entrance elsewhere in the souterrain, perhaps this feature lay in the now destroyed part of the roof. The general structural features of this souterrain compare well with those of many other recorded souterrains in Co. Cork.

Above ground there was no evidence of a directly associated ringfort or other structure. However, situated at a distance of c.500m ENE is a disused children's burial ground or *cillin*.

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my thanks to Professor M. J. O'Kelly and Dr. E. Shee for their help and advice in the preparation of this report.



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