

HISTORY OF TOWNLANDS

Historically Ireland and its counties are sub-divided in a unique way: counties into baronies, baronies into parishes, and parishes into townlands. The townland is a unique feature of the Irish landscape and is one of the most ancient divisions in the country. The origin of the townland remains obscure but they are undoubtedly of great antiquity. They existed long before the parishes and counties and were eventually written down in anglicised form as they sounded to English court scribes. Until recently the townland was the postal address of the countryman, before the post office introduced its scheme of road names.

The townland name may originally have referred to an easily identifiable feature of the landscape such as Carraig Carrick (meaning Rock) or Tulach Tully (meaning a hill) or a botanical feature such as Eanach Annagh (meaning marsh). The social customs or history of the people who have lived in a particular place can also be reflected in the name of the townland. Often these names are the only records that survive of the families who held the land in pre-plantation times, Baile Bally (both meaning settlement) are usually compounded with personal or family names and examples can be found all over Ireland including such names as Ballywalter and Ballysavage. Many townlands throughout Ireland took their names from early habitation sites, both ecclesiastical and secular, and these include Rath rath (meaning fortification) or Dun dun (meaning fort) or Cill Kill (meaning church). In all Ireland there are no less than 5,000 townlands beginning with 'Bally', 45 of them named Ballybeg (little town). Some 2,000 townlands begin with Knock (a hill): there are 60 called Tully (a little hill) and there are 11 eadan Eden's (hill brow).

Townlands originally consisted of a number of sub-divisions such as greeves and plough lands but they are now recognised as the smallest administrative division in the country. There are approximately 62,000 townlands in Ireland and great variations are evident in townland sizes due to the fact that their shapes and sizes are related to local topography and farming practices. Anything from five to thirty townlands grouped together to form a civil parish. From the seventeenth century onwards land was let by landlords on a townland basis and townland names were recorded in a variety of documentation concerning land. The rentals of estates were organised according to townlands, the Tithe Applotment Books used the townland as its smallest division and it was also used as a distinct unit in the Census and Valuation Book. An Act of Parliament can only change the present townland names on the Ordnance Survey Maps.

Townlands in the Civil Parish of Donaghmore

Agharan
Aghareany
Aghintober
Altaglushan

Annaghbeg
Annaglinny
Aughlish
Aughnagar
Ballybray
Ballyward
Clonaneese Glebe
Clonavaddy
Cottagequin
Creevagh Lower
Cullenfad
Cullenrammer
Dernaseer
Derryalskea
Berryhoar
DerryKeel and Gortlenaghan
Derryvene
Disternan and Derdolt
Drumbearn
Drumhirk
Drumnafern
Drumreany
Eskragh
Feroy
Finulagh
Foygh
Garvagh
Glassmullagh
Glenadush
Gorey
Gortlenaghan and Derrykeel
Gortnaglush
Killygavanagh
Killyharry Glebe
Killylevin
Killyliss
Killymaddy (Evans)
Killymaddy (Knox)
Killymoyle
Killyquinn
Kilnaslee
Lisboy
Lisgallon
Lisnagowan
Lisnahull
Lisnamonaghan
Moghan
Mullaghcreevy
Mullaghdrolly
Mullaghanagh

Mullaghbane
Mullaghconnor Glebe
Mullaghfurtherland
Mullaghmore
Mullaghmore Glebe
Mullaghrodden
Mullycrunnert
Mullygruen
Reaskcor
Reaskmore
Reclain
Reloagh
Stackernagh
Terrenew
Toomog
Tullyaran
Toomog
Tullyaran
Tullydraw
Tullyleek
Tullynure