Names for townlands and fields may describe the landscape as it was in the past, or is still. They can refer to plants or animals which make the area distinctive, or point to landmarks.

The townland of Dowland is believed to be Dubh Linn in Irish, meaning the black pool. The River Roe runs close to the townland’s western boundary. In his notes on placenames published in 1925, Alfred Moore Munn suggested that the townland once extended to the river, ‘which being sluggish may have formed a pool there.

Lower Doaghs, Dumhacha in Irish, means the sand banks. In the 17th century this sandy townland in Magilligan parish was inhabited only by rabbits.

Ballycastle comes from the Irish Baile an Chaisleáin, townland of the castle. The castle or hall was built by the Guild of Haberdashers, one of the 12 London companies involved in the plantation in County Londonderry. Some traces of the building remain.

In Altikeeragh there is a field called the Buckies, a Scots word referring to the wild rosehips that grew there. An area called the Wetlands shows boggy, marshy ground.

Some fieldnames in Scutchtown, part of the Bellarena estate, describe different types of ground. Here a map of the fields is laid over an historical 6-inch Ordnance Survey map annotated for the underlying geology.