

**The island of Ireland is divided into administrative areas, decreasing in scale from province to townland.**

Townlands have been used continuously in Ireland for around 1000 years. As they remain largely unaltered since the 17th century, they can tell us a great deal about the histories of people and place.

Some townlands were created during the Plantation of Ulster in the 17th century. This was a time of great change in the landscape, so the names given to places during that time reflect those changes.



Map of County Londonderry by Thomas Raven, 1622, showing the lands granted to each of the 12 London Companies that undertook the plantation of the county. (Courtesy of Coleraine Borough Council)

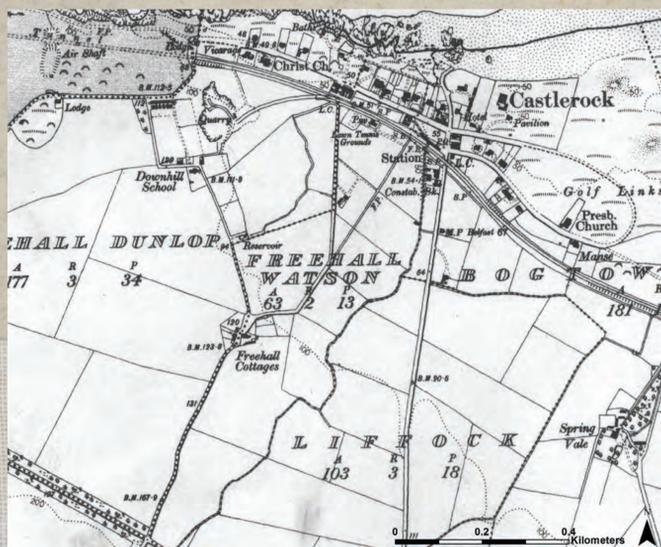


During the Plantation land that had been confiscated from the defeated Irish lords by the English Crown was granted to soldiers, merchants and others. They encouraged Protestants from Scotland and England to move to Ulster and rent land from them. The new landowners hoped that these 'planters' would produce wealth from the land's natural resources, and remain loyal to the Crown.

The administrators of the Plantation used existing place names and units of land measurement. These included baronies, parishes and townlands.

The Clothworkers Company tried to establish a town at Formoyle. They started building a new road to connect Formoyle with Coleraine and Limavady, but did not complete it. Traces of the road can now be seen in what is still known as 'New Line' field.

Freehall Watson is in the village of Castlerock. During the plantation of County Londonderry, lands were granted to the Church, to 12 London companies and to the native Irish. One type of land grant was known as a 'freehold', so the name of this townland may refer to a freehold given to somebody called Watson, perhaps an English planter. Or 'Freehall' may come from an Irish word, *frithceall*, which refers to land belonging to a religious establishment. It is marked as 'bishop's land' on G.V. Sampson's c.1813 map of County Londonderry.



Freehall Watson shown on the 3rd Edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map. Most of the early 6-inch map editions for Ulster do not show field boundaries which were initially excluded.\*



Bellarena is probably the only townland in Ireland whose name comes from Latin. The name is also given to a large landed estate made up from this and other townlands, probably established in the 17th century. It means 'beautiful sand', and compared to most other place names is a latecomer.

View of Binevenagh Mountain across the Spire Field in Bellarena Estate.