

Townland and field names may refer to how people have used land in the past.

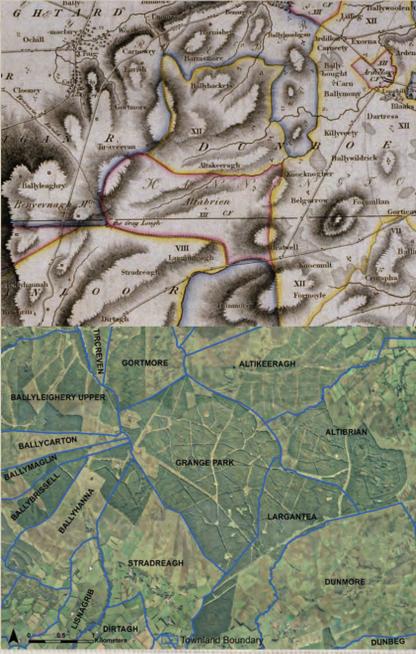


Potato drills still visible in what is now sheep grazing land at Carnowry.



The remains of a flax dam at Burren Beg, where flax was soaked in water to soften the fibres before being sold to a local mill. Flax was an extra source of income for most farming families but little now remains of this once thriving agricultural industry.

The townland of Grangepark means an enclosure belonging to a grange. A grange was usually a farm where grain was grown. In fact, granges were often owned by religious houses like abbeys.

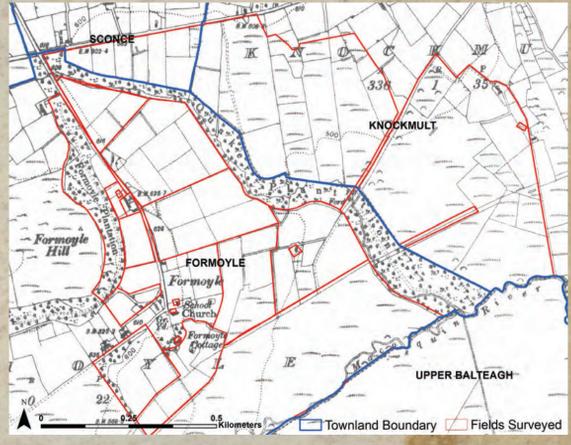


Detail from G.V. Sampson's map of County Londonderry, 1813, beside a contemporary aerial photograph of the same area. (Courtesy of Limavady Borough Council, map donated by Brian Brown).*

Grangepark does not appear as a townland on a map by G.V. Sampson made in 1813. It then lay in Altibrian, marked as 'bishop's land'. By the 1830s Ireland was being mapped by the Ordnance Survey. Its staff recorded that Grangepark was mountainous, with no shelter from trees or hedges and few or no crops. It was used only for grazing horses and cattle. If it had been a grange, this must have been in the distant past when the land was sheltered and fertile.



Ordnance Survey benchmark at Magilligan, recording the height above sea level at this point. The first Ordnance Survey was completed in 1846 and was accurate to within one inch of modern electronic equipment. (Courtesy of Limavady Borough Council)



Comparing today's field boundaries with the 3rd Edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey Map shows how fields have been joined to make much larger ones more suitable for modern farming practices. The names of the original fields have often been lost in the process.

Field names in Bellarena tell another story about past land use. Keeper's Field and Labourers' Park probably refer to areas given to the estate's labourers and gamekeeper to use as vegetable plots.



The former blacksmith's workshop and barns on Bellarena Estate.

Two fields called the Warren Upper and the Warren Lower probably housed rabbits. The Normans introduced the practice of trapping rabbits for their meat and fur in the 13th century. Rabbits were a significant source of food and income for people in Magilligan parish up to the mid-19th century.

Field names in Ballycastle refer to more recent uses of the land. One is called Wheat Fall because it was productive and suitable for wheat. Another field known as Beef Park may have been used to fatten cattle.