

Introduction

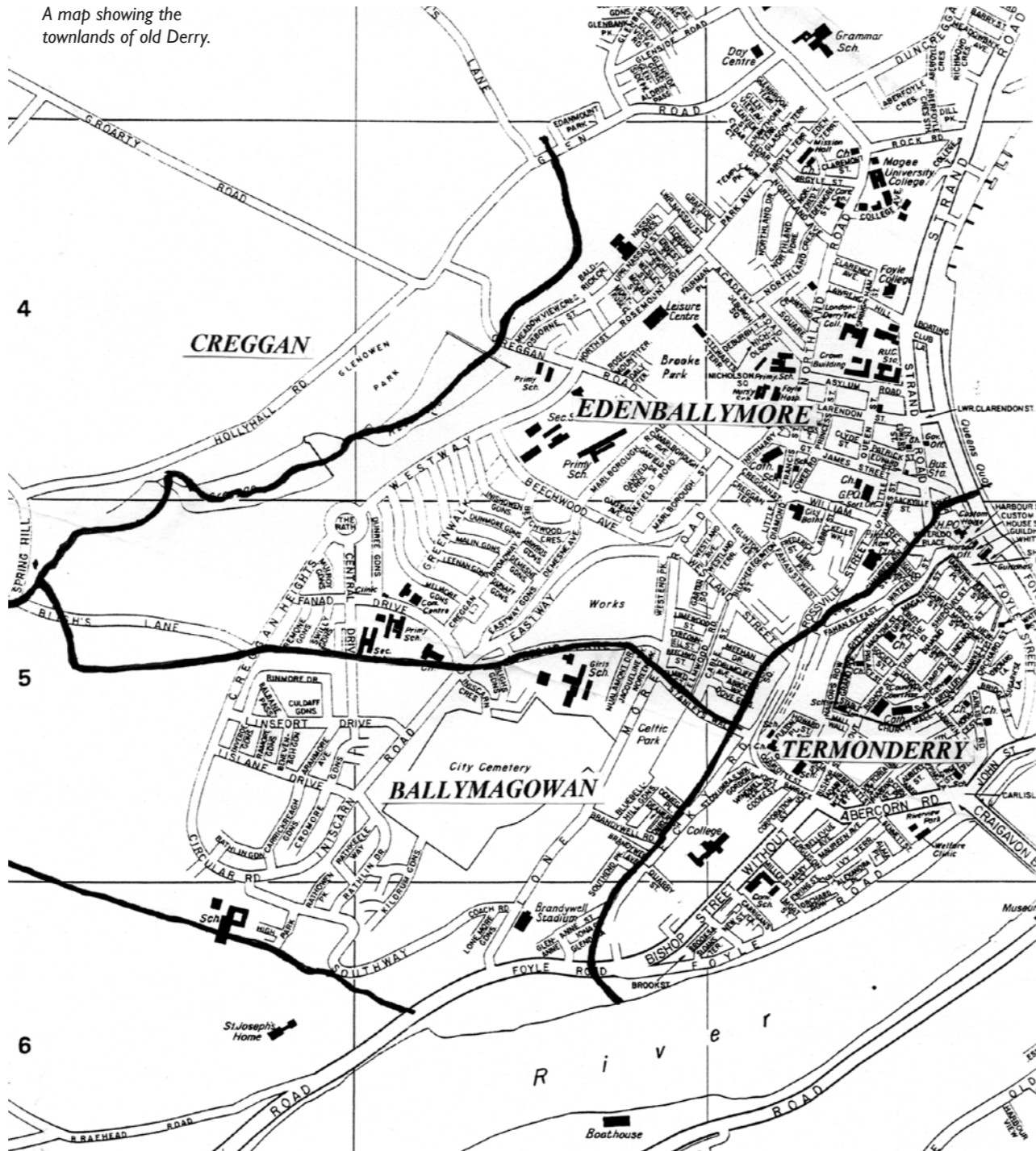
In this piece Annesley Malley explores the history of land ownership in the wider Creggan area since the Stone Age.



Over two thousand years ago, Creggan, Ballymagowan and the adjoining townlands were probably covered with trees, particularly in the little valley of the stream that began in Springhill and flowed east.

These townlands would have remained wooded with scrubby trees of ash, oak, holly etc until the first local settlers came along and cut them down for fuel and shelter. The area was undoubtedly populated by the Bronze age (2,500-300BC) as there have been several cist graves discovered over the last fifty years. There is also evidence of raths in the area (mainly from the early Christian period of 500-1,000AD) and around the hill at Coshquin to the north. The people who lived in the Creggan area would have been subsistence farmers and fishermen on the River Foyle, which was to yield a plentiful bounty of salmon and oysters. The main local supply of fresh water came from the Creggan burn which still runs through the Creggan Country Park.

A map showing the townlands of old Derry.



As the population of Derry grew the tree cover further vanished along the hillsides of Derry, including the Creggan, until the only wooded cover along the Foyle was on the Waterside as far out as Newbuildings. The River Foyle had saved this section from being cut down but it soon disappeared after the Planters came to settle in Derry and especially after the first bridge was built in 1791, which allowed easier access to the Waterside. The cleared land would have been used for agriculture and the grazing of animals.

The only proportion now remaining in the Waterside is a remnant of Prehen Wood. Currently owned by the Woodland Trust, it amounts to some 18 acres. The steep nature of this section meant that the felling of trees was too dangerous thus leading to its preservation. It is open to the public and has good pathways.

In Medieval times the Creggan and adjoining townlands was to become part of the large estate belonging to the Augustinian Priory, which had originally been formed around the old Columban settlement on the Hill of Derry. The size of this estate had spread along the River Foyle to the present County Donegal border and beyond, to Carrigans in the south and northwards towards Culmore and Soppog.

Instead the townlands of Creggan and Edenballymore became part the Diocese of Derry and were held for each respective Bishop. The only remaining church land on the west of the Foyle was a small area around the Dominican Priory at the head of the present day William Street (hence Abbey Park) and the Convent lands at Ballynagalliagh. The lands around Culmore and Ballyarnet were held by non-church landowners.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in the mid 16th century saw much of the land in Derry fall to the Crown, except for the lands in Creggan, Cloughglass and Edenballymore, which were given to the Anglican church.



The arrival of Sir Henry Dowcra in Derry as pictured on one of the older stained glass windows in the city's Guildhall.



St Augustine's Church

The townlands of Killea, Creevagh Upper and Lower, Ballougr, Termonbacca, Ballymagowan and Mullennan, which became known as the 'Fifteen Hundreds', must have also been given to the Anglican church in Derry at some time during the late 16th century, as records show that by 1600 they were controlled by the Church of Ireland bishop.

In the same year Sir Henry Dowcra landed at Culmore to consolidate the crown's control of Derry. He set up his base at Culmore Fort and then moved west to take over Elagh Castle, once held by Sir Cahir O'Doherty's father. He then marched into Derry, which by then was an island surrounded on one side by the River Foyle and to the west by a wet, boggy area later to become known as the 'Bogside'. Dowcra took over the old buildings around the little church of St Augustine and built earthen ramparts around the island.

Dowcra allowed the Anglican church to carry on managing the 'Fifteen Hundreds' as well as the Creggan, Cloughglass and Edenballymore townlands. When the Honourable The Irish Society was set up by James I in 1613 to administer the plantation in Derry the Church was still allowed to keep all of its lands throughout the County. At that time the Church of Ireland Bishop held about 10% of the land within county Derry.

As the years went by the Irish Society constantly disputed the ownership of the 'Fifteen Hundreds', the aforementioned area of seven townlands south west of the Creggan. In 1704 the Church of Ireland Bishop gave in and a deal was made. The disposal of the lands was arranged under an Act of Parliament under the condition that a rent of £200 was paid to the Church of Ireland each year. The Honourable The Irish Society then took over the estate and there are good records remaining of the tenants of this area.

However the townlands of Creggan, Edenballymore and Cloughglass were retained by the Bishop. Edenballymore, being closest to the city, was soon covered in buildings; in the nineteenth century Cloughglass was also built over as it lay along the Northland Road.

The townland of Creggan remained rural. One Bishop turned part of it into a Deer Park, which was the fashion at the time. Others planted trees throughout the area in circles; these small clumps of trees were created to allow shade for the deer during the day. The famous 'Earl Bishop', Frederick Hervey was the figure who would have done the most to enhance the estate in this fashion. The land may still have been used for this purpose by the mid 19th century, as the 'Deer Park' name appears as late as 1853 on the Ordnance Survey maps of the area.

The 'Bishop's Demesne' appears on early maps around 1800. This was the area of Edenballymore that adjoined Creggan townland. This area could have been farmed by the Bishop or let to tenants. Certain areas of this land was also planted with trees.

Many of the placenames in the area were also influenced by the involvement of the Church of Ireland or by other historical factors. Examples include Demesne Avenue (from the Bishop's Demesne), plus Rathmore Park (from the Cropie rath) as well as Oakfield and Beechwood, which reflected the large variety of trees in the area. Glenowen (glen abhainn – the glen of the river) also reflects the presence of the Creggan Burn which still flows through the area, albeit, mainly underground. Apparently many of the placenames of the modern estate (eg Dunree Gardens, Dunaff Gardens) relate to places that a corporation official would visit on walking excursions in the 1940s.

The land was gradually let to tenants for general agricultural purposes. By 1869 all the lands held by the Church of Ireland were being sold off as the Church of Ireland was disestablished. The



A portrait of Bishop Frederick Augustus Hervey.

townland of Creggan was sold to Sir Henry Hervey Bruce, Bt. of Downhill. At this time records show that the estate had six tenants and amounted to 240 acres, with a net rental income of £174. 5. 2. The tenants held it from year to year and the names listed from that period include Hatrick, Shaw, Todd, Wright, McClintock and Campbell. The Valuation Lists for 1832 and 1858 are also available as a source for the names of earlier tenants.

By 1873 the Creggan estate and others were sold under The Landed Estates Court and eventually, under successive Land Acts, the tenants were given the right to buy out their farms and in their own right become landowners. Many of the names that appear on the tenant lists of the 19th century are now the same names that appear on the list of landowners today, including the Hatricks and Fosters.

In the valley below Creggan Hill ran a stream or small river, which provided water for farm animals as well as the deer. Roads ran along each side of the valley and the river was crossed at Creggan Bridge Upper and Creggan Bridge Lower.

The first reservoir was built by the Derry Corporation along this valley and stream in 1849, designed by a Mr Hassard. At this stage the reservoir could only have been built with the Bishop's permission. The second reservoir was built in 1852 with the final section installed in 1880. The reservoir's ownership was transferred to the new Derry City Council in 1973. In 1992 the reservoir was lying unused due to new European Union directives banning the use of open reservoirs. It was then that Glenowen Fisheries secured a long term lease of the site to develop an inner city fishing facility, eventually expanding their plans to develop the Creggan Country Park as it is known today.



The Creggan Country Park Visitor Centre



Dignitaries and officials at the opening of the park.



Creggan Country Park staff & Management at the official opening of the centre's restaurant by former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds



Kids posing with their 'catch of the day'.



St Mary's pupils enjoying an academic field trip at the park



Mussenden Temple, Castlerock



Central Library, Derry



Prehen Wood, Derry

This pamphlet has been produced as part of the Creggan Country Park's 'Step Back in Time' Heritage Lottery funded project examining the history of the Creggan Country Park site and the wider Creggan area. A number of pamphlets covering subjects linked to the Creggan Country Park heritage are available including:

- The siege of Derry
- Industrial heritage
- Land ownership
- Natural Heritage
- Early History
- Living Landscapes/the Rath
- Talking History

Creggan Country Park can also arrange Walking Tours of its site exploring all these subject matters in detail as well as offering field trips to other sites associated with these topics. Tours can also be tailored to suit groups focusing on specific academic fields. For example the Industrial Heritage module can be expanded to suit groups studying science/geography whilst the siege module can be tailored for modern history groups.

Other sites associated with the early history and land ownership of the Creggan Country Park:

Mussenden Temple and Downhill Palace: The Mussenden Temple and Downhill Palace were developed by Bishop Frederick Hervey and later inhabited by Sir Henry Hervey Bruce, both former owners of the Creggan Country Park site. The site, now owned by the National Trust, is renowned for its history and sits above the Downhill/ Magilligan Strand, an important wildlife habitat. Guided tours of Magilligan exploring the natural heritage of the area can also be arranged.

Central & Creggan Libraries: Research visits involve library staff and local historians who help groups to learn more about the early history of the Creggan and land ownership in Creggan and the wider Derry area using original documents and artefacts.

Prehen Wood: Creggan Country Park can organise a historical walk of the Prehen Wood (including a nature trail of the site) as well as guided tours of Prehen House, Derry's only Georgian 'big house' and scene of the famous story of Half hanged McNaughten.

Tours are organised in association with Creggan Country Park's partner organisation derrybluebadgeguide (www.derrybluebadgeguide.com). For details on organising these tours contact Creggan Country Park on (028) 71363133 or info@creggancountrypark.com.



Creggan Country Park

The history of land ownership – who owned Creggan?

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