

Townlands – Land Reg & Postmen

The townlands were the means by which you knew where a family lived or a person lived. If you knew the townland, you knew where they lived. I remember well when people would come home from America or from some other far part of the world trying to find out where their relations had gone, some would come to my father because he would have an encyclopedic knowledge of the parish. He met so many people, obviously in and out and he would have known who they were and the first question he would always ask is, “what’s the name of the townland.” He would go through the particular family names who lived in that particular townland and connect them up, now that was his particular way of doing it.

Townlands are vital, for every historical record in the country is based on the townland, for example, during the plantation in the early seventeenth century townlands were the basis on which land was granted to new planters. They would get so many townlands and great problems arose from that, because a townland was at that time thought to contain about sixty acres. A townland is a Ballyboe. A Ballyboe means basically how many an area which would describe how many cows could be kept on a particular area of land, so for Ballyboe you need townland. Some townlands are much larger, for example Altaglushan which is not far from here is reckoned to be the largest townland in Ireland and it is a very large townland for the simple reason that much of it is bog mountain and heather and has very little fertile or good land on which to graze cattle or cows on. You might have in another part of the country a very small townland, but it would be very fertile, so you had this great problem.

But getting away from that for the moment, townlands were the measure of all the records, so if you wanted to find out where a place was, you needed first of all to find out the townland and then of course you would find out the parish, it was vital for all legal changes of property. Your land was based, your area where you lived was based on the townland you lived in and all legal transfers, all legal

Disclaimer

The information on this site is for informational purposes only. BEAM assume no liability for any inaccurate, delayed or incomplete information, nor for any actions taken in reliance thereon.

terminology to do with the tenant and the landlord was based on the townland measure. Nowadays of course it has gone out of fashion.

Well the postmen were usually local and they had no problem with identifying, they knew who lived in every townland and if there were people for example of the same surname, all they actually would do was usually the person who wrote would put on the address. I had relations that lived in Greencastle and they were McCullough's. Now there were about fifty families of the name lived in the parish, how did you recognise these? You would recognize them first of all by the townland in which they lived and secondly by the nickname that they had. They were the James Kitts, when letters came from America it was John McCullough JK in brackets, Seskinshiel, Greencastle, Omagh. That's how they worked out. It worked perfectly and I suppose it would still work perfectly today if it were around to do so.

The townland names I see have reappeared on the signs in Omagh District Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council. First of all you would see the road name and then underneath you see in smaller print the townland name, which is a great improvement and indeed praise to the Council's for doing that.

Disclaimer

The information on this site is for informational purposes only. BEAM assume no liability for any inaccurate, delayed or incomplete information, nor for any actions taken in reliance thereon.