Scotch Street

Settling on a name

by Marjorie Halligan

Personal Images

The Ulster Gazette of Thursday, 8th January, 2009, featured the proposed designs for new street art for Armagh city centre. The theme for Scotch Street was "Myths and Legends". The idea of a symbolic sculpture for the street reminded me of two former pieces of street art or furniture that I have always associated with Scotch Street. First of these was the "golden teapot" which used to hang above the entrance to the CB Café. This café occupied the site which is now TJ Hawthorne's furniture store (2010). The teapot is now in the County Museum. Another well known piece of Scotch Street art was the public house sign depicting a seventeenth century horseman crossing a river. This sign hung above a public house situated at the bottom of the street once known as the Prussian Arms. An impression of it is captured in Clara Irwin's watercolour of 1910.[1] When the First World War made all things German unpopular, locals referred to the horseman as "King Billy". The whereabouts of the sign is unknown. It was still in evidence when I lived in Scotch Street in 1964, when the public house was owned by Joe McNally. The site has traded under many logos since then. It became The Wagon Wheel then The Spider's Rest. It closed as Calvert's Tavern in the early years of the twenty-first century.

Foundations of Scotch Street

The subject and final location of the aforementioned sign may be in doubt, but there is no doubt that the present Scotch Street is sited on an area of Armagh which supported human settlement from 2800BC. This information is not the stuff of myths and legends. It comes from the findings of archaeological digs during the 1970s. The 1979 dig at 39-41 Scotch Street found evidence of a Neolithic ditch roughly circular in plan and up to12m across that had been filled in. The early age of the ditch was confirmed by the presence of hundreds

A view of Scotch Street at the beginning of the 20th century, note the erroneous caption reading "Main St."

of small pieces of Neolithic pottery. Two of these sherds were identifiable as 'Carrowkeel Ware' which is associated with the people who built passage tombs (3000 BC). Spreads of charcoal associated with other shreds were suitable for radiocarbon analysis. This indicated that the ditch was probably dug within a few centuries of 2800 BC.[2]

Part of Early Christian Armagh

In the 5th century AD, this area of settlement would have held an obvious attraction to St. Patrick and his followers. The archaeological evidence already discussed proves the antiquity of human settlement in the Scotch Street area. This does not automatically guarantee evidence of Christian settlement nor does it underwrite a connection with St. Patrick. Written tradition, however, has it that

Scotch Street was the site of Patrick's first church in Armagh. This canon begins with Muirchu's Life of St. Patrick in the late 7th century. He claims that Na Ferta was the site first occupied by Patrick. In Old Irish fertae meant a grave mound.

Muirchu expanded his description of the site to refer to it as being known in his time as the fertae martyrum, the Burial ground of the Martyrs. This claim was supported over time in the Annals of Ulster of the 11th and 12th centuries and by Bartlett's map of 1600. Later J. Stuart supports the claim that the area of land lying across Scotch Street from its conjunction with Linenhall Street to that with McCrum's Court was an area rich in historical sites going back to the time of St. Patrick.[3] Is this claim supported by archaeological evidence? Excavations at 46-48 Scotch Street between 1979 and 1980 uncovered an Early Christian cemetery with fourteen shallow graves. Carbon dating of an oak log-coffin from one of these helped to identify the cemetery as dating from the 6th or 7th century. The archaeologists felt that in all probability this is the site written about by Muirchu as the Fertae

Martyrum. It would seem to confirm the written evidence that the first ecclesiastical site in Armagh was in what we now know as Scotch Street.[4]

From Furtagh Street to Scotch Street

The concurrence of written and archaeological evidence is reassuring. Further evidence of Scotch Street's link with religious antiquity can be found in the Rental Rolls of the Archbishops of Armagh. T.G.F. Patterson's transcription of these Rolls covers the years from 1615 to 1746.[5] These were years of change beginning with the Plantation of Ulster (1607), through the upheaval of the 1641 rebellion and culminating in the Williamite Rebellion (1689-1691). Against this background the changing of a street name may not seem very significant. The name is not even unique to Armagh, our near neighbour, Dungannon, is just one other Ulster town with a Scotch Street. The Rental Rolls, however, enable us to give Scotch Street in Armagh a unique link with Armagh's earliest history. In the early Rolls street names existed in the form of "the street next to the Fryory" (sic) or as the street leading to the road to Newry. These names which owed more to destination than location, Newry Street would seem the most likely designation for the present Scotch Street. Focusing on the occupants of the tenements recorded in the rolls provides a time line for the street. Furtagh Street is one of the first streets named in the 1660 roll. The name does not relate to a destination but to previous religious occupation of the area. In 1660 eight tenants are named as holding one tenement in the street. Their yearly rents varied from sixteen shillings and eight pence to three pounds plus two capons or two hens each. Amongst them are the names of Robert Sanders and Richard Grace. Their tenements were valued at a rent of three pounds per year. In the Roll of 1661, Scotch Street is mentioned for the first time when Francis Derensy is named as taking over three tenements in "the Scottish Street". The title for the street is refined further in the roll of 1676, when,

"Alexander Murdogh rented 1½ acres adjoining to the demesnes and lying below his house in the Scotch Street".

Whilst there is no indication of the national origins of Sanders, Grace or Derensy in the Rolls their names provide the link between Furtagh Street and Scotch Street. In the Roll of 1713 drawn up by Walter Dawson, he described the tenement of Richard Hall of Scotch Street, deceased, as

"one other tenement in Fertagh now Scotch Stretet formerly Sanders tenement".

Hall also held the tenement that had formerly belonged to Grace. Its location is similarly described. Dawson traced another tenement back to Furtagh Street that had been held by the Widow Burneham for two pounds. He notes that

"John Ogle, Tanner, held half of 1 tenement in Scotch Street formerly set to Burnham".

The link with Burnham is noted again in the letting of a further half tenement to Samuel Ogle, "Dyar" (sic) in Scotch Street that had been formerly let to Burnham.[6] Allowing for the differences in the spelling of Furtagh to Fertagh and of Burneham to Burnham, it does not ask historical imagination to stretch too far to accept that Furtagh Street became Scotch Street.

Why Scotch Street?

No reason is quoted in Paterson's edition of the Rolls for the choice of Scotch Street. In the Armagh fascicle of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas it is noted that names of English origin do increase in the Rolls between 1615 and 1618 from fourteen to twenty-seven but no definite Scottish connection is drawn.[7] Stuart's Memoirs identifies a migration of Scottish Presbyterian settlers to the County and City of Armagh in the early seventeenth century. He suggests that the name Scotch Street derives from their probable settlement near the eastern entrance of the town at the junction of the Hamilton's Bawn and Newry Roads.[8] He certainly had a close knowledge of Scotch Street. In his footnote on page 147 he states that his father lived in a lane off Scotch Street until 1778, the origin of his intimate knowledge of Scotch

Street is obvious. There is other evidence supporting his suggestion that dissenters were settling in Scotch Street. Whilst the Archbishops dissuaded dissenters as tenants, Dawson's Roll of 1713 noted that there were more leases for dissenters in Scotch Street, but at a higher price.[9] Also the Archbishops were not the sole landlords in this area. The Earl of Anglesey held the land on the south side of the street close to the district known as Na Fearta from 1619.[10] It lies approximately between Linenhall Street and Dobbin Street. The property became known as the earl of Anglesey's liberty. Here toleration of dissenters as tenants was accepted more notably in the number of Catholics who were able to gain tenancies in these liberties. Lord Caulfeild also had tenements at the bottom of the street. There was no bias against dissenters on Caulfeild land as the first Presbyterian Meeting House (1676) was built on Caulfeild land in Abbey Street.[11] When Thomas Ashe described it in his account of the rents of Archbishop Boyle of 1703, he described it as "one of the Greatest Meeting Houses In the North" with a "Congregation very Numerous".[12] So despite troubled times and higher rents tenancies were available for dissenting Scottish settlers in Scotch Street.

"The Tenants lives neat and clean like an Englishman" (sic)

Unfortunately this quotation taken from Thomas Ashe's account is not a description of conditions in Scotch Street at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is a description of the tenancy of Mr. James Grayham who was a tenant of the Archbishop for one hundred and sixty-three acres at Balleheriden. The quotation is, however, a useful signpost to the post-plantation period in which Scotch Street evolved. Whilst Armagh being mainly in the ownership of the Archbishop of the Established church, was not strictly a plantation settlement area, however, the conditions under which Archbishop Hampton granted tenancies were influenced by the rules governing the Plantation for the rest of

Scotch street as it appeared on Rocque's plan of Armagh in 1760

rest of his tenement he had built a malt house and kiln, and a house for his looms. At the back of the tenement he had a stable, barn, "cow house" and turf house. He had fruit trees in his large garden. He was repairing a small stone two storey house which also occupied his tenement.

This clothier by trade was showing considerable enterprise. He was not alone in this respect. Others in the street were showing similar enterprise. Daniel Wilson had a well built malt house capable of producing two thousand barrels of malt in a year. Two other small shopkeepers are recorded, though only Robert Hamileton is named. The stone houses of Gabriel Rollston, cooper, and Thomas McComb are mentioned amongst the better buildings. More "ordinary" and in poorer repair was the house of John Anderson, butcher who was a tenant of John Ogle, tanner. In the same category of repair as Anderson's tenement was that of Turlogh Woods who had his small croft sown out in flax. Here is a hint at the industry that was to flourish in Armagh as the woollen industry declined. Robert Aldrigg had his looms in one room in a building that was in bad repair.[15] Stuart records that cloth of every description was made in Armagh. Quoting from a letter from Thomas Molyneux to Joseph Locke of 1696, he noted that a Thomas Prentice of Scotch Street was carrying on the manufacture woollen cloth.[16]

Final Word

The final word in this outline of early Scotch Street lies with Ashe. In the description of leases 21 and 126, Ashe

added to our knowledge of the community by describing the House of Correction or prison which stood at the bottom of street on Lord Caulfeild's tenement. On John Rocque's map of 1760, it is marked as the Bridewell and occupies the present site of Andy Flanagan's butcher's shop and delicatessen, 2010.[17] Ashe's description assures that it was a building fit for its purpose and places it near Scotch Street brook, the Bowling Green and the road that led to the barracks.[18] His detailed observations particularly of the cottage weaving industry enables us to envisage not only the topography but the survival and growth of the Scotch Street community in this garrison town in the troubled seventeenth century. It had found its name and was beginning to establish its identity as a notable trading area in the city.

Endnotes

[1] Crawford, W.H. & McCullough, C. *Irish Historic Towns Atlas No.18 Armagh.* Dublin: Royal Irish Academy. 2007, Plate 6.

[2] Hamlin, A. & Lynn, C. Ed. *Pieces of the Past Archaeological Excavations by the Dept. of the Environment for Northern Ireland 1970-1986.* Belfast: HMSO; 8-10.

[3] Stuart, J. *Historic Memoirs of the City of Armagh.* 1819, 512.

[4] Lynn, C.J. Ulster Journal of Archaeology Vol. 51 Ed. Michael Avery. Antrim: Greystone Press; 1988, 69-84

[5] Paterson, T.G.F. *Abstracts from the Rentals of the Archbishops of Armagh 1615-1746.* A Mss in the Armagh Public library compiled from the originals in the Archbishop's Registry, and copied from the Library copy for the use of the County Museum, Armagh; 1952, by T.G.F. Paterson.

[6] Paterson, Abstracts, 26, 35, 120, 128, 176, 190, 195.

[7] Crawford & McCullough *Atlas* No. 18, 3

[8] Stuart, J. *Historic Memoirs of City of Armagh.* p208

[9] Paterson, Abstracts, 205

[10] Crawford, W.H. & McCullough, C. *Irish Historic Town Atlas No. 18,* 2

[11] Crawford & McCullough, *Atlas* No. 18, 4

[12] Ashe, Thomas. *An Account Taken by Thomas Ashe Esq. 1703, with notes and observations of the townlands belonging to the Archbishop,* 53

[13] Ashe, *Account* 23, 73,37,19,70.

[14] Stuart, J., *Memoirs,* 296

[15] Ashe, Thomas. *Account.* p.38, 37.

[16] Stuart, J. Memoirs, 258

[17] Crawford & McCullough, *Atlas 18,* map 5

[18] Ashe, Thomas. *Account* lease 126, p.67, 68.

Ulter. The terms "Plantacon Measure", "Plantation Tenement" and "Plantacon House" (sic) as quoted by Ashe show the influence of the Plantation on Armagh's development. Ashe records how the bright hopes of Archbishop Hampton for a remodelled city were dashed. Its unhappy state as a result of "the troubles" (1641 Rebellion) and "the last wars" (1689-1690) is clear from Ashe's references to the very bad condition of houses in Scotch Street. Many were "tumbling down".[13] In the Williamite War, Stuart refers to both King James II and Duke Schomberg using quarters off Scotch Street for supply depots.[14] Despite all this upheaval, there is still some evidence in his account of the progress in the Scotch street community from the simple houses described as cretes and copple houses in the earlier Rolls to well built stone houses.

An example of this can be seen from Ashe's description of James Ogle's tenement. Ogle had taken over the Burnham tenement and had built on it after 1690. His three storey house and shop was built of brick facing on to Scotch Street. In the