

County Louth Archaeological and History Society

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Source: *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Dec., 1917), pp. 199-201

Published by: [County Louth Archaeological and History Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27728112>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 02:44

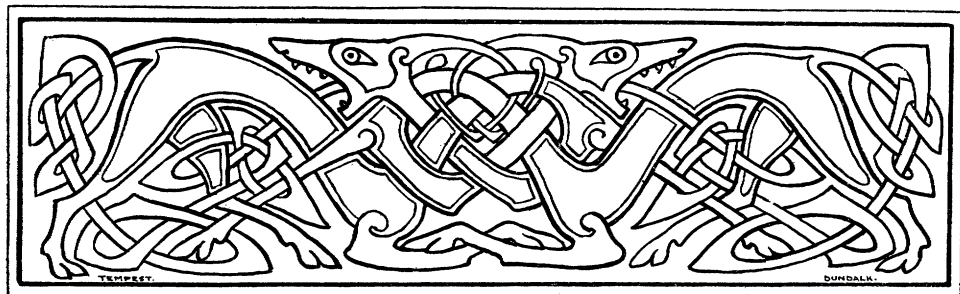
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Le Camestreet, Le Campstreet lane, The Big Bridge, etc.



THE idea is very common, and has been sometimes stated in the press, that Camp Street in Dundalk got its name from Schomberg's camp there in 1689. This tradition is completely upset by history. It looks almost ridiculous to say that Camp Street is known to history. Yet such is the fact. In an Inquisition held in Dundalk in 12^o Elizabeth (A.D. 1571): "Jacob Brandon nuper de Dundalke" was seized "de 1 mess' in boriali dict' vill; de 1 mess' in le came street, vill praedicta"—i.e., Jacob Brandon late of Dundalk was possessed of a farmhouse and offices, in the North of Dundalk, and another in le camestreet [the crooked street] in the aforesaid town. So here nigh one hundred and twenty years before Schomberg's misadventure at Dundalk we find a street named suspiciously like Camp Street, and as we shall see from the same document, identical with it.

The Inquisition goes on to tell us, that John Lymericke, Brandon and others, by gift of Lord Ormonde, were seized of several portions of Dundalke, amongs tthem "le campstreet lane in occidenti, et modo voc' dom' infermorum sci' Trin' de Dundalke"—i.e., one of them (Brandon) possessed Camp Street lane "in the West," and lately called the house of the sick—namely, of the Trinity, or of the Trinitarians of Dundalk. Also in Lord Duncannon's Patent of the confiscated Dundalk property proved in the Court of Claims, 1660, as extracted by Rev. Mr. Leslie and given in his lecture in Dundalk there is enumerated "Camp Street, east side, 29 tenements."

So here we find the transition to the present name in evidence. "Le Campstreet lane" is of course the John Street of to-day, and was exactly enough described as "in the West," being the only street then running West from the main street. It is shown very clearly without a name on the map of 1680 in Dalton's *Dundalk*, leading out to the Castletown gate on the town trench, which formed Dundalk's defence on the west. The site of this gate is still known to some old people as the Custom's gate at the end of John Street.

Why was Camp Street called the crooked street? Well, because it *was* crooked,

nor is it straight to this day, though inhabited by the straightest of people, for in Camp Street still dwell the oldest families of Dundalk's "old stock."

On the map of 1675 in Dalton it is named "Corn street," in curious agreement with Brandon's message there in the Inquisition, it being perhaps quite a rural district. "Corn street" is ill-defined, irregular, broad and curved. Strange to say on the map of 1680 it is straighter than on that of 1864, or than it is at present. It and Campstreet lane were joined in living memory by a direct passage where the house adjoining St. Nicholas' Catholic Church now stands. Doubtless too, the whole highway from the Castletown gate through John Street across Church Street to Back Lane (now Nicholas Street) had many curves, long since vanished, making it even more worthy of its name "Le Camestreet."

Nor is the house of the sick in the lane without a memory. The space looking north, occupying the angle formed by Church Street and John Street, enjoys the rather surprising title of Monkey's town, designating likely, though in a corrupt and possibly ironical form, the quite forgotten home of the monks. Not very long ago Peter Grimes, digging a pit in his garden there, uncovered a spot floored with black and white tiles—perhaps the sanctuary of the monks' chapel! Mr. Redmond M'Grath knows the exact spot, and it would be possible to have it again examined.

The Trinitarians were founded in 1198 by St. John of Matha under Innocent III for the redemption of captives from the Saracens. In the thirteenth century, according to Alban Butler, they had six hundred houses in various countries. In later days they had fifty-two houses in Ireland, but I have met with no other reference to a house in Dundalk. They wore a white habit with a red and blue cross on the breast of their "scapular."

They must be distinguished from those other "Cross-bearers" in the south-east of Dundalk, at St. Leonard's, which latter saint it is not just so easy to identify. A few incidents lead to the conclusion that he was Leonard, a sixth century saint of Nobiliac, near Limoges in France. This St. Leonard was greatly honoured in England, especially at Worcester, where his feast day (November 6th) was a half-holiday, with a prohibition of labour except that of the plough. Now in 1185 the Lord Deputy—Philip of Worcester—plundered from Dublin to Down. "From thence" [Armagh], says Hamner (quoted by Dalton), "he went to Down and from Down to Dublin, laden with gold and silver money and money's worth, which he extorted in every place where he came and other good did he none." Dalton goes on: "When Dundalk and its vicinity recovered from the infliction of this visitation, Bertram de Verdon founded a friary of Cross-bearers, following the rule of Saint Augustine, which he dedicated to St. Leonard." Bertram displayed a biting humour in choosing Worcester's saint to atone for its son's rascality. St. Leonard's name strikes a sad note in Irish story. On November 6th, 1649, Owen Roe "died at Cloc Uactair, upon Saint Leonard's day."

Another item in the Inquisition may be cited in connection with St. Leonard's: John Wilway, prior of the "Hospitlers," was seized of "Le Tannagh Weyre"—the tanyard weir. A weir at St. Helena's quay was fished in the memory of many still living, and may have been the place mentioned. Tanyards were numerous in those days, and to a late enough period, in Dundalk. Whether there was one at or near the quays is not so easily settled. There may, too, have been other weirs on the river of which not a memory survives. The face of things has so changed all along the river, that hardly an idea of the old state of things can be conceived.

Living townsmen saw the Marists' grounds flooded and the great pit in the middle of them filled up, where it was said boats used to be built; in fact, all behind St. Nicholas' used to be under water at high tides, which even came up through the

sewers into Church Street, till the river was confined to its present bed. Mr. Redmond M'Grath was told by an old devotee of St. Rispin—Isaac Turney—who died some forty years ago, at the age of ninety-five, that his father, a tide waiter at Soldiers' Point, often when attending religious service at St. Nicholas', moored his boat to the back gate of the churchyard—a picturesque occurrence worth recording for its own sake!

During the building of the present sewers, a flight of steps was found between the back gate of St. Nicholas' and the caretaker's lodge going down to a passage some twelve feet below, as if leading into Church Lane—the Longstaff Lane of the seventeenth century maps. It was so called because opening on Clanbrassil Street, it so narrowed that "Little John's" staff would measure it across.

A glance at *Louthiana's* plates of the Big Bridge shows clearly the state of bridge and river and district as late as 1757. Half a dozen ruined arches of the old bridge stand in mid-stream, giving a surprising idea of its grandeur, spanning an estuary—not a river merely. Its ruins exist yet under the road, and could be traced on the landward side till Maxwell's field was filled up and built upon. Towards the sea some foundations can still be noticed in Mr. Hughes' field. The arches went out as far as the hedge bounding the narrow field along the road on the side towards the sea. Mr. M'Grath saw cattle sheltering under them. They were torn away not long ago and the stones used to build houses in John Street. The bridge did not extend farther towards the town than the present structure, for Mr. M. Sellars informs me that the site of the gas works is a gravelly beach, not a swamp.

Old people of to-day knew the remains of fourteen arches running north to the junction of the Dowdallshill and Forkill roads. An idea of its mighty span may be gained from the aerial indication of its (intended?) lines on the map of 1655 in Dalton. On the maps of 1675 and 1680 part of it is shown in what seems splendid masonry. An attempt to trace its beginning and end may be made in another number. "The Big Bridge" always seemed a ridiculous misnomer for the present structure. Plainly it is only the pigmy heir and namesake of the old bridge, which was doubtless as great a wonder at the date of its building, as was the Boyne Bridge, "when we were Boys."

"Susie Dunne's Island" beside the bridge deserves a note. It is a rock almost in the form of a triangle. There are traces of what seems a fort on it yet. The present owner found both iron and leaden bullets in the strip of ground between the island and the road. Could it be the "Innis Olla," where the sons of the King of Norway landed to visit Cuchullin at "Bright-faced Dundéalgan?"

We have wandered away from Camp street lane; but perhaps we may return yet, if only to show that silent as it is now, in former times it witnessed fateful scenes and looked on men of fate. It knew James and William and Schomberg, and listened in awe to the tramp of their armies over its rough pathway.

Unmeasured thanks are due from Enda to Mr. Redmond M'Grath for placing at his disposal his great stores of local lore. Most of this paper is in reality the work of Mr. M'Grath, and without his help it could not be written.

ENDA.