

Jerrettspass and District

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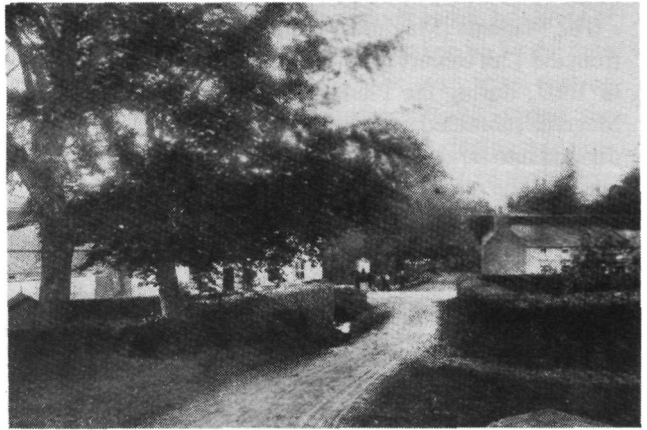
The geology of a district has a great influence on its history, and so it is with the Jerrettspass area. Millions of years ago there was considerable volcanic activity in the British Isles. In this particular area there was intrusive vulcanicity whereby rocks cool and solidify underground and are later exposed by the layers above them being eroded away. A good example of this is Goraghwood quarry, which is in fact a dyke or underground intrusion originating from Slieve Gullion. At Jerrettspass, a fault or crack in the rock has been eroded over the years to produce a fairly narrow glen similar to those found in the Glens of Antrim. During the ice age this intrusion was exposed, and as the ice receded, the material suspended in it was deposited over the area in the form of an uneven series of mounds known as Drumlins. Therefore, an immense river must have flowed through this valley at one time, which disappeared leaving a line of marshes surrounded by rich alluvial soil.

Across this bogland, passes were made at convenient places. Those in our immediate neighbourhood were at Jerrettspass, Knockanarney, Aughtanarraghan, Poyntzpass and Scarva Pass where the old subsidiary roads are still in existence.

Jerrettspass in the early part of the 16th century was known as "Lameses" or "Lambs Pass". Formerly this ancient pass, like its neighbours at Poyntzpass and Scarva, was defended by a castle, the three being built by the Duke of Albemarle. This immediately shows the importance given to these passes as focal points for safe passage and as places for the local inhabitants to meet.

DANE'S CAST

Knockanarney pass connects the parishes of Donaghmore and Drumbanagher. At Knockanarney the old road over "Barrack Hill" passes a portion of the remains of an ancient earthwork known as "The Dane's Cast". This road continues up the Church Hill through the townland of Lissummon where the remains of a fort crown the summit. Near the fort is a "statue menhir" or "standing stone" which probably marks the grave of a former chieftain. The lofty position of Lissummon Fort must have been invaluable in the days of primitive warfare for it commands an extensive view



Jerrettspass, Co. Armagh

of the surrounding country. Six counties may be seen on a clear day.

Three brothers known as "The Three Collas" came north as mercenaries of the High King of Tara in 332 A.D. and in a seven-day battle (which was so great that corpses lay scattered from Drumillar, near Loughbrickland, to the Clanrye,) they defeated Fergus, King of Ulster, and went on to take Armagh. The townland of Lurganare (the ridge of slaughter) would appear to have got its name from this battle. The remnants of Ulstermen withdrew to Down and Antrim (Ulidia) and to defend themselves built a ditch and bank from the Clanrye to Lisnagead. Lough Neagh and the River Bann helped in their defence the rest of the way. Parts of this ditch and bank can be seen at "The Barracks" at Knockanarney and in Dromantine townland not far from the rear entrance to Dromantine House. The Irish name for this earthwork is "Gleanna na Muice duibhe" — The Glen of the Black Pig.

MAGH COBHA

In his book "The Parish of Donaghmore" J. D. Cowan states that from earliest times this territory was known as "Magh Cobha" which would have included the towns of Banbridge, Dromore, Poyntzpass and north of Newry. Magh Cobha means "Plain of Cobha."

"The district was composed of morasses and forests. Fields for cultivation or pasture were mainly unfenced.

Fences first appeared in the 7th century A.D. Land was farmed in a primitive fashion, corn of various kinds being the chief crop. Pasture was usually for cows being chief article of wealth. The houses were mostly of wood with families of superior rank living in the forts which were generally of circular form."

The Magenis (Maginies) family ruled Magh Cobha from the 12th century A.D. until the 17th century A.D. In 1607, during the Plantation of Ulster Sir Arthur Magenis submitted to the new system and the land was divided into large estates. The Magenis family owned land to the east of Jerrettspass, the estate called Dromantine.

The Drumbanagher estate beside Dromantine was granted in 1610 to Sir Garret Moore. It was inherited by his fifth son, Arthur, whose direct descendant, John Moore, sold the estate to Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell Close in 1818. The original house was burnt down and in the years 1832-37 Colonel Close built a castle of Scottish freestone in Italian style from a design by W. H. Playfair. A demense wall was built in 1847 to give employment during the famine.

LOCAL VOLUNTEERS AND YEOMEN

During the American War of Independence, which began in 1776, many of the British troops usually stationed in Ireland were withdrawn to fight in America. As a result, the local inhabitants were left defenceless against attack and therefore they assembled together in 1779 at Belfast: thus began the Irish Volunteers.

Lord Charlemont took command of the County Armagh Volunteers in 1780, eventually forming the United National Army becoming its first Commanding General. By 1782 this force numbered 100,000.

Local Volunteer companies were formed at Acton, Tullyhappy, Tyrone's Ditches, Lisdrumgore, Drumbanagher, Killevy and Mullaghglass. These Volunteers were almost exclusively Protestant and were seen as a source of danger to the Irish Parliament in Dublin.

The Government decided to disband this force by substituting militia and yeomanry under its orders and supervision.

Mullaghglass yeomanry was recruited in 1797 by George Atkinson of Millvale, formerly Lieutenant in First Newry Volunteers. This was a cavalry corps of 54 men called "Mullaghglass Mounted Yeomen" — officially merely infantry. Drumbanagher Infantry was

recruited in 1798 by John Moore who was Captain and C. Warburton being Lieutenant.

"THE BATTLE OF THE PASS"

As a result of the "Penal Laws" which were enforced during the 18th century both Presbyterians and Roman Catholics suffered. Some persecuted Presbyterians emigrated across the Atlantic. There was great competition for land in the Jerrettspass area, Protestant tenants being ousted by Catholic tenants and vice-versa. When the 1798 rebellion broke out a young Presbyterian farmer banded together his friends and neighbours — both Protestant and Catholic — and turned them into a branch of the Society of United Irishmen. The members coveted the notice of the military authority and for this they had not long to wait.

They had weekly meetings for drill. On one of these occasions — a fine summer evening — there arrived a small party of the Armagh Militia, a still smaller party of cavalry known as the Welsh Horse and a few mounted yeomen. The entire company was under the command of a Lieutenant Tuskin.

The "Defenders of the Pass" as they called themselves were armed with old muzzle-loading guns, antiquated pistols and pikes made in local forges. An eye-witness at the time recalled how, accompanied by other members of the family he was taken to a field on his mother's farm overlooking the scene of the conflict. There, he watched as the advancing militia and horsemen were confronted by a handful of peasants. He heard the sound of the guns; the crack of the pistols and the clash of pikes and swords. The "Battle of the 'Pass" resulted in the complete route of the locals.

The leader was taken prisoner, tried by martial law, and was executed on the spot. Whilst this summary punishment was being inflicted, the cavalry advanced into County Down and set fire to houses of those regarded as suspects leaving many homeless all over the face of Glenn and Barr.

Although it was not a great triumph, it was sufficient to give the officer in command the right to call the place "Tuskin's Pass".

The mounted Yeomen who took part in the engagement were most likely the Mullaghglass Cavalry Corps. This was the only body of yeomenry allowed to retain its arms after disbandment. They acted as law enforcers or police, capturing at one stage Michael Collier a notorious mail coach robber.

GERRARD'S PASS

In later years when a Post Office was established in the little settlement, the name of the postmaster was "Gerald" later corrupted into "Gerrard". He was a relative of the young man who had suffered in the 1798 rebellion. By his influence the village became known as "Gerrard's Pass."

Through time the spelling changed the 'Jerritz Pass' and then to the present name of Jerrettspass.



1st Drumbanagher Presbyterian Church,
Jerrettspass

DRUMBANAGHER PARISH CHURCH

Drumbanagher Parish Church is a picturesque building sited in the hills near Jerrettspass. Many of the parishioners reside in or around the village.

The original church was consecrated on 22nd May, 1731 by the Bishop of Dromore and Armagh and was called "St. Mary's, Drumbanagher." This building stood in the centre of the present graveyard and was very plain, having only a small bell tower at the eastern end. In 1833 a new church was built at Mullaghglass and was named "St. Luke's Drumbanagher."

Eventually the old church was demolished and the stones absorbed into the foundations of the present church, the foundation stone of which was laid by Colonel Close on 2nd September 1859. The granite stone used came from neighbouring quarries and the church was completed in 1861. It was consecrated on 18th July, 1861 by the Bishop of Dromore and Armagh. In 1872 Drumbanagher was made a separate parish from the old Parish of Killeavy. Later in 1885 an organ, built by Wadsworth of Oxford Street, Manchester, was erected in the church. Then in 1899 it was transferred to Loughgilly Church and a new

organ was presented to the church by Misses Grace and Alice Close. This organ built by Telford and Telford of Dublin is still in use today.

"HOLY POTEEN"

Drumbanagher church has had many special collections in its time all for good causes, but none of them is more famous than the one taken up by the then sexton Robert (Crab) Kelly. The story goes that on Sunday mornings the minister always started the service as soon as the bell stopped ringing and this didn't give the sexton time to get down from the belfry. As a result it wasn't unusual for him to arrive late. However, one Sunday morning the bell was heard to pell during the service. The Church treasurer a Mr. Griffith, who was also a schoolmaster of Drumganagher Primary School, slipped out to see what had happened. He ascended into the belfry and found Kelly blind drunk beside a still he had set up to distill poteen. Any fumes had been escaping up the spire and the police would never have suspected the church because the smoke mingled with the smoke coming out of the boiler house.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1751, the present Presbyterian church was built under the leadership of the Reverend Michael Henry. This was known as the 1st Drumbanagher, Presbyterian Church. It is said that before this, the people worshipped in a tiny wattle church in the glen behind where this church now stands.

However, in 1801 Jerrettspass (Lower) Presbyterian Church was founded. It split from the older congregation, but the cause of the division is not known. This became known as the "Secession Congregation of Drumbanagher" and was under its own Presbytery and Synod until 1844. After that it became known as 2nd Drumbanagher and later Jerrettspass Presbyterian Church.

It was not until 1902, that the two churches were united as 1st Drumbanagher and Jerrettspass Presbyterian Church under the leadership of the Reverend James Mulligan. Services were held separately in both churches on alternate Sundays until it was decided to meet in 1st Drumbanagher only.



Church of Ireland, Drumbanagher

JERRETTSPASS SCHOOL

Around the time that the Presbyterian Church was built in 1751, a school house was also built — probably fairly primitive — four walls, thatched roof, small windows, earthen floor with a fire probably in the centre of the room. This remained until demolished to make way for the Belfast-Dublin line around 1850.

Through compensation received from the Railway Company, a new school was built in front of the church with the site taken from church grounds by the authority of the landlord, Captain Douglas. Initially it was called “Jerrettspass Scriptural School” and was maintained by the Church Education Society. This Society had the following object:—

“To assist schools at present existing, and to establish new schools on an improved system for the purpose of affording to the children of the Church instruction in the Holy Scriptures and in the Catechism and other Formularies of the Church, under the direction of the bishop and parochial clergy, and under teachers who are members of the United Church of England and Ireland.”

Later all schools were transferred to the National Board of Education, but still under parochial management. Captain Douglas became patron of Jerrettspass National School with the vicar of Drumbanagher as manager. Some years later Captain Douglas vested the school in the Armagh Board of Education, who thus became Patrons. In July 1926, the Vicar, with the consent of the Patrons, transferred the school to the Armagh Regional Committee reserving the right to use the building after hours for parochial purposes.

In 1972 the school was closed and the pupils transferred to Poyntzpass and then in 1975 the building was demolished having fallen into a state of disrepair.



Jerrettspass National School

NEWRY CANAL

The Newry Canal runs close to Jerrettspass. Work began on the Canal in 1730, but unforeseen difficulties retarded progress and it was not until 1742 that the Canal was opened for traffic. It was the first major inland canal in the British Isles, being 18½ miles long with 14 locks. However by 1750 winter flood water had breached the banks at several places and the locks were beginning to leak and decay.

Hence, between 1801 and 1810 John Brownrigg reconstructed the Canal and after 1810 there were only 13 locks. The Canal bridge at Jerrettspass was one of three bridges rebuilt by Brownrigg and is dated 1808. The Canal was owned by the Newry Navigation Company. Passenger services were introduced in 1813 by the Quakers of Moyallen from Knockbridge to Newry.

First Class Cabin 3/4 return

Second Class Cabin 2/1 return

These passenger services continued for about 30 years.

The Canal was intended to carry coal on barges from Coalisland to Newry, but was used to carry coal in the opposite direction. In the years 1938-39 commercial traffic stopped using the Canal. The warrant for abandonment was issued on 7th May, 1949, as far as the town of Newry and through the town on 21st March, 1956.

During this operation, locals had been employed as

“Lighter men” who worked on the barges which carried coal on the Canal. At Jerrettspass there is the remains of a jetty where coal etc., was off-loaded and wheeled by wheelbarrow to the local coal merchants yard, which was a short distance away.

GORAGHWOOD STATION

The location of Jerrettspass has throughout history made it one of the focal points for traffic routes due to its position along the valley which runs southwards towards the famous “Gap of the North”. This must surely be one of the reasons why it was chosen as the site for the mainline junction station at nearby Goraghowood at the advent of the railway.

One of the first printed references to the building of a railway was made in Coote’s “Statistical Survey of Co. Armagh” which states:—

“An iron road has been talked about but no decision has been made.”

Construction of the railway from Newry to Goraghowood started in 1846 but was not finished until 1853. The Armagh - Goraghowood track was diverted by Colonel Close of Drumbanagher after an unsuccessful attempt by the railway company to drive the route through part of his demense. As a result, the Lissummon Tunnel, the longest in Ireland, had to be built to by-pass the estate. The remains of the embankments for the original route proposed can still be seen in the glen to the rear of the Presbyterian Church at Jerrettspass. Besides the impressive embankments and cuttings, these railways resulted in some of the finest examples of stone and steel girder bridges to be built. They range from an interesting steel girder bridge with a wooden floor to an impressive

three arch stone bridge crossing a small stream on the Armagh - Goraghowood line with a total of ten bridges in the Jerrettspass area alone.



Goraghowood granite quarries

However, it must be noted that the building of the railways resulted in the loss of some of the history of Jerrettspass. The 1823 Ordnance Survey map shows that several of the houses existing at that time were lost during the building of the Armagh - Goraghowood line and the school house originally facing the Presbyterian church was demolished to facilitate the Belfast - Dublin double track line which also goes through Goraghowood.

At its peak, Goraghowood Station was a busy, thriving junction on the major inter-city route and acted as a vital artery on the once vast network of the Great Northern Railway of Ireland. In the 1850s - 1900s it was the quickest way to get from Belfast to London:—

- (a) via train Belfast to Goraghowood
- (b) via train Goraghowood to Greenore
- (c) via boat Greenore to England.

The station complex included a shop, a waiting room and various other passenger facilities. There was also a Customs post at the station, for many years the first stop for travellers entering Northern Ireland. The Warrenpoint train service was very popular, especially in the summer-time for Sunday School excursions etc. However, on the 3rd January, 1965 the life of Goraghowood station ended when the line from Goraghowood to Newry and Warrenpoint closed due to lack of passengers.

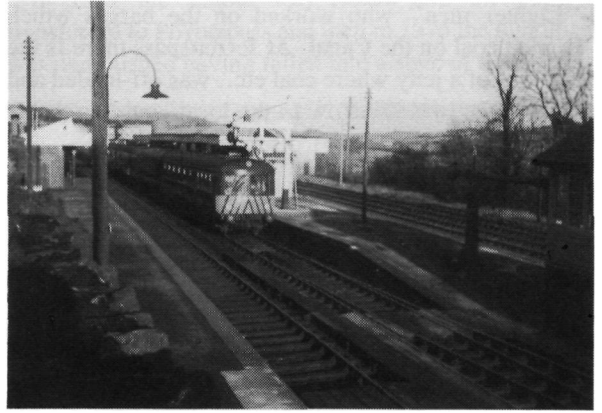
Many local people also worked in the granite quarry at Goraghowood which was also owned by the Railway Company and the stone quarried was used in the upkeep of the railway lines and bridges throughout Northern Ireland. However this industry also died with the closing of the station.



O'Hare's Coach Factory Jerrettspass 1909
“Specialists in Governess and Rail Cars,
Rubber Tyreing on Premises”

TRAIN RACING

The train was a great challenge to some of the landlords in the area, with regard to its speed. The Innes family, who then owned Dromantine House, and who were great gambling men, made bets that their Arabian ponies would beat the train from Jerrettspass to Goraghwood. The story goes that on the day of the race, both pony and train arrived at the same time in the station. It was said that the coachman could handle the ponies so well that "they could turn the coach wheels over a half crown on the ground!"



Goraghwood station

Barr Chapel



Jerrettspass today