

# Mavemacullen Townland

## Loughgilly Parish, the River Cusher and its mills

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**M**avemacullen is the name of two townlands — Mavemacullen Upper and Mavemacullen Lower. Mavemacullen Upper with an area of 239 acres 1 rood and 30 perches is in the Parish of Loughgilly, while Mavemacullen Lower, 398 acres 2 roods and 38 perches in area, is in the Parish of Ballymore and Mullabrack. The highest point in the Mavemacullens is 301 feet above sea-level.

I was always led to believe that the meaning of the name "Mavemacullen" was "The Plain of the Mills." Some authorities would disagree. Through the Parish of Loughgilly flows the River Cusher used in the past as the source of power for many mills.

Over the years the spelling of the name of the townland has varied greatly. The earliest written form I have found is in the Hearth Money Rolls of 1664-65 when it was referred to as "Moy McCullen". Other versions are:—

- Mowillin — also Hearth Money Rolls 1664-65
- Maymawhillen — Family indenture 1815
- Maymaywhillin — Family headstone 1817
- Maymacullen — Family indenture 1827
- Maymawhillan — Map of Tenancy 1833
- Memacullen — Headstone 1859
- Maymacullen — Orange Hall 1923
- Mavemacullen — Present Day
- Mawhillen — In speech use, to my knowledge 1912.

'Mawhillen,' as I will call the townland in this article has within its boundaries, a **church** and **graveyard**, a **manse**, **school**, **hall**, **shop**, **Post Office**, **Blacksmith's Forge**, and 10 **occupied farm houses**. However, there are no mills within the townland.

**The church** — Clare parish Church, (Church of Ireland). The parish was formed with four townlands from Mullaghbrack, five from Loughgilly and twelve from Ballymore on March, 6th 1840. The lease of the site of the church was obtained from James Brown on 3rd March, 1841 and the church consecrated on October 13th, 1842. The first minister was Rev. Edward Bryce. He was succeeded by Rev. James Wilson in 1844. The latter married twice; first to a

daughter of William Hutcheson, Tandragee and then to Mary Prentice, the widow of Robert Prentice, in Drumbanagher Church on Septmeber, 9th, 1844. Rev. Frederick Trulock Hankin was minister from 1858 until 1877. Later this church became part of Loughgilly Parish.

**Mawhillen Graveyard** is the burial ground of the Harden family, former owners of Clare. The oldest dated headstone in the graveyard is that of Irwin of Corlust dated 27th December, 1832. This seems strange as the lease of the site is dated March 3rd 1841, eight years later. The headstone of James Dillon, who died in 1859 records his former residence as "Memacullen." The Rev. James Wilson and his wife Mary are buried in this graveyard.

Clare **Manse** is in Mawhillen townland. Built in 1879, it was occupied by the ministers of Clare until 1965. Previous to 1879 the ministers had resided elsewhere, notably Rev. John Bell who is buried in the Presbyterian Graveyard, Clare. Described on the headstone as "A laborious and faithful pastor, aged 57 years," he lived at the cross-roads on the Markethill, Tandragee Road still known as "Bell's Crossroads."

In this graveyard is a headstone recording the deaths of three brothers on 22nd, 28th and 29th November, 1918. Residents of Mawhillen they died in the great 'flu epidemic which swept the country at the end of the Great War.

**Mawhillen School** attached to Clare Parish Church is in the same grounds. In the early years of the last century a 'hedge school' is mentioned in the townland in a Government Inquiry into education in the country.

**Mawhillen Orange Hall** built in 1923 is inscribed "Maymacullen." Previous to this the brethren met in a building owned by James Cunningham.

Thomas Haire was the owner of the **shop** in the townland and carried on an extensive trade in a wide variety of goods over many years.

Grocer, hardware merchant and funeral undertaker it is noted that in this latter trade he had 23 funerals

in a period of 21 days at the time of the 1918 'flu epidemic.

Eleven Lane End's **Post Office** is also housed in this local shop, and has been in business for 100 years and more. In tenancy maps for 1833 and 1863 the area is called "Eleven Lonan Ends" and "Eleven Loanings" respectively. Named most likely in the old coach days the passengers having noticed that there were a number of lanes within a very small area.

The **Blacksmith's** shop in any district was one of the most important places. Known locally as "The Smithy," there was a time when Mawhillan had no Smithy. There had been one just outside the boundary at an intersection of five roads or lanes. This spot became known as the "Brick House" because it was here that one of the first houses made with brick rather than mud was erected. The smithy became vacant and the local undertaker, I have already mentioned, needing a smith to shoe his horses which pulled the hearse, erected a new 'shop' and got a smith, John Clarke in the late 1890's. This smithy closed in the 1960s.

The population in the country is less than it was years ago, and now there are only **10 occupied farm houses** in the two townlands of Mawhillan. I can recall twenty occupied and point out the sites of at least fourteen others I have become aware of in my lifetime. Bassett's Directory 1888 lists eighteen residents, including Post Master Thomas Haire, Brick Manufacturer Robert J. Haire and the Reverend R. J. W. Wham. The latter died on the 2nd October, 1929 in Clare Manse, having at one time been Armagh Deputy County Grand Master of the Orange Order.

Mawhillan has one fort, rath, in Lower Mawhillan. It was a good example, until about four years ago an agricultural grant was used to help level the outer ring.

There is a **Spa Well** (Chalybeate) in a field behind Clare Church, Mawhillan, and there were numerous spring wells, many alas, filled in since piped water came to the area.

### PARISH OF LOUGHGILLY

The present Loughgilly Parish extends from Mawhillan Upper to Ballintemple Townland near Newtownhamilton. On the 1602 map it is shown as "Locully." The parish was formerly known as "Castrum O'Hanlon," as much of the Cusher Valley belonged to the O'Hanlon's until their estates were confiscated for taking part in the Earl of Tyrone's rebellion in Queen Elizabeth's reign. The area known as Tyrone's Ditches is mostly within the parish

boundary, in the townland of Ballenan. This is where the Earl encamped for several years, and had dug his defences.

In this district roamed several highwaymen, and no doubt Redmond O'Hanlon, Tory or Rapparee, moved through and maybe even escaped from his pursuers by walking across Loughgilly Bog. Posts were placed just below water level to make a ford for those who knew the path to take.

In 1613, John Madden, Rector (Loughgilly), got a Chancery Decree for £40 for cattle "wrongfully distrained on the lands of Lisdracor and Coronagh," against Sir Archibald Acheson who, on the 19th June, 1629, however, got a Decree against him "in lieu of the profits of the Rector of Loughgilly 1624 and 1627." He resigned the rectory in 1628 exchanging with his successor for Donoughmore, Geo. Synge.

One of the larger houses mentioned in papers during these years was reported by Captain Pynnar's Survey 1618 - 19 .....

"Henry Bowcher, Esq., hath two thousand acres, called Claire. Upon this proportion there is a bawn of lyme and stone, being one hundred feet in length, and eighty feet in breadth, and fourteen feet high, with two flankers. There is now in building a good strong stone house which is fully two stories high, and a number of workmen labouring for the speedy finishing thereof."

Another resident is noted in "The Post Chaise Companion 1786" when detailing the route from Newry to Ballybay via Ballymoyer.

"Within half a mile of Ballymoyer Church, on the left at the cross-road from Newry to Newtownhamilton is Ballymoyer Lodge, the seat of Sir Walter Synnot, Knt. The house is beautifully situated by the side of a deep glen, with a fine stream running amongst rocks through it. The plantations are extensive and well laid out."

Hearth Money Rolls for 1664 show that there were 130 listed homes of one hearth within the Parish of Loughgilly. Six were listed for Mawhillan and none of the names is in the area now. The Mawhillan names recorded were, McGeough, McInnan, McSherry, O'Keenan, McGurigan and McGurigan.

In 1785 "Portnorris rioters" committed several "barbarous actions" in that quarter; "they broke and destroyed all the effects belonging to a Mr. Murphy. His damages in liquors and groceries were estimated at £100 loss besides the personal injuries that himself and family received."

“Sir Walter Synnot, Magistrate, left no means untried to reclaim these rioters to a sense of their duty but to no effect. Accordingly, some troops were sent to his assistance and he took four of these heroes by surprise. In 1787 the rioters were acquitted. It was confidently reported that some of the Papists took large bribes at these Assizes not to prosecute.”

Papers in State Paper Office Dublin record that in 1796-8 there was an attack on 24th Dragoons at Loughgilly.

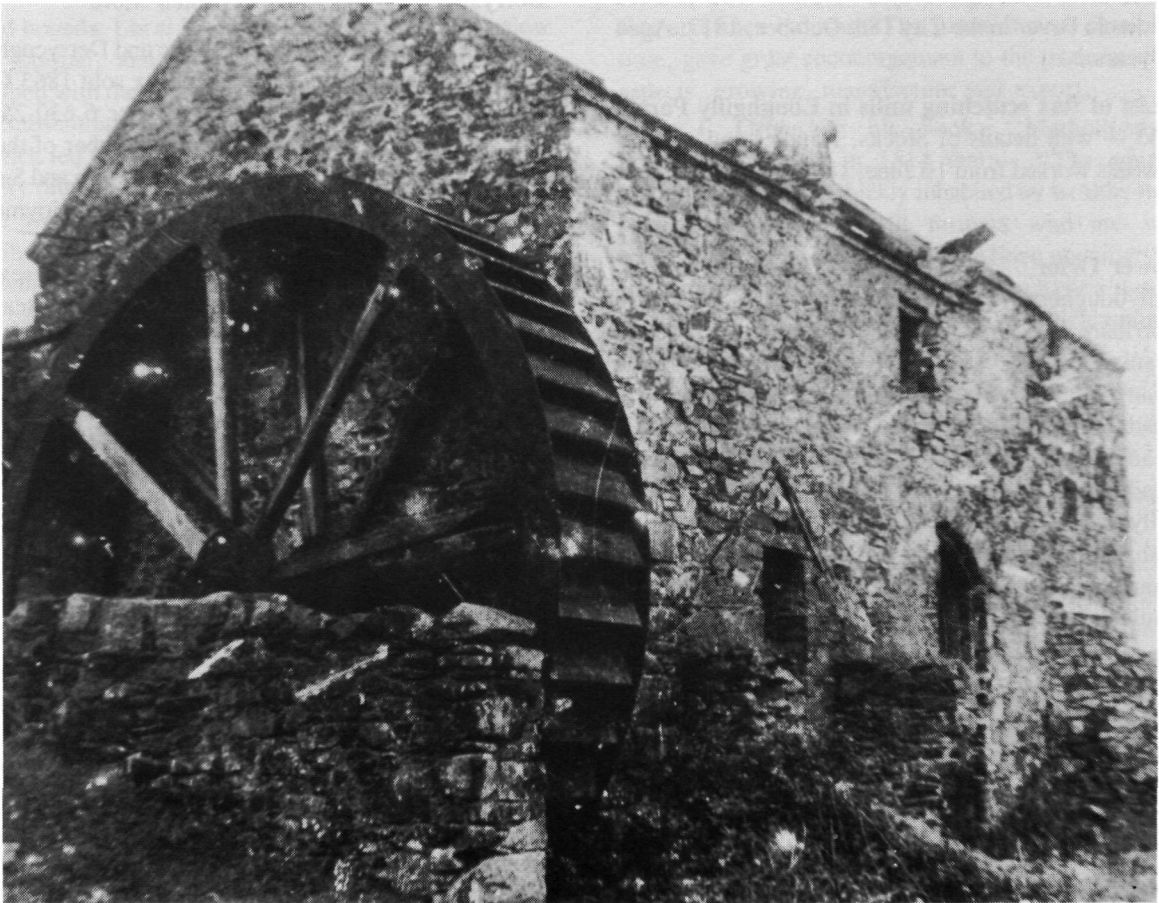
### THE RIVER CUSHER AND ITS MILLS

The Cusher River which flows through Loughgilly Parish and forms the western boundary of Mawhillen townlands, is the longest river within County Armagh, being twenty one miles in length. On a map of “Belfast and District” 1602 it is shown as “Cushere” and a local tenant map as “Cushiere” in 1833. The Cusher catchment area extends from Corernagh in the east to

Waugh’s Cross Roads in the west, and from Clady in the south to north of Tandragee. Within this area, I believe, there was as great a concentration of water mills as in any other area of Northern Ireland. It rises near Belleeks village and flows the full length of Loughgilly Parish.

A list of Mills for Scutching Flax is given in “the Agriculturla Statistics of Ireland for the year 1863.” Those for the Cusher area numbered forty and of these, twenty were in Loughgilly Parish.

Within the area of about two miles square, there were seven mills — two sites with both corn and flax mills and three other sites of flax mills only. In the adjoining area an extension of the plain to the south, also two miles square, there were six mills; one site with both corn and flax mills, two separate flax mills, and one large site with a flax mill, corn mill and kiln to dry grain to be ground for flour, and still Mawhillen townlands had no mills within their boundaries.



Henry’s Mill, Crankey

An indenture dated 10th December, 1815 for my farm "Between the Reverend Thomas Carpendale Sen, of the City of Armagh Cleric of the one part, and Murty Toner of Maymawhillen" stated:— "And also shall and will grind or cause to be ground at the Mill or Mills of Mullaghmore within the Manor of Mount-Norris, or such of them as the said Thomas Carpendale shall nominate limit or appoint, — and shall pay for the Grinding hereof the accustomed Toll or Multure, to wit one full twentieth of all such Corn — in default did grind of his Corn, — at such other Mill or Mills other than the said Mills, of the said Thomas Carpendale — within the said Manor, that in every such case, as often as the same shall hapen the said Murty Toner — shall forfeit and pay unto the said Thomas Carpendale — the sum of six shillings and eightpence of each Bushel of Corn — ground at such other Mill or Mills." Mullaghmore Mill was three miles distant.

**Note:**— Rev. Thomas Carpendale M.A., was Headmaster Armagh Royal 1786 - 1817. Died Epidemic Fever in the City 18th October, 1817. Aged 63 years.

**List of flax scutching mills in Loughgilly Parish 1863** — with details of Stocks, Handles and number of weeks worked from 1st June, 1862 - 31st May 1863.

	Stocks	Handles	Weeks Worked
<b>Lower Orior</b>			
Ballydougherty	5	25	20
Corrinare	12	60	20
Crankey	8	40	16
Keadybeg	5	25	17
Keadybeg	6	30	20
Keadymore	10	50	19
Keadymore	8	40	20
Killycarron Upper	8	40	10
Lisnalee	6	30	22
Mountnorris	14	70	18
Mullaghmore	6	30	8
<b>Upper Orior</b>			
Carrickananny	4	20	26
Carrickgallogly	4	20	26
Creggan Upper	8	40	20
Drumharriff	6	30	36
Drumharriff	4	20	
Drumnahunshin	4	16	13
<b>Lower Fews</b>			
Drumgane	8	40	26
Drumgane	8	40	26

### Ballymyre

Lurgana	12	60	21
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These Mills worked an average of twenty weeks in that year. With a total of one hundred and fortysix Stocks/Men labour and an average of six persons for all other jobs about the Mill, they would have given employment to 266 persons in Loughgilly Parish.

Mills recorded for the same period in the remainder of the catchment area:—

Ballylane	Derrycughan
Ballynewry	Derrycughan
Ballyshiel Beg	Drumcahee
Ballyshielmore	Edenkennedy
Bryandrum	Kilmacue
Cladymore	Lurgaboy
Clare	Marlaco More
Clare	Seaboughan
Corlust	Shanecracken Beg
Derryallen	Shanecracken More

There was one flax mil on each site and Derrycughan also had a beatling mill. Scutched flax sold 1863 Co. Armagh 781,888 Stones (14 lbs) Ulster 6,630,252.

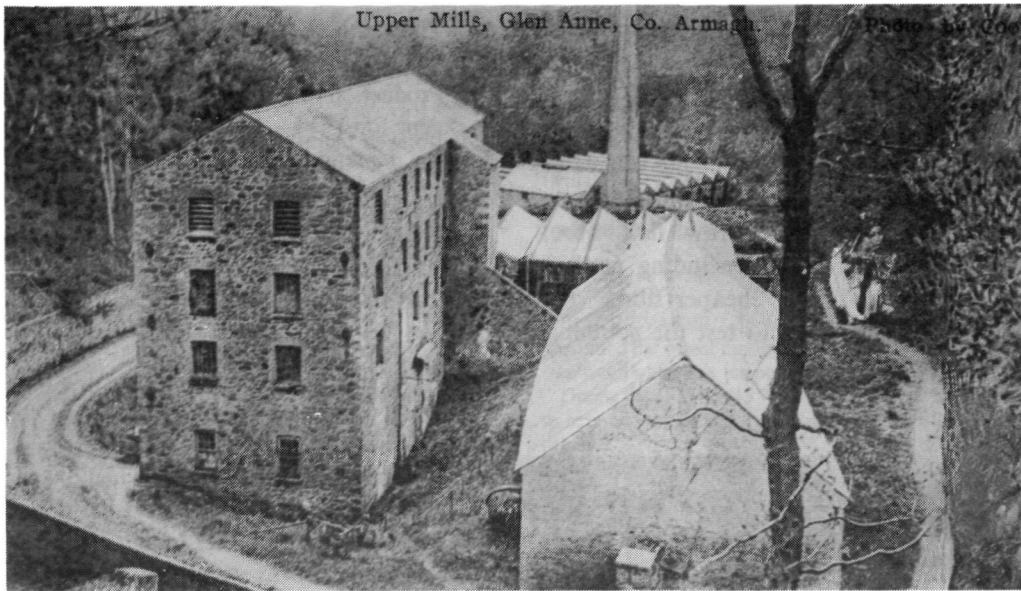
It should be remembered that on a number of these sites there were other types of mills i.e., Corn and Saw. With all of these there was a great deal of employment in the country districts.

County Armagh in 1863 had one hundred and seven flax mills; ninetythree water powered, seven steam, five water and steam and two horse powered mills. The total for the County was twenty more than in the previous year. From this time of water powered machinery with such great employment on a home produced product it is sad that in the present day there is almost no home linen / flax industry.

### FLAX and LINEN

Flax and Linen are mentioned in records from earliest times. In Egyptian tombs remains have been found of flax fibres. The Old Testament, Exodus, Chapter IX, verse 31. "The flax therefore, and the barley were hurt, because the barley was green, and the flax was now balled." There are numerous records of the growth, manufacture and use of flax and linen in the Bible. Luke and John both record the use of linen for the burial of their Lord and Master.

Up to the mid 1660s, there was very little manufacture of linen locally, even for home use, but over the next twenty years, the industry grew by leaps



Glenanne Mill

and bounds. Local land owners like Arthur Brownlow of Lurgan, and Samuel Waring of Waringstown, helped with the growth of the flax and linen industries.

Substantial changes took place from 1740 to 1760, which led to a great increase in home linen weaving. Very often a room was added on to the cottage to house the weaving looms. This room was known as the "Shop" (workshop). Within Cushier area in the townland of Ballyshiel is "Jiggle Street." This was so called because of the noise created by the working of the looms. There were at least six houses with looms in the 220 yards stretch of road. In the 1770s, weavers earned from one shilling to one and five pence a day, and their wives could earn threepence and fourpence a day for spinning. In these years, the United Irishmen were formed, and weavers are mentioned in many places as having taken part in the Rebellion of '98. Henry Joy McCracken was apprenticed to the linen trade.

Jimmy Hope a weaver from Templepatrick, fought at the Battle of Antrim. James Burns, weaver, was in charge of the cannon at Antrim.

In Ballymena, a man from the Glynnys, carrying a basket of flax from Belfast, was forced to join the insurgents and to carry a tar barrel to the Market House to set it on fire. Afterwards, he left the scene with his load for home.

Because of the troubles about this time i.e., Diamond Fight of 1795 and the Insurrection of '98, many weavers fled south, and this helped the spread of the

flax and linen industry. The Linen Board, about this time, gave great encouragement to the trade in all its aspects, growing, manufacture and export.

W. I. Green in his book, "Methodism in Portadown" states in 1814 that:— "The country around Tandragee is thickly inhabited by wealthy linen bleachers, and the small farmers who are very comfortable, are all engaged in the linen manufacture, so that it became no difficult matter to have a weekly market of linen, the average value of which amounts to £2,000."

At about the same time "the flax market held at Tandragee was one of the best in the land," according to one authority.

In 1831 the Tandragee Flax Market amounted to £7,000.

In 1841 the Manufacturers of Ulster organised a society for "the improvement of the Growth of Flax." Markethill Society recorded a yield of 5 cwt. per acre. Fourteen Societies showed an average of 36 stones, in seven Northern counties.

It is recorded locally in the latter half of the 19th century that a farmer from beside Newtownhamilton delivered a load of scutched flax to Dublin in a horse drawn cart. This load was collected in Armagh and taken home, from where the long journey was started the next morning. The horse and farmer were rested that night in Drogheda, and next morning, the trip to Dublin was completed. Next day, the journey was re-

traced and having reached home, five days had been spent on the road by horse and driver.

Some local mill owners carried out their own research.

The following note was found in the offices at Glenanne Mill "Master Ben Gray of Glenanne Mill, because of the cost of raw flax fibre, experimented with other crops (including nettles) to see if he could produce a cheaper fibre. He employed Mrs. Sarah Feenan to test the spinning quality of nettle fibre."



*This Photograph represents Mrs Sarah Feenan who was born in the County of Monaghan in 1806. At an early age she learnt to spin Wool, afterwards Flax, and now in her ninety-first year Nettles. The finest qualities of yarns in this case were spun by her.*

This delivery was carried on annually for a number of years.

Production of flax declined over the next fifty years, except for 1914 - 1918 war period, and again there was a demand during the Second World War. In 1930 only 72 acres of flax was grown in Tandragee rural district.

In 1941, the last flax crop was grown on my Mawhillen farm, with the yield being one of the best ever for the area at 199 stone in four acres.

A Press report in 1958 states:—

"The steady decline of the North's linen trade has reached such serious proportions that the Stormont Government is now being urged to step in and take a more active interest in its survival.

"The speedy action to arrest the downward trend is underlined by the rather frightening figures disclosed the other day of the way things have been shaping in the linen trade over the past 25 years.

"In that period approximately two-thirds of the merchant firms engaged in the linen business in the North have disappeared while in the past two years at least three spinning mills, six weaving factories and four cloth processing works have closed down.

"More are likely to follow. Last year the production of linen damask was 2,500,000 square yards, or approximately only 6 per cent of what it was in 1913."

A further report in 1967 tells us that:—

"In co-operation with the linen trade, the Northern Ireland Agricultural Trust proposes to arrange for the production of approximately 100 acres of flax next season. This will enable tests to be carried out on various aspects of production and harvesting. Concurrently with these crop tests it is proposed to make further investigations into suitable methods of processing and prepare details of a processing unit.

"When this has been done both the Trust and the linen trade will be better able to assess the long term potential of flax production in Northern Ireland and, if appropriate, to co-operate in a fully commercial development."

On the western bank of the Cushier was an interesting 'mill-race'. Water taken from the Cushier, was used to drive several mills before being returned to the river. About 1 ¾ miles in length and running through three townlands, the 1860 Ordnance Survey Map shows details of this mill-race.

A ditch was dug with the excavated soil built up on the river side to retain the water in the race. This can

still be traced from the beginning of the race to the site where the first two mills stood. There was a flax scutching mill and a corn mill. There is no trace of them today.

From these mills the mill race continued to another flax mill, now in ruins. The race here has been filled in but its course is now marked by a fence. Although this mill is in ruins, there is sufficient evidence to see how it operated. The 'cut' into which the mill wheel was mounted was about 4ft 6ins wide. Remnants of wood and iron, from which the mill wheel was made, are still to be seen. Beyond this mill the race passed under the Markethill Road and over the Bryandrum River. The latter was achieved by means of a wooden aqueduct 10 feet wide and 3½ feet deep.

Tradition has it that the water was used to drive another mill before returning to the Cusher, but of this nothing now remains.

Drumharriff	Kitty Boyle		
	married		
	Cosgrove		
	married Malone	1950	
Drumnahunshin	Patterson	1900	
Drumgane	Samuel Gass	1950	Corn Mill and Kiln
Drumgane	Byres	pre 1939	Owner was buyer of flax
Lurgana	Parker Synott	Burnt - unknown	Corn Mill Kings, Malone

\*"BACK WATER" In time of floodwater the level rose and prevented the wheel turning. Some Mills had a stand-by system to take over when this happened.

During the 1939 - 1945 War, grants were given by the Government to help owners of water powered Flax Mills to convert to engine driven.

**THE END OF AN ERA**

**Some notes on Flax Scutching Mills**

**Loughgilly Parish**

Scutching Mill	Last known owner	Approximate date last worked	Other details of site
Ballydougherty	James Hanna	Accidentally burnt 1918. Overheated rollers	*Suffered from Back Water Corn Mill
Corrinare	Malachy Toner	1947	*Suffered from Back Water
Crankey	John Henry	Owner having been hurt in rollers 1920	
Keadybeg	Scott	1920	
Keadybeg	Robert John Caldwell	1920	
Keadymore	Robert George McClelland	1930	Known as Slate Mills converted to Timber Mill
Keadymore	Samuel Girvan	pre 1914	*Suffered from Back Water Corn Mill and Kiln
Killicarron Upper			
Lisnalee	Patrick Boyle	pre 1937	
Mountnorris	Samuel Barber	1949	Corn Mill
Mullaghmore		Derelict 1930	Corn Mill
Carrickananny	Chambers	Burnt 1912	How — not known
Carrickgallogly	Markey	pre 1918	Corn Mill
Creggan Upper	John O'Hanlon	1956	*Suffered from Back Water
Drumharriff	Edward Boyle	1950	

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