

The Townland of Nutfield in County Clare¹

Philip Crowe

The present-day townland of Nutfield in the parish of Templemaley, barony of Bunratty Upper, is on the eastern side of the River Fergus and immediately adjacent to it. It is somewhat elongated in shape, north to south in orientation, and about 5 kilometres north of Ennis. Nutfield does not appear among the denominations of land in the parish of Templemaley as delineated in the Down Survey conducted from 1655 to 1658.² While the parcels of land in that survey frequently correspond with the place names and boundaries of modern townlands, Nutfield is an exception.³

Townlands are the smallest administrative land units used in Ireland today.⁴ Nutfield is just one of over 60,000 townlands in the whole of Ireland. Despite the name ‘town-land’, it does not refer to villages, towns or built-up areas but to land generally. Townlands vary greatly in size and shape. Under various names, they have been the basic unit of land divisions in Gaelic Ireland going back at least 1,500 years.⁵

The names of townlands often refer to geographical features, historical events or even folklore and myths. The folklorist Thomas Johnson Westropp (1860-1922) recounts two versions of a myth about the placename *Skaghvickincrow* (otherwise *Skaghvickencrow*), a townland in the parish of Inagh, County Clare, meaning ‘MacEnchroe’s [Crowe’s] hawthorn bush or tree’.^{6 7} Both versions of this myth tell of a great treasure to be found under this tree. The central character in the stories unearthed this treasure so that they and their descendants became enormously wealthy. This legend is incorporated in the depiction of a tree as the central feature of the Crowe coat of arms granted to Thomas Crowe of Dromore in 1860.



¹ This is a revised version of: Philip Crowe, ‘Origins and history of the townland of Nutfield in County Clare’, *The Other Clare*, vol.44 (2020), pp.42-45. My thanks to Brian Ó Dálaigh and Conchubhar Ó Cruaioich for their assistance with Irish-language personal names and placenames, and to Tony Stewart for editing the images.

² Frank Prendergast, ‘The Down Survey of Ireland’, *Survey Ireland*, vol.14 (1997), pp.43-52. It is said the Down Survey was so named because, in contrast with earlier surveys, it accurately measured distances and did so by *laying down* measuring devices.

³ *Books of Survey and Distribution: Being Abstracts of Various Surveys and Instruments of Title, 1636-1703*, (ed.), Robert C. Simington, (Dublin, 1967), vol. IV, p. xiii.

⁴ Michael Mac Mahon, ‘Townlands: Old territorial divisions and land measures: Where to draw the line’, *The Other Clare*, vol.24 (2000), pp.37-42.

⁵ Patrick Nugent, *The Gaelic clans of Co. Clare and their territories 1100-1700 A.D.* (Dublin, 2007), p.22.

⁶ *Map of Inagh Parish showing Townlands*, Clare County Library, http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/inagh_townlands.htm. Retrieved 9 Sep 2020.

⁷ George Unthank MacNamara, ‘A legend of Skaghvickencrow, Co. Clare’, *The Journal of Limerick Field Club*, Vol.1, No.4 (1900) p.42.

Original Irish placenames often identify the clan -- people descended from a common ancestor thus sharing the same family name -- who were traditional occupants of that territory. Land was considered to be 'owned' by the clan as a whole, with smaller sub-divisions occupied by individual families or family groups. Around c.1641 the territory of the Mac Enchroe clan encompassed 2,896 acres in County Clare held by 19 family groups.⁸ Inheritance of lands was determined by senior clan members according to the tenets of Gaelic law. The territorial integrity of the clan was thus maintained. This contrasts with the English system of individual ownership which generally allows people to buy, sell and bequeath land to whomever they please.

The Irish name for Nutfield is presently shown in the Placenames Database of Ireland as Drumconora (*Drom Chonóra*), through this may change after further research.⁹ The name of this townland was thought to refer to a natural feature of the area -- namely, the prevalence of native Hazel trees (*corylus avellana*). These trees are found in areas of limestone such as the Burren plateaus of north Clare where Nutfield is located, and the fruit could be described as 'golden'. Thus, the name was thought to refer to a 'field of golden nuts'.¹⁰

I should emphasize at this point that Nutfield was never part of the home territory of the Mac Enchroe clan. The modern-day parish of Inagh in which those lands were located is about 20 km west of Nutfield. All of the Mac Enchroe lands were confiscated in the seventeenth-century redistribution to be discussed below.

The name *Drom Chonóra* was collected in the Ordnance Survey of 1839 and recorded as such. However, close inspection of the second part of the name shows that the translation cannot be correct. The name for 'nut' in the Irish language is *cnó* whereas the spelling from the Ordnance Survey is *chon* -- a subtle difference we might say, but a very important one in this instance. The error might have arisen from a late Irish pronunciation of the placename, or a mistake when the name was written in the paper records.¹¹

Recent research provides new light on this conundrum. Luke McInerney has transcribed the text of a document dated in the period from 1615 to 1624.¹² It concerns a petition by Lughlen McCnona seeking bail for his son charged with an offence. It is addressed to Donough O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond, in his capacity of Lord President of Munster. McCnona the elder offers his interest in certain lands as collateral in the bail application. Among the lands listed in his petition, McCnona mentions a one-third part of a quarter of 'Dromkonora'. This suggests that 'Dromkonora' was part of the lands held by Lughlen McCnona's family. The McCnona (*Meic Connaidh*) were possibly a collateral branch of the *Meic Conmara* (MacNamara). Drumconora is therefore likely to mean 'Ridge of Conna', Conna being the progenitor of the McCnona

⁸ Nugent, *The Gaelic clans of Co. Clare*, p.200.

⁹ Dublin City University, Placenames Database of Ireland, <https://www.logainm.ie/en/>

¹⁰ See, for example, James Frost, *The History and Topography of the County of Clare*, (Dublin, 1893), pp.347-8.

¹¹ Email to author from Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich, Placename Officer, The Placenames Branch, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 9 Oct 2019.

¹² Luke McInerney, 'Six Deeds from Early Seventeenth Century Thomond', *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, vol.10 (2017), pp.40-44

lineage. It appears that the lands held by the *Meic Connaidh* also encompassed the modern townland of Ballymaconna (*Baile Mhic Connaidh*) in the neighbouring parish of Kilraghtis. Unfortunately, ‘the McCnona family appears not to have survived the English exterminations of the 1650s and the surname is now extinct’.¹³

To complicate matters further, Drumconora was also known as Ringaruffe (otherwise Ringaruff) -- an *alias* for Drumconora which appears in an entry in the Register of Deeds when, as will be discussed below, it was mortgaged by Henry O’Brien on 3 July 1721.¹⁴ Ringaruffe is adjacent to Drumconora which, as we will see, was ultimately absorbed into the modern townland of Nutfield. The name of Ringaruffe derives from the Irish “*An Rinn Gharbh* meaning ‘the rough point (of land)’, probably in reference to the northern point of this townland which extends to a vee between the River Fergus and Faunrusk Lough”.¹⁵ This geographical feature can be seen in modern maps of Nutfield (see [Fig. 3](#)).

At the beginning of the Confederate War in 1641, Drumconora was in the hands of ‘Teige McNamara, gent’ who was one of the ‘chief rebels’ in the Siege of Ballyallia Castle in that year.¹⁶ Following that conflict and the subsequent conquest of Ireland by Oliver Cromwell’s forces, the lands of ‘disloyal’ Catholics and other ‘rebels’¹⁷ were confiscated and granted to Cromwellian soldiers and ‘Adventurers’ (those who had financed the campaign) by the Act of Settlement 1662 and subsequent legislation.¹⁸ Sir William Petty was commissioned in 1654 to make what came to be known as the Down Survey as the basis for the reallocation of land ownership.¹⁹ The results were subsequently tabulated in the Books of Survey and Distribution (otherwise Survey Books) showing among other details the names of those in possession of land before and after hostilities, the size of allotments, the quality of those lands and their location.²⁰

At least some of the discrepancies to be discussed below can be attributed to the haste with which the Down Survey was completed in County Clare. With the death of Cromwell in 1658 and the subsequent restoration to the throne of Charles II in 1660, there was urgency among those who sought to profit from the redistribution of land to have the matter finalized. Consequently, many of the details in the Survey Books for County Clare were taken from the earlier Strafford Survey conducted in the 1630s when the Gaelic system of land tenure still operated in some areas.²¹

¹³ Email to author from Brian Ó Dálaigh, 11 Oct, 2019.

¹⁴ *Registry of Deeds*, Dublin: book 151, p.416.

¹⁵ Email from Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich, 9 Sep 2019.

¹⁶ Frost, *The History and Typography of the County of Clare* (Dublin, 1893), pp.347-8.

¹⁷ Virtually all Catholics, including many of the Old English of Ulster, were considered disloyal to the Crown. Some few Protestants, including Presbyterians, also participated in the rising of 1641 (the Confederate War) and/or the subsequent war against the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell.

¹⁸ S.J.Connolly, (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, (Oxford, 2002), pp.115-116, 536.

¹⁹ Simington, *Books of Survey*, p. xxxvii.

²⁰ Images for all 27 denominations in the parish of Templemaley in Simington are available on the internet. The pages for Templemaley are 125-130; however, because of the addition of Simington’s *Introduction*, search for pages 194-199 in the facsimile online version.

²¹ Simington, *Books of Survey*, pp. xxxv-xxxvii.

Teige McNamara's denomination²² of Drumconora does not appear by that name in the Survey Books. Rather it appears as Fanroske (see [Fig. 1a](#) and [Fig.1b](#)) and consisted of 23 acres of 'arable' and 'pasture' land, that is land suitable for tillage and grazing, in the barony of Bunratty (the division into Upper and Lower came later). Two factors provide assurance that Teige McNamara's Fanroske (now Faunrusk) in the Survey Books and the Drumconora Estate in the Down Survey are one and same: the 'number of plot' is 5 in both sources (see Fig. 1b and [Fig.2](#)) and are in approximately the same location in the Down Survey map and in the much more detailed and accurate Ordnance Survey map of County Clare completed in 1842²³ (see Fig.3). However, as we shall see, there were important changes to the size and shape of Fanroske and some of the surrounding denominations to produce the townlands as they exist today (compare Fig. 2 and Fig 3), and from which the modern townland named Nutfield emerged. (see Fig.3)

The 23 acres of Fanroske held by Teige McNamara in 1641 constituted one-third of a quarter²⁴, the other two-thirds being made up by the adjacent denominations of Gortenassa (otherwise Gortnasha) and Cregavealcosha (now Cragaweelcross) (Nos. 6 and 7 in Fig. 2). The land in these two denominations was of somewhat lesser quality than Fanroske since, in addition to arable land, some parts were 'Rocky pasture' and one-seventh (77 acres) was 'waste'. In addition to the whole of Fanroske, Teige McNamara also held one-third of a quarter of Gortenassa and Cregavealcosha; the remaining one-third was divided equally between Donogh McNamara and Solla Ó Mulkenry.

It is not just by chance that two McNamaras, Teige and Donogh, were the majority landholders in the above denominations. Templemaley had been in the patrimonial territory of the McNamara clan since at least the early part of the fourteenth century.²⁵ Following the defeat of the forces of the Richard de Clare in the Battle of Dysert O'Dea in 1318, the powerful McNamara clan became rulers of 'almost the entire region of the county Clare which lies between the river Fergus and river Shannon' and remained so until the imposition of English law and customs commencing in the late 16th century.²⁶ With specific reference to the barony of Bunratty, these had been the traditional lands of MacNamara Finn.²⁷

All of the lands comprising the above denominations were confiscated and granted to others considered loyal to the English Crown. The whole of Fanroske was granted to Donogh O Callaghane (otherwise O'Callaghan). The land in Gortnasha and Cregavealcosha was divided

²² I am using the term 'denomination' to refer to a parcel of land which is smaller than a modern townland and/or combines with adjacent parcel(s) of land.

²³ Connolly, *Oxford Companion*, pp.435-6.

²⁴ Notionally, a 'quarter' of land consisted of 120 profitable acres. Its extent was determined in part by the quality of the land and its situation. An additional complication is that 'acres' were of varying size -- Irish acres, plantation acres, among others.

²⁵ Nugent, p.144.

²⁶ James Hogan, 'The Tricha Cét and related land-measures', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Section C, vol. 28 (1929), pp.148-235.

²⁷ Bernadette Cunningham, 'Continuity and change: Donnchadh O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond (d.1624), and the Anglicisation of the Thomond lordship', in Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds.), *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008), p. 67.

between Donogh O’Callaghan (51 acres) and Cormuck Ryan (60 acres). The symbol following the names of O’Callaghan (see Fig. 1b) and Ryan indicates they were granted these lands as ‘innocent Catholics’.

The other important transformations for our purposes concern the denomination of Bungarrow²⁸ and Tully, and Fanroske. Bungarrow (*Bun Gharraí*) translates as ‘the lower end the tillage field’ or, directly pertinent here, ‘the ground nearest the river’. Prior to confiscation the Survey Books show the whole of Bungarrow and Tully (81 acres of Arable and Pasture land and 12 acres of Lough) in the hands of James Ó Mullane. This land was granted to the above mentioned ‘innocent Catholic’ Cormuck Ryan, and was later held by Francis Burton.²⁹ Bungarrow and Tully comprised two-thirds of a quarter. The denomination of Derrie (as shown in the Survey Books) made up the remaining one-third of a quarter. It was confiscated from Loughlin McInerhynny (otherwise McInerney), and granted to Donogh O’Callaghan - presumably the same O’Callaghan who was granted the 24 acres of Fanroske.

The Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3) shows the changes in the boundaries and names of the above denominations: Bungarrow and Tully have been renamed Nutfield; the Drumconora estate had been excised from Fanroske (now Faunrusk) to become part of Nutfield; and the one-third of a quarter of Derrie was no longer a part of Bungarrow and Tully but had been absorbed into the combined entities of Derrie and Gortenessa to form the present-day townland of Derry. The resulting townland of Nutfield consisted of 219 acres of good quality land suitable for tillage and grazing, with the added advantage of being immediate adjacent to the River Fergus for watering stock and water transportation.

The Court of Claims in 1663 issued an instruction that Irish placenames be anglicised. The court required ‘new and proper names more suitable to the English tongue’ be used to replace the ‘barbarous and uncouth names by which most places were called, with the Irish names attached as an *alias*’.³⁰ However, as we shall see, the name change to Nutfield was neither immediately nor universally adopted.

Despite O’Callaghan being shown as an ‘innocent Catholic’ in the Survey Books for the three denominations discussed above, and for two other denominations elsewhere in Templemaley, he was denied a certificate of innocence by the Court of Claims in 1663. These undoubtedly were the two persons of that name originally from the barony of Duhallow in County Cork – one from Clonmeene, the other from Kilpadder – who were found ‘nocent’³¹ (i.e. guilty) and were ‘outlawed’.³² Hugh Weir writes that ‘Colonel Donough O’Callaghan, Chief of his clan, and member of the Supreme Council of the Kilkenny Confederation in 1641, had his Duhallow, County Cork, estates confiscated and was outlawed. He settled at Mountallon *circa*

²⁸ Shown incorrectly as Rungarrow in both the Down Survey map and the Books of Survey and Distribution Books.

²⁹ Simington, *Books of Survey*, p. xxxvii.

³⁰ Simington, *Books of Survey*, p. xvi.

³¹ While ‘nocent’ (guilty) is now archaic its opposite ‘innocent’ (not guilty) is not. Compare with hospitable/inhospitable, capable/incapable, and so on.

³² *Court of Claims: Submissions and evidence, 1663*, (ed.) Geraldine Tallon, (Dublin, 2007), Item 614, p.237.

1652, together with his sons Teige, Donough and Caher'.³³ Donough O'Callaghan the younger obtained leases of Kilgory dated 16 November, 1675.³⁴

The Survey Books show that the grant to Donogh O'Callaghan at Mountallon in the parish of Clonlea, barony of Tulla, was shared with three others – Murtoogh Dowling, Peter Bolgier and Barth Stackpole. No marks appear after these names to indicate the basis of their instrument of title. Robert Simington, the editor of the facsimile edition of the Survey Books published in 1967, remarks that this is 'an interesting conjunction of transplanter's'.³⁵ It seems O'Callaghan's certificate of innocence had been revoked by this time (or perhaps had not been given in the first instance), and one or more of the others were likely to have been loyal Protestants. In addition, they came from different counties – Bolger from either Kilkenny or Carlow, Stackpole from Limerick and O'Callaghan from Cork – which Simington considered to be another unusual feature of this combination of grantees.

After O'Callaghan lost his status as an innocent Catholic, at least some of Drumconora came into the possession of the third Viscount Clare (otherwise Lord Clare). Lord Clare was subsequently attainted³⁶ for supporting the cause of the Catholic James II, and died in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. His lands, including some or all of Drumconora and four other denominations in Templemaley, then passed into the hands of Francis Burton in his capacity as Trustee of Forfeited Estates. The description of the land in the Report of the Trustees reads: 'Cragganeclonishigh 1/3 quarter being part of the 2 quarters of Drumconora, 60 acres.'³⁷

There is indirect evidence that Drumconora was purchased from the Commissioners for Sale of Forfeited Estates by Sir Donough O'Brien, first Baronet of Dromoland.³⁸ On 23 April 1702 Sir Donough made a settlement in favour of his second son Henry O'Brien by his second wife Elizabeth Deane. This settlement follows and presumably is linked to the marriage of Henry to Susanna Stafford in 1699. The settlement included Stonehall Castle and more than 30 land denominations in counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary, including lands in the barony of Bunratty.³⁹

There is also direct evidence that Drumconora was in Henry O'Brien's possession soon thereafter. On the death of her father in 1720, Susan Stafford inherited Blatherwycke Park estate in the county of Northamptonshire, England, which the couple then made their permanent home. As a result, Henry O'Brien liquidated his assets in county Clare and on moving to England assumed the name Stafford.⁴⁰ In July 1721 he sold Stonehall Castle for £500 and mortgaged Drumconora to Francis Bernard for an amount unknown. Francis Bernard (1663-1731) of county

³³ Hugh Weir, *Historical Genealogical Architectural notes on some Houses of Clare* (Whitegate, 1986), p.199.

³⁴ Weir, *Houses of Clare*, p.159.

³⁵ Simington, *Books of Survey*, pp. xli-xlii.

³⁶ He was declared guilty of treason, in this case post-mortem, with the practical effect of his spouse and descendants losing his lands and hereditary titles.

³⁷ *15th Annual Report Irish Record Commission*, Commissioners of Public Records in Ireland (1825), pp.353-354.

³⁸ *Inchiquin Papers*, Brian Kirby, ed., (Dublin, 2009), Typescript, National Library of Ireland, p.14.

³⁹ *Inchiquin Manuscripts*, John Ainsworth, ed., (Dublin, 1961), Item 1263, pp.407-408

⁴⁰ *Inchiquin Papers*, Kirby, p.324.

Cork was an MP in the Irish House of Commons and at one point Solicitor-General of Ireland.⁴¹ Following Bernard's death, Drumconora was purchased by James Crowe in 1744 at public auction by a decree of the Court of Chancery in Dublin.⁴² Relatives of Francis Bernard by marriage appear later in the story of Nutfield. Bernard was related by marriage to Hon. Grace Freke, William Putland and his wife Ann Evans who caused Robert and George Crowe to be confined in the Four Courts Marshalsea in 1787 and 1788 for non-payment of debt. Nutfield was one of the lands mortgaged for the loan.⁴³

From the mid-18th century to 1828 Nutfield was held by branches of the Crowe family. It then came into the possession of Michael O'Loughlen (1789-1842), a member of one of County Clare's most distinguished clans. He was appointed a judge to the Irish Bench in 1836, the first Catholic to achieve such a senior position since 1688. In 1838 Michael O'Loughlen was created a baronet, designated *of Drumconora*.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Griffiths Valuation in 1855 shows Nutfield was held 'in fee' by Sir Michael's son Sir Colman (1819-1877).

Sir Bryan O'Loughlen emigrated to Australia in January 1862 where he became at various times attorney-general, treasurer and premier of the colony (now state) of Victoria.⁴⁶ On the death of his grandson Sir Colman Michael O'Loughlen (1916-2014), his son Michael O'Loughlen QC, a Melbourne barrister, succeeded as the 7th Baronet of Drumconora.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that the O'Loughlen family has retained the name Drumconora rather than using the anglicised Nutfield. The property was subsequently acquired by the Lands Commission and divided. Drumconora House was demolished in the early 1930s and the stone used to make an access road to the new houses and farms.⁴⁸

It is disappointing that more of the gaps and uncertainties in the history of Nutfield could not be fully resolved. However, they reflect some of the turmoil in Ireland in the second half of the seventeenth century, if only in one small part of County Clare, and bring the history of Nutfield up to the present day.

⁴¹ Edith M. Johnstone-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament, 1692-1800* (Belfast, 2002), vol. III, p. 173.

⁴² Registry of Deeds, p.416.

⁴³ See Philip Crowe, 'The Crowe Gentry of County Clare: A Forgotten Branch', *The Other Clare*, vol. 41 (2017), p.102, available online at www.crowehistory.com.

⁴⁴ The O'Loughlen Baronets, 15 July 2019 -- lordbelmontinnorthernireland.blogspot.com.

⁴⁵ A statue of Sir Michael O'Loughlen, 1st Baronet, can be seen in the Ennis Courthouse.

⁴⁶ Jessie Burke (ed.), *Who's Who in Australia* (Melbourne, 2018), p.1277.

⁴⁷ *The Peerage: A genealogical survey of Britain as well as the Royal families of Europe*, p.54590.

<http://thepeerage.com/p54590.htm>. Michael O'Loughlen has declined to sign the Roll of the Baronetage, and thus the title lies dormant. Email from Michael O'Loughlen, QC, 29 September 2019.

⁴⁸ Emails to author from Ann McNamara, 2 October 2018 and 11 January 2019.

Fig. 1a. Two full pages from Books of Survey and Distribution, County Clare, 1636-1703.

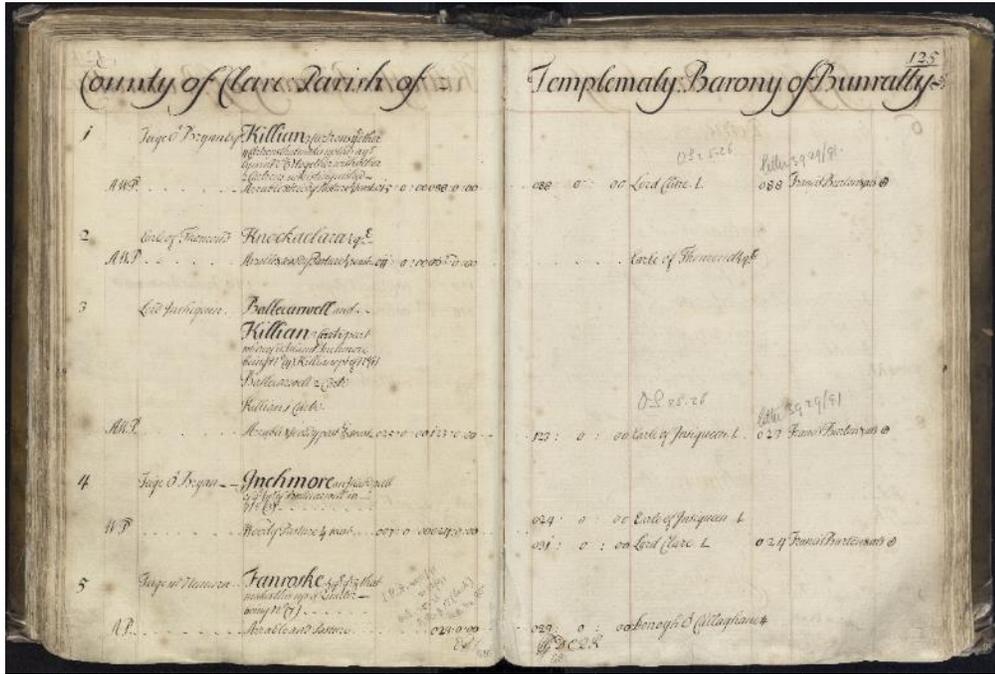
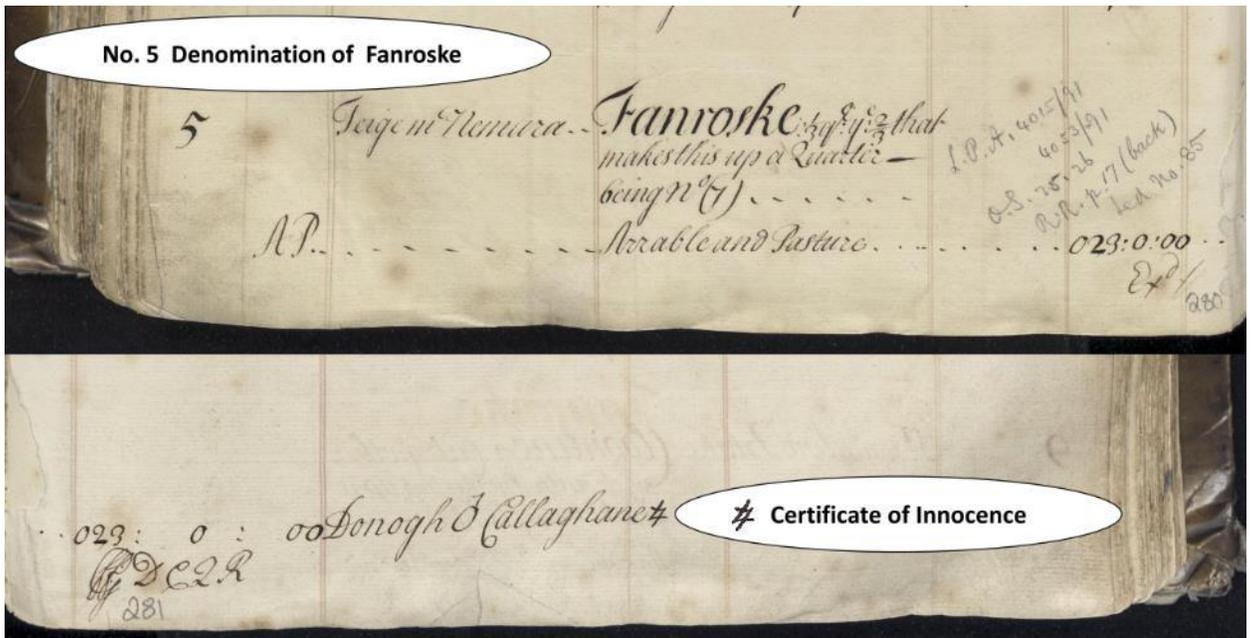


Fig. 1b. Extract showing denomination No.5, Fanroske



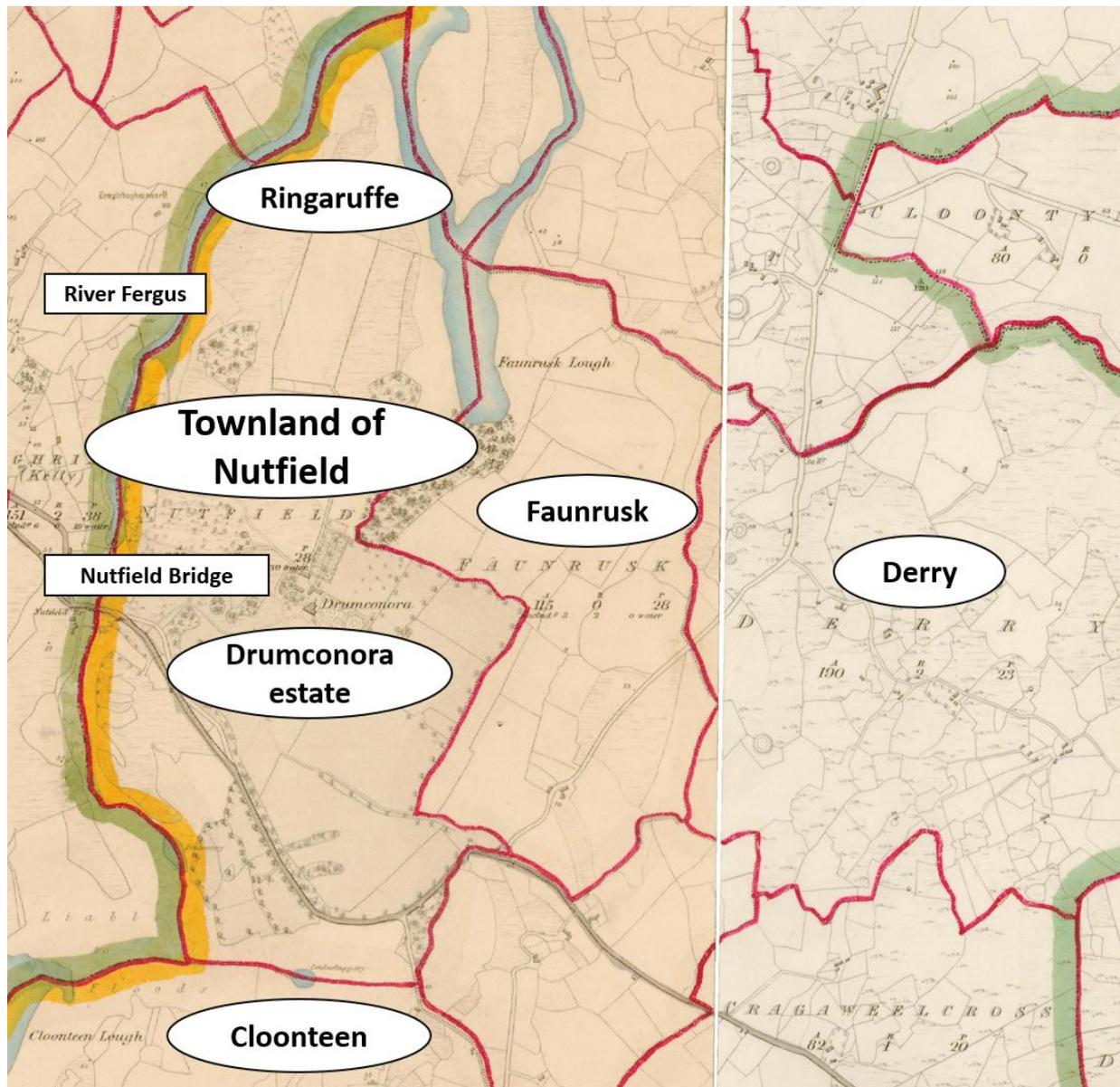
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Fig. 2. Down Survey map, c.1658, part of parish of Templemaley, Barony of Bunratty, County of Clare.



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Fig. 3. Townland of Nutfield, parish of Templemaley, Ordnance Survey 6" map 1842.



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