

# Newmarket and Weavers' Square

## An Margadh Nua agus Cearnóg na bhFíodóirí

### A pattern of past and present

Historically, Newmarket and Weavers' Square formed an area of patchwork development. Urban row dwellings, interspersed with open industrial spaces, housed a mix of native inhabitants and immigrant newcomers. Much of the surrounding street plan, which dates from the late seventeenth century, was once central to Dublin's clothworking, leather tanning and brewing/malting industries. This urban landscape still holds echoes of the enterprising spirit of its early building and industrial ventures.

### Medieval landscape

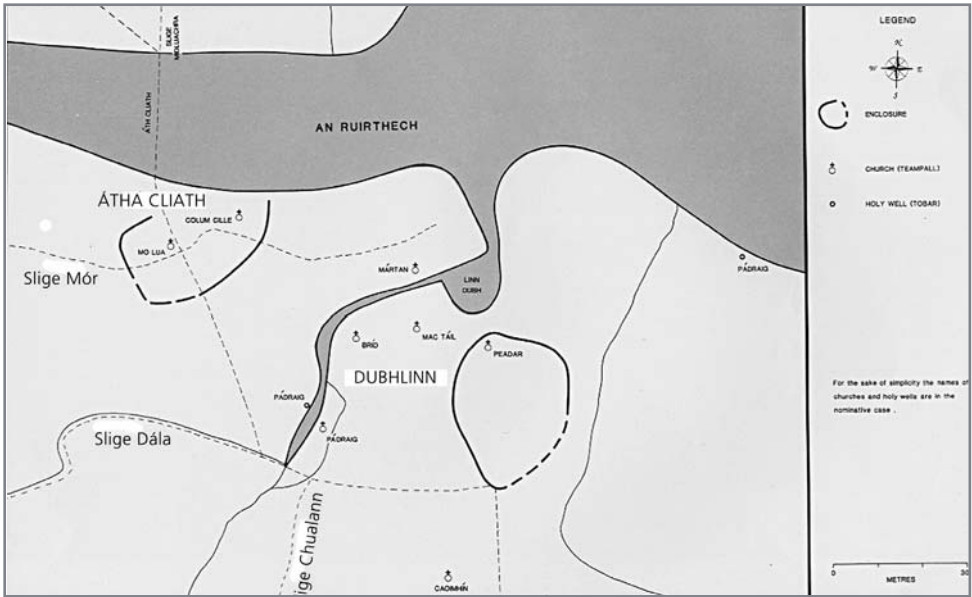
When medieval 'Dubline' expanded beyond its walls, suburban, monastic

and industrial development grew along the major thoroughfares. Three gateways were built outside the city walls, along the Coombe, to aid defence and the regulation of traffic and commerce. An area of high ground by the Coombe (derived from *com* or 'valley') extended from what is now Ardee Street to New Row, south to Mill Street and was bordered by the Commons Water, the Abbey Stream and the River Poddle. This area eventually became the site of Weavers' Square, Newmarket and St Luke's Church.

Prior to this development, the site served as farmland, part of a hinterland which helped to feed Dublin's inhabitants. A medieval traveller arriving to Dublin



Close up of John Speed's map of Dublin, 1610, showing the extra-mural gate and development along the Coombe in the suburb known as the Liberties (circled)



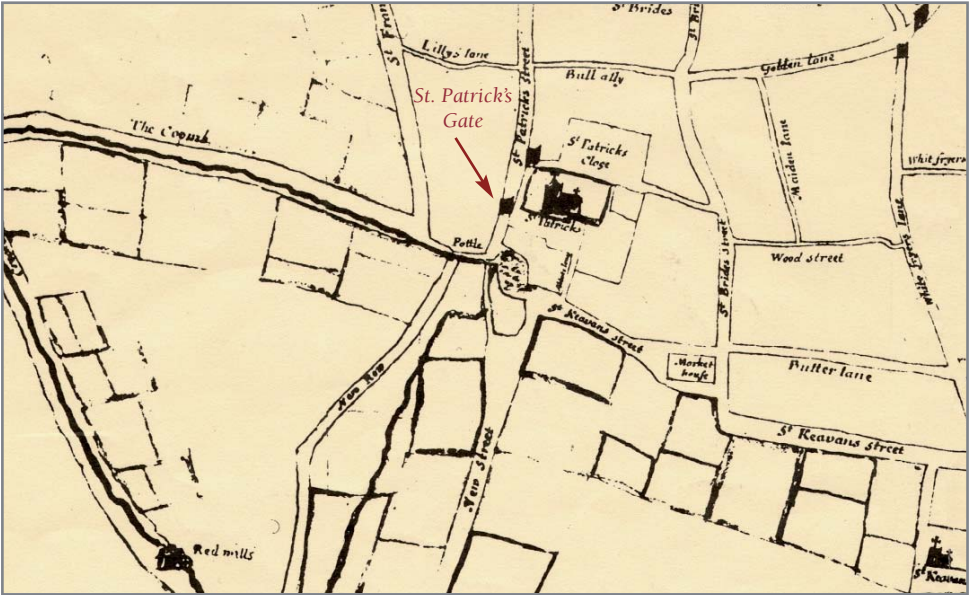
*Dr Howard Clarke's 'Reconstructed Map of Gaelic Dublin, 6th-9th Century' (Reproduced courtesy of Dr Clarke and the National Library of Ireland)*

from the direction of Crumlin to the southwest would have proceeded along the ancient Slí Dhála ('highway of the assemblies', now Cork Street). Following the route flanked by agricultural fields and abbey millstreams, he would have proceeded in the direction of Waxamay's Gate (near the west end of the Coombe at Ardee Street) along the Upper Coombe and across the Commons Water (near Ash Street). He would have walked through Coombe Gate (at what is now the junction with Hanover Street) and then passed St Francis' Gate on his left where Francis Street now joins Dean Street. From there he would have turned left and continued up St Patrick's Street into the city, passing first through St Patrick's Gate and then through the city wall at St Nicholas' Gate.

Except for old boundaries and rights of way, none of the medieval landscape of Newmarket and Weavers' Square sur-

vives above ground. This may be due, in part, to the intermittent ravages of warfare. An inventory of 1643-1644 lists many houses on the Coombe (21), Pimlico (23) and elsewhere as having been abandoned due to proximity to the outer wartime fortifications of Dublin. These fortifications, well outside the medieval city walls, extended from beyond New Street via Roper's Rest and Crooked Staff (Ardee Street) to Pimlico and James Street. The disappearance of much of the medieval landscape owes more, however, to the extraordinary development of the area from the late seventeenth century. Apart from the evidence of medieval water engineering found at a variety of locations, excavations in Newmarket and nearby indicate that the area remained predominantly rural until the late 1600s.

Archaeologists have found evidence of medieval leather tanning off Fumbally



Close up of Bernard de Gomme's map, 1673, showing St Patrick's Cathedral (centre). The area which later became Newmarket is shown as fields, bounded to the north by the Coombe (shown as a stream), to the west by Crooked Staff (later Ardee Street) and New Row to the east

Lane and New Street where wood-lined soaking pits and elaborate ditch systems have been unearthed. 'Blackpitts' is likely to refer to this smelly, hide-processing activity and not to mass graves of Black Plague victims as has sometimes been suggested. At the corner of Ardee Street and the Coombe Bypass, the medieval millpond on the Commons Water, mostly silted up by the seventeenth century, was unearthed.

### The Abbey and the Earl

The patchwork built environment at Newmarket and Weavers' Square arose as a consequence of the peculiar administrative history of the Liberty of Donore. Like the Liberty of Thomas Court north of the Coombe, Donore appears to have originated as a district held by the Abbey of St Thomas from the twelfth century. Following Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century,

these lands were acquired by William Brabazon, ancestor of the Earls of Meath, and became known as the 'Meath Liberties'. This administrative history meant that the Abbey, and later the Brabazons, enjoyed unusual access and rights to water. They defended these rights vigorously until the abolition of the Brabazons' manor court in 1859.

### Medieval water management

The canons of St Thomas were responsible for extensive engineering works which routed water through abbey lands in order to supply their mills. From as early as 1185, these works may have diverted water from the River Dodder to Kimmage, where it joined the River Poddle. At Kimmage, a stone tongue, known locally as the 'stone boat', and built under the direction of the Abbey, divided the water by a ratio of 2:1.



*Charter of the Liberties, 1192*

An artificial channel, the City Watercourse, took one-third of the water north-west toward Dolphin's Barn. Close to what is now Basin Lane, the channel continued east along the south side of James Street, through Thomas Street and on into the city. This circuitous route may have been necessary in order to skirt the lands of the Abbey and to provide sufficient fall for the water to reach the elevation of the city conduit in High Street.

The remaining two-thirds of the Dodder/Poddle water, flowing north from Tonguefield, followed the original course of the Poddle as far as Harold's Cross. Nearby, the first of St Thomas' three mills, the Woodmylle (rented from the Prior of the Holy Trinity despite its location on abbey lands) served the southern abbey precincts. From this point, what became known as the Abbey Stream (a term not used in Meath Liberties' leases) was channelled northwest to serve the western precincts of St Thomas. Its route

deviated from the Poddle's original course, flowing towards the reputed site of Donore Castle, along what is now Donore Avenue. This horseshoe-shaped stream continued north-east across Dolphin's Barn Lane, through 'the pipes and the ridges' grounds nearby to the City Watercourse (adjacent to what later became Marrowbone Lane). Flowing along the walls of the Abbey itself, the Abbey Stream powered the Thomas Court Mill. From there it turned south once more along what is now Tripoli, Pimlico and Ardee Street, across Newmarket, and on to feed the millpond of the Double Mills at what became Warrenmount on Mill Street. Near Blackpitts, it rejoined the original, natural watercourse of the Poddle, crossed behind what is now New Row to a wide,



*Millstones found near the medieval millpond on Cork St (F. Myles)*



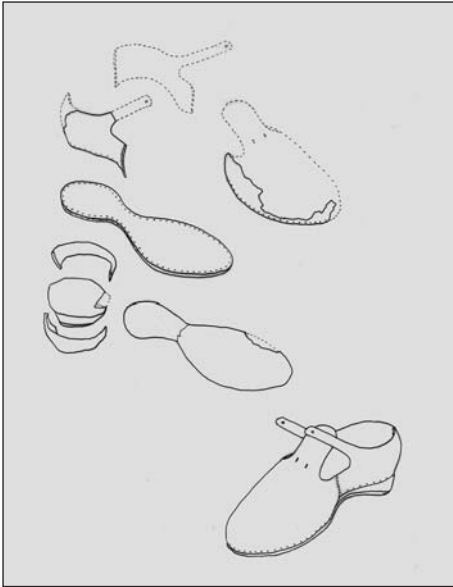
Thirteenth to eighteenth-century tanning pits on New St South (A. Giacometti)

fordable spot – Cross Poddle – at the end of Patrick Street.

Less is understood about the Commons Water, which rose in Drimnagh and supplied a millpond alongside the Slí Dhála. The presence of this pond in boggy ground may help explain the Cork Street/Ardee Street/Upper Coombe dog-leg along that ancient route. Originally a boundary stream, the extent of engineering of the Commons Water remains uncertain. It is known, however, that between the millpond and Ardee Street it crossed *beneath* the Abbey Stream, continued along the north side of the Coombe to what is now Ash Street, and crossed the thoroughfare to continue along the south edge of the Lower Coombe. It merged with the Abbey Stream at Cross Poddle. Another engi-

neered watercourse, the Tenters Water, diverted part of the Abbey Stream eastwards (along what is now Brown Street South and Oscar Square) to rejoin it again just upstream from the Double Mills millpond.

Most of these watercourses – and others for which no written records remain – survive beneath our streets. Some are silted-up, u-shaped channels. In places, earth and stone dykes have been uncovered alongside the ancient channels, frequently with nearby, later culverts which have taken over the same function. The millstream near Warrenmount is one well-known example of a watercourse that remained open into the twentieth century. An overall picture of the locations, origins and uses of these watercourses may be achieved by combining



the results of a large number of (mostly small-scale) archaeological digs in the neighbourhood, although our understanding of this aspect of Dublin's history is far from complete.

To some extent the watercourse pattern is preserved above ground with the layout of modern streets. Although Newmarket and Weavers' Square are measured, planned layouts of the late seventeenth century (see below), nearby streets such as Mill Street, Marrowbone Lane and Pimlico/Ardee Street seem to have originated as rights-of-way along



(Above) Seventeenth-century shoe from a tanning pit on New St South (A. Giacometti)  
 (Below) Brooking's 1728 Map of Dublin showing section with Newmarket and Weavers' Square (north is down). Also shown are the Coombe, Pimlico and Crooked Staff (now Ardee Street)



*Eighteenth-century malthouse on Ardee St (F. Myles)*

the engineered waterworks and plough headlands of the Abbey's old precincts. The extraordinary water rights enjoyed by both the Abbey of St Thomas and the Brabazons were perhaps the single most important factor in the growth of industry in the Newmarket and Weavers'

Square area. The trades which gained footholds required access to water, or were closely related to those which did. These included milling, malting, brewing, distilling, tanning, and later textile production and cloth dyeing.

# Newmarket

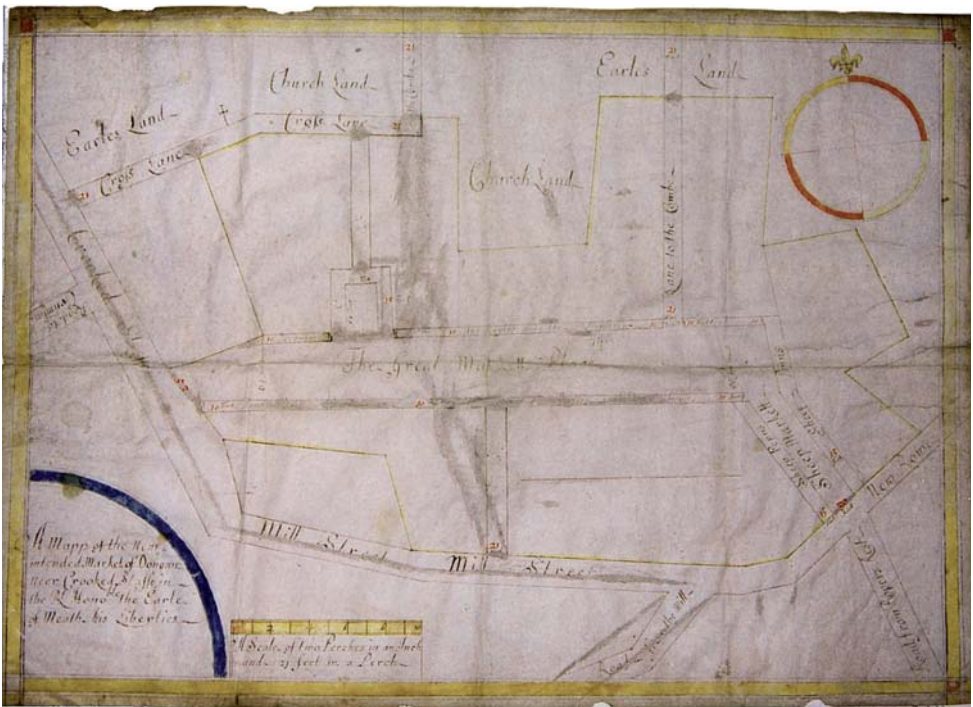
## An Margadh Nua

### The seventeenth-century building boom

In Restoration Dublin (c.1660–1685) improvement-minded landlords and investors began to launch new development ventures across the city. The population of the capital expanded and continued to grow into the eighteenth century with many immigrants settling in the Meath Liberties. Most of the streets and property plots around Newmarket and Weavers' Square were conceived and laid out in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Surviving street names reflect this: Earl Street, Meath Street, Brabazon Row and Chamber Street are all names referring to the Brabazon family. The

Meath Liberties appealed to the new breed of entrepreneur for several reasons: for the availability of undeveloped land and agricultural raw materials; for the proximity to the city without Corporation regulations; and for the plentiful supply of water.

In 1674, a royal patent was obtained for a twice-weekly agricultural market, and in 1675, William, 3rd Earl of Meath, sought its implementation. A map of the 'New intended Market of Donour' illustrates the planned 21-foot wide alleys and lanes, 31-foot wide main streets and a marketplace modelled on Smithfield across the Liffey. A market house with a



Map of the 'New intended Market of Donour', 1670s (P. Walsh, courtesy of the Rt Hon. Anthony, late 14th Earl of Meath and the Meath family).





*In situ remains of a barrel used as a c. 1700 water cistern on John Meares' premises (W.O. Frazer)*

15-foot wide passage surrounding it was planned for the south end of Brabazon Row. 'Sheep Penns' were to line both sides of Ward's Hill. After 1676, it became possible to grant longer-term leaseholds which were more attractive to 'middlemen' investors. The first development plots in Newmarket date from within a decade or so after this time – yet take-up was slow.

Early leases usually stipulated that plots should be built on within seven years, yet despite this clause archaeology indicates that the pace of development varied. Findings also indicate that most artisans both lived and plied their trade in

the same building, or on the same property. Many occupations requiring outdoor space were noisome trades dealing in animal by-products related to the new market. Tanyards, knackeries and renderers' yards stood cheek by jowl with smaller-scale skimmers, glovers, glue-makers as well as cloth workers and brewers/malters. Along with the yards, large tenter fields, in which cloth or skins were stretched to dry and cure on outdoor wooden frames (hence the expression 'on tenterhooks'), provided large open spaces within the new urban landscape. Such tenter fields were present south of Chamber Street and Weavers' Square (near modern-day



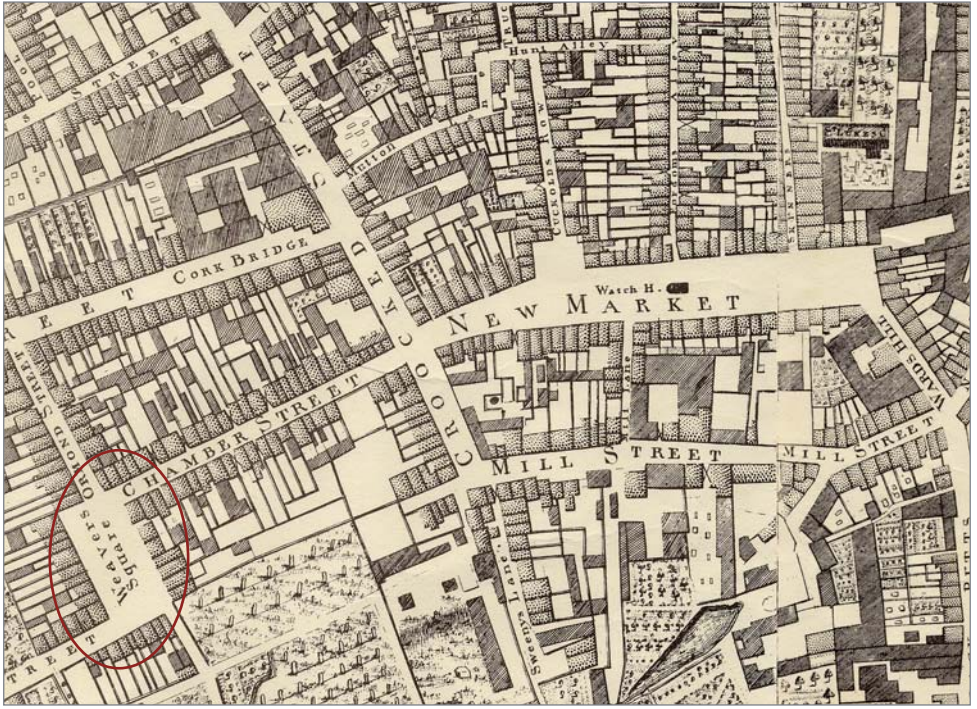
*Newmarket St: excavation of the stone-lined cistern (front) behind carpenter Peter Wainwright's c. 1700 Dutch Billy (off to right), with dyer John Meares' adjacent c. 1700 Dutch Billy and back yard (back) and the cistern in Faithful Tate's Newmarket garden (c. 1684; back left) (W.O. Frazer)*

Oscar Square and Thomas Street) and off Skinner's Alley (Newmarket Street, beneath where St Luke's is now). 'The bleaching field' (along the present south end of Clarence Mangan Road) was another large open space used for the processing of textiles.

The Newmarket development (with others in the Meath Liberties) was planned and project-managed by interested middlemen. These included tanners, George and James Edkins; clothiers, Matthew Kane and his sons; brewer, Arthur Emerson; his son-in-law Bernard Browne who was a glover and Oliver Cheney, an agent of the Earl. Water from the Abbey Stream supplied cisterns in the yards of individual properties via a sophisticated

network of 'Bored Pipes' of 'oak and dale' [deal]. The amount of water (cistern size, pipe gauge) was based on the perceived needs of each household/business, and the twice-yearly rates, payable to the Earl, were assessed accordingly. The connection between water supplied and the needs of artisans – as assessed by middlemen developers – demonstrates (and archaeology has confirmed) that frequently plots were subdivided, houses were built and water was provided according to the specifications of intended inhabitants. In certain instances, the inhabitants were themselves middlemen, but there were also craftspeople further down the social ladder who seldom show up in written records.

# Weavers' Square Cearnóg na bhFíodóirí

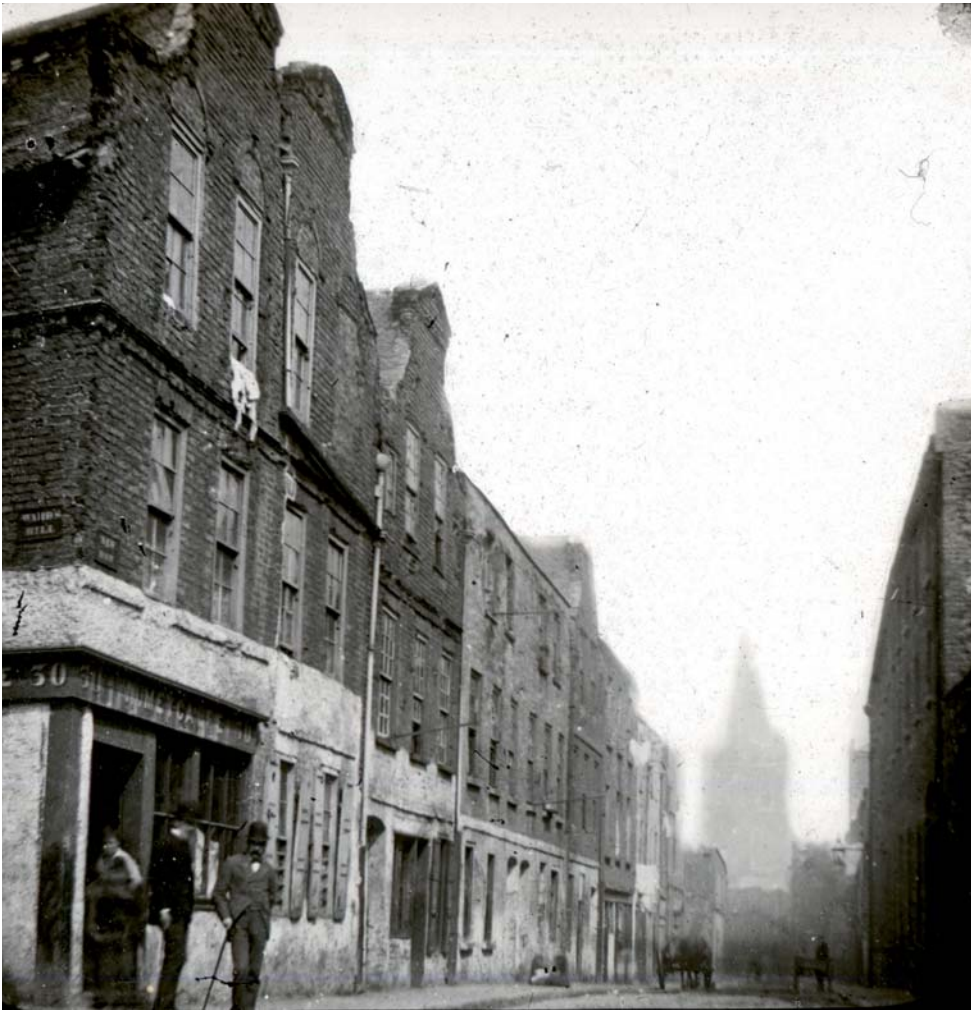


*John Rocque's map, 1756, showing Newmarket and Weavers' Square (circled)*

Weavers' Square and Chamber Street took off as ventures in the 1690s when, as the former place name suggests, they became central to the clothworking industry. The organisation of early textile production ran along similar lines to the operation of the modern global clothing industry in the Third World. The master artisans, who made most of the profit, farmed out piecemeal work (initially wool and later silk) to journeyman weavers, who laboured with the aid of wives, children and apprentices in their own homes. With the onset of industrialisation in the eighteenth century, large mills employing many textile workers

sprang up around, and in place of, earlier domestic houses. The Weavers' Hall, in existence by 1682 and rebuilt on the north side of the Coombe in 1745 (complete with a gilded statue of George II over its door), is testament to the importance of the cloth trade in the area during this period.

British legislation relating to trade was invariably protectionist. The growth in Irish woollen goods followed prohibitive duties on the export of live sheep, but this was damaged by the Woollen Act of 1699. The Act forbade the export of Irish woollens overseas and imposed duties



*Dutch Billys with the tower of St Patrick's Cathedral in the background, New Row, 1880s (RSAI)*

on exports to England. Irish manufacture concentrated on 'frieze', a lower quality woollen cloth not widely produced elsewhere. Even during boom periods, resources were scant for many cloth workers and their families. Times of recession, such as the slump of 1720 to 1721 in which tariffs against home-spuns, native broadcloths and cheap, subsidised imports silenced thousands of looms, were often connected with outbreaks of disease and famine. (That of the 1720s prompted Jonathan Swift's satire *A Modest Proposal*.) During lean

years, householders kept a few animals in the yard to provide wool and dairy both for their own use and for sale in nearby Newmarket. Archaeology suggests that cloth workers on Newmarket Street raised sheep and processed wool as a sideline to their main employment.

#### **Brick row houses and Dutch Billys**

The architecture of weavers' homes on Chamber Street and Weavers' Square reflected their working arrangements. In Chamber Street, narrow, two- and three-storey, plain gable-fronted, brick row

houses with roomy well-lit garrets were occupied by journeyman weavers, who required indoor space to work their looms, and by other artisans. Buildings on Weavers' Square tended to be more spacious, as were other occasional townhouses in the neighbourhood which were built for the socially aspirant master artisans, merchants and agents of the Earl. The area has come to be associated with Huguenot weavers, but others also worked in weaving and in related trades such as spinning, bleaching/fulling, dyeing.

Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Dutch Billys (named after William III) were also characteristic of the area. This Anglo-Dutch architecture is commonly attributed to Dutch and Flemish immigrants fleeing the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), yet the building of these houses in Dublin predates 1685. This suggests some earlier seventeenth-century architectural influence from immigrants from

the Low Countries. A distinctive feature of the Dutch Billy was the roof-ridge perpendicular to the street. Sometimes, a cross-ridge was introduced to give four gables and extra space in the garrets. In the most characteristic houses, the front gables of steep roofs were hidden by curved quadrants sweeping up to flat curved or triangular pediments with heavily moulded string-courses on the front elevation delineating storeys. The houses were built of brick, often on stone foundations, and stood in continuous rows. Corner fireplaces frequently allowed two houses to share a single, bulky chimney stack. Although Dutch Billys on Newmarket and Weavers' Square were less ostentatious than their counterparts in more prosperous neighbourhoods, they still provide insight into the lives of their inhabitants. These humble structures often had only a ground floor, first floor and garret, with no basement. References to cellars in Meath Liberties leases are rare. Some excavated Dutch Billys on Skinner's Alley



*Garret tenement room with rafters and corner fireplace visible, Newmarket, 1913 (RSAI 'Darkest Dublin')*



*Dutch Billys on Sweeney's Lane, c. 1900 (RSAI)*

(Newmarket Street) show evidence of crawlspace 'underfloor' cellars which seem to have served as cool storage for dairy products destined for market. A typical house had a 'two up, two down' floor plan in which each room had a corner fireplace on the chimney stack, and a large garret.

The subdivision of buildings into tenements commenced in the late seventeenth century and was widespread by the end of the eighteenth century. A four-room-plus-garret Dutch Billy might have been split into as many as five or six rooms, each let separately and many

with their own exit to a street, yard or alley.

#### **'that thieves' kitchen'**

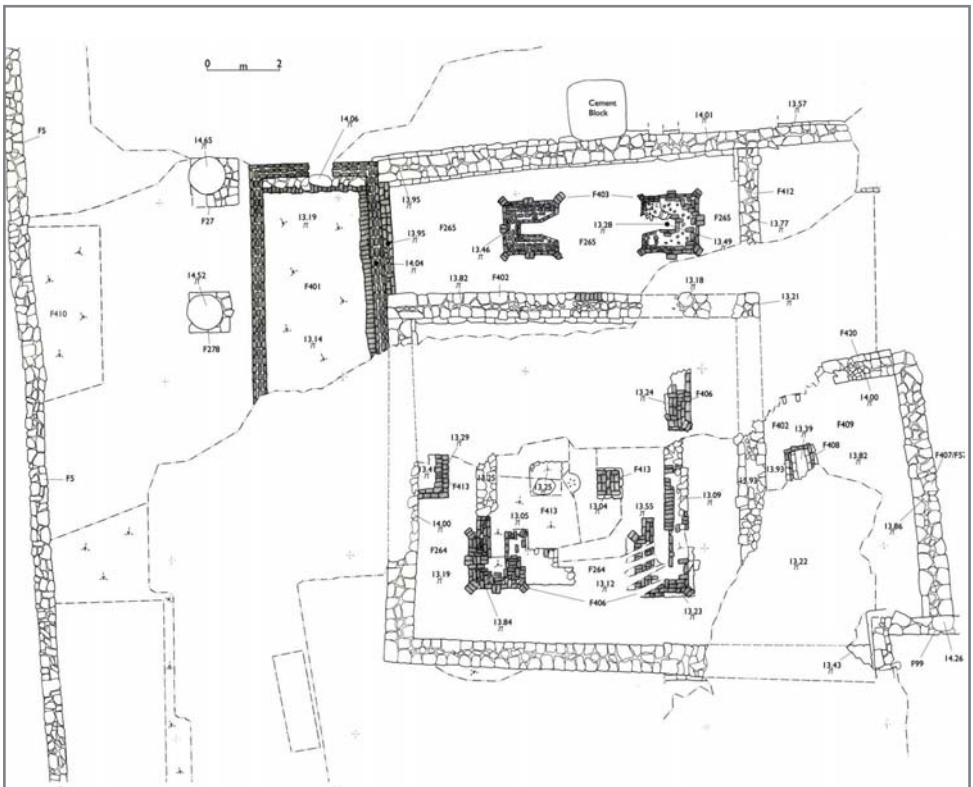
Beginning with the late seventeenth-century development of Newmarket, many of the leases were extended from a 41-year maximum to 61 years, as investors sought longer contracts. 'Lives renewable', wherein the heirs of middlemen tenants were able to renew leases, became one of the predominant means of conveyance in the Meath Liberties. However, Catholic tenants were excluded from this and, after the Forfeiture legislation of 1703, were not permitted

leaseholds of more than 31 years. Only one Catholic middleman, Thomas Ashton – a seedsman married to a Protestant – was granted a lease of ‘lives renewable’ by the Earl in 1688. The lease was for a property on the south-west side of Newmarket that fronted onto Crooked Staff (Ardee Street) and Mill Street. Ashton sublet part of the property to Henry Poulter, son of a brewer of New Row who, in turn, had subtenants of his own.

From as early as 1710, more prosperous residents had begun to move to rural locations in County Dublin and beyond, although many maintained business premises and other property in the Meath Liberties. As the eighteenth century progressed, fewer people worked

their trades in their own homes or yards. All major businesses in the area – textiles, tanning and brewing/malting – became more industrialised, and control over them was concentrated in fewer, more powerful hands.

The subdivision of properties into short-term tenancies became extensive. Buildings, originally constructed to house families, were split into tenements in which individual rooms were rented out by the week. Residents continued to be employed in the large-scale industries centred in the area, and ‘downturns’ in such industries, with their wage-reductions and mass layoffs, precipitated starvation and outbreaks of contagious disease. Rents for tenement rooms in the Meath Liberties were particularly low,



*Eighteenth-century porter house brewery and malt house on Ardee St (F. Myles)*

and this attracted such large numbers of poor inhabitants that the area became known as 'that thieves' kitchen' in some contemporary leases. The 1798 census tallied 7,241 residents of the parish of St Luke, of which 6,839 (94.4%) were 'lower class'. (More than half of these were female: 3,990 or 55.1%.) In James Whitelaw's 1805 survey which was based on the 1798 census, 454 houses in St Luke's were inhabited, with 41 'waste' (abandoned or derelict), which yielded a crowded average of 15-16 people per 'house'. Archaeological findings show the effects of subdivision and neglect on older Dutch Billys and similar buildings. Evidence has been uncovered for the failure of water pipes, the blocking of door-

ways between rooms and the addition of rickety external stairwells. By the end of the eighteenth century, widespread perpetual 'lives renewable' leases, fixed rents, multiple layers of subtenants and inactive, profiteering landlords, had all contributed to the decline of the area.

A consequence of the slum divisions which became characteristic of the Newmarket and Weavers' Square area is that many of the original structures in the neighbourhood survived, subdivided and altered, into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even today, a number of structures, with significantly altered street facades, still contain building fabric from the late 1600s to early



*Gable buildings on Chamber St, 1913 (RSAI 'Darkest Dublin')*





*Cottages on Blackpitts, 1913 (RSAI 'Darkest Dublin')*

1700s. The absence of basements in many buildings means that, in many cases, the archaeology of the site still lies buried.

### **Immigration**

The number of Dubliners expanded hugely over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, despite periods of war and disease. The population of the city grew from an estimated 5,000 to 10,000+ (1% of the total population of Ireland) in 1600, to 40,000 to 45,000 (9%) by 1664-1669. By the 1700s, Dublin was second only to London in size, with a population of 60,000 to 75,000. By 1800, 180,000 people resided in the city. Scholars have documented the huge influx of industrial workers into suburbs like Crumlin and

Kilmainham where the number of adult residents grew by 60% to 80% in the decade after 1650. The Newmarket and Weavers' Square area also experienced an extraordinary influx of skilled artisans before and after 1700.

An 'Act to Encourage Protestant Strangers to Settle in Ireland' was passed in 1662, but as early as 1630 there are records of continental Huguenots settling in Ireland. As local folklore suggests, Huguenots settled in the Newmarket and Weavers' Square area from the late seventeenth century, where they contributed substantially to the development of the textile industry. Significant Dutch immigration into the area was already underway by the middle of the 1600s, due, in part, to intensive



*The Weavers' Hall, demolished in 1956*

Dutch involvement in shipping and cloth manufacture. Many of the continental immigrants, fleeing religious persecution, arrived via England, notably Bristol and London's East End. They were accompanied by an influx of English settlers, including many religious nonconformists. By the 1690s, many of these settlers were also cloth workers who hailed from England's West Country.

The area seems to have been mostly Protestant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the extent that it had its own 'animal gang' of bigoted street thugs – many of them apprentice weavers – called the 'Liberty Boys'. However, a growing Catholic minority was also resident by the mid-eighteenth century. In 1718, Anthony Dopping

summarised the denominational affiliation of residents in the parish of St Luke's (and probably underestimated both Catholics and dissenting Protestants) as follows: 'Conformists 2,438 [including conformist Huguenots]; Dissenters 823; Papists 1,106'. Institutional discrimination against Irish Catholics in, for example, the terms of leases and membership of artisan guilds has made them less visible in other surviving historical documents. Nevertheless, the large number of 'Popish' schools recorded in 1731 indicates the size of the Catholic part of the population in the Meath Liberties. Four such schools were identified in the parish of St Catherine's (Thomas Court): in Earl Street, Pimlico, Poole Street and Braithwaite Street. In the parish of St Luke's (Donore), six schools were listed (five run by women): two were in New Row and one each in Mill Street, the Coombe, Fordham's Alley (now Coombe Court) and Truck Street (now Brabazon Street). No mass houses were recorded in the Meath Liberties at the time, perhaps because of the proximity of 'St Francis' Chappel' in Francis Street.

The high proportion of nonconformist Protestants in the area, particularly among the weavers and tanners, meant that a number of meeting houses for different groups of dissenters were also scattered throughout the neighbourhood. One off Newmarket Street (now demolished, but with foundations beneath the present grounds of St Luke's) was the site of the 'battle of Skinners Alley', a fracas between independent Baptists, Moravians and Methodists which resulted in a slanderous pamphlet

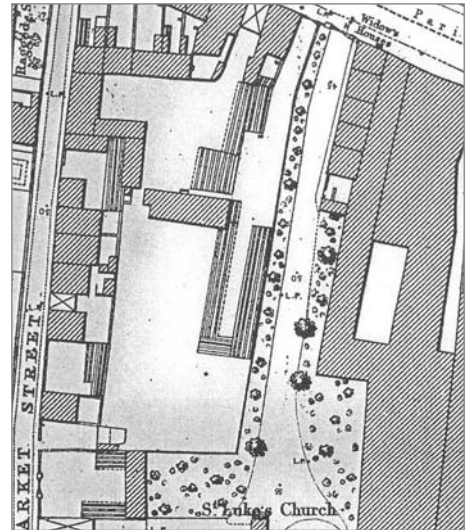


1818 watercolour painting depicting St Luke's Church with graveyard in front (National Gallery of Ireland)

war in 1747. (Some of the pamphlets still survive.) John Wesley preached in this meeting house between 1748 and 1752.

### The church of St Luke the Evangelist

In response to overcrowding associated with an influx of new parishioners, the parish of St Nicholas Without ('without' meaning outside the city walls) was divided in 1707 and the new parish of St Luke was formed. Prior to this, services had been held in the north transept of St Patrick's Cathedral. The church of St Luke was built in 1715-1716 in a plain, rectangular form with a gallery to a plan typical of many new Anglican churches of the time. Originally, the west end of the church had a double bellcote. For a time after 1789, parishioners of St Nicholas Without removed services to St Luke's where a new gallery was built to accommodate them. Shortly afterwards,



Detail from the 1886/7 OS map showing the former parochial school of St Luke's Church which became the Widows Alms House

they returned to the Lady Chapel in St Patrick's until 1861 when they amalgamated finally with the parish of St Luke. Within the church grounds, adjacent to the Coombe entrance, a school for poor



*Pre-1975 view from the gates of St Luke's with the Widows Alms House on the left (Representative Church Body Library)*



*The Widows Alms House during the development of the surrounding site*

boys was established in 1810. In 1862, the building was converted into the Widows Alms House. (The advertisement for the annual St Luke's charity sermon in 1825 called it 'the poorest parish in Dublin'.) A new access to St Luke's from Newmarket was open in 1884, to replace the lane from Skinner's Alley, at that time reported to be 'choked with stagnant and putrefactive matter'. Today, the remaining precinct of St Luke's survives as an oasis of green space in the neighbourhood. The protected church and grounds are undergoing renovation.

### **Brewing, tanning and other early industry**

Brewing and tanning have a long history in the Meath Liberties, dating back to medieval times. Before the late seventeenth-century development of the Newmarket and Weavers' Square area, these industrial activities clustered around the old watercourses of the Abbey of St Thomas in, for example, the Coombe and near Blackpitts, where tanning pits date from as early as the 1300s. Brewers, such as Hugh Leeson (twice Mayor of Dublin, in 1651-1652 and 1655-1656) and Richard Gustard, had businesses in the Coombe from the mid-1600s. But with the extensive underground wooden water pipe systems built from the 1680s onwards, the number of such businesses grew. Another brewer, Captain John Chamberlain (he sublet the 'Gateshead' maltings and brewery at the east end of Newmarket) and James Edkins (a tanner and middleman developer of Newmarket and Mill Street), were involved in the construction of these underground pipe systems. Tanyards, breweries, malthouses, and related arti-



*c. 1700 pipe-fed cistern on Newmarket St (W.O. Frazer)*

sans such as skimmers, cobblers, glovers, carpenters and coopers, set up throughout the neighbourhood, wherever water could be piped. Even though prior to the mid-eighteenth century hops were rare, and light, pale ale was the usual tippie, hops have been found in archaeological deposits from c.1700 at the east end of Newmarket, adjacent to the Gateshead maltings. Part of another 1720s brewery, which was fed by a wooden water pipe, has been excavated on Ardee Street. In the 1760s to 1770s, a Mr Farrell operated a brewery at Blackpitts where the first Dublin porter may have been brewed. John Purser, an English brewer employed by Farrell, left to work for Arthur Guinness in the 1780s.

Seventeenth-century artisan activities were predominantly small-scale, household enterprises – the equivalent of



*Onion bottle from John Meares' dyeing vat on Newmarket St (J. Sunderland)*



*Aerial view of Newmarket area in the late-twentieth century*

today's micro-breweries – and our knowledge of them derives principally from archaeology. Many went out of business in the late eighteenth century when increased taxes made competition with bigger operations impossible. Buildings from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century breweries, maltings and, to a lesser extent, tanneries, survive today, although they are rapidly disappearing. Examples can be found in Ardee Street, Newmarket and Fumbally Lane.

#### **Hidden history: archaeology and John Meares of Skinner's Alley**

Archaeological findings of the Newmarket and Weavers' Square built environment allows us glimpses of the otherwise hidden history of 'regular' Dubliners. Excavations in advance of modern development also provide information about these individuals – even

those too humble for reference in written records. One example involves a property on Newmarket Street (Skinner's Alley) near the corner of that street with the new market. From an archaeological excavation we learned that the property was an early garret-over-two-storey house – probably a Dutch Billy. The property, including lands on part of the tenters field there, formed a section of a larger plot leased by the Earl to middleman developer Richard Gustard in 1678. From 1695, the lease was held by Gustard's son-in-law and fellow brewer Robert Mason, who ran the 'Gateshead' maltings at the east end of Newmarket. The building, dating to c.1700, had a large side and rear yard with separate water pumps (off the same wooden mains) and brick-lined dyeing vats built into the outside of the original Dutch Billy foundations. These findings, com-



*John Meares' c. 1700 premises on Newmarket St (W.O. Frazer)*

bined with the environmental evidence for cloth dyeing on the property until c.1720-1725, have enabled archaeologists to link the premises with the cloth dyer John Meares. The scant written history of Meares can be pieced together with the findings to reconstruct the lives of the man, his family and some of his neighbours.

The archaeology demonstrates the abandonment of the premises by Meares in 1720-1725 when the dyeing vats were filled with his family's discarded possessions. Clay smoking pipes, pots used to store urine (used in the dyeing process), cooking pots and tableware, the odd surviving scrap of colourful cloth and, ominously, an infant's shoulder blade were uncovered. The items suggest a decline in fortune and the rapid abandonment of the property, perhaps even a forced evic-



*Pottery from John Meares' dyeing vat on Newmarket St (J. Sunderland)*

tion. It is difficult not to connect the hard times of the Meares with the cloth industry slump of 1720-1721. The date of abandonment is supported by historical sources which indicate that by 1725 Peter Wainwright (a carpenter) and his family were subletting the premises from half-owner Elizabeth Wilkinson. Archaeology confirms a carpenter's

workshop on the property after the dyer had left. Wainwright was also involved in alterations and repairs to St Luke's, and he built several houses on Poole Street and Braithwaite Street. During his early occupancy, Meares leased the property from another Society of Friends (Quaker) carpenter, Thomas Bell, who never lived there but resided elsewhere on the north side of Newmarket. After Bell's death in 1710, Meares presumably rented his house from Bell's heir (and cousin) Elizabeth. The hardworking Thomas Bell was involved in numerous construction projects across Dublin, including the Bride's Alley meeting house in the early 1680s and the Meath Place meeting house in 1686-1687. In 1696, he was the craftsman assigned responsibility for the 'making, laying & finishing [of some of] ye [wooden] pipes and shores' near Newmarket in an agreement with George Edkins, tanner, and the Earl. Ten years later, Bell and his apprentice Wainwright remained the craftsmen chosen by the Earl to maintain the pipes after the Edkins contract had expired.

Meares was a dissenting Baptist lay-leader. Together with his neighbour, fellow lay-leader and gluemaker John Cullame (whose property has also been excavated), he broke away from the Swift's Alley Baptist congregation. Prior to the construction of the meeting house further down Newmarket Street in c.1703-1706, meetings seemed to have been convened in either Meares' or Cullame's house. By 1736, Meares was involved in the conveying of the trusteeship of the meeting house down the lane,

and it appears that he had been a Baptist trustee from c.1706. (Cullame and their landlord Mason had, by this time, passed away.) Meares was possibly even in residence on the meeting house premises after his removal from the Bell property. He seems to have been living there in 1747, by which time he was also attending meetings of the Moravians which were held on the premises. Still hale and in his sixties at the time of the 'battle of Skinner's Alley', Meares was involved in the fight over the meeting house and was arrested as a result.

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