

The western suburb of medieval Dublin: its first century

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ABSTRACT

Situated to the west of the walled city, the western suburb of medieval Dublin was in its embryonic stages of development during the last decades of the twelfth and throughout the thirteenth century. The first signs of westward expansion were the laying out of burgage plots in the area immediately outside the western mural-gate, a response to growing pressure on space within the walled city. This new portal suburb experienced subdivision of plots soon afterwards. In contrast to the organic or piecemeal development of the portal suburb close to the city walls, an altogether more deliberate, systematic rural-to-urban colonization was envisioned for the whole western area perhaps as far as Kilmainham. The first move toward this planned development of a western suburb was to found St Thomas's Priory in this western area in 1177. Development was characterised by the granting of long narrow burgage plots on both sides of the central artery that ran westwards through the western area forming a linear suburb, the creation of parishes encompassing the newly laid-out plots and the appearance of urban traders who held these plots. Using a primary documentary source, the paper outlines the layout and character of the western suburb in this early developmental stage, and attempts to clarify the role of St Thomas' in this development.

Key index words: western suburb, medieval, St Thomas' Priory.

Introduction

Much has been written on medieval Dublin in recent decades, aided by the mass of new information brought to light by extensive archaeological excavations at Wood Quay, Cornmarket and Bridge Street Upper and other sites in the medieval city and suburbs (Hayden, 2000). Based mainly on the archaeological reports, Simpson has assembled a detailed summary of the developmental stages of medieval Dublin (Simpson, 2000). She provides information on the renewal and extensions of the city's defences and land reclamation from the River Liffey to the north of the walled settlement. Clarke has made a tremendous contribution to our knowledge of Dublin's medieval suburbs, outlining their extent and illustrating the existence and character of four very distinctive suburbs (Clarke, 1998). His treatment provides a unique overview of the western suburb in its historico-geographical context. He adds that Dublin's 'liberty', at 15.5 km²., was sufficiently large to facilitate suburban spread in all directions, and yet "even at its greatest extent in the Middle Ages the urban area did not occupy more than a fraction of the available space" (Clarke, 1998: 45). Bradley suggests the "possibility of development" in the western area during the Hiberno-Scandinavian period (Bradley, 1992: 53). Historians have shown much interest in St Thomas' Abbey (Berry, 1892; Gwynn, 1954; Davis, 1986-7; Elliott, 1990), and recent excavations undertaken by archaeologists have uncovered physical remains of the abbey (Walsh, 2000). This paper presents information about the early development of the western suburb, the findings of an analysis of documents contained in The Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin (Gilbert, 1889). The documents are mainly charters of burgage grants in

the western suburb and cover a time-span of approximately 100 years, from *c.*1177 to *c.*1272 (Duddy, 1990, 18-21). The documents examined support other evidence such as local nomenclature, that St Thomas' Abbey was a significant agent in the drive to develop the western area and in the unfolding character of the developing suburb.

The emerging street pattern

Clarke has pointed out that while the *suburbium* was usually topographically below the *urbs*, the western suburb slopes upwards from the walled city of Dublin. Furthermore, the street pattern of the western suburb was linear, centering on the ancient route, the *Slighe Mhór* (present-day Thomas Street/James' Street) leading westwards from the walled city at Newgate, with a parallel back lane to the north (Clarke, 1998: 50). Simms has shown that Thomas Street follows the ground contours very closely since it "curves along the northern edge of the ridge overlooking the Liffey" (Simms, 1979: 36). The *Slige Chualann*, leading southwards into Leinster and northwards across the River Liffey accommodated Francis Street and Bridge Street (Simms, 1979: 30). A street pattern comprising Thomas Street, James' Street, Bridge Street, Francis Street, Croker Lane, and the street from Donore (now Pimlico) was in evidence in the western suburb in the early Anglo-Norman period. Thomas Street was referred to as the way or street directed toward Kilmainham (Gilbert, 1889: 413), and the way or street which runs in the direction of St Thomas (Gilbert, 1889: 386). Thomas Street with its continuation, James' Street was the main artery through the western suburb, and was referred to as the "great street leading to Kilmainham" (Brooks, 1936: 22). The fact that Thomas Street is often referred to descriptively in relation to Kilmainham or other streets and landmarks rather than by name suggests that as a street, it was new (Gilbert, 1889: 386, 395, 397, 413). Indeed, Clarke suggests a date of *c.*1195 when the street is recorded as the "great new street" (Clarke, 1998: 50). Further references associate the street with St Thomas to whom the local Augustinian priory was dedicated, and from which Thomas Street eventually took its name (Gilbert, 1889: 378, 408). James' Street took its name from the church of St James that was located on that street, and Francis Street was named after the Franciscan friary of that name. Croker Lane which extended as far as Cook street in medieval times has been recorded as the "street of the potters" and *Crokeristret* (Gilbert, 1889: 378, 415). That street, of which the lane is only a remnant, will henceforth be referred to as Crockers' Street. Burgage plots joined Thomas Street to Crockers' Street (*ad vicum figulorum*) (Gilbert, 1889: 378, 397, 404). Bertram's Court is documented also (*Curia Bertram*) (Gilbert, 1889: 377; Hayden, 2000, the Cornmarket site). Bridge Street is recorded as the "street of the great bridge" (Gilbert, 1889: 284). The bridge over the River Liffey (roughly where Fr Mathew Bridge stands today) is recorded as the "great bridge", "bridge of the Osmen," and "Dublin bridge" (Gilbert, 1889: 284, 414, 418). The bridge was rebuilt in stone *c.* 1215 (Clarke, 1998: 48). Newgate was described as the "new western gate" in 1177 (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1889-1944, I, 166), the "western gate" in 1179, and the "new gate" by *c.* 1190 (Brooks, 1936: preface, p. vii). The rebuilding of the western mural gate at Newgate indicates that the Anglo-Normans were up-grading the city defences soon after their arrival. Furthermore, though still uncertain about the exact circuit of the twelfth century curtain wall, a 'dramatic' expansion of the enclosed space of the city to encompass the land reclaimed from the south bank of the River Liffey began *c.*1242 (Barry, 1988: 122; Simpson, 2000: 53). This had the effect of cutting off Lower Bridge Street from the western suburb apart from access via Gormond's Gate.

Local religious houses

In 1170, the area to the west of the city was the only area immediately outside the city walls that was not settled by a major religious house. This situation changed in March 1177, when St Thomas' was founded by William fitz Audelin on the instructions of King Henry II. As a Royal foundation, St Thomas' carried with it a degree of prestige, so that it was in receipt of many grants of property from its inception. However, this Royal foundation was unique in that the founding thrust came from a repentant conscience (Gwynn, 1954: 12-13). Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury had been murdered by King Henry's supporters, and was canonised a saint soon afterwards. The foundation then, was dedicated to St Thomas the Martyr of Canterbury in retribution for the murder. At the time, the founding impetus would have encouraged both followers of the King and those who wished to be seen as his supporters to follow suit with additional grants. While the canons regular operated St Thomas' from the beginning, the Augustinian canons regular were definitely the proprietors from 1186. The Congregation of St Victor of Paris, commonly known as the Victorine Augustinians (canons regular also) operated St Thomas' from 1192 onwards (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970: 172). Founded as a priory, St Thomas' was promoted to abbey status in c.1192, a possible recognition of its many and rapid acquisitions of churches and lands throughout Ireland, but also perhaps in recognition of the introduction of the Victorine Augustinians in that year, who were a very well organised branch of Augustinians and whose monasteries were frequently granted this status (Gwynn, 1954: 14). Another religious house, the Priory and Hospital of St John the Baptist outside the New Gate, Dublin was founded in the western suburb between 1185 and 1188 by Ailred the Palmer. This house was operated by Augustinian canons regular also, in this case of the order of *Fratres Cruciferi* whose houses were generally hospitals for the poor (Hennessy, 1988: 42). Simms has noted that a reference in the *Register of the Hospital of St John the Baptist without the New Gate* to open fields west of the hospital indicates that the hospital itself and St Thomas' Priory were possibly the first buildings in Thomas Street (Simms, 1979: 36). A third religious house, St Francis Friary was founded before 1233, and it was operated by the Franciscan friars (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970: 248). According to Clarke, St Thomas' was "by far the dominant religious institution in the western suburb" (Clarke, 1998: 51).

Influence of St Thomas' in the western suburb

The most vivid evidence of the existence and influence of St Thomas' in the western suburb is to be found in the street names of the area, for example Thomas Street, Thomas Court, and Thomas Court Bawn. In addition, the medieval church of St James from which James' Street takes its name belonged to St Thomas' Abbey. St Thomas' has been called a colonial foundation and "an ecclesiastical fort of English power, under the direct control of the King, and nourished by him as a useful agent in the affairs of state" (Elliott, 1990: 62-63). One can deduce that St Thomas' was encouraged to develop the suburb from the outset because its foundation grant was in the form of a burgage (Gilbert, 1889: 281), and burgage tenure was an important ingredient of the borough (Platt, 1976: 126). The idea was that the Crown set the standard, and laymen followed suit. Nevertheless, borough development was in the citizens' interest, and this is why they confirmed the Crown's grant (Gilbert, 1889: 281). The foundation grant and grants of major spiritualities were decisive, because they set down the conditions which determined the nature of subsequent gifts. Thus the foundation grant of burgage effected the nature of St Thomas' direct sources of revenue thereafter, and

seems to have encouraged borough expansion in the western suburb. The application of burgage tenure was the secular framework for securing borough expansion. Similarly, spiritual grants from the ecclesiastical authority were grants made to set the framework within which St Thomas' would operate most effectively on the ground. An important point to note is that the Anglo-Norman archbishops of Dublin, John Cumin and Henry of London represented the Crown during their episcopacies, and were 'agents' of the colonisers (Murphy, 1995: 42). Thus, they gave the canons responsibility for two parishes (those of St Thomas and St James), so that the Church not only developed its own local sphere of influence but also supervised the pattern of secular development.

In many ways, the devotional structure of the medieval church which developed on the continent and which accompanied the Anglo-Normans and the new monastic orders into Ireland was central to St Thomas' involvement in grants. Tremendous weight was placed on the belief that holy men could intercede for the dead and ensure their salvation. Those who could afford it would found monasteries, and those who could not, would give benefactions to one already in existence in return for a clearly defined obligation of prayers by the community for them and their kin (Dickinson, 1961: 66). Whenever, St Thomas' was receiving a gift, the grant was made '*Deo et canonicis regularibus ibidem Deo servientibus*' and the like. This mentality facilitated St Thomas' acceptance and subsequent exploitation of all sorts of property since the grants were given under the pretext that they were to support God's service (Rodes Jr., 1977: 49-51). Thus, in his confirmation charter of St James' church, Matthew, the Archbishop of Cashel encouraged St Thomas' to acquire possessions through "just means by the holy devotion of the faithful under the Lord's protection" (Gilbert, 1889: 317-318). The laity expressed their devotion to God by granting spiritual and temporal property to St Thomas' under this spiritual pretext; grants were made for the salvation of souls and in free and perpetual alms, and incurred no expense to St Thomas' (Gilbert, 1889: 374, 377-378, 397, 407-408, 418). There were exceptions in which this was not the case, for example, Thomas de Kenefeg's grant of burgage which was not donated in alms, and so was not exempt from secular service. Instead, an annual rent in the form of grain in addition to an entry fine were to be paid by St Thomas' (Gilbert, 1889: 409).

Sources of St Thomas' revenue included local grants both of a spiritual and temporal nature. On different occasions, the canons were grantees, grantors, and even overseers of grants. They were involved as grantors and grantees because the terms and conditions of agreement were favourable to them, and as overseers, to ensure that the terms and conditions were favourable to them. Grants of land were most prevalent. It was up to St Thomas' to ensure that burgage plots were situated in such a way as to enhance the value of its own property including its agricultural land, its mills, its rental income from urban property, certain customs, and spiritual and urban tithes which it possessed. The spiritual income of St Thomas' comprised the revenue of churches which were in its possession and tithes of various other benefices with which it had been endowed. Its temporal income was gained through arable land, woodlands, fisheries, mills, rents and urban possessions such as houses (Gilbert, 1889: 281-282, 284).

Profit from a spiritual grant

St Thomas' receipt of the spiritual grant of St James' church was accompanied by a parish (Gilbert, 1889: 284). The parish facilitated favourable contact between the clergy and the laity, inspiring much of St Thomas' external profits, and adding further to its temporal possessions. The dual profession of the community at St Thomas' as monks and priests

justified its exploitation of both spiritual and temporal sources of revenue. The Anglo-Normans favoured Augustinians over other religious communities because they could receive grants and tithes as well as engage in pastoral and charitable work (Hennessy, 1988: 41-42). The good works expected of the St Thomas' community were the reception of guests and the poor (Gilbert, 1889: 284). In the confirmation grant for St James' parish, the arable land and mills of St Thomas' were given exemption from all ecclesiastical tithes, an incentive to give as much as possible of its local lands to cultivation as it would receive all the revenue. Further to this, St Thomas' was free to rent any of this arable land to the inhabitants, now its parishioners (Gilbert, 1889: 284). A number of payments of rent to St Thomas' was in the form of grain (Gilbert, 1889: 378, 397). St Thomas' was renting at least some of its mills by 1272 (Gilbert, 1889: 353-354). The abbey's receipt of payments in grain suggests that St Thomas' was not the sole producer of grain in the area, but may have controlled the local mills.

Receipt of rents

St Thomas' was in receipt of rents from property in the western suburb, and many of the rents were derived from urban possessions there. Philipp de Wirecestria granted land "in front of the gate of St Thomas" to the canons. Two laymen were to hold the land from the canons, and they were to pay Philipp who in turn would pay St Thomas' (Gilbert, 1889: 407-408). Alwin de Wintonia granted land "outside the western gate of Dublin" to St Thomas' which Nicholaus Pistor was holding from him. The rent of money was to be received by Alwin's wife, Helena, and further payment, which was to be in kind (twelve measures of grain) was to go to St Thomas'. When Helena died, St Thomas' was to receive the full rent (Gilbert, 1889: 397). So, St Thomas' was entitled to a part interest in the rent at first, and was to receive all of the rent eventually. Alice, wife of Gilbert de Livet granted land, and a house along with a yard to St Thomas' whereby her husband would hold the property from the canons and was to pay rent to them for as long as he lived (Gilbert, 1889: 374). Robert de Bedeford granted an annual rent of grain to St Thomas'. The rent was part of an urban holding consisting of three houses (Gilbert, 1889: 378). Grants of rent were a welcome source of revenue as they involved the receiver in no expense, yet provided an income. The number of rental grants would be less frequent in a rural environment. St Thomas' even made its own efforts to secure income in rent from urban possessions. St Thomas' granted land to Walo, brother of Gillebert Niger, a layman, with the stipulation that he pay an annual rent (Gilbert, 1889: 387). St Thomas' was not in a position to use urban property itself directly, so any in its possession was best rented to others. As well as rents, the citizens of Dublin granted certain lands and holdings to St Thomas', a large proportion of which may have been urban plots (Gilbert, 1889: 282). The evidence suggests that St Thomas' did not have sufficient urban possessions to be independent of the income from its agricultural produce, and most of the urban possessions it had, were rents (Gilbert, 1889).

Grants of burgage

A small but significant area of St Thomas' suburban property was held by burgage tenure. It must have exploited the burgage which the crown granted to it at its foundation (Gilbert, 1889: 281). It was free from secular service (the normal rent owed by burgesses) apart from landgable (obligatory nominal ground rent payable to the Crown), so that no expense was incurred by St Thomas'. It would have been normal for St Thomas' to rent the

burgage to a lay-person such as it did to Walo, brother of Gillebert Niger above. Robert de Bedeford granted burgages and parts of burgages in Bertram's Court and perhaps on James' Street to the canons (Gilbert, 1889: 378). St Thomas' may have created burgages itself, for example, the one held by Rembold, son of John Tannere from master Hugo from the "fee of St Thomas" (Gilbert, 1889: 417). The canons were overseers of grants of burgages in the western suburb. W., clerk of Hamwoda granted a plot of land to be held by free burgage tenure to Alured de Wendoure, Reiner Palmer and Radulf Noriscus, and an annual rent of eight pence worth of grain was to suffice for all service (Gilbert, 1889: 384). Allewin de Wintonia granted a plot to be held by free burgage tenure probably along Thomas Street to Nicholaus Pistor de Herefordia, and in this case also, the annual rent was to be paid in the form of grain (Gilbert, 1889: 398). W. Albus granted half a burgage in James' Street to Hosbert de Lichefeld (Gilbert, 1889: 412). The usual burgage tenure was held, and the plot adjoined other plots, something which provides an interesting insight into the nature of James' Street at that time. Willelm Albus granted half a burgage to Osbert Lecanum on Thomas Street with an annual money rent (Gilbert, 1889: 399). The citizens of Dublin granted a full and free burgage on Thomas Street to Allewin de Wintonia (Gilbert, 1889: 397-398). Like many of the burgages, this one adjoined other plots of land, frequently held by people whose surnames suggest urban-type occupations (see below). Thome Lamartre granted a free burgage to Ricard Carpentarius near the "bridge of the osmen" (Gilbert, 1889: 414). The growth of urban property close to the abbey and its lands must have accelerated a rise in the rental value of these lands, the value of St Thomas' agricultural produce due to demand, and all these would have increased the revenue from spiritual property such as tithes. In effect, even the property under agriculture became urban property of a sort, as firstly, it was situated on the margins of an expanding urban area, and secondly, it was supplying the urban market. The mills too were a component of the urban matrix as they were processing produce grown locally. This transformation from rural to urban and the accompanying rise in property values were the indirect, long-term benefits and future promise associated with urban possessions. The overall result of this management of resources, the interworking of spiritualities and temporalities to maximise profit, was the shaping of the suburban landscape.

Lastly, the custom on "ale and mead" also granted to St Thomas' by the Crown is worth mentioning (Gilbert, 1889: 281). The beverages were presumably sold throughout the city and suburbs, and must have provided the canons with a consistent income. It was noted a second time when a decree was passed confirming that St Thomas' would retain its right to the custom (Gilbert, 1889: 411). It must have been a valuable source of income, otherwise the situation would not have arisen whereby the monks of St Mary's Abbey tried in vain to abolish St Thomas' claim over the custom.

Parish development

A parish church was much more than a nucleus from which to attend to the cura animarum of parishioners. The canons were thought to be most apt at the time to run parishes, since they were priests who observed a Rule. The parish of St Thomas the Martyr may have been founded along with St Thomas' Priory in 1177. Unfortunately, only a single reference is made to the parish in the documents being examined, and details concerning its relationship with St Thomas' Priory are not included (Gilbert, 1889: 413). However, the Bull of Pope Alexander III mentions St Thomas' as a parochial church in 1179 (Sheehy, 1962: 26-29). The parish continued to function at least until 1202 (McNeill, 1950: 28-29). No evidence can be

found for the parish church of St Thomas except for a church of St Thomas (Gilbert, 1889: 398, 417) which appears to have been the priory itself. Perhaps, when St Thomas' was promoted to an abbey, the Victorines rededicated the parish church to St Catherine and erected new buildings south of the priory/parish church to satisfy the role of abbey. The abbey of St Thomas was already the recipient of many endowments due to its religious and secular associations, and so a parish church separate from the abbey complex would have augmented the overall income. The recent excavations show that the abbey complex was comparable in size to the ruins of Kells Priory, county Kilkenny (Walsh, 2000: 185). The existence of St Catherine's church next to Thomas Street and to the north of the abbey complex is recorded in 1610 (Speed, 1611, following p. 141, no. 56). The location of St Catherine's church due north of the abbey and on the main road westwards, suggests that this was the site of the earliest church in the area. Other dedications to St Catherine were associated with the Victorine Augustinians, for example St Catherine's Priory recorded in Waterford in *c.* 1207 and St Catherine's Priory, Co. Dublin, founded in 1219 (Gwynn and Hadcock, 1970: 197, 192 respectively). In the early sixteenth century, Archbishop Alen seems to have thought that the predecessor of St Catherine's was dedicated to St Thomas the Apostle (White, 1941: 10, 181), and this parish church belonged to Holy Trinity Priory (McNeill, 1950: 3). However, the first certain reference to St Catherine's church in Dublin is dated to 1315 by Archdall when, referring to St Thomas' Abbey, he records: "The churches of St Catherine and St James in Dublin, ... were found to belong to this abbey in the 8th of King Edward II" (Archdall, 1873: 46). It is possible that after the reorganisation of the one existing parish into two parishes connected with the foundation of a second church, St James' and the delineation of its extensive boundaries (Gilbert, 1889: 284, 383), the original parish church was rededicated to either St Catherine or to St Thomas the Apostle.

The second church, dedicated to St James the Apostle together with a cemetery was founded very soon after the founding of St Thomas' (Gilbert, 1889: 383). The far western site of St James' reflects actual suburban expansion or the anticipated suburban growth in that direction. The parish church of St James was appropriated to St Thomas', and the parish of St James was to comprise the whole suburb west of Newgate and Bridge Street as far as Kilmainham and excluding the area south of St Thomas' and seemingly on both sides of it (Gilbert, 1889: 284). The extent of St Thomas' parish hitherto remains uncertain, but may have included the entire western suburb as far as Kilmainham. With the advent of the additional parish in the western suburb, that of St James, the reduced parish of St Thomas may have extended east and west of the priory/parish church. In this way, St James' parish would have had as its eastern boundary, the city wall from Newgate northwards along Bridge Street, as its western boundary, Kilmainham, as its northern limit, the River Liffey, and Thomas Street as its southern boundary. The reorganisation of St Thomas' parish into two smaller units reflects a confidence in the potential for population growth in the western suburb. Clarke suggests that two parish churches were a response to a "sizeable population" in the area (Clarke, 1998: 50).

Emergence of a streetscape

Most of the plots were held by burgage tenure, and these, associated on various levels with St Thomas' Abbey, were granted extensively throughout the western suburb, but especially on Thomas Street (Duddy, 1990). Bradley says that suburbs had already been developing outside the walled area of Dublin during the Hiberno-Scandinavian period

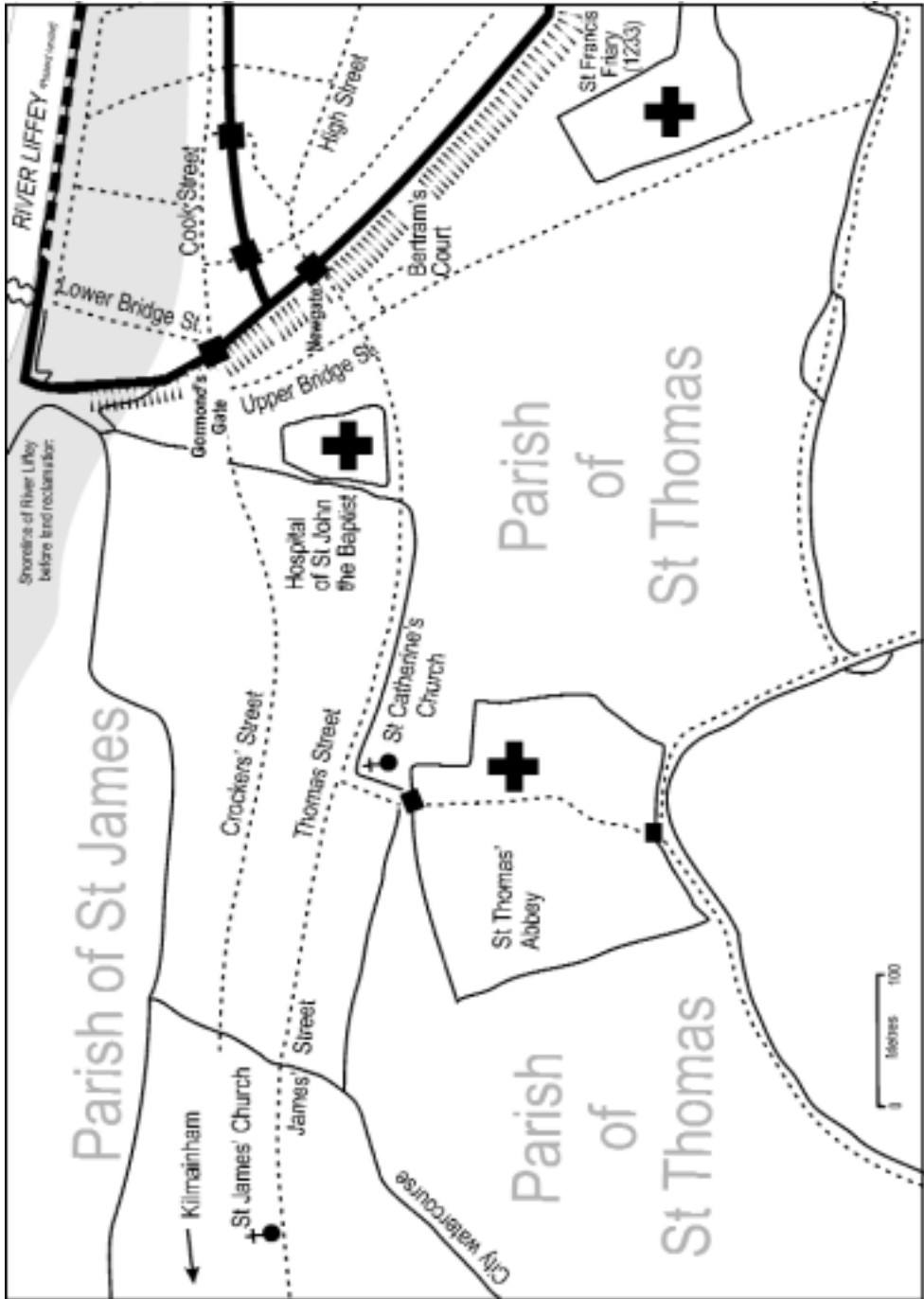


Figure 2: Sketch-map of the western suburb showing the two parishes; the parish of St Thomas and the parish of St James (based on Clarke, 1998 and Simms, 1979).

(Bradley, 1992, 53). This development, however, may not have pertained to the western area, since Hayden points out that pottery excavated at Bertram's Court date only from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century (Hayden, 2000: 103). However, Bertram's Court, immediately outside the western wall at Newgate was quickly settled, and its burgage plots were already undergoing subdivision whilst plots on Thomas Street were being laid out for the first time. A burgage granted in Bertram's Court had a frontage of 22 feet (c.6.7m) and a depth of 21 feet (Gilbert, 1889: 377) suggesting that either the original long narrow plot that characterised medieval burgages (Slater, 1981: 211) had been sub-divided lengthways or a new plot was being laid out in a cramped space. Two further grants of burgages are recorded for Bertram's Court; the first of these was a third of a burgage tenement while the second concerned an undivided burgage tenement (Gilbert, 1889: 378). Hayden noted the considerable differences in the sizes of plots in Bertram's Court (Hayden, 2000: 101), but the irregularity of the plots might merely indicate development of a piecemeal nature (Simms, 1979: 34). Given the absence of evidence for occupation earlier than the end of the twelfth century, the irregularities in burgage dimensions and divisions of burgages in Bertram's Court may reflect the fast growing need for limited prime space close to the busy city gate. At any rate, the great demand for property at Bertram's Court causing subdivision of plots evidently soon made it an established suburb and demonstrated the worthiness of efforts to develop the western suburb on a grander scale. The area outside St Michael's Gate, henceforth referred to as Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate (Gilbert, 1889: 378 (footnote no. 1); Clarke, 1978: 13, B7) — to the west of Winetavern Street, and approximately along present-day Cook Street which lay between the northern section of the twelfth century curtain wall and the River Liffey — was becoming another established suburb. Though not part of the western suburb, its development testifies to the pressure to colonise beyond the city walls even where land was scarce, and its subdivision of plots shares characteristics with Bertram's Court. Two grants of burgage made in this area concerned a quarter of the original full tenement (Gilbert, 1889: 378, 382). The sub-divided plots suggest a growing density of burgage tenements in a restricted area while existing boundaries remained undisturbed. It is understood however, that the tidal waters of the River Liffey "came right up to the wall" at the time of the Anglo-Norman take-over (Simms, 1979: 35). From the end of the twelfth century until the beginning of the fourteenth, a series of waterfronts were erected, and advanced toward the bed of the River Liffey on its south bank. The reclaimed land behind these lines of revetments then accommodated "warehouses and other mercantile buildings" (Barry, 1988: 121-122). The tenements at Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate, thus, could not have been long established, yet were probably in great demand given their location beside the river where there was an increasing amount of external trade. The neighbourhoods at Bertram's Court and outside Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate probably began as portal suburbs; if so, they were the first manifestation of expansion beyond the restrictive curtain wall of the city, and their purpose could be described as valves for city over-spill.

A ribbon/linear suburb was developing along Thomas Street whilst simultaneously, a bridgehead suburb was developing along Bridge Street (*in suburbio Dublinie versus pontem Osmannorum*) (Gilbert, 1889: 414). Of the sample of documents being examined, dimensions were supplied for seven plots, and five of these were on Thomas Street, one on Bridge Street, and one in Bertram's Court (Gilbert, 1889: 377, 399, 408, 413, 414, 415, 417). There is no evidence for a standard frontage dimension, since no two dimensions in this aspect of the plots were equal. On Thomas Street, the widest frontage was 32 feet (c.9.8m), followed by 30 feet (c.9.1m), 27 feet (c.8.2m), and 21 feet (c.6.4m) (Gilbert, 1889: 415, 399, 408, 413

respectively). In contrast, the narrowest frontage was 16 feet (Gilbert, 1889: 417). On Bridge Street, the frontage was 20 feet (*c.* 6.1m) (Gilbert, 1889: 414), and in Bertram's Court, it was 22 feet (Gilbert, 1889: 377). Perhaps dimensions were recorded only when some uncertainty existed about boundaries or when a measurement differed from the standard along a street. Stating the dimensions of a plot also suggests the newness of the plot, so that these references to Thomas Street, and Bridge Street are an indication that these streets were being laid out for the first time. In contrast, the dimensions given in Bertram's Court are given due to the evermore cramped conditions there; reference to fractions of tenements and the square shape of the plots make this evident.

Plots were laid out in long, narrow strips in a ladder pattern on Thomas Street, James' Street and on Bridge Street. On Thomas Street, the plot with a frontage of 32 feet (*c.* 9.8m) had a depth of 50 feet (*c.* 15.2m) (Gilbert, 1889: 415). Its length compares favourably with the depth of the plot on Bridge Street which had a frontage of 20 feet (*c.* 6.1m), but with a depth of 60 feet (*c.* 18.3m) (Gilbert, 1889: 414). Both were lengthy plots. The Thomas Street plot extended as far back as Crockers' Street. Four further references to plots on Thomas Street suggest that plots laid out on the northern edge of the street extended back to Crockers' Street too (Gilbert, 1889: 378 (two references), 397, 398). Crockers' Street which ran almost parallel to Thomas Street, seems to have delimited the rear-ends of plots fronting the northern edge of Thomas Street except in cases where plots might have been divided lengthways, in which cases those plots would front onto Crockers' Street. The distance between the two streets determined the depths of the plots. Medieval towns followed the natural terrain very closely (Simms, 1979: 29-30), and so just as the degree of parallelism was not perfect, the plot depths differed from one to the next accordingly. Likewise, the plots themselves were not always perfectly symmetrical, for example, the plot on Bridge Street had a rear of 15 feet (*c.* 4.6m), and this was different from its frontage of 20 feet (Gilbert, 1889: 414).

Contiguous nature of the plots

There is evidence for the contiguous nature of plots on the new streets of the western suburb. The plot which W., clerk of Hamwoda granted to Alured de Wendoure, Reiner Palmer, and Radulf Noriscus was next to the plot held by Philipp Rufus (Gilbert, 1889: 384). The plot which W. Long granted to Johann Alb was between the land of Ada, son of Seild and that of Johann Textor (Gilbert, 1889: 413). Ada, son of Seil granted a plot to Ricard Faber which was between the land of his uncle, Augustine and the land of Hunfrid (Gilbert, 1889: 408). The plot which Thome de Kenefeg granted to Roger Passe was between the land of Robert Trusseluka and the land of Heremer de Bristoll (Gilbert, 1889: 415). Bartholomew, son of the Archdeacon granted two plots, one to Robert Thop which lay between the land of Robert de Castelcnoc and the land of Laurence, and which W. Misce held; the other to Willelm Liun de Cestria which lay between the land which Willelm Mice had held and the land of Godefrid, son of Kenelm (Gilbert, 1889: 385). If W. Misce and Willelm Mice were the same man, then the information borne in these two grants might substantiate the existence of a row of five plots on Thomas Street. The plot which Allewin de Wintonia granted to Nicholaus Pistor de Herefordia was located between the land of Levis, mother of Willelm and the land of Robert Sutor, and was on the northern edge of Thomas Street (Gilbert, 1889: 398). The citizens of Dublin granted a plot on the northern edge of Thomas Street to Allewin de Wintonia, and this was located between the land of Johann Picot and the land of Robert Sutor (Gilbert, 1889: 397). If Sutor was the same man recorded as a neighbour of Nicholaus Pistor

de Herefordia (above), then a reference to the same plot held by Sutor would indicate that a row of five contiguous plots at least lay on the northern edge of Thomas Street. At least two of the plots which Robert de Bedeford granted to St Thomas', and which were located on Thomas Street adjoined similar plots; the first of these lay between the house of Reginald Palmer and the house of Walter Pistor on the northern edge of the street, and the second lay between the house of Ricard Pistor and that of Reginald Pistor (Gilbert, 1889: 378). The plot which Audeon Brun granted to Willelm Long may have been located on the southern edge of Thomas Street (*a sinistra parte vie et cauchie que tendit versus sanctum Thomam*) (Gilbert, 1889: 386). This was held by burgage tenure and adjoined the land of Ada, son of Seild and the land of Johann Telarius. The frontage dimension of another plot on the southern edge of Thomas Street was given as 16 feet (c.4.9m), so that it was probably a long, narrow plot like those on the northern edge of the street (Gilbert, 1889: 417). It was next to the cemetery of St Thomas which perhaps was the parish cemetery. A thirteenth century graveyard was uncovered in the recent excavation next to Swan Alley to the south of Thomas Street, though the low density of burials suggests that it was only a temporary burial ground (Walsh, 2000: 186, 199, 200). Two further plots not recorded as being contiguous were situated on Thomas Street; one of these, Philipp de Wirecestria granted to St Thomas', and lay in front of the gate of St Thomas, the other, situated somewhere along the street, was granted by the citizens of Dublin to Roger de Liminister (Gilbert, 1889: 407, 404). Thus, based on the small sample of grants above, there are ten instances of three contiguous plots, two instances of two contiguous plots, and two instances of single plots on Thomas Street. Of these, there is the possibility of two rows of five contiguous plots, at least one of which was located on the northern edge of the street. Of the four plots recorded for the southern edge of Thomas Street, there was one row of three contiguous plots and a single plot.

Farther westward, James' Street was being colonised also. Henric Tirel's grant of land for the church and cemetery of St James, though at the extreme margin of the western suburb reflected the westward drive of suburban expansion (Gilbert, 1889: 383). Robert de Bedeford granted a burgage to the canons on James' Street, which faced (versus) St James' church, and lay between land held by the Hospital of St John the Baptist and some street directed northwards from James' Street. The plot held by the hospital was probably burgage also, the hospital exploiting it for financial revenue. Another plot was one which W. Alb granted to Hosbert de Lichefeld and lay between the land of Willelm Alb and the land of Hosbert Tanner (Gilbert, 1889: 412). Willelm Alb granted a plot to Osbert Lecanum, and this adjoined the land of Henric Tirel and the land of Hosbert de Lichefeld (Gilbert, 1889: 399). If Willelm Alb and W. Alb were the same man and Hosbert de Lichefeld is the one man named in the two grants, then this may have been a case of five contiguous plots in a row. Therefore, there were eight plots at least on James' Street, and this included the church plot. There are two instances of three contiguous plots, one instance of two contiguous plots, and a single plot for the church. Of these, there may have been one instance of five contiguous plots.

Contiguous plots were found on Bridge Street, and as would be expected, at Bertram's Court and Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate. Thome Lamartre granted both plots on Bridge Street on separate occasions. He granted the long, narrow plot to Ricard Carpentarius, and this plot lay between the land of Laurence Alb and the land of Willelm Brid (Gilbert, 1889: 414). The other plot, he granted to St Thomas', and this adjoined his wife, Margarete's plot and the plot which he granted to the Hospitallers of Kilmainham (Gilbert, 1889: 418). These grants show that there were at least six plots on Bridge Street with two instances of three contiguous plots. Only three grants of burgage were recorded for Bertram's Court, but each has been

recorded as a contiguous plot. Robert de Bedeford granted all three plots. He granted one to Radulf Warrarius which lay between the land of Radulf, son of Nigell the dyer and the land of Peter, son of Dru (Gilbert, 1889: 377). This was the rectangular shaped plot with a frontage wider than the depth. The second and third plots he granted to St Thomas'; one plot adjoined the land of Ricard Talbot and the land of Willelm Sellarius, the other lay between the land of Hugo Pistor and the land of Galfrid de Wynkynglo. All in all, nine plots were accounted for in Bertram's Court. Ricard Piscator granted a plot to Osbert de Cardif outside Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate and next to the land of Roger Piscator (Gilbert, 1889: 382). Robert de Bedeford granted a plot to St Thomas', and it was next to the river, between the gate itself and the land of Hugo Richolf (Gilbert, 1889: 378).

The inconclusive nature of the documentary sample being examined makes it impossible to verify that a continuous row of long, narrow plots spanned any one or all of the streets, Thomas Street, James' Street, Bridge Street, or Crockers' Street, but does suggest that Bertram's Court was cramped. The fact that many of the plots recorded adjoined other plots raises the possibility that a ladder pattern of continuous rows was in existence or in development. Certainly, intermittent rows of long, narrow plots existed. Following Simms' application of Conzen's method of town-plan analysis, and assuming that plot-boundaries do not change easily, but rather endure into modern times (Conzen, 1968, 113-130; Simms, 1979: 27), the plot-boundaries on Rocque's 1756 map of Dublin reflect the original burgage plots as well as subsequent plot-boundaries (Figure 3). Indeed, archaeological investigations have confirmed the continuity of plot-boundaries (Barry, 1988: 118).

Land-use and occupational quarters

Given the evidence above of numerous grants of burgage plots, rents from urban possessions, and the creation of parishes, the western suburb was changing from a rural landscape into an urban streetscape. Further pointers to the emerging urban character of the suburb come from the surnames of the plot holders which are indicative of urban occupations. At the same time, the western suburb continued to possess a rural character since mention (above) is made of mills and payments of rent in the form of grain, and, likewise, surnames of plot holders suggesting occupations connected with grain production.

The reference to its fields and 'grange' suggests that St Thomas' depended for a large part of its income on arable land (Gilbert, 1889: 3, 284). In 1268, St Thomas' is recorded as possessing seven acres of arable land (Gilbert, 1889: 3). However, the early adoption of a pastoral role by St Thomas' facilitated the exploitation of resources outside the monastic farm suggesting that the documented 'grange' was meant in a loose way only. As already mentioned above, the archdiocese of Dublin gave exemption from all ecclesiastical tithes to the arable land of the abbey. St Thomas' paid rent to Thome de Kenefeg in the form of grain, grain no doubt from the abbey's own produce (Gilbert, 1889: 409). St Thomas' was also given the liberty to rent any of this arable land to its parishioners (Gilbert, 1889: 284), and some payments from lay-people to St Thomas' were in fact in the form of grain (Gilbert, 1889: 397, 378). Quite a few rents transacted between the inhabitants themselves were paid in the form of grain, showing that they too involved themselves in grain production in the western suburb (Gilbert, 1889: 384, 385, 398). Indeed, one of these rents concerns a plot of land granted to Nicholaus Pistor de Herefordia, whose surname *Pistor* suggests he was a miller or a baker (Gilbert, 1889: 398). The receipt of payments in grain suggests activities such as milling and baking in the suburb.



Figure 3: Remnants of burgage plot boundaries visible on Thomas Street (Rocque, 1756).

Connected to arable land, and grain production in particular, were mills, and there is evidence that mills operated in the western suburb. St Thomas' possessed mills which were exempt from ecclesiastical tithes (Gilbert, 1889: 284). In 1272, it was renting some of its mills to Johann de Hac, and the production of corn and barley is recorded in connection with these mills (Gilbert, 1889: 353-354). Henric Tirel granted St Thomas' the tithes of two mills, both in the parish of St James (Gilbert, 1889: 383, 392). Furthermore, a mill is mentioned in reference to one of the fields belonging to St Thomas' (Gilbert, 1889: 3). The reference to a number of mills in the western suburb suggests that there was also enough land under arable cultivation to supply the demand for grain needed to operate the mills profitably. Local bakeries were one possible consumer, and a number of landholdings are recorded which suggest the activity of baking; a house of Walter Pistor on Thomas Street, a house of Ricard Pistor and Reginald Pistor possibly on Thomas Street also, and land belonging to Hugo Pistor in Bertram's Court (Gilbert, 1889: 378). Johann de Hac was free to grind all of his own and his family's corn and barley in the mills he was renting from St Thomas', but the abbey's corn and barley took precedence should it arrive unexpectedly (Gilbert, 1889: 353-354). As well as supplying mills and bakeries, grain was a vital ingredient in the brewing of the ale of which St Thomas' retained the valued custom (Gilbert, 1889: 411).

Fishing could hardly be called a land-use, but there is evidence that it was a local activity and some plots were occupied by fishermen. St Thomas' was granted a boat for fishing on the River Liffey by some of the citizens of Dublin (Gilbert, 1889: 281). Along with the plot which Henric Tirel granted to St Thomas' for the church and cemetery of St James, he granted a tithe of fishing for an area extending from Kilmainham to the land of Daniel, brother of Driu (Gilbert, 1889: 383). In another charter, Tirel granted a tithe of fishing concerning a pond in the parish of St James (Gilbert, 1889: 392). Ricard *Piscator* whose surname suggests he was a fisherman, granted a plot to Osbert de Cardif outside Mac Gilla Mo-Cholmóc's Gate next to the River Liffey, and this plot adjoined the land of Roger Piscator, perhaps a fisherman also (Gilbert, 1889: 382). Indeed, a timber jetty or boardwalk dated to c. 1189 was uncovered in this area and may have been used by these fishermen (Simpson, 2000: 50).

There is evidence of woodland in the western suburb, but the references are only to indicate the relative locations of St Thomas' fields (*In duobus campi contra januam silve: In campo sub silva: In campo supra silvam: In silva*) (Gilbert, 1889: 3). The simple fact that the woodland was used to relate the location of the abbey's fields throughout the western area suggests that woodland was extensive and was a prominent characteristic of the area. Also, since seven acres of arable land were to be found in the woodland (*In silva vii. acras terre arabilis*) (Gilbert, 1889: 3), it is possible that an assart was in operation here (Robinson, 1980, 285). Possibly the woodland produced timber for building construction, boat building, farming implements, and firewood for potters' kilns and bakers' ovens. In the western suburb alone, there would have been ample demand.

Further information concerning land-use in the western suburb can be gleaned from the description of streets and street names, as well as the occupations of the inhabitants indicated by their surnames. Three references allude to a street or neighbourhood in the western suburb where potters operated. The plot which Thome de Kenefeg granted to Robert Passe backed onto Crokeristret (Gilbert, 1889: 415). A plot which Robert de Bedeford granted to St Thomas' extended from Thomas Street to the potters' street (*vicus figulorum*). A further plot which de Bedeford granted lay opposite the potters' street (Gilbert, 1889: 378). Perhaps Ricard *Figulus* was one of the potters (Gilbert, 1889: 395). McCutcheon sheds useful and

interesting light on the pottery industry in medieval Dublin (McCutcheon, 2000). She says that pottery was often part-time, and held a low status on the economic rung, and that since potters did not organise themselves into guilds, they are seldom recorded in the documents. She adds that *figulus* probably referred to a clay potter. Although the documentary evidence points to Crokeristret (Crockers' Street) as the potters' quarter, unfortunately, archaeology has uncovered no medieval kilns to support the assumption, nor indeed anymore than "the typical household refuse" (Clarke, 1998: 50; McCutcheon, 2000: 119). As mentioned above, the surname *Pistor* suggests a miller or baker, or both since the two were connected. There are some references to people with this surname occupying plots located on Thomas Street. Nicholaus *Pistor de Herefordia* was granted a plot on Thomas Street, and was to pay his rent in grain, a further indication that he was a miller or baker (Gilbert, 1889: 398). The plot extended "from one street as far as the other street", probably from Thomas Street to Crockers' Street. Walter *Pistor*, Ricard *Pistor*, and Reginald *Pistor* each had holdings on Thomas Street too, and all extended to Crockers' Street (Gilbert, 1889: 378). The fact that they lived so close to one another suggests that the northern edge of Thomas Street was a bakers' quarter. Thus, the bakers' ovens and the potters' kilns would be contained very much in the one area. However, mention is also made of a plot held by Hugo *Pistor* in Bertram's Court (Gilbert, 1889: 378). Hayden's study of the historical sources found that Bertram's Court was predominantly industrial, comprised small buildings with yards, and was occupied by a weaver, a wool-beater, and a buckler (Hayden, 2000: 102). His archaeological investigations of the site reflected the above findings, uncovering several levels of metalworking activity, possibly dating from the late twelfth century, and continuing throughout the thirteenth. In the mid-to-later thirteenth century, there is evidence that animals were housed (Hayden, 2000: 103-109).

Various urban occupations in the western suburb

Mention has already been made of millers and perhaps bakers operating in the western area, and though these occupations were tied into the agricultural economy for their raw materials and ingredients respectively, they were based near the urban centre, because they relied on a consumer population. Suburbs often had a strong agricultural economy (Clarke, 1998: 56). Walter *Pistor* neighboured a plot which linked Thomas Street to Crockers' Street (Gilbert, 1889: 378), and was likely a baker. Nicholaus *Pistor de Herefordia*'s plot seems to have extended from Thomas Street to Crockers' Street also, suggesting that he too was a baker, rather than a miller (Gilbert, 1889: 398). One of his new neighbours was Robert *Sutor* whose surname suggests he was a tailor. Ricard *Figulus*, who was probably a potter, held land somewhere off the northern edge of Thomas Street (Gilbert, 1889: 395). He may have held a plot which linked Thomas Street to Crockers' Street like many of the plots along the northern edge of Thomas Street. Johann *Textor* was possibly a weaver, and held a plot adjoining two other plots somewhere on Thomas Street (Gilbert, 1889: 413). Johann *Telarius* who was probably a weaver also, held a plot on the southern edge of Thomas Street (Gilbert, 1889: 386). A felter, Hugo *le Feutrer* held land in the area also (Gilbert, 1889: 387). Ricard *Faber* was granted a plot on Thomas Street with a frontage of 27 feet (c.8.2m) and a depth the same as the neighbouring plots. Provision was made against fire destroying the 'houses' on the plot, suggesting that Faber was a blacksmith, his furnace being a fire hazard (Gilbert, 1889: 408). Situated on Thomas Street, he was aptly positioned to service the traffic moving to and from the city. Hosbert *Tanner* held a plot on James' Street (Gilbert, 1889: 412); tanners may have

been located on this margin of the suburb since tanning was an ill-smelling activity. Yet, the spin-off trades from tanning usually included “shoemakers, saddlers, harness makers,” and makers of “leather clothing, gloves, purses and girdles” (Bolton, 1980: 171). Ricard Carpentarius was granted a long, narrow plot between two other plots on Bridge Street (Gilbert, 1889: 414). As a carpenter, he was well situated for building fishing boats close to the river, and would have found ample employment constructing timber dwellings and outhouses in the western suburb. The reference to buildings being destroyed by fire and the rare specific mention of a stone house (Gilbert, 1889: 282) suggest that timber was widely used for house building, while stone was used occasionally. There is a “complete lack” of stone houses or cellars recorded for Bertram’s Court (Hayden, 2000: 102). Given the extensive woodland in the western area, timber was readily available, whereas stone needed to be quarried and so was more difficult and expensive to acquire. Indeed, a quarry (*lapicinum*, MS., indistinct) was situated beside one of the fields of the abbey (Gilbert, 1889: 3).

So, the newly developing western suburb was attracting millers and tanners along with more typical urban occupations such as bakers, weavers, tailors, potters, blacksmiths, and carpenters. Occupational clusters were emerging, with millers and bakers located on the northern edge of Thomas Street, their plots extending to Crockers’ Street. The potters’ quarter was situated somewhere in relation to Crockers’ Street. Also on Thomas Street, the two weavers and the tailor mentioned above were located. Tanners were operating on James’ Street. Some of the inhabitants must have been employed in the immense task of cultivating the expansive estate of St Thomas’ Abbey (Gilbert, 1889: 3).

Conclusion

Woodland characterised the area to the west of the city. A trackway, the *Slighe Mhór*, or “way directed towards Kilmainham” cut through this woodland landscape linking Dublin city with the interior of the country. The need and potential for urban expansion into the western extra-mural area was manifesting itself through development at Bertram’s Court next to Newgate. Then there was a change: co-incident with the foundation and initial years of the priory (soon becoming an abbey) of St Thomas the Martyr, the western area took on a thoroughly new form. An organised approach to development on a grand scale transformed this largely wooded rural landscape into a suburban streetscape. St Thomas’, itself situated a distance from the curtain wall was a catalyst for drawing settlement beyond the wall, utilising the ‘way directed towards Kilmainham’, so that development expanded westward in a linear plan. Soon, the ‘way directed towards Kilmainham’ became the ‘street of St Thomas’ and the ‘street of St James’. Burgage plots were granted on both sides of the ‘street’, and these plots were being laid out for the first time, in series of rows in a ladder pattern. St Thomas’ was involved at all levels in the transaction of grants concerning the western area. In addition, one parish, and then a second parish in the care of St Thomas’ were established, and these initiatives were a response to the growth of a supportive population in the area. The western suburb was attracting urban traders who occupied the long, narrow burgage plots lining the new streets, such as Thomas Street, James’ Street, and Bridge Street, and those on the northern edge of Thomas Street extended northwards to Crockers’ Street. Behind the plots, agriculture in the form of arable cultivation was carried on, together with connected activities such as milling. This was the initial layout of the western suburb, and the basis for all subsequent development in the centuries to follow.

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