

## **The Three Trout's River**

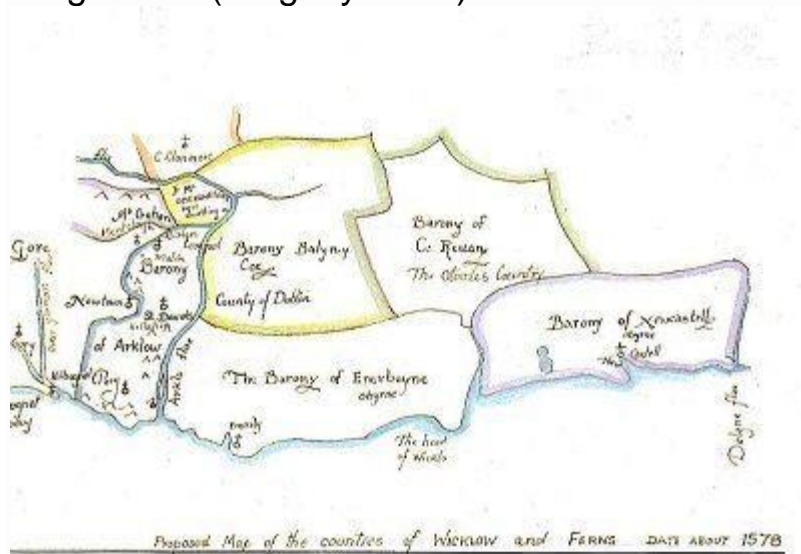
Most locals will know Three Trout's River; the small stream which flows southwards through the Glen of the Downs, then eastwards, south of Delgany, under the road bridge at Three Trouts Bridge, and under the Farrankelly Road, just north of

Charlesland and Seabourne Apartments. The stream is shallow, narrow, and hardly noticeable. But more than 400 years ago it briefly marked the boundary between County Dublin and the original County Wicklow.

Although only about two metres wide, the River is the boundary between the barony of Newcastle and the barony of Rathdown, a large barony stretching from Donnybrook to Three Trout's River. In the sixteenth century, before County Wicklow was created, the entire area, including the Wicklow Mountains, was in County Dublin. Back then Dublin stretched as far south as Arklow, which was then in County Carlow (Carlow had a sea boundary at that time). However, although in County Dublin, the area was controlled by the O'Byrnes, and the government had little control over it.

In the late 1570s Queen Elizabeth was planning to call a parliament. In an effort to avoid a Catholic-dominated parliament emerging, the government created two new counties (in 1579) – County Wicklow and County Ferns. County Ferns was tiny; it was created out of small parts of north Wexford and eastern Carlow and included the towns of Ferns and Arklow. County Wicklow ran from Three Trout's River in the north, to near Arklow in the south, and encompassed all of the O'Byrne country, including the Wicklow Mountains. A few years later (1585) an election was held, and the two counties returned 4 MPs – all government supporters. The MPs for County Wicklow were Sir Henry Harrington and Edward Brabazon.

The map shows the two counties; with Three Trout's River named as Delgne flue (Delgany River).



However, since County Wicklow essentially covered territory which was predominantly populated by Gaelic Irish, and contained no large Protestant settlements (the principal Protestant settlements in the area were around Bray, Delgany and Powerscourt, all of which are north of Three Trout's River, and so remained in south County Dublin) there were no trustworthy supporters to make the county function effectively. So, shortly after the election the two new counties were disbanded, and the old boundaries of counties Dublin, Carlow and Wexford restored. The new counties of Wicklow and Ferns only lasted about 7 years, but never really functioned, except for the purpose of electing the 4 MPs to the parliament. But for those 7 years tiny Three Trout's River was the county boundary between Wicklow and Dublin. So when you travel along Farrankelly Road and pass over Three Trouts River or along Kilcoole Road and cross Three Trouts Bridge you are crossing from one county into another, based on the old 1579-1585/6 boundary.

Following the collapse of the two counties the area was restored to County Dublin where it remained until 1606, when a new (second) County Wicklow was created, with the borders that we know

today (with some minor modifications). This time, however, it was recognised that the new county needed substantial Protestant settlements to function, so the new northern boundary of County Wicklow was plotted along the Dargle River, thereby transferring Bray, Powerscourt, Delgany and the Greystones area (Greystones town did not exist at that stage) into the new County Wicklow. County Ferns, of course, was never recreated.