

The Tankards of Tankardstown: Flemish or Norman?

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The onomastic importance of the personal name Tankard in Ireland is examined and its Cymro-Norman or Cymro-Flemish origins are discussed, the latter option being considered the more probable.

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The townland and, in two instances, parish name *Tankardstown* most likely derived from tenancies occupied by Tankards during the colonisation by the Normans in the thirteenth century. Since *Tankard* or *Tancard* was at this stage a personal rather than a family name, it is doubtful if these tenants were related to each other, bearing in mind also the wide distribution of the place-names. Some authorities give this name an English origin, 'English' in this context no doubt embracing Norman, pre-Norman English, or Flemish;¹ others more specifically state the name to be Norman.² There is, however, considerable evidence to suggest that the Irish Tankards were of Flemish origin.

To put the discussion in geographical context, Ireland has thirteen townlands named Tankardstown: three in Limerick, four in Meath, and one each in Kildare, Carlow, Dublin, Laois, Waterford and Cork. Meath also has a Tankardrath, Louth a Tankardsrock, and Kildare a Tankardsgarden. The name occurs as a parish in Limerick and Laois.³

One of the Limerick townlands is in the parish of Uregare, barony of Smallcounty, and has an area of about 311 acres. The other two, Tankardstown North and South, are about a mile south-east of Bruree, and have a total area of about 630 acres. They once formed part of the pre-Reformation parish of Tankardstown in the barony of Coshma, but are now part of Kilmallock parish. Joyce's work⁴ contains much information about the area: there was once a castle and a church (St. David's, dating from 1410)⁵ but nothing remains of either except the churchyard, the monumental inscriptions from which have been given by Joyce; however, the inscriptions are from 1760 on, and are therefore no help with the problem being considered here.

The dedication of the church to St. David, being rare in Ireland,⁶ is suggestive of a link with Pembrokeshire. Patronage was granted to Graney Convent in Kildare.⁷

This Limerick place-name first appears in extant records in 1280, when Anne de Cogan claimed it as dower from John le Penrys; other land-holders in the area about this time

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¹John O'Donovan, *Field Name Book of County Limerick 1839-40*, p. 1642; G. MacSpealáin, "Place-names of County Limerick" in *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 4(1944-45), 162.

²T. J. Westropp, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 33,C(1916), 492; Mannix Joyce, *Bruree: The History of Bruree district, i.e., the history of the parish of Bruree and of the old parish of Tankardstown*, Bruree 1973, p. 34.

³*The Census of Ireland: General Alphabetical Index to the townlands and towns, parishes and baronies of Ireland*, Dublin 1861, p. 860.

⁴Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-36.

⁵T. J. Westropp, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 25,C(1904-05), 422.

⁶S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the British Saints*, London 1908, Vol. II, p. 305. This work mentions only one church in Ireland dedicated to St. David, that at Naas, Co. Kildare; John O'Hanlon, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, Dublin, n.d., Vol. III, p. 51, lists, as well as Naas, the parish of Ardnurcher, Co. Westmeath.

⁷Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

included De Lacys, Russells and Goulds.⁸ Two of these families appear to have had links with areas of Wales associated with Flemings: Le Penrys with Penrice in Gower, and Russell with Pembrokeshire.⁹ In 1307 John, son of Tankard, held freehold in Tankardstown.¹⁰ According to Westropp,¹¹ early records show that a Tankard held a free tenancy at Kilfinnan in 1252, while there is evidence of others with the name in Meath¹² and Louth¹³ around 1300. Research in the other counties where the townland occurs seems likely to find further evidence of Tankard tenancies.

The case for Flemish origins rests partly on the fact that the Norman invasion force contained a significant contingent of Flemings from Pembrokeshire.¹⁴ The Welsh Flemings are likely to have contributed also to the colonisation of those parts occupied by the invaders. It is possible that members of the Flemish community in Lanarkshire (referred to below) also took part in the movement to Ireland.

The Flemish colony in Pembrokeshire was established by Henry I at the beginning of the twelfth century. The new settlers virtually supplanted the Welsh in an area centred on Haverfordwest, and new place-names, often based on personal names, came into use.¹⁵

Evidence from personal name studies supports the view that *Tankard* was used by Flemish immigrants, and, more significantly, was used more frequently and earlier by those who settled in Pembrokeshire. The earliest instance from the British Isles would appear to be the castellan of Haverfordwest (who died c.1130).¹⁶ Another Tankard gave his name to a large estate eight miles from Haverfordwest, formerly Tankardiston but now Tancredston.¹⁷ Later instances are the archdeacon of Carmarthen (1247),¹⁸ Tankard de la Roche (1282) and the sheriff of Pembroke (1290).¹⁹

From twelfth century Lanarkshire, in what was apparently another Flemish colony, a Tankard gave his name to another Tankardiston which is now known as Thankerton.²⁰ In Suffolk in 1175 there was one *Tankardus Flandrensis*, the first instance of the name in England so far discovered.²¹ After this date, however, the name appears more widely in English documents, appearing in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Oxfordshire.²² Further research on the frequency as well as the distribution of the name would be needed to confirm the situation, but the above data certainly indicate extensive Flemish usage.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁹Richard Roche, *The Norman Invasion of Ireland*, Dublin 1970, p. 56. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 34, mentions a Tankardus Russell in 1325; if he was a Norman, this could be an instance of Norman usage of the name *Tankard*. Perhaps he borrowed the name from his Flemish neighbours?

¹⁰*Cal. Justiciary Rolls of Ireland, Edward I, Part II*, p. 431.

¹¹T. J. Westropp, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 33,C(1916), 471.

¹²*Cal. Justiciary Rolls of Ireland, Edward I, Part I*, p. 165.

¹³A. J. Otway-Ruthven, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 66,C(1968), 434.

¹⁴G. H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans*, Oxford 1920, Vol. I, pp. 396-8; J. R. S. Phillips, "The Anglo-Norman Nobility" in James Lydon (ed.) *The English in Medieval Ireland*, Dublin 1984, p. 90.

¹⁵John E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, London 1911, Vol. II, pp. 424-425.

¹⁶Gerald of Wales, *Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales*, Harmondsworth 1978, pp. 143-145.

¹⁷Bertie C. Charles, *Non-Celtic Place-names in Wales*, London 1938, p. 28. Mr. John Owen, Asst. Archivist at Haverfordwest, supplied the location of this estate; he also expressed the view that it was probably not associated with Tankard the castellan, because of its location and likely date of origin (personal communication, 17/9/1984).

¹⁸*Cal. Patent Rolls (1232-1247)*, p. 500.

¹⁹Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁰Robert L. G. Ritchie, *The Normans in Scotland*, Edinburgh 1954, pp. 374-377; Geoffrey W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, London 1973, pp. 288-290, and *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History*, Oxford 1980, pp. 44-45; George V. Irving, *The Upper Ward of Lanarkshire*, Glasgow 1844, pp. 474-8.

²¹P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, London 1976, p. 343.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 343; Thorvald Forssner, *Continental-Germanic Personal Names in England*, Uppsala 1916, p. 227.

The possibility remains, however, that the Flemings may have copied the name from the Normans. The continental evidence as to history and distribution is worth reviewing, although it is regrettably inconclusive.

It is important to distinguish at this point between the names *Tankard* and *Tancred*, for the two have at times been regarded as inter-changeable, that is, as alternate names for the same person.²³ Evidence suggests that in the Middle Ages this was not the custom, and authorities on early personal names treat the two as distinct, each with its own history, distribution and derivation.²⁴ The point is worth making because of the fame of the Norman family of Tancredi de Hauteville. In later periods and in some areas the two names seem to have been confused with one another (e.g. Tancredston replaced Tankardston in Pembrokeshire) but in medieval Ireland *Tankard* or *Tancard* seems to have been consistently used in relation to the tenants possibly associated with places called Tankardstown.²⁵

Although both *Tankard* and *Tancred* are of continental Germanic origin, there are significant differences between them. *Thancrad*, from which *Tancred* is apparently derived, occurs as early as the eighth century, and continues to be found more frequently and over a wider area than *Thanchard*, *Tankward* or *Tanquard*, which were the early forms of *Tankard*; the latter do not appear before the ninth century, and then in a small area of Saxony.²⁶ Both names spread to the West Frankish kingdom, *Tancred* by the ninth century; *Tanquardus* has been found at Macon (938) and at Cluny (957).²⁷ The next instance is of particular interest in the present context, for it comes from Normandy. At the *Abbaye de la Trinité*, in Caen, a monk *Tanquardus* died in 1113. Unfortunately the source²⁸ does not say where he came from before entering the *Abbaye*; he may well have been Flemish, for there had been close links between monasteries in Flanders and those in Normandy.²⁹ This one instance does not make a very strong case for Norman use of the name.

On the other hand, Morlet's work does not reveal one instance of *Tankard* from Flanders. Two possible reasons for this are: (1) The name seems to have been rare in continental sources before 1200, and this rarity very likely extended to the Flemish region also; (2) Morlet used only one source for this area.³⁰ There appears to be a lack of published studies of personal names in Flanders before 1200. According to Winkler,³¹ *Tankard* (in Dutch *Dankard*) spread into the Netherlands from France, but he gives no dates. Another

²³MacSpealáin, *op. cit.*, p. 162; Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁴Forssner, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-8; Ernst Foerstermann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch*, Bonn 1900, Vol. I, cols. 1403-5; Marie-Thérèse Morlet, *Les Noms de Personne sur le territoire de l'ancienne Gaule du VI^e au XII^e siècle*, Paris 1968, Vol. I, p. 65. Dr. Edward MacLysaght, in his *The Surnames of Ireland*, 6th edition, Dublin 1985, p. 283, comments as follows: "Numerous and prominent in Leinster in mediaeval times Tankard is now very rare. Tancred is used as a synonym, though often of different derivation: Tankard is maker of tankards, Tancred from Old-German *tancrad* (thought counsel). See Hankard"—on p. 145, referring to Hankard, he says: "This is a local form of the Norman Tancred, elsewhere anglicized Tankard. Families of Hankard have been in south-east Cork since the sixteenth century and were known in Irish as *na hAncardaigh*."

²⁵An observation from Mr. P. Ó Cearbhaill, Place-Names Officer, Ordnance Survey Office (personal communication, 23/7/1984).

²⁶Foerstermann, *op. cit.*, cols. 1403 and 1405.

²⁷Morlet, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²⁸L. Delisle (p.p.) *Rouleaux des morts du IX^e au XV^e siècle*, Paris 1866, XXXVI, 73.

²⁹David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London 1964, pp. 106-107.

³⁰M. Gysseling (ed.), *Diplomata Belgica ante millesimum centesimum scripta*, Brussels 1950.

³¹J. Winkler, *Friesche Naamlijst*, Leeuwarden 1898, p. 58.

source indicates that the name was in use in Holland by 1244.³² Le Neve's comment that *Tankred* was "a great name among the Danes when in England"³³ appears to be without foundation.³⁴

The rarity of the name in early continental sources contrasts with its incidence among Flemish immigrants to Britain, and would seem to support the view that the Irish use of *Tankard* derived from Flemings, probably mostly coming via Wales. More research is obviously needed, however, to assess with greater precision the location, frequency and identity of those using this name in Britain, Ireland and Flanders, particularly during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

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POSTSCRIPT

Since submitting the above to the *Journal*, I have done further research, including a visit to Haverfordwest, in Wales, where the Record Office has a collection of deeds and court archives beginning in the latter half of the thirteenth century. These show six persons with the surname *Tankard* in the area between 1273 and 1304; these had been listed by the Archivist, but were not the result of a detailed study, which may find more instances.

A second instance of *Tankard* from Normandy appears in Ordericus Vitalis: *Historia Ecclesiastica* (trans. Thomas Forester, London 1856, Vol. II, p. 67). This was the prior of Fécamp who became abbot of Jumièges in 1096.

The following is a list of the distribution of *Tankard/Tancard* in England up to 1300 A.D., based on Patent, Close, Fine, Curia Regis, Pipe and Hundred Rolls, together with the findings of Reaney and Forssner (see footnotes 21 and 22 above); where possible, the county is followed by town or village, and after this, the date and source:

SUFFOLK (1175, *Pipe Roll*); YORKSHIRE, Birdforth (1185, *Records of the Templars in England in the 12th century*, ed. B. A. Lees), York (1189, *Freemen of York*), (1195-97 *Pipe Roll*); GLOUCESTERSHIRE, Bristol (1185, Lees *op. cit.*); OXFORDSHIRE (1190 *Pipe Roll*); LINCOLNSHIRE, Lincoln (1202 *Pipe Roll*); LANCASHIRE (1202 *Assize Roll*); WARWICKSHIRE, Withybrook (1294 *Patent Roll*); Warwick (1297 *Patent Roll*); SOMERSET, Somerton (1273 *Hundred Roll*); NORTHUMBERLAND, Plessey (1253 *Close Roll*).

In two other instances no location is given, but one of them is linked to the Count of Warwick (*Curia Regis Roll* 1201) and the other to the Earl of Hereford (1284 *Patent Roll*).

Lastly, another *Tankardus Flandrensis* appears in the *Patent Roll* of 1357.

³²J. van de Schaar, *Uit de wordingsgeschiedenis der Hollandse doop-en familiennamen*, Assen 1953, 133. Me. Morlet supplied this reference, which I do not myself have access to (the same applies to fns. 28, 30 and 31 above).

³³Peter Le Neve, *Baronets*, Vol. III, p. 114.

³⁴Professor G. Fellows-Jensen has advised me that she knows of no evidence of Viking use of either *Tancred* or *Tankard*, and she considers the names to have been extremely rare in Britain before Norman times (personal communication, 25/10/1985).