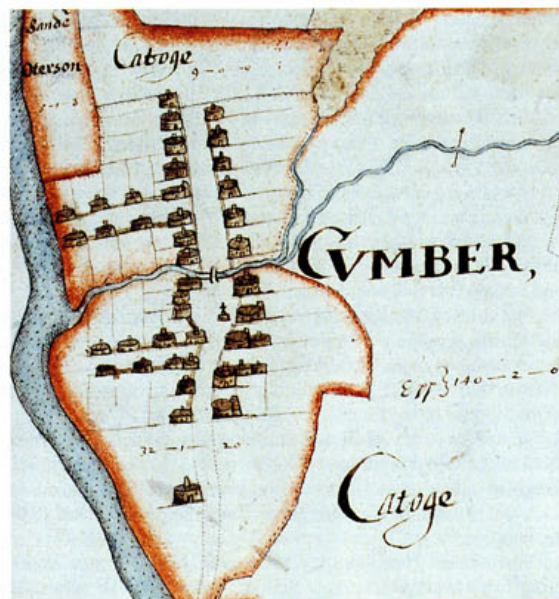




Hoping for a bite at the old five-arch Kennel Bridge, demolished in 1995.

fine old bridge, a popular spot for fishing, was demolished and replaced in 1995 by an award-winning, single arched structure, which incorporates one of the original stones, a stone that bears a mason's mark.

Not to be outdone, Sir James Hamilton built a completely new village in his part of the parish, on what is now the Ballydrain Road. This became known as New Comber, as opposed to Owld Comber for the original settlement around the abbey. The name is still retained in New Comber Bridge and New Comber House. Hamilton's 'rival' village was a considerable settlement. A map, made by Thomas Raven in 1625, shows forty-two detached cottages, laid out in one main street and two side streets. This would have made it one of the largest villages in Ulster, with almost as many houses as a town such as Holywood. Bangor had some eighty houses at the time, while Montgomery's Newtownards had around one hundred. Each cottage had a long strip of land for growing vegetables. North of the bridge is a square, containing a mercat (or market) cross. On the south side of the village was a ball green, on which stood what looks like either a maypole or gibbet. The residence of Robert Hamilton, nephew of Lord Claneboye, is marked. That Hamilton should settle his nephew here is a clear sign of his commitment to



The competition. 'New Comber', from the 1625 Raven maps. Strangely enough, south is to the top. Note the 'mercat cross'.

the place. Hamilton was determined to make his wing of the parish burgeon. We know almost nothing more about this interesting but doomed settlement. When Owld Comber was relaunched in 1731, New Comber declined and in time ceased to exist.

Both Combers were shaken to their foundations by the rebellion of 1641. Hugh Montgomery had died in 1636, and two Comber men, Thomas Kennedy and John Lockart, led his funeral procession. It was therefore left to his son Hugh, the second viscount, to look to the defence of his tenants. He received a commission as colonel, and authority to muster one thousand foot and five troops of horse, which he paid for. Hamilton, now in his eighties, also raised a regiment. In February 1642 Comber came