

Irish Local Names Explained

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Tuallam timcheall na fóbla

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PREFACE

THIS little volume is a key that will help to open many locks.

It contains a vocabulary of the root words from which Irish place names are most generally formed. It also contains a considerable selection of those names that are best known through the country, and which best exemplify the use of the root words.

By the aid of the roots and examples it will be easy to discover the proper forms and meanings of hundreds of place names not mentioned in the following pages.

Now that an active interest is being taken in the native and correct forms of our place names, this little book cannot fail to be of practical use.

Should more exhaustive information on the subject be desired, it will be found in *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places* by the same author.

IRISH LOCAL NAMES EXPLAINED.



THE PROCESS OF ANGLICISING.

1. SYSTEMATIC CHANGES.

Irish pronunciation preserved.—In anglicising Irish names, the leading general rule is, that the present forms are derived from the ancient Irish, as they were spoken, not as they were written. Those who first committed them to writing, aimed at preserving the original pronunciation, by representing it as nearly as they were able in English letters.

Generally speaking, this principle explains the alterations that were made in the spelling of names, in the process of reducing them from ancient to modern forms; and allowing for the difficulty of representing Irish words by English letters, it will be found that, on the whole, the ancient pronunciation is fairly preserved.

Aspiration.—The most common causes of change in the reduction of Irish names, are aspiration and eclipsis. Some of the Irish consonants are, in certain situations, subject to what is called aspiration; it is indicated by the letter *h*, and it always changes the sound of the consonants.

B and *m* aspirated (*bh*, *mh*) are both sounded like *v* or *w*, and, consequently, where we find *bh* or *mh* in an Irish name, we generally have *v* or *w* in the English form: examples, Ardvally in Donegal and Sligo, in Irish *Ard-bhaile*, high town; Ballinwully in Roscommon, *Baile-an-mhullaigh*, the town of the summit

(*mullach*). Sometimes they are represented by *f* in English, as in Boherduff, *Bothar-dubh*, black road : and often they are suppressed, especially in the end of words, or between two vowels, as in Knockdoo, *Cnoc-dubh*, black hill, the same as Knockduff in other places.

For *c* aspirated see page 4.

D and *g* aspirated (*d^h*, *g^h*), have a faint guttural sound, not existing in English, and they are consequently generally unrepresented in anglicised names; as in Lisnalee, *Lios-na-laegh*, the fort of the calves.

F aspirated (*f^h*) totally loses its sound in Irish, and of course is omitted in English; as in Knockanree in Wicklow, *Cnoc-an-fhraeigh*, the hill of the heath.

P aspirated is represented by *f*; as in Ballinfoyle, *Baile-an-phoill*, the town of the hole, the same as Ballinphuill and Ballinphull elsewhere.

S and *t* aspirated (*sh*, *th*) both sound the same as English *h*; as in Drumhillagh in Cavan and Monaghan, *Druim-shaileach*, the ridge of the shallows, the same name as Drumsillagh in other counties, in which the original *s* sound is retained.

Eclipsis.—An eclipsed consonant has its sound altogether suppressed, the sound of another consonant which is prefixed, being heard instead. Thus when *d* is eclipsed by *n*, it is written *n-d*, but the *n* alone is pronounced. The eclipsed letter is of course always omitted in English.

When a noun is used in the genitive plural, with the article prefixed, its initial consonant is eclipsed. Each consonant has a special eclipsing letter of its own.

B is eclipsed by *m*; Knocknamoe, the name of a place in Queen's County, represents the Irish *Cnoc-na-mbo*, the hill of the cows.

C is eclipsed by *g*; as in Cloonnagashel near Ballinrobe, which ought to have been anglicised Coolnagashel, for the Four Masters write the name *Cuil na-gcaiseal*, the corner of the *cashels* or stone forts.

D and *g* are both eclipsed by *n*; as in Mullananallog in Monaghan, *Mullach-na-ndeadg*, the summit of the thorns or thorn bushes.

F is eclipsed by *sh*, which is represented by *v* in

English; as in Carrignavar in Cork, which is in Irish *Carraig-na-bhfear*, the rock of the men.

P is eclipsed by *b*; as in Gortnaboul in Kerry and Clare, *Gort-na-bpoll*, the field of the holes.

S is eclipsed by *t*, in the genitive singular with the article; as in Ballintaggart, *Baile-an tsagairt*, the town of the priest.

T is eclipsed by *d*; as in Lisnadurk in Fermanagh *Lios-na-dtoire*, the fort of the doars.

2. CORRUPTIONS.

While the majority of names have been modernized in accordance with the principle of preserving the pronunciation, great numbers on the other hand have been contracted and corrupted in a variety of ways. Some of these corruptions took place in the Irish language; but far the greatest number were introduced by the English-speaking people in transferring the words from the Irish to the English language. The following are some of the principal corruptions.

Interchange of l, m, n, r. The interchange of these letters is common in Irish and English, as well as in other languages. We find *l* very often substituted for *r*; as in Shrule, Shruel, Struell, Sroohill, in all of which the final consonant sound should be that of *r*, for they are derived from *Sruthair* [sruher], a stream.

N is sometimes, but not often, changed to *l*, as in Castleconnell near Limerick, which is the castle of the O'Connings, not of the O'Connells, as the present form of the name would indicate.

The change of *n* to *r* is of frequent occurrence, as in Kilmacrenan in Donegal, which should have been called Kilmacnenan, for the Irish authorities write it *Cill-mac-nEnain*, which Colgan translates the church of the sons of Enan, who were contemporaries and relatives of St. Columba.

The change of *l* to *r* is not very common, but we find it in Ballysakeery in Mayo, which is written by Mac-Firbis, *Baile-easa-caoile* [Ballysakeely], the town of the narrow cataract.

M and *n* are occasionally interchanged. For example, the barony of Glenquin in Limerick, should have been called Glenquim, for the Irish is *Gleann-a'-chuim*, the glen of the *cum* or hollow. Kilmainham near Dublin is called Kilmannan by Boate, which is more correct than the present form. The name signifies the church of St. Mainen (Irish *Maighnenn*), who was bishop and abbot there in the seventh century.

Change of ch and th, to f. The guttural sound of *c* aspirated (*ch*) does not exist in English, and in anglicised names it is occasionally changed to *f*; for example, Knocktopher in Kilkenny, is from the Irish *Cnoc-a'-tochair*, the hill of the *togher* or causeway. *F* is also sometimes substituted for *th*; thus, Tiscoffin in Kilkenny took its name from an old church called *Tigh-scoithin* [Tee-Scoheen], the house of St. Scoithin, who erected his primitive church here towards the close of the sixth century.

Substitution of g for d. *D* aspirated is often changed to *g*; as in Drumgonnelly in Louth, which should have been anglicised Drumdonnelly, for the Irish is *Druim-Dhonghaile*, the ridge or long hill of the Donnellys.

Addition of d after n; and of b after m. The letter *d* is often corruptly placed after *n*;—as we find in case of Rathfryland in Down, which is called in Irish *Rath-Fraeileann*, Freelan's fort. *B* is also often placed after *m*; as in Cumber or Comber, the names of several places in the northern counties; the Irish word is *Comar*, which signifies the confluence of two waters, and it is correctly anglicised Cummer and Comer in many other names.

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The following abbreviations have been used in quoting authorities for the Irish forms:—

- "F. M.," The Annals of the Four Masters.
- "Book of R.," The Book of Rights (*Leabhar-na-gCeart*).
- "Hy F.," The Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachrach.
- "O'Dugan," The topographical Poems of O'Dugan and O'Heeren.
- "O'C. Cal.," O'Clery's Calendar of Irish Saints, or, The Martyrology of Donegal.
- "Wars of GG.," The Wars of the *Gaedhil* with the *Gaill* (of the Irish with the Danes).
- "Mart. Tam.," The Martyrology of Tallaght.

The Irish forms are always in Italics. The Irish root words are fully explained in the Vocabulary at the end of the book.

The pronunciation of the principal Irish words is given in brackets, as nearly as can be represented by English letters.

Abbeyfeale in Limerick; *Mainistir-na-Feile*, the monastery or abbey of the river Feale.

Abbeygormican in Galway; the abbey of the O'Cormacans.

Abbeylara or Lara in Longford, *Leath-rath*, F. M. [Lah-rah], half rath or fort.

Abbeyleix; the abbey of the old principality of Leix, so called from a monastery founded there in 1183 by Conor O'Moore. In the reign of Felim the Lawgiver (A. D. 111 to 119), this territory was given by the king of Leinster to *Lughaidh Laeighseach* [Lewy Leeshagh], Conall Carnach's grandson, for helping to expel the Munstermen who had seized on Ossory. Lewy's descendants, the O'Moores, took from him the tribe name, *Laeighis* [Leesh], and their territory was called by the same name, now modernized to Leix.

Abbeyshrule in Longford; from a monastery founded there by one of the O'Farrells. It was anciently called *Sruthair* [Sruher], F. M., i. e. the stream, of which Shrule is a corruption.

Abbeystrowry in Cork; the same name as the last. The *sruthair* or stream from which it was called, gave name also to Bealnashrura (the *beal* or ford-mouth of the stream) a village situated at an ancient ford.

- Achenry** in Sligo, *Achadh-Chonaire* [Aha-Conary], F. M., Conary's field.
- Adare** in Limerick; *Ath-dara* [Ah-dara], F. M., the ford of the oak tree. A large oak must have anciently overshadowed the old ford on the Maigue.
- Addergoole**, **Addragool**, **Adrigole**, **Adrigoole**; *Eadar-dha-ghabhal* [Adragoul], i. e. (a place) between two (river) forks.
- Aderrig**; *Ath-dearg*, red ford. See Aghaderg.
- Affane** on the Blackwater below Cappoquin; *Ath-mheadhon*, [Ah-vane], F. M., middle ford.
- Agha** in several counties; *Achadh* [Aha], a field.
- Aghaboe** in Queen's County, where St. Canice of Kilkenny had his principal church. Adamnan in his *Life of St. Columkille*, written in the seventh century, has the following passage, which settles the meaning:—"St. Canice being in the monastery which is called in Latin *Campulus bovis* (i. e. the field of the cow), but in Irish *Ached-bou*."
- Aghaboy**; *Achadh-buidhe* [Aha-boy], yellow field.
- Aghacross** near Kildorrery in Cork; the ford of the cross; probably from a cross erected in connexion with St. Molaga's adjacent establishment, to mark a ford on the Funcheon. See Templemolaga.
- Aghada** near Cork; *Ath-fhada* [Ahada], long ford.
- Aghaderg**; *Ath-dearg*, red ford. See Aderrig.
- Aghadoe** near Killarney; *Achadh-dá-eó* [Aha-daw-o], F. M., the field of the two yew trees.
- Aghadowey** in Derry; *Achadh-Dubhthaigh* [Ahaduffy], O'C. Cal., Duffy's field.
- Aghadown** and **Aghadoon**; the field of the *dun* or fort.
- Aghadreen**, **Aghadreenagh**, **Aghadreenan**, **Aghadrinagh**; the field of the *dreens* or sloe bushes (*draeighean*).
- Aghafad**, **Aghafadda**; long field.
- Aghagallon**; the field of the *gallan* or standing stone.
- Aghagower** in Mayo; the correct name would be Aghafower, for the ancient form, as found in the old *Lives of St. Patrick*, is *Achadh-fobhair*, the field of the spring, from a celebrated well, now called St. Patrick's well. The present form is written in Hy F., *Achadh-gabhair*, which means the field of the goat.

- Aghamore; *Achadh-mór*, great field.
 Aghanloo; *Athan-Lugha*, Lugh's or Lewy's little ford.
 Aghavea in Fermanagh; *Achaah-beithe* [Ahabehy],
 F. M., the field of the birch trees.
 Aghaveagh in Donegal and Tyrone; same as last.
 Aghavilla, Aghaville, Aghavilly; *Achadh-bhíle*, the
 field of the *bíle* or old tree.
 Aghaviller in Kilkenny; *Achadh-biorair* [Ahabirrer],
 F. M., the field of the watercresses (*r* changed to *l*).
 Aghindarragh in Tyrone; the field of the oak.
 Aghintamy near Monaghan; *Achadh-an-tsamhaidh*, the
 field of the sorrel.
 Aghmacart in Queen's County; the field of Art's son.
 Aghnamullen in Monaghan; the field of the mills.
 Aghnaskea, Aghnaskeagh, Aghnaskeew; *Achadh-na-
 sceach*, the field of the white-thorn bushes.
 Aghowle in Wicklow; *Achadh-abhla*, the field of the
 apple trees.
 AGLISH; *Eaglais* [aglish], a church.
 AGLISHCLOGHANE in Tipperary; the church of the *clogh-
 aun* or row of stepping stones.
 AGLISHCORMICK in Limerick; St. Cormac's church.
 AGLISHDRINAGH in Cork; *Eaglais-draeighneach*, the church
 of the *dreens* or sloe bushes.
 AGOLAGH in Antrim; *Ath-gobhlach*, forked ford.
 AHANE, AHAUN; *Athán*, little ford.
 AHAPHUCA; the ford of the *pooka* or spright.
 AHASCRAGH in Galway; *Ath-easrach*, F. M., the ford of
 the *esker* or sand-hill.
 AILLE; *Aill*, a cliff.
 ALLEEN; *Aillin*, a little cliff.
 ALT; *Alt*, a height, the side of a glen.
 ALTAN; little cliff or glen side.
 ALTATURK; the glen side of the boar (*tore*).
 ALTAVILLA; the glen side of the *bíle* or old tree.
 ALTINURE; *Alt-an-iubhair* [yure], the glen side of the
 yew tree.
 ALTNAVEAGH and ALTNAVEIGH; *Alt-na-bhfiach*, the cliff or
 glen side of the *fiachs* or ravens.
 ANNA; same as ANNAGH, which see.

- Annabella near Mallow; *Eanach-bilë*, the marsh of the *bilë* or old tree.
- Annacлоне; the marsh of the meadow (*cluain*).
- Annacotty near Limerick; *Ath-na-coite*, the ford of the *cot* or little boat.
- Annacramph in Armagh and Monaghan; *Eanach-creamha*, the marsh of the wild garlic.
- Annaduff; *Eanach-dubh*, F. M., black marsh.
- Annagh; *Eanach*, a marsh.
- Annaghaskin in Dublin, near Bray; *Eanach-easgann*, the marsh of the eels.
- Annaghsbeg, Annaghsmore; little marsh, great marsh.
- Annahagh, Annahaia in Monaghan and Armagh; *Ath-na-haithe*, the ford of the kiln (*aith*).
- Annahavil; *Eanach-abhail*, the marsh of the orchard (*abhail*).
- Annahilt in Down; *Eanach-eilte*, the marsh of the doe (*eilt*).
- Annakisha; the ford of the *kish* or wickerwork causeway.
- Annalong in Down; *Ath-na-long*, the ford of the ships (*long*): the ford was near the place where vessels used to be moored or anchored.
- Annamoe in Wicklow; *Ath-na-mbo*, the ford of the cows (*bo*).
- Anny; same as Annagh, which see.
- Arboe in Tyrone; *Ard-bo*, the cow's height.
- Ard; high; a height.
- Ardagh; *Ard-achadh* [Ard-aha], high field.
- Ardaghy; same as Ardagh.
- Ardan, Ardane, Ardaun; little *ard* or height.
- Ardara in Donegal; *Ard-a'-raith*, the height of the rath, from a hill near the village, on which stands a conspicuous fort.
- Ardataggle, Ardateggle; *Ard-a'-tseagail*, the height of the rye (*seagal*).
- Ardbane, Ardbaun; white height.
- Ardbeg; little height.
- Ardbraccan in Meath; St. Breacan's height. St. Breacan erected a church here in the sixth century, some