IRISH LOCAL NAMES EXPLAINED

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BY

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Tꞃiallam timceall na Foðla

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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 altera-
tions 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 Roscom
mon, *Baile-an-mhullaigh*, the town of the summit

B

(*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 (*dh, gh*), have a faint guttural
sound, not existing in English, and they are conse-
quently generally unrepresented in anglicised names;
as in Lisnalee, *Lios-na-laegh*, the fort of the calves.

F aspirated (*fh*) 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 Bal-
linphuill 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 sallows, the same
name as Drumsillagh in other counties, in which the
original *s* sound is retained.

Eclipsis.—An eclipsed consonant has its sound alto-
gether 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 Ballin-
robe, 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-ndealg*, the summit of the
thorns or thorn bushes.

F is eclipsed by *bh*, 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-dtorc*, the fort of the boars.

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. Taml.," 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 Felimy 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, *Lasighis* [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 fordmouth of the stream) a village situated at an ancient ford.

Achonry 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 an-
ciently 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 Kil-
kenny had his principal church. Adamnan in his
Life of St. Columkille, written in the seventh cen-
tury, 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 Agha-
fower, 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.