

**Journal of the Cork Historical and  
Archaeological Society**

www.corkhist.ie

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Title: Local names

Author: Various

*Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 1892, Vol. 1, No 2,  
page(s) 40-41

Published by the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

Digital file created: June 7, 2013

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## Local Names.

### TOPOGRAPHICAL AND PERSONAL.

#### OUR ANCESTRY.

COUNTY CORK is divided into 23 baronies, again into 243 parishes, subdivided into 5,478 townlands, each having its distinctive name. The townland or field nomenclature, in the descriptive language of the Celtæ, is chiefly derived from the natural features of the particular locality, as *Adrigole*, "a place between two forks"; *Aghada*, "long ford"; *Annagh*, "a marsh," etc. Many have different forms of the same name, which have undergone change, either by prefixes or affixes, or by incorporation with another word. A large number are interesting from an archæological and historical point of view. According to antiquarian conjecture, they identify localities associated with the hagiology of the district, the forts and raths of the ancient Irish, the folk-lore and traditions from remote antiquity, and, not unfrequently, with important facts in local history.

The *Kil (Cil)* of the holy recluse—"the light of the early Christian Church"—is often compounded with the name of the saint, as *Kilroan*, "the cell of St. Ruadhan," and the *Cahir, Dun, Dungan, Lis*, and *Rath* with the name of the old septs; and often with topographical terms, as *Aghadown*, "the field of the dun" or fort. *Bally*, a corruption of the Irish *Baile*, "a town," is the prefix to a considerable number of townlands, and would seem to indicate the existence of a town or village there at some period of history. Many of these etymologies are, of course, open to criticism.

We have the authority of Dr. John Donovan, the distinguished Celtic scholar and editor of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, for placing the landing of the first inhabitants of Ireland at Dunnamarke, on Bantry Bay, county Cork. They came from the East. Many mythical races are recorded by Irish bards as having colonized Ireland from time to time. Among these were "Nemedians," who were afterwards enslaved by a colony of African pirates called "Formorians." Of the early inhabitants of Ireland, whose archaic remains, characteristic of the "Stone Age," still largely exist after the lapse of ages, the Cymbri, or Cimmerii, and other tribes of the Celtæ, are generally supposed to have been the most ancient. Some anthropologists, however, believe the aborigines were of the Turanian (Finnish) family. The Celts were followed by successive immigrations of Firlbolgs (Belgians, "men of quivers"); Tuatha Dé Danaans (Teutones, *Tuath-Daoiné*, "men of the north"), from Germany; and the Milesians (Clan Milly), a colony from Spain. With the Tuatha Dé Danaans, who introduced the working of metals into Ireland, commenced the "Age of Bronze," and to them the Celtic tribes were probably indebted for their naval art. They

were a Gothic race, totally different in language, customs, and religious rites, to the Celtæ. In Irish folk-lore, they had power over the elements; they were gods; and as fairies they still inhabit the recesses of mountains and glens, and the old forts and raths of which they were probably the builders. Ogham inscribed stones (resembling the runes of ancient Germany and Scandinavia), usually attributed to the Druids of the Celts, are frequently found built into these structures.<sup>(1)</sup> That an invasion of Ireland from Spain took place before the Christian era scarcely admits of doubt. The *Psalter of Cashel* places the Milesian conquest about B.C. 1300, from which time they were the governing power, until the arrival of the Danes in the 9th, and the Normans in the 12th centuries. The Danes built fortified towns, and the power of the Fitzgeralds and other Norman families completely overshadowed that of the native princes. The English element was further strengthened after the great Desmond rebellion in the 16th century, when they were settled on the forfeited lands in large numbers; and again after the war of the Commonwealth.

Pagan Ireland possessed, perhaps, one of the most advanced civilizations of the Western World, with a system of education, a code of laws, and a regularly-constituted priesthood. The government was by elective or tanist chief king, and provincial and petty kings, divisible into small tribes or septs. They kept cattle, were tillers of the soil, and artificers in gold, silver, and brass, but had no cities or large towns. Their worship had an affinity to the ancient mythology of the Persians and Hindus, and both the Celts and the northern invaders were sun or fire worshippers, and offered human sacrifices. The round towers, still a *crux* to antiquaries, are believed by many to be connected with pagan worship.

Surnames were first adopted by the Irish in the reign of Brian Boru (11th century), and were commonly deduced from the name of the principal ancestor, with "O" and "Mac" annexed. Celtic derivations form the largest class of surnames, and Scandinavian and English names have been celticized in form by receiving the prefix "Mac" or "O." Spenser states that many families in Ireland, supposed to be native Irish, were really of English origin, but, "for private despite," they cast off the English name and allegiance, and took on the Irish habits. There is a considerable intermixture of English surnames, by reason of the English settlements, and instances of the changing or anglicizing of Irish surnames are also very numerous.

The various points of information summarized above will be collected, from their present scattered and isolated sources, for further observations and corrections, and, with the aid of workers in this field of investigation, much fresh information will, doubtless, from time to time, be brought to light.

(1) Commonly called "Dane's" *forts* by the peasantry; the name surmised to be a corruption of "Danaan's" *forts*.

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