

**SNSBI**  
**(Pen-y-bont)**  
15/3/2023

**Native Irish surnames in Irish townland names**

# Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich

*An Brainse Logainmneacha / The Placenames Branch*

*An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán/*

*The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.*

## The Placenames Branch (DTCAGSM):

Website: *logainm.ie* (managed by the Placenames Branch,  
Fiontar, Gaois & School of Irish (DCU))

Placenames in the Database: c.126,605

County: 32 Historical Counties (All-Ireland)

Baronies (Blue lines): 345 (Historical units of administration)

Townland (Grey lines): 61,107 (smallest administrative unit)

**Since the foundation of the Irish Freestate (26 counties) in 1922 the official form of most placenames has been in English, with only few exceptions.**

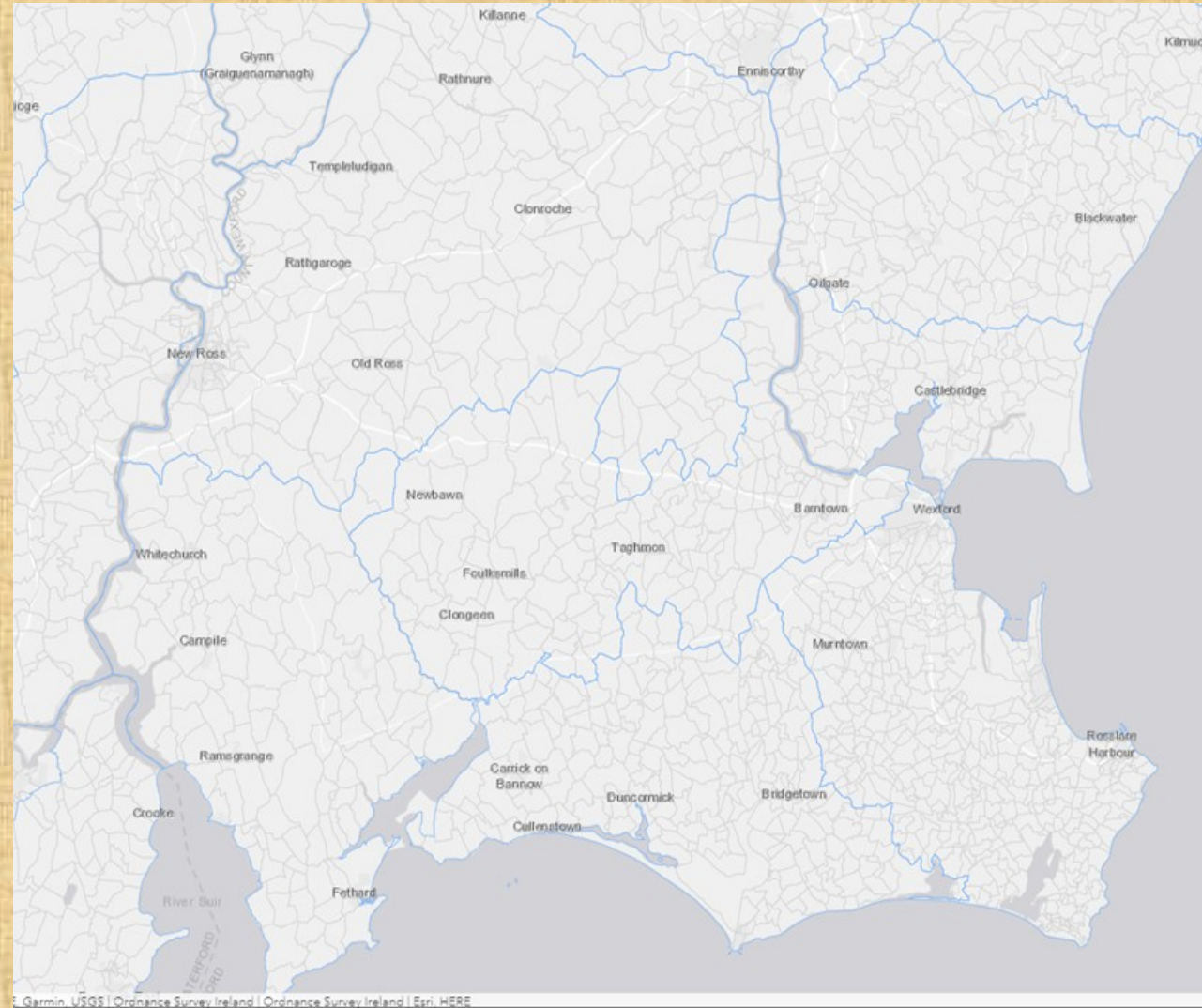
**Cóbh** < Queenstown **Dún Laoghaire** < Kingstown

**Port Laoise** < Maryborough **An Daingean** (Offaly) < Philipstown

**The English form of some names was also changed:**

Ballydesmond (Cork) < *Kingwilliamstown* (village)

Bunclody (Wexford) < *Newtownbarry* (village)



# Placenames and the Gaelic Revival:

Campaign to force the Royal Mail to accept Irish addresses.

**Placenames and native culture: Dinnseanchas. Cóir Anmann “fitness of names”. Placenames were a literary tool.**

**Decline of Irish and its culture (19<sup>th</sup> cent.)**

**Gaelic Revival Movement (late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> cent.) > Campaign for the use of Irish versions of placenames: e.g. An Baile Mór vs *Ballymore***

**Post-Sheanchas (Conradh naGaeilge/the Gaelic League: author Seosamh Laoide, 1905).**

- (*Post-Sheanchas*: a mix of wonderful work, errors and guesses (according to the author himself) – biblical status)
- (*Post-Sheanchas*: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1911; some errors corrected and some guesses emended)
- 1927c. *Postoifigí i Saorstát Éireann* (‘Post-offices in the Irish Freestate’)
- 1937c. *Log-ainmneacha* (‘placenames’), by Risteard Ó Foghludha.
- 1955, 1964, 1977 *Eolaí an Phoist* (‘mail-guide’), Government Publications Office (on behalf of the Post-Office).

Irish the first official language (not pursued with any real vigour):  
> A sharp need for access to regularised and standardised Irish  
Placenames

The Placenames Commission was established in 1946 to make available Irish versions of  
Placenames on a standardised, academic and professional basis

The Placenames Branch was established in the 1950s as the research arm of the Placenames  
Committee

- Placenames Commission disbanded in 2012 (Purge of the so-called Quangos)
  - Placenames Committee formed in 2013
    - (Statutory entity with the implementation of article 13, of the Official Languages' Act 2021 (Amendment).)

# Placenames Order: Timeline

- **Placenames Act 1973.**
  - The Irish name was not to become a legal name, but the Irish form of the English name.
- The Placenames Order (Irish Forms) (No. 1) (Post-Offices) 1975.
- (Mainly based on a booklet prepared by the Placenames Branch and the Placenames Commission: *Ainmneacha Gaeilge na mBailte Poist, 1969*).

## The official Languages Act (2003)

- 33.—(1) [the Irish form of a Placename ]  
to have the same force and effect as the  
English version ...

# Placenames Orders from 2003

(There was a public consultation period prior to every order post 2004)

- The Placenames Order (Co. Cork) 2012
- The Placenames Order (Co. Dublin) 2011
- The Placenames Order (Gaeltacht Areas) 2011
- The Placenames Order (Population Centres and Districts) 2005
- The Placenames Order (Co. Tipperary) 2005
- The Placenames Order (Gaeltacht areas) 2004
- 
- Iomhá 6:
- The Placenames Order (Co. Louth) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Co. Limerick) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Co. Waterford) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Co. Kilkenny) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Offaly) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Co. Monaghan) 2003
- The Placenames Order (Provinces and Counties) 2003
- (Gaeltacht (x 2); Counties (x 9);
- Population Centres, etc. (x 2)

# 1. Abolishment of the Placenames Commission (2012)

# 2. Establishment of the Placenames Committee (2013)

(Legislation only amended in 2021 to reflect the establishment of the Committee, but this has caused a delay in further Placenames Orders)

## Draft Orders for 8 counties prepared since 2012

The Placenames Order (Co. Sligo) - Draft 2019

The Placenames Order (Co. Laois) - Draft 2018

- The Placenames Order (Co. Wexford) - Draft 2016
- The Placenames Order (Co. Carlow) - Draft 2015
- The Placenames Order (Co. Mayo) - Draft 2015
- The Placenames Order (Co. Longford) - Draft 2014
- The Placenames Order (Co. Galway) - Draft 2012
- The Placenames Order (Co. Leitrim) - Draft 2012

10 [598]		
	<b>Colún 1 Béarla (Column 1 English Language)</b>	<b>Colún 2 Gaeilge (Column 2 Irish language)</b>
252	Clonliffe East	Cluain Life Thoir
253	Clonliffe West	Cluain Life Thiar
254	Clonmel	Cluain Meala
255	Clonmethan	Gleann Meáin
256	Clonshagh	Cluain Seach
257	Clonsilla	Cluain Saileach
258	Clonskeagh	Cluain Sceach
259	Clonswords	Gleann Soird
260	Clontarf East	Cluain Tarbh Thoir
261	Clontarf West	Cluain Tarbh Thiar
262	Clonturk	Cluain Torc
263	Clutterland	Talamh Chlutair
264	Coldblow	Coldblow
265	Coldcut	An Bhoth Fhuar
266	Coldwater Commons	Coimín an Uisce Fhuair
267	Coldwinters [ED: Lusk]	Buaile an Gheimhridh
268	Coldwinters [ED: Finglas]	Buaile an Gheimhridh
269	Colecot	An Bhoth Fhuar
270	Colganstown	Baile Uí Cholgan
271	Collegeland	Fearann an Choláiste
272	Collinstown [ED: Holmpatrick]	Baile Choilín
273	Collinstown [ED: Drumcondra]	Baile Choilín
274	Collinstown [ED: Clondalkin]	Baile Choilín
275	Colmanstown	Baile Uí Cholmáin
276	Colt Island	Inis Coilt
277	Common	An Coimín
278	Commons [ED: Drumcondra]	An Coimín
279	Commons [ED: Newcastle]	An Coimín
280	Commons [ED: Rathcoole]	An Coimín
281	Commons [ED: Clondalkin]	An Coimín
282	Commons [ED: Rathfarnham]	An Coimín
283	Commons (1st Division)	An Coimín (an Chéad Roinn)
284	Commons (2nd Division)	An Coimín (an Dara Roinn)
285	Commons East	An Coimín Thoir
286	Commons Little	An Coimín Beag



# Systematic overview of townland names in Ireland

Place names orders (lists of names) have taken precedence over explanatory notes and a macro-analysis of townland names

\*Exception: Limerick, Tipperary & Wexford.

Ad hoc provision of explanatory notes on *logainm.ie*

E.g. Ballybunnion (Kerry) (More intended)

## Baile an Bhuinneánaigh

genitive: **Bhaile an Bhuinneánaigh**

validated name [\(What is this?\)](#)

(Irish)

## Ballybunnion

(English)

Capitalise

### Glossary

#### baile

ENGLISH townland, town, homestead

### Explanatory note

Gaeilge

English

Baile an Bhuinneánaigh 'the town(land) of An Buinneánach'

Buineán — a gaelicised form of the Anglo-Norman surname Bunyan

Longer explanatory notes sometimes appear on *logainm.ie*:

The screenshot shows the logainm.ie website interface. At the top, there are two entries: 'Dún Seachlainn' (Irish) and 'Dunshaughlin' (English). Below these are navigation options like 'Capitalise' and sections for 'Glossary' and 'Explanatory note'. The 'Explanatory note' section is expanded for 'Dún Seachlainn', providing a detailed historical and linguistic context. On the right side, there is a sidebar with metadata: COUNTY (An Mhí/Meath), BARONY (Ráth Tó/Ratoath), CIVIL PARISH (Dún Seachlainn/Dunshaughlin), and SUBUNITS (all (65), streets (44), townlands (20), towns (1)).

**Dún Seachlainn** 🔊  
genitive: Dhún Seachlainn  
(Irish)

**Dunshaughlin** 🔊  
(English)

Capitalise

**Glossary**

**dún**, dúnaibh  
ENGLISH fort

**Explanatory note**

**Gaeilge**

**Dún Seachlainn** 'the fort of Seachlainn' < **Domhnach Seachlainn** 'the church of Seachlainn'  
< Meán/Sean-Ghaeilge **Domnach Sechnaill** (**Domhnach Sechnaill** sa Nua-Ghaeilge) 'the church of Seachnaill'

**Seachlainn** — ainm pearsanta ar foirm mheititéisithe é de **Seachnall** (< *Secundinus*)

D'ímigh claochlú nach beag ar an ainm seo le caitheamh na haimsire. Is í an tagairt is sine atá againn don áit ná iontráil in *Annála Uladh* ón mbliain 801, **abbas Domnaig Sechnaill**. Iasacht luath ó *dominicum* na Laidine is ea **domnach** agus baineann na heaglaisí a bhfuil an t-ainm seo orthu le tréimhse thosaigh na Críostaíochta in Éirinn. Mar leis an dara cuid den *logainm*, **Sechnall**, iasacht atá ann ón ainm Laidine *Secundinus*. Bhí seisean ar dhuine de na heaspáig a bhí ag craobhscaoileadh na Críostaíochta in Éirinn sa 5ú haois. Taispeánann na samplaí stairiúla den *logainm* atá caomhnaithe i gcáipéisí eaglasta Laidine go ndearnadh **Seachlainn** de **Sechnaill** (gin.) de bharr meititéisí faoi dheireadh an 12ú haois, e.g. 'Douenhagsachlin' (1187), 'Dounagh-sachlayne' (1248). Tá an t-athrú céanna le feiscint san ainm pearsanta **Mael Sechnaill** > \***Maol Seachlainn**. Faoi dheireadh an 14ú haois bhí **Dún** curtha in ionad **Domhnach** i dtosach an *logainm*, e.g. 'Dunshaglyn' (1374), 'Donshaghlyn' (1437). Tá an t-athrú céanna le feiscint i lámhscríbhinní déanacha Gaeilge, 'inghean an giúsdís Diólún ó Dhún Seachlainn', cuir i gcás, in *RIA 23 F 12* (18ú haois). Tá an méid a scríobhadh i *Litreacha na Suirbhéireachta Ordaísis (LSO)* (1836) faoin fhoirm Ghaeilge a bhí in úsáid ag cainteoirí Gaeilge an cheantair an tráth úd ag cur leis sin: 'Dunshaughlin is always in Irish called *Dún Seachlainn* (pron. Shoghlin) (or *Duin S.*—) for which they can assign no meaning — never *Domhnach S*'; féach leis 'In the townland of Bonestown [parish of Dunshaughlin] there is a holy well called *Tobar Saint* [sic] *Seachlainn*' (LSO).

COUNTY  
**An Mhí/Meath**

BARONY  
**Ráth Tó/Ratoath**

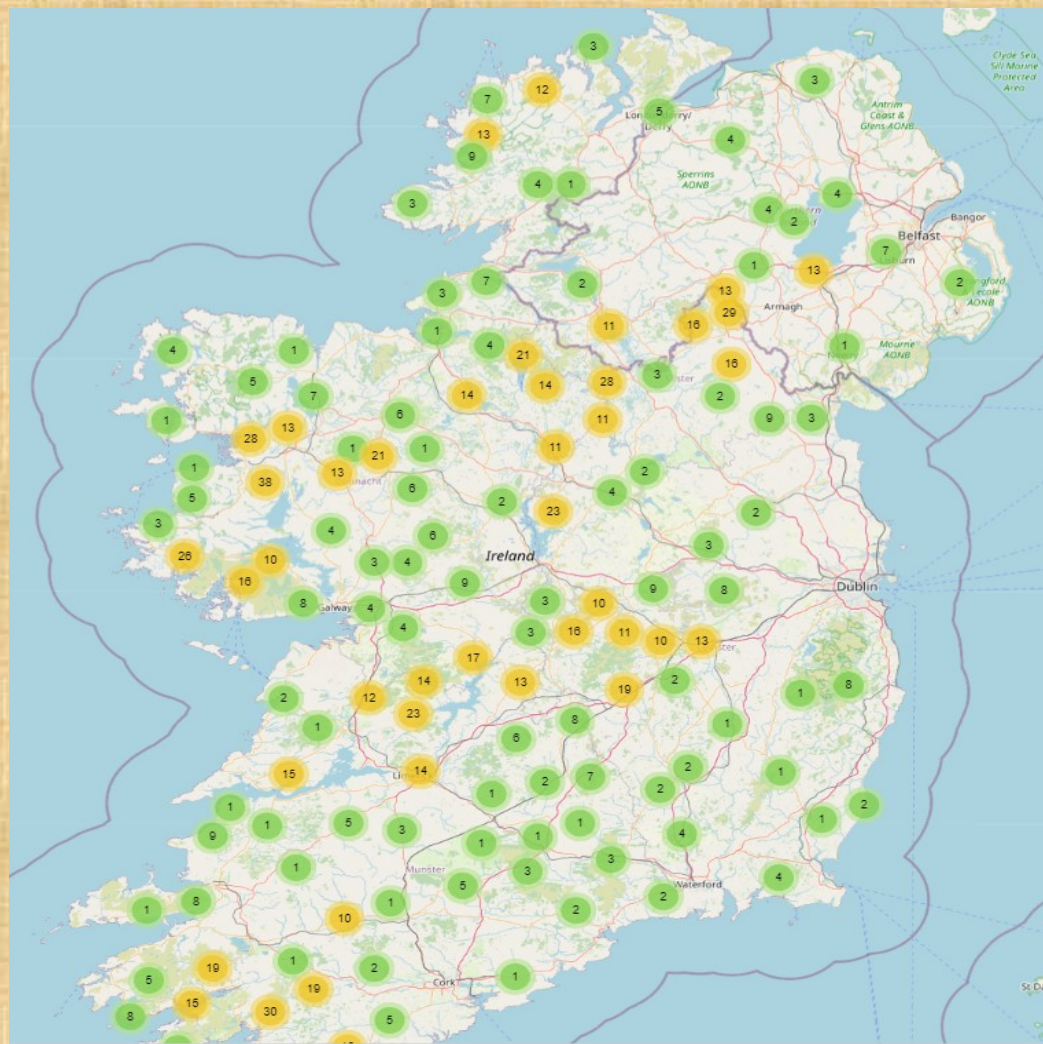
CIVIL PARISH  
**Dún Seachlainn/Dunshaughlin**

SUBUNITS  
**all (65)**  
streets (44)  
townlands (20)  
towns (1)

# Systematic overview of townland names in Ireland

## The Possibilities:

- Doire '(oak-)wood, thicket'
- (Provisional map)



# Approach to research: Based on the approach of the Swedish Institute for Placename Study: *Ortnamnsarkivet*. (Most sources post 1550)

Tóin le Gaoith		Lordstown	
<i>gin.</i> Thóin le Gaoith			
CON: #100024 An Mhí/Meath			N 61980 7269
BAR: #194 Baile Fhobhair/Fore			SO 1
PAR: #1849 Diamhair/Diamor			F0
1640c	Gnewhamon als. Tonreege	· Inq. Lag., <i>l.</i> (CI 163)	(Oliver' Plunkett, nup de..., seis' fuit de feod, de vil' & ter de Clonybreny pd', Ballenegon, ... Edw' Plunkett de Gnewhamon al' Tonreege & Garrot Plunkett de Ballybrehye & hered' suis
1654	Tonlegeith	· CS V, <i>l.</i> 262	(East...Martinstowne. West...Dymore. North... Hamlinstowne. South...Gibbonstowne & Donogoran) (The Earl of Fingall, Ir. Papt.)
1654	Tonlegeith	· CS V, <i>l.</i> 260,261	
1655-7	--	· DS(TCD)	
1655-7	Tonlegeith	· DS (P, TCD)	(E[arl] of Fingall, Ir. Papist)
1660c	Tonlegeeth	· BSD, <i>l.</i> 103	
1667	Townelegnith or Townelegnith	· ASE	Michael Boyle, Archbishop of Dublin... Townelegnith or Townelegnith, 94 a. (152a... [par. Diamor] bar. Half-Fowre, co. Meath— ASE 73
1685c	--	· Hib. Del.	
1812	Lordstown	· Larkin (Mí)	
1813	Lands of Townleguith otherwise Lordstown (John Lord of Co. Dublin – Simon Rose)	· CGn., <i>i.</i> 660, <i>l.</i> 321, <i>u.</i> 457396	660.321.457396.
1834	Lordstown	· TAB	
1836	[Lordstown]	· OD:AL, <i>l.</i> Mí025,21	"Correct." [Nóta OD]
1836	Lordstown	· Larkin (Mí):AL, <i>l.</i> Mí025,21	
1836	Lordstown	· BS (Jones):AL, <i>l.</i> Mí025,21	

## Nóta eolais (NOTE)

Lordstown (par. Diamor). Is léir ón fhianaise luath don logainm seo go bhfuil an bunainm Gaeilge le díorthú ó 'Tóin le Gaoith', leagan a d'fhorbair ó 'Tóin re Gaoith' de réir dealraimh. Tá Tóin re Gaoith agus an leagan malartach Tóin le Gaoith le fáil go forleathan sa tír, agus tá an chuma ann go bhfuil Tandragee (par. Ráth Moliain) le díorthú ó 'Tóin re Gaoith' fosta gidh nach bhfuil taighde iomlánach déanta ar an logainm sin fós. Tá an logainm mar atá sa Bhéarla, .i. Lordstown, le díorthú ón sloinne Nua-Ghall Lord. Bhí an baile fearainn seo I seilbh John Lord ó Bhaile Atha Cliath ag tús an 19ú aois. Níl go leor fianaise ann faoi láthair le bheith cinnte faoin alias a bhí ag an logainm seo, .i. 'Gnewhamon'.

## Nóta eolais (NOTE)

38797 Lordstown Tóin le Gaoith 5/05/2021

# Anglo-Norman surnames in townland names

- The most common structure is undoubtedly:
- *Surname + town*

Gambon > Gambaston > **Baile an Ghambúnaigh**/Ballygamboon (Kerry) = **An Gambúnach**

Bodram > Boudranstown > **Baile Bhúdráin**/Ballywoodrane (WX)

\*Sinnottstown > **Baile Shionóid** > Ballyhinode (La)/ \*Sinnottsgarden > **Garraí an tSionóidigh** > Garrytinodagh (WX)

Cryke or Cyrke > Crickiston > **Circiostún** > Crickstown

- **How is Anglo-Norman settlement to be seen through townland names throughout the country?**

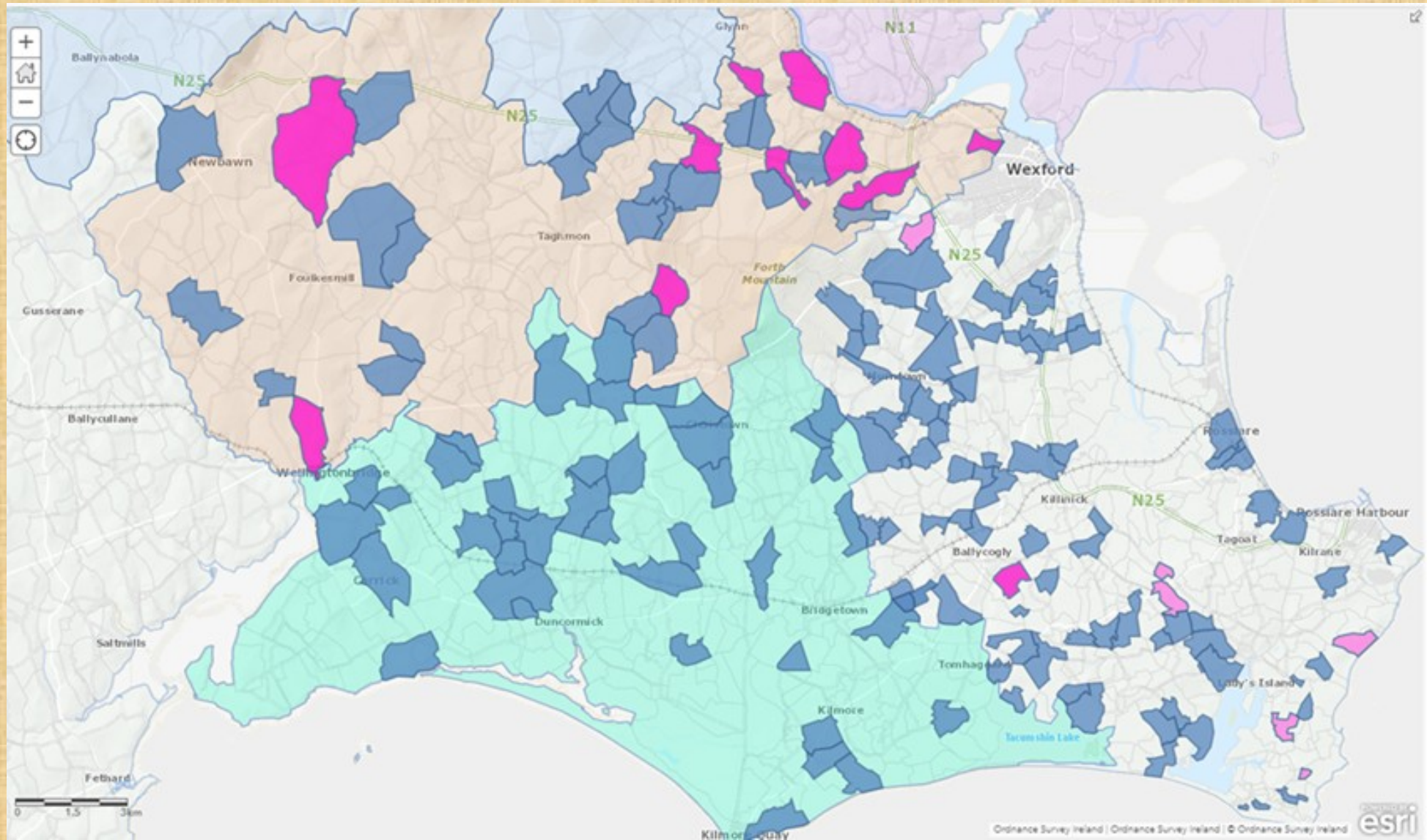
## Anglo-Norman surnames in south Wexford

*Surname + Town* most common; *Coddstown, Latimerstown, Furlongstown, Pembrokestown*, etc.

Some gaelicised names reflected in the evidence in Pink; *Devenistown* > **Baile an Doimhnisigh** > *Ballindinas*

Over 50% of townland names from English.

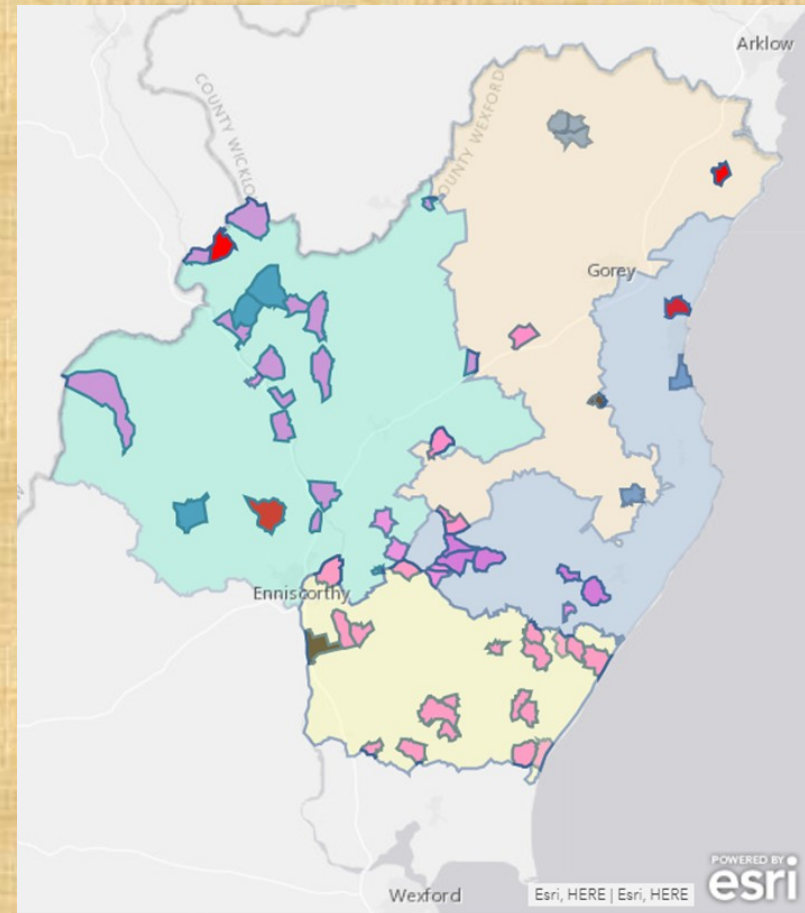
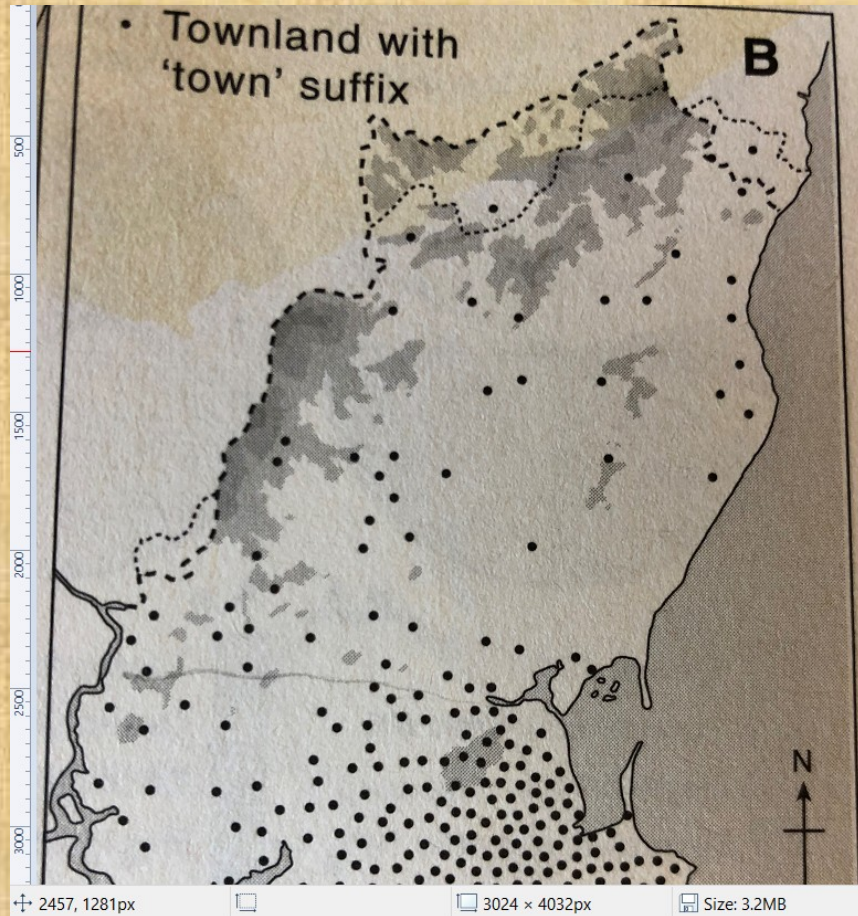
Over 50% of these have *Surname + Town*



In areas regaelicised: English placenames such as *Corbetstown* might not give us an information about Anglo-Norman colonization!

Only 4 with the structure *-town* in north Wexford might reflect Anglo-Norman attempted colonization.

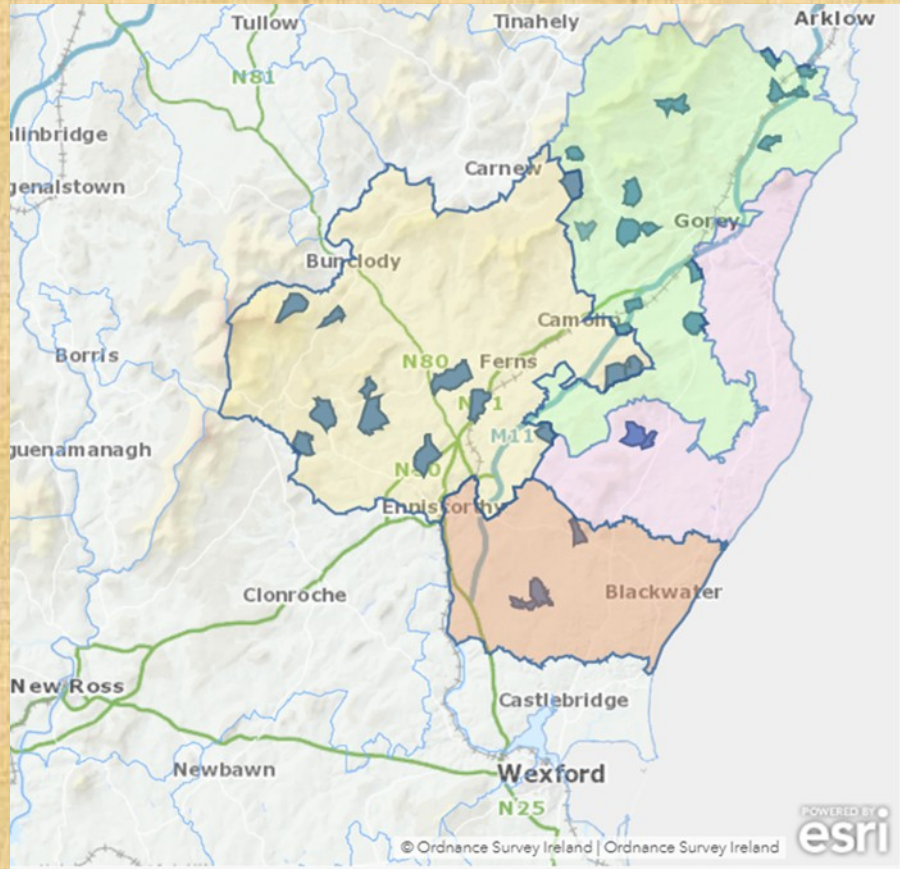
Anglo-Norman attempted colonization in north Wexford actually mostly reflected in placenames from Irish (mostly from place-names with *baile* 'town' + *surname* construction, i.e. most likely gaelicised forms of *surname* + *town*)



# Townland names in north Wexford with native Irish surnames.

Total number less than those containing Anglo-Norman surnames.

Less than 10% of total:



- Baile Uí Chearnaigh/Ballycarney
- Baile Ó gCuilinn/Ballygullen (x3)
- Baile Uí Chaoilte/Ballykilty
- Baile Uí Fhearáil/Ballyorrill; Bailte Ó bhFearáil/Baltyfarrell
- Cluain Uí Mhurchú/Clone
- Cluain Mhic Shiúrdáin/Clonjordan
- Cluain Uí Braoin/Clonybyrne
- Baile Uí Bhraoin/Ballybreen
- Baile Uí Aoláin/Ballyellin
- Baile Uí Chonaráin/Ballyconran
- Baile Uí Dhorchaí/Ballydarragh
- Baile Ó Riagáin/Ballyregan; Baile Uí Riagáin/Ballyregan
- Baile Uí Fhoghlú/Ballyfoley
- Baile Uí Laitheasa/Ballylacy
- Baile Uí Lorcáin/Ballylarkin
- Baile Uí Mheannáin/Ballymannon
- Baile Uí Mhuirígh/Ballymurray
- Baile Uí Mhurchú/Ballymurragh
- Baile Uí Éidín/Ballyeden

# Sligo:

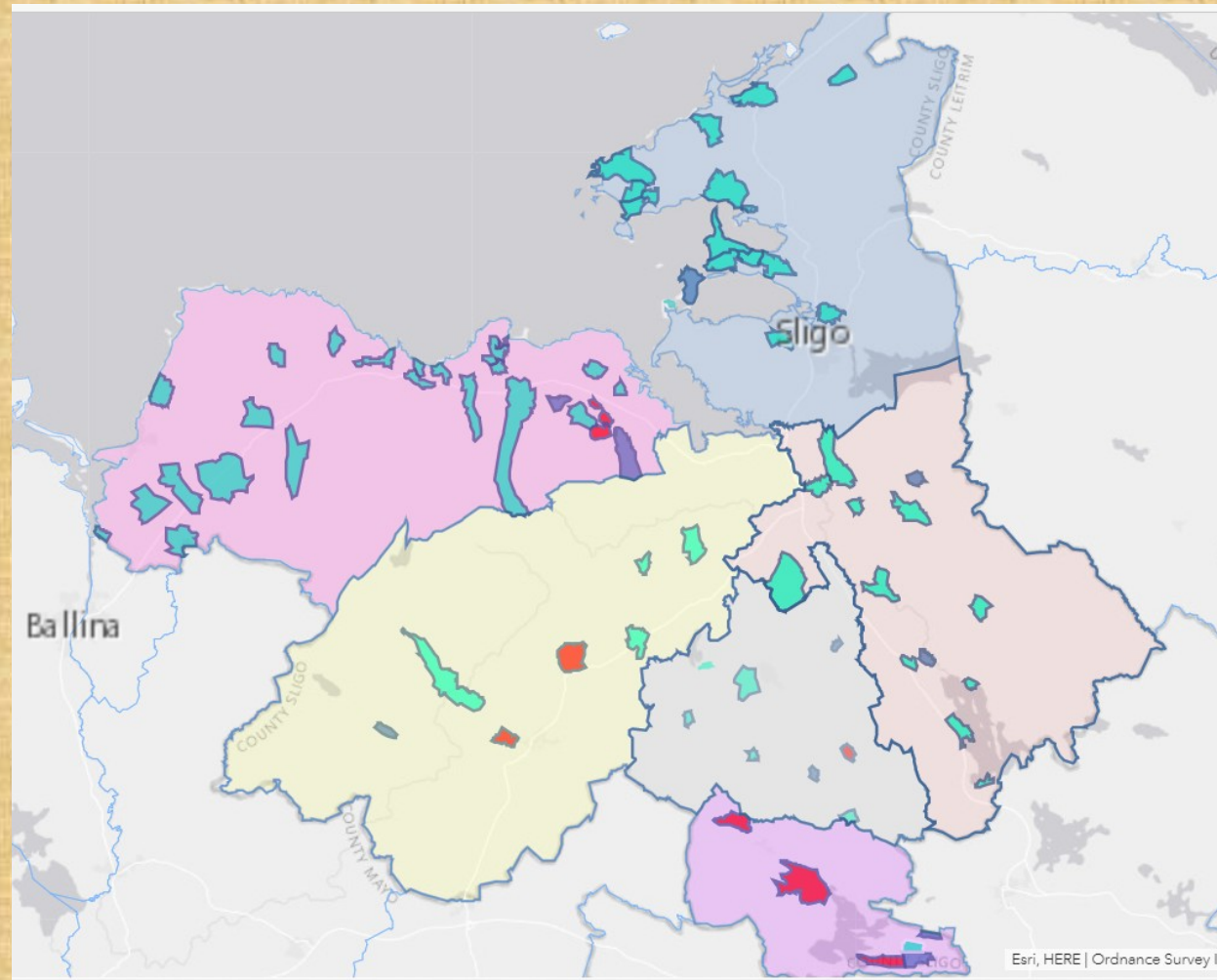
Anglo-Norman surnames: *Ceathrú Uilcín/Carrowwilkin; Ceathrú Mhaible/Carrowmably?*

Native Irish surnames: Less than 10%.

Professional surnames/(royal) household or surnames on church lands (green)

Surnames of the principal families/dynasties (red)

Surnames of an uncertain status (blue)





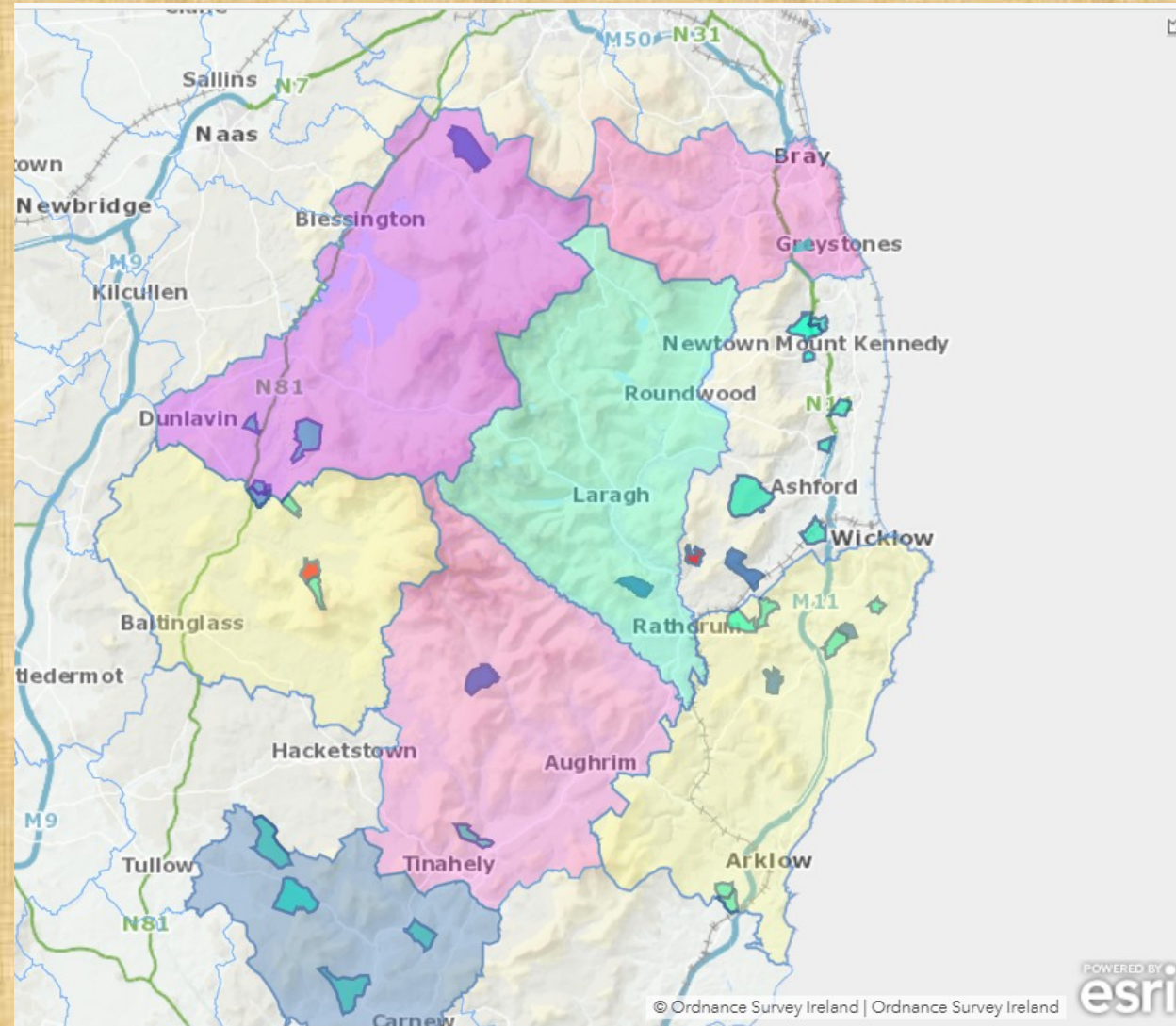
# Native Irish surnames in Irish townland names in County Wicklow

Less than < 50 (< 5%).

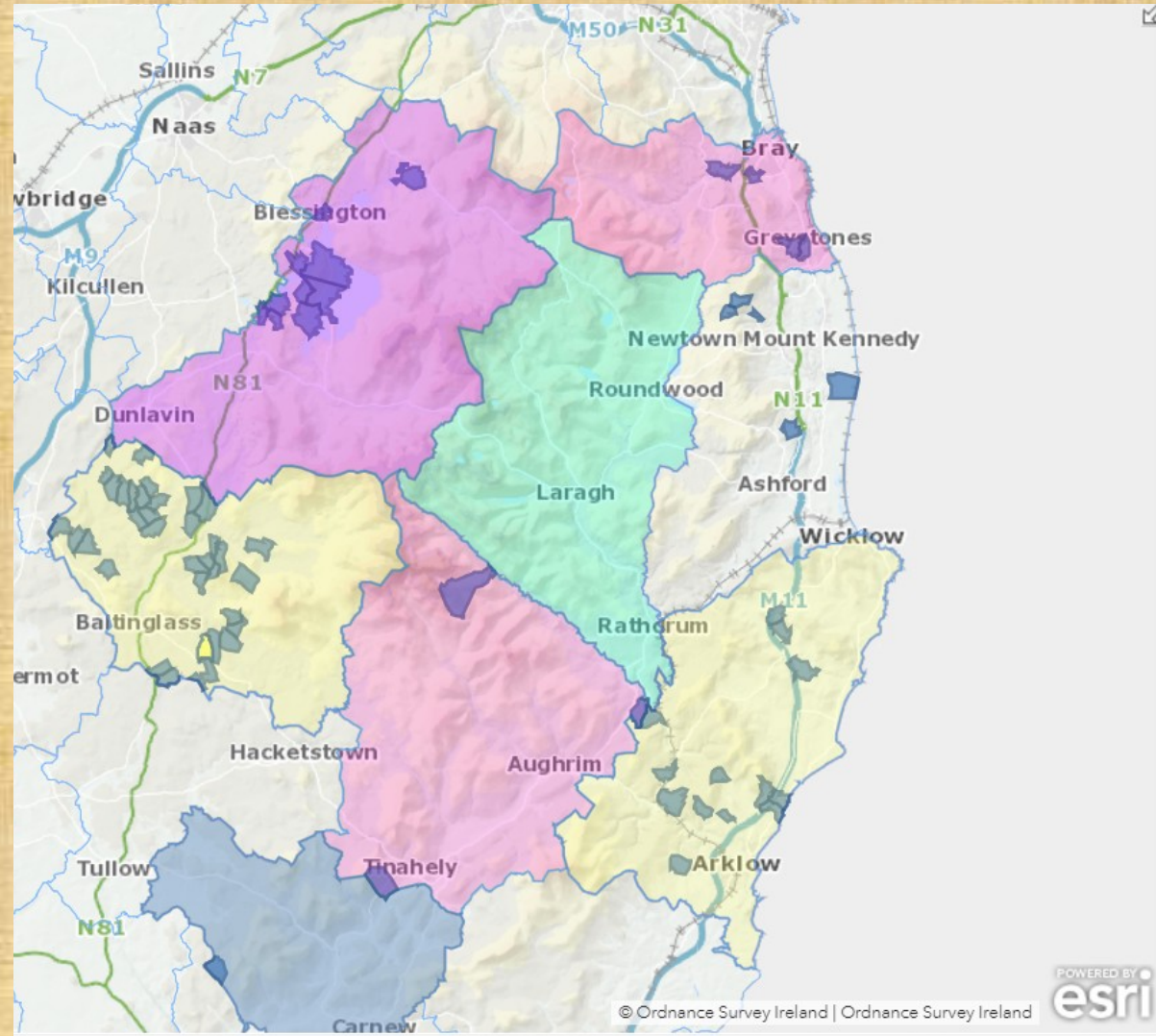
professional & ecclesiastical surnames (green)

Principal surnames (red)

Surnames of uncertain status (blue)



# Anglo-Norman surnames in townland names in Wicklow.



Why are there so many Anglo-Norman surnames in comparison to native Irish surnames, even in Irish language placenames?

- Anglo-Norman
- Freehold (English Law)
- Native Irish Surnames
- Short term tenancy
- (Native Irish Law)
- Why so many 'professional' surnames in the townland names?

# Discourse on the mere Irish of Ireland (c.1608)

<https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E600001-004/index.html>

- [Learned classes] Another sorte are scholasticall fellowshippes, or fraternities, some professe the lawes I meane the Irish Brehone lawes, other professe Physick, others professe poetry, and philosophie, other professe Antiquities and cronologie, others professe musicke whereof some are for the harpe, and others to singe rymes, and Irishe ballades. And all these doe carrie such correspondencie, and reciprocacion ... as they **may be said to be but seuerall Branches of one stocke, or twoe**, for howsoeuer they seuer in the professions and sciences, yet it is apparent that euery of them doth appropriate him selfe to the dependency of some Irish Lorde, **and that they haue lands bestowed vpon them of olde by some Irishe Lorde, or other for the maintenance of eyther of their professions. Which they hold at this day.**
- Placenames of this type provide us with a view into native Irish society not readily identifiable from other sources alone .i. professional families obtained land under different conditions to other families, even those belonging to the principal families.
- Such placenames can help us to identify professional families.

# How do we recognise professional families?

- Native Sources

- *Mac Aogáin/Keegan, Egan* (literature, history)
- *Mac Raith/McGrath* (literature, history)
- *Ó Beacháin/Behan, Bee* (literature)
- *Ó Bolguír/Bolger* (medicine)
- *Ó Ceannabháin/Canavan* (medicine)
- *Ó Dálaigh/Daly* (literature, history)
- *Ó Laighin/Lyons* (medicine)
- *Ó hÍcÍ/Hickey* (medicine)
- *Mac an Bhreithiúna/Brehony, Judge* (law)

- *Calendar of Papal Registers*

- Dermot Macgaedagan, Canon/*Diarmaid Mac Aogáin*
- Malachy Maccrath, dean/*Maoileachlainn Mac Raith*
- David Obeachayn, priest/*Dáibhí Ó Beacháin*
- John Oboligi priest/*Seán Ó Bolguír*
- Oddo Oceandubain, canon/*Aodh Ó Ceannabháin*
- Nemerus Odalaych, Canon/*Giolla na Naomh Ó Dálaigh*
- John Olaygyn, priest/*Seán Ó Laighin*
- Patrick Ohykyga, monk (Regensburg)/*Giolla Phádraig Ó hÍcÍ (< Íceadha)*
- Isaac Mcbrechamayn, priest/*Íosóg Mac an Bhreithiúna* ... dispensation as the son of a priest and an unmarried woman ... be ordained and hold a benefice even with cure the perpetual vicarage ... void by the death of Macrobius Macbrechamayn/*M? Mac an Bhreithiúna*

# Clerical families:

- To Cornelius Okeallaid/*Conchúr Ó Ceallaigh*, a Friar Preacher, Papal dispensation, as the son of a bishop and an unmarried woman':
  - (*CPL V*, pp 251-65)
- To Simon McGowand/*Síomón Mac Gabhann*, clerk, of the diocese of Armagh.
  - Dispensation as the son of an Augustinian canon and nun.
  - (*CPL V*, pp 251-65)
- John Macdubayll [*Seán Mac Dúill/Ó Dúill*] 'who has studied canon law in a place which is not a university ... for three years, and who lately received papal dispensation, as the son of a priest and an unmarried woman ... the pope has lately ordered provision to him of the rectory of the parish church of Ynisemocholmog in the diocese of Dublin (1413).

# Native Irish surnames in Irish townland names

- Indicative of Professional status in Gaelic Irish society?

- Future:
- Continued research of this topic and all surnames in townland names.
- Interactive maps:
- Distribution of professional surnames in townland names
- Distribution of all native surnames in townland names
- Distribution of all AN surnames (in English placenames only, in Irish placenames only or evidence for both)
- Distribution of all New English surnames
- Complicating factors:
- Existence of the same surname of different origin, surnames often difficult to identify in townland names, dearth of evidence.
- Staff of Placenames Branch reduced from 7 researchers in 2009 to 1 research in December 2021. 3 researchers as of March 2023.