



# Gaelic Surnominal Place-Names in Ireland and Their Reflection in Argentina

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## Abstract:

District-names like Casey, in *Provincia de Buenos Aires*, or Murphy, in *Provincia de Santa Fe*, are mirrored by their Irish counterparts such as Ballycasey (*Baile Uí Chathasaigh*, “Casey’s town”), and Ballymurphy (*Baile Uí Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s town”). This paper explores some of the Irish Gaelic surnames which have not only made the transfer across the Atlantic, but subsequently found themselves immortalised in Argentinian place-names. In doing so, and by examining the corpus of Irish place-names containing these surnames, it attempts to establish a connection back to the native homelands of these Gaelic families, thus contributing to the wider narrative of the Irish in Latin America.

**Keywords:** Emigrants, Gaelic families, Onomastics, Surnames, Toponyms.

## 1. Introduction

Place-names, no matter where in the world they are, offer us an insight into the history of a place. By uncovering their origins and etymologies, we are afforded an opportunity to gain an understanding of the various political, social, religious, and geographical influences which shaped the nomenclature of an area. Quite often in Ireland, place-names are merely descriptions of the local topography. As such, names which simply describe features of the landscape tend to be our most common category; and place-names like Dromore (*An Droim Mór*, “the big ridge”) or Mullaghboy (*An Mullach Bui*, “the yellow hilltop”) are found throughout the island. Another category of names is that which commemorates titans of the built environment, thus highlighting the influence of settlement and settlers on the naming process. This is evidenced in names like Lisdoon/Lisduff (*An Lios Dubh*, “the black ringfort”) or Cashelbane (*An Caiseal Bán*, “the white ringfort”). Sometimes, however, place-names immortalise the surnames of ancient noble Gaelic families in Ireland and show us that these families were important or significant enough in a particular area to have a place named in

their honour (or name a place in their own honour). Therefore, place-names like Ballyneill (*Baile Uí Néill*, “O’Neill’s town(land)”) and Ballydonnel (*Baile Uí Dhónaill*, “O’Donnell’s town(land)”) are proof of the former influence of these Gaelic septs in various regions.

In many cases, this influence does not come to a halt at the Irish sea borders. A number of these surnames have made the voyage of emigration across the Atlantic and once again made their way into place-names, centuries after their toponymic parallels in Ireland were first coined<sup>1</sup>. To that end, this article looks at a small number of Gaelic surnominal place-names in Argentina, and seeks to discover if toponymic links can be established back to the homeland of those who gave their names to these places. If so, we may be so bold as to suggest an ancestral connection between the individuals and families who are commemorated in Gaelic surnominal place-names in Argentina and those very Gaels who named their places in Ireland long ago.

## 2. Anglicisation of Irish place-names

Before we discuss the place-names themselves it would be worthwhile to make a brief mention of Irish place-names in general. For the most part, the modern forms of Irish place-names have undergone a process of Anglicisation which has concealed the original Irish language etymologies. This process has taken place as a result of the language shift from Irish to English. However, the native Irish place-names were not annexed during the language shift, they were merely adopted or “transliterated” into the English language<sup>2</sup>. As such, the historical toponymist is able to look at older spellings of the names as preserved in various English language documents compiled by incomers. Even though they were not composed in Irish, these historical spellings are often the key to unlocking the Irish language origin of the name. The majority of the place-names discussed in this article belong to this category. However, as well as adopting the native Irish place-names, settlers from Britain also coined new place-names in their own language, often by simply adding the word “town” after their own name or surname. For example, names such as Walterstown in County Meath, or Adamstown in County Louth (henceforth “County” will be abbreviated to “Co.”)<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, a small number of the place-names cited in this article belong to this stratum.

## 3. Gaelic Surnominal place-names in Argentina

The following eight names were selected from a list entitled “Irish Place Names and Landmarks in Argentina”<sup>4</sup>. They were selected because biographical information is provided

<sup>1</sup> The Irish surnominal place-names were found by searching the database of the Northern Ireland Place-names Project (NIPNP) at < [www.placenamesni.org](http://www.placenamesni.org) > (03/2021) and the database of the Placenames Branch, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (PNB) at < [www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie) > (03/2021). Under the discussion for each Irish surnominal place-name in Argentina, I have included every example I could find of the same surname in a place-name in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> See Ó Mainnín (2017) for a comprehensive discussion on the anglicisation process and the journey of Irish place-names from their Irish origins to their contemporary forms.

<sup>3</sup> It was not uncommon for English names coined by the Anglo-Normans to undergo a process of Gaelicisation. For example, in the case of *Walterston*, Co. Down, the name was adopted into Irish as *Baile Uaitéir*. As Ó Mainnín denotes, “There is an ironic twist, however; when the tide turned again in favour of English from the seventeenth century, the name re-emerged not as \*Walterstown (i.e. as a modern reflex of the Middle English name) but as Ballywalter, a name in English (and of English origin) which was now unmistakably Irish” (2017, 17).

<sup>4</sup> See: <[https://www.irlandeses.org/ipnl\\_argentina.htm](https://www.irlandeses.org/ipnl_argentina.htm)> (03/2021).

on the link at footnote 4 for the individuals and families who gave their names to these places in Argentina. However, there are many other Irish surnominal place-names in Argentina; for example, Cullen, Lynch, MacCay, Mackenna, Maguire, Mulcahy. Further study of other sources would reveal the families or individuals from whom these places were named<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.1 Casey

The town of Casey in Partido de Guaminí, Provincia de Buenos Aires, was named in honour of Eduardo Casey. He was born in 1847 and was the son of Irish emigrants Lawrence Casey, from Co. Westmeath, and Mary O'Neill, from Co. Wicklow. Eduardo ended his own life in 1906 after a long battle to recover his financial losses (Murray 2010, 318). He is most notable for having founded the city of Venado Tuerto in southern Provincia de Santa Fe, in which there is also a main avenue, "Casey", named after him (IPLA)<sup>6</sup>.

Woulfe (1923, 455-56) lists six distinct septs of the surname *Ó Cathasaigh*, the original Irish form of Casey. One was an ancient family in Co. Meath; another was a Dalcassian family in Co. Limerick; elsewhere in Munster was a family who were in possession of a territory in Co. Cork. In Connacht there were two erenagh families, one in Mayo, and another in Roscommon; and finally, in Ulster, there was another erenagh family in Co. Fermanagh.

There are two townlands named Ballycasey (*Baile Uí Chathasaigh*, "Casey's town(land)" in Galway and Tipperary, as well as Ballycasey Beg and Ballycasey More in Co. Clare<sup>7</sup>. Elsewhere in Clare there is a townland called Coolycasey (*Cúil Uí Chathasaigh*, "Casey's corner/nook")<sup>8</sup>, and another called Liscasey (*Lios Uí Chathasaigh*, "Casey's ringfort")<sup>9</sup>. This name is seemingly mirrored by another in the north, in Co. Tyrone, called Liscasey (Ó Doibhlin 2021, forthcoming). Another interesting example is the place-name Garrancasey, in Co. Tipperary, which the PNB takes to have derived from *Garraí an Chathasaigh*<sup>10</sup>. What we have here is an example of a fairly common phenomenon in Irish surnames, where a name beginning with the "Ó" prefix swaps this for the definite article "an" (the), thus taking on a nominal form<sup>11</sup>. As such we can translate *Garraí an Chathasaigh* as "garden of (the) Casey", or simply "Casey's garden". In the east of Ireland, we have two places containing the surname, one is Dallyhaysy in Dublin which seems to come from *Dál Uí Chathasaigh*, "tribe of Casey", which would render it a very early name<sup>12</sup>. A final example is the intriguing place-name Clonadacasey, which contains this surname in its nasalised genitive plural form, i.e. where the place was named after a local family bearing

<sup>5</sup> The *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, for example.

<sup>6</sup> See Landaburu (1995) for a detailed biography on the life of Eduardo Casey.

<sup>7</sup> *Baile* is generally anglicised as "Bally" and it is the most common element in Irish place-names. There has been significant academic discussion regarding the use of the word in place-names; see Price (1963), Flanagan (IPN, 8-13), and Toner (2004). It may denote "town" or "townland", or simply "settlement" in the wider sense. For the purpose of the place-names in this article which contain the element, I have translated it as "town(land)".

<sup>8</sup> *Cúil* means "corner, nook" (Ó Dónaill s.v.) and it is common all over Ireland as an initial element in place-names.

<sup>9</sup> In Old Irish, *lios* literally meant "the space about a dwelling-house or houses enclosed by a bank of rampart" (eDIL s.v. *les*). As Deirdre and Laurence Flanagan point out, however, in place-name terms, it is generally translated as "fort" (IPN, 112), or "ring-fort" (Ó Dónaill s.v.).

<sup>10</sup> *Garraí* may denote a few different things, "small (enclosed) field, plot", "yard, enclosure", or more simply, "garden". It is in this latter sense it is generally translated for place-name purposes.

<sup>11</sup> For example, *Ó Cathasaigh* becomes *An Cathasach*, i.e. "the Casey". Other examples include *Ó Doibhlin* (Devlin) becomes *An Doibhlineach* "the Devlin"; *Ó Donnabháin* (Donovan) becomes *An Donnabhánach* "the Donovan".

<sup>12</sup> *Dál* is attested in Old Irish as "a sept, a tribe; the land inhabited by a tribe" (eDIL s.v.).

the surname, and not just one individual (*Cluain Fhada Ó gCathasaigh*, “long meadow of the Caseys”)<sup>13</sup>. It is highly likely that the Caseys who gave their names to these two latter places in Leinster were of the ancient Meath sept of *Ó Cathasaigh*. Likewise, it is possible that Eduardo Casey’s father, Lawrence, from Co. Westmeath descended from the same sept.

### 3.2. Dillon

The street-name Dillon in Merlo in Provincia de Buenos Aires was named after a Juan Dillon (1819-1887), who was a public official and businessman. He was the second son of John Dillon (d. 1826) from Dublin. This in itself is noteworthy as it shows an example that migration to Argentina took place from the capital of Ireland as well as from rural areas. Juan Dillon was responsible for building the church in Merlo, as well as the municipality and several schools. Dillon was appointed to the key position of Immigrations Commissioner in 1875 by President Avellaneda. He was subsequently elected senator during three terms in the Buenos Aires parliament (Coghlan 1987, 241; DILAP). Given the fact that he had a monumental impact on the development of the town we may speculate as to why the name Dillon appears to have been employed so sparingly.

The surname Dillon is common throughout Ireland, particularly in North Connaught and the Midlands (de Bhulbh 2008, 48). They were one of the great Hiberno-Norman families in Ireland, and it has been a surname of some significance throughout Irish history. As MacLysaght (1985, 73) informs us, their stronghold was “Dillon’s Country” in Westmeath, and another branch settled in Co. Mayo. As the Dillon family integrated into the Irish and Gaelic society, their name underwent a process of Gaelicisation and became *Díolún*.

Being a family of such importance, they have understandably left their mark on a number of Irish toponyms. As is to be expected, many of these are in Leinster, the province in which the Anglo-Norman presence was strongest, and in which the Dillon family themselves settled. We have three examples of place-names coined in English, Dillonstown in Co. Louth, Dillonsdown in Co. Wicklow, and Dillonsland in Co. Meath (PNB). As well as these we have a hill range in Co. Louth called Knockdillon, which derives from Irish *Cnoc an Díolúnaigh* “Dillon’s hill”<sup>14</sup>. In Co. Meath we have a townland called Mullaghdillon, and although the PNB has not yet suggested an Irish origin, we can be fairly certain in postulating *Mullach an Díolúnaigh*, or perhaps simply *Mullach Díolúin* “Dillon’s summit/hilltop”. Further south, in Co. Tipperary, in the province of Munster there is a townland named Garrandillon, which comes from Irish *Garrán an Díolúnaigh* “Dillon’s grove” (PNB)<sup>15</sup>. We can also find an example of the surname in one Ulster place-name, in the north of the country; Artidllon in Co. Derry was originally *Ard Tí Díolúin* “the height of Dillon’s house” (Comer 2016, 139)<sup>16</sup>. Our place-name evidence indicates clearly that the surname Dillon had a greater influence on the toponyms of Leinster than any other part of Ireland – which, interestingly, was the native province of Juan Dillon’s father, John.

<sup>13</sup> *Cluain* is a very common element in place-names and it means “meadow” or “pasture-land” (IPN, 56).

<sup>14</sup> Here we have another example of the definite article *an* being used with a surname. *Díolún* (Dillon) becomes *An Díolúnach* “the Dillon”.

<sup>15</sup> *Garrán* is a word meaning “grove” or “shrubbery”. It is rather numerous in Munster, Connaught, and Leinster, but does not seem to be well attested in Ulster (Joyce I, 498).

<sup>16</sup> *Ard* is the most common word in Irish place-names which signifies a “height” (IPN, 17). *Teach* (or the oblique form *tigh*) is the Modern Irish word for house. When found in a place-name, it frequently denotes saints house, i.e. a church (147).

### 3.3 Duggan

The town and railway station of Duggan in *San Antonio de Areco* is named after Tomás Duggan, who sold 40 hectares to the Western Railway in 1896 (Murray 2005, 144; IPLA)<sup>17</sup>. Tomás first arrived in Argentina from Ireland in 1859 and he became a leading member of the Irish-Argentine community. According to the memoir of John Macnie the Duggans went on to become “one of the wealthiest families in Argentina” (1925, 62). They were the sons of Hugh Duggan and Jane Kelly, and they hailed from Ballymahon in Co. Longford (IPLA).

The surname comes from Irish *Ó Dubhagáin* which is rendered *Ó Dúgáin* in Modern Irish, and has its origins in the Irish adjective “dubh”, meaning “black”. It may be anglicised alternatively as “Doogan” or “Dougan”. There were several distinct septs with the surname. What is deemed to be the original and most important were from Fermoy, in Co. Cork; there was another sept elsewhere in Cork and 3 others in Connaught (Woulfe 1923, 508-509).

The surname *Ó Dúgáin* has left its mark on quite a few Irish place-names. If we begin in the sept’s ancestral home county of Cork, we find two townlands containing the surname as a qualifying element; Caherduggan (*Currach Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s marsh”)<sup>18</sup>, and Lisduggan (*Lios Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s ringfort”) (PNB). As mentioned above, the Duggans also had a strong foothold on certain areas of Connaught, and this is reflected in the nomenclature of the province. There are 2 townlands called Ballydoogan in Co. Galway and Sligo, which come from *Baile Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s town(land)”. We also see the surname appear in another Galway townland name; Cartrondoogan (*Cartrún Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s quarter(land)”) <sup>19</sup> is situated in the same parish as the aforementioned Ballydoogan, which shows us the family held particular importance in the district (*ibidem*). Another Ballydoogan in Co. Westmeath (Leinster) has the same derivation, and two townlands called Ballydugan in Co. Down (Ulster) (NIPNP; PNB; McKay 1999, 12). The surname appears in no less than three place-names in Co. Donegal, and all are situated along the northwest coast of Ireland; Binnyduggan (*Binn Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s peak/point”)<sup>20</sup> and Scoltydoogan (*Scoilt Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s crack”)<sup>21</sup> (PNB). The third place, Duggan’s Town, differs from the two former names in that it was coined in English and not Irish. We have another example of a similar composition in Co. Wexford, in Leinster; Doogan’s Warren (*ibidem*). Our final, and most noteworthy example is in Co. Longford, the native county of the Duggan Brothers. Farranyoogan (*Fearann Uí Dhúgáin*, “Duggan’s ploughland”)<sup>22</sup> is located a mere 18km away from the town of Ballymahon, the homeplace of Hugh Duggan. If any of these names are to have an ancestral link to Duggan in *San Antonio de Areco*, this one must be deemed our most likely candidate.

<sup>17</sup> See Murray (2005) for a discussion on the development of the railway system in Argentina.

<sup>18</sup> *Currach* (or *corrach*) is one of several Irish words meaning “swamp”, “marsh”, “morass”, or “wet bog” (Ó Dónaill s.v.; IPN, 61).

<sup>19</sup> “Cartron” was a term brought to Ireland by Anglo-Norman settlers. As Joyce explains, “*cartron* signifies a quarter, and is derived from the French *quarteron* [...] it was applied to a parcel of land varying in amount from 60 acres to 160 acres” (Joyce I, 245). It was subsequently Gaelicised and adopted into the Irish language as *cartrún*, *cartún*, or *cartúr* (Mac Gabhann 2014, i 123). Although not an overly numerous element throughout Ireland, it is not uncommon around the Midlands and in Connaught (see: <www.logainm.ie> (03/2021)).

<sup>20</sup> *Binn* (or *beann*) means “peak” or “mountain peak” (IPN, 29), but can also denote “horn, antler” (Ó Dónaill s.v.); or simply “point” in the wider sense.

<sup>21</sup> *Scoilt* literally translates as “crack” or “split” (Ó Dónaill s.v.). In place-name terms, it generally denotes a coastal feature, i.e. a crack in the rocks.

<sup>22</sup> *Fearann* is a word which means simply “land” in a general sense, but more specifically “ploughland” (IPN, 186).

### 3.4 Kenny

Another such railway station in Provincia de Buenos Aires is Kenny. Antonio Kenny (1857-1921) was the son of James Kenny (1798-1857), who came to Argentina before 1837, and Honoria Murray (1811-1904) – they were from Co. Westmeath. Antonio himself was born in San Vicente a short time after his father died, and he himself died on 21 February 1921. In 1897, he granted a parcel of land to the Central Buenos Aires railway director, and thus the Kenny station was founded (IPLA).

The surname derives from Irish *Ó Cionaoith*<sup>23</sup>, and it was the name of a number of distinct septs. The most notable of these were the lords of the *Uí Máine* in counties Galway and Roscommon, and in this region the surname is still very numerous (MacLysaght 1985, 115). In Ulster there was an *Ó Cionaoith* sept in Co. Tyrone, and another sept called *Ó Coinne* in Co. Down which became anglicised as Kenny (Bell 1988, 111)<sup>24</sup>.

Various families and individuals called *Ó Cionaoith* have become immortalised in place-names all throughout Ireland. For example, there are two townlands in Co. Donegal, and another in Co. Limerick called Ballykenny, these derive from Irish *Baile Uí Chionaoith*, “Kenny’s town(land)”. Further names include Clonakenny in Co. Tipperary (*Cluain Uí Chionaoith*, “Kenny’s meadow/pasture”), Coolkenna, Co. Wicklow (*Cúil Uí Chionaoith*, “Kenny’s corner/nook”), and Tullycanna, Co. Wexford (*Tulaigh Uí Chionaoith*, “Kenny’s hillock”)<sup>25</sup> (PNB). We also have an example of this surname appearing in its genitive plural form in Carrigogna, Co. Cork (*Carraig Ó gCionaoith*, “rock of the Kennys”)<sup>26</sup>. Clunganny in Tyrone may be another example of this as it possibly derives from *Cluain Ó gCionaoith*, “meadow/pasture of the Kennys” (Ó Doibhlin 2021, forthcoming). Kenny also appears in Irish place-names of English origin. There are townlands called Kennystown in counties Tyrone and Wicklow which undoubtedly were named from local inhabitants bearing the surname (NIPNP; PNB). The above place-names are well distributed throughout Ireland, with four in Ulster, three in Munster, and three in Leinster. Ironically, none appear in the province of Connaught, from which the most significant *Ó Cionaoith* family hailed<sup>27</sup>. There also appears to be no examples of the surname appearing in a place-name in Co. Westmeath, the homeplace of the family of our Antonio Kenny.

### 3.5 Lennon

The majority of the place-names featured in this paper are towns, or railway stations which subsequently grew into towns. However, sometimes Irish landowners named features within their properties (Murray 2010, 71). Lennon stream in Capilla del Señor, Provincia de Buenos Aires, is one such example. The landowner in question was one Edward Lennon, born in Co. Westmeath in 1819. This stream which was on his *estancia* in Capilla del Señor was named after him (DILAB).

Although the surname Lennon is found throughout Ireland, it is particularly common in Ulster and Leinster. In general, it comes from Irish *Ó Leannáin*<sup>28</sup> and it was the name of various

<sup>23</sup> Woulfe (1923, 466) gives the alternative spellings *Ó Cionaodha* and *Ó Cionáith*.

<sup>24</sup> The more common anglicised form of *Ó Coinne* is (O’) Quinn.

<sup>25</sup> *Tulaigh* is an oblique form of *tulach*, meaning “Low hill; hillock, mound” (Ó Dónaill s.v.).

<sup>26</sup> *Carraig* means simply “rock”, and Flanagan also gives the meanings “large prominent stone” (IPN, 44).

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the family’s native homeland in Co. Roscommon was known as Munter Kenny (*Muintir Uí Chionáith*, “the people of Kenny”). This is now a non-official place-name, and although it is still known locally, it no longer serves any administrative purposes.

<sup>28</sup> As MacLysaght explains, “some confusion arises because [...] the Irish surnames *Ó Lonáin* (Lenane) and even *Ó Luinín* (Linneen) are also sometimes Lennon [...] in English” (1985, 120).

distinct septs. The most notable of these were an erenagh family in the parish of Inishmacsaint, Co. Fermanagh; a number of the members of the family were priors or canons in the same county in the fourteenth and fifteenth century (Bell 1988, 120).

*Ó Leannáin* has left its mark on many place-names all over Ireland. There are no less than nine townlands which derive from *Baile Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s town(land)”; two called Ballylennon in Co. Offaly and Carlow, two called Ballylennan in Tyrone, and two more in Donegal and Galway, Ballylannan in Wexford, Ballylinane in Limerick, and Ballylenane in Waterford (NIPNP; PNB). Other examples include Aghalinane in Co. Cork which comes from (*Áth Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s ford”)<sup>29</sup>, Killina in Co. Monaghan (*Coill Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s wood”)<sup>30</sup>, and Cappalinnan in Laois (*Ceapach Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s tillage-plot”)<sup>31</sup>. Two townlands in Co. Cavan contain the surname as a qualifying element, they are Corlattyannan (*Corrleacht Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s odd grave-mound”)<sup>32</sup> and Cullyleenan (*Cúil Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s corner/nook”). Although the townland on Keyanna in Limerick comes from *Caothanna* “swamps”, the PNB informs us that historical evidence from the seventeenth century proves *Cúil Uí Leannáin* was a former name for the townland. *Corr Uí Leannáin*, “Lennon’s round hill” seems the most likely etymology of Corralinnen in Co. Fermanagh<sup>33</sup>. Of all the above place-names, the majority are in Ulster, and somewhat unsurprisingly, most of these are in counties bordering Fermanagh, the county in which the *Ó Leannáin* sept held significant importance. Only three are in the province of Leinster, and none are in Westmeath, the native homeplace of our Edward Lennon.

### 3.6 Murphy

John James Murphy is the individual who has found himself immortalised in the name of the town and railway station of Murphy in General López, Santa Fe. The town did not receive the name Murphy until 1911 and it was the descendants of the original migrant who were still in the area who named it. He was born in the parish of Kilrane, Co. Wexford, in 1822, and was the eldest son of Nicholas Murphy and Katherine Sinnott. Edmundo Murray gives a good account of his emigration to Argentina, and his subsequent endeavours and exploits in the country<sup>34</sup>.

Murphy is the single most numerous surname in Ireland, and it is common in every province. It is an intriguing surname as it was used with both the “Ó” and “Mac” prefixes, depending on what part of Ireland it was found. The vast majority of those called Murphy nowadays originally came from Irish *Ó Murchadha*, meaning, “descendant of *Murchadh*”, which was an

<sup>29</sup> *Áth* is the most common Irish word for a “ford”, and it forms part of hundreds of place-names all over the island of Ireland (Joyce I, 354).

<sup>30</sup> *Coill* is a one of a number of Irish words which signifies a “wood”. It is generally anglicised as “kil(l)” and for this reason it is often difficult to distinguish it from another Irish word in its modern spelling; *cill* “church”.

<sup>31</sup> As Joyce (I, 228) points out, *ceapach* is a word meaning “a plot of land laid out for tillage”. It is not uncommon in place-names but is not found in Ulster as frequently as it is in other provinces.

<sup>32</sup> *Leacht* means “grave or burial monument”, and is quite common in place-names, often referring to wedge-tombs but can also refer to other sorts of megalith (IPN, 107). It is preceded here by the adjective *corr*, meaning odd or conspicuous (Joyce I, 397).

<sup>33</sup> As Joyce (I, 397) alludes to, the noun *corr* is troublesome for place-name scholars as it can signify a few different things. These include, “projecting point”, “round hill”, “hollow”, “pit”. As mentioned previously, as an adjective it means “odd” or “conspicuous” (Ó Dónaill s.v.).

<sup>34</sup> Murray’s account is available online at <<https://www.irlandeses.org/murphy.htm>> (03/2021).

ancient personal name meaning “sea-warrior” (Ó Corráin, Maguire 1981, 142). The surname has now been standardised in Modern Irish as *Ó Murchú*. It was the name of three separate septs in three separate provinces, one in Cork (Munster), one in Roscommon (Connaught), and one in Wexford (Leinster). However, most Murphys in the province of Ulster actually come from a further distinct sept, *Mac Murchadha*, which is more commonly rendered *Mac Murchaidh* in northern dialects of Irish. They were an important *Cenél Eoghain* family who controlled extensive lands in modern day Co. Tyrone (Bell 1988, 201).

Understandably, there are quite a number of place-names all over Ireland containing the surname Murphy as a qualifying element. *Baile Uí Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s town(land)” is the origin of no less than seventeen townlands on the island; fourteen of these were anglicised as Ballymurphy, in counties Cork, Clare, Carlow, Antrim, Limerick, and Galway; and three became anglicised as Ballymurragh, one in Co. Kerry, and a further two in Co. Wexford. More examples include Coolymurraghue in Co. Cork (*Cúil Uí Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s corner/nook”), Garryvarrigha in Co. Limerick (*Garraí Uí Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s garden”), and Rathmurphy in Co. Sligo (*Ráth Uí Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s ringfort”)<sup>35</sup>. If we venture northwards, we find examples of the alternative Ulster spelling in the names Golanmurphy (*Gabhlán Uí Mhurchaidh*, “Murphy’s small fork”)<sup>36</sup> and Mullamurphy (*Mullach Uí Mhurchaidh*, “Murphy’s summit/hilltop”)<sup>37</sup> in Co. Monaghan. Three townlands in Co. Down and another in Co. Antrim called Ballymurphy all most likely derive from *Baile Uí Mhurchaidh*, “Murphy’s town(land)” (*NIPNP*). As well as the above place-names which incorporate the surname Murphy with the *Ó* prefix, we have no shortage of examples containing the “Mac” prefix. Ballymurphy in Tyrone is one example of this, as historical spellings from the seventeenth century indicate, the original Irish form was *Baile Mhic Mhurchaidh*, “Murphy’s town(land)” (Ó Doibhlin 2021, forthcoming). Both Lis Murphy in Co. Derry and Lismacmurogh in Co. Longford derive from *Lios Mhic Mhurchaidh*, “Murphy’s ringfort” (Comer 2016, 304; PNB). The townland of Ballycurrigh in Co. Offaly as well as two townlands called Ballymacmurragh in Offaly and Cork have been given by the PNB as *Baile Mhic Mhurchú*, “Murphy’s town(land)”; which combines the *Mac* particle, which was in use in Ulster, with the *Murchú* (“Murchadha”) form of the surname, which was more common in the south. Finally, of particular interest to us here, we have two interesting townland names from Co. Wexford, John James Murphy’s native county; they are Macmurrughisland and Macmurroughs. They differ from all the previously mentioned names, however, in that they seem to be later English coinages.

### 3.7 O’Brien

The individual who named the town of (Eduardo) O’Brien in Provincia de Buenos Aires was Eduardo O’Brien, born in Co. Wexford. Eduardo (Edward) O’Brien first emigrated to South America at the age of 14 when he and his parents Patrick and Frances went to Brazil. They subsequently settled in Carmen de Areco, a town in Provincia de Buenos Aires. At the age of 72, in 1906, Eduardo donated 46 hectares for the purpose of building a railway station. The town which grew up around the station was founded officially on 21 March 1909. The name of the station (and town), O’Brien, was selected by Eduardo not to commemorate himself, but

<sup>35</sup> In the older language, *ráth* had the significance, “An earthen rampart surrounding a chief’s residence, a fort, rath” (eDIL s.v.). In place-names it is generally translated simply as “fort”.

<sup>36</sup> *Gabhlán* is a rather uncommon place-name element. It means “fork, bifurcation, inlet, creek” (Ó Dónaill s.v.).

<sup>37</sup> *Mullach* simply means “summit” or “hilltop” and it is very common in place-names all over Ireland.

General John Thomond O'Brien, who was no relation to Eduardo (IPLA). A few years after Eduardo's death, the station was subsequently renamed "General O'Brien".

O'Brien is one of the great Gaelic families who have been prominent throughout the history of Ireland. The family descends from none other than Brian Boru, who was High King of Ireland until his death at Clontarf, Co. Dublin in 1014. O'Brien is the most common anglicised spelling of *Ó Briain*, other variants include "O'Brian", "O'Bryan", and "O'Bryen". The O'Briens eventually dispersed and divided into several branches: two in Co. Tipperary, two in Limerick, and another in Co. Waterford (Woulfe 1923, 442-443). Although originating in Munster, O'Brien has now spread all throughout Ireland where it is the fifth most common surname (MacLysaght 2007, 27).

Being a surname of such significance and importance throughout Ireland's history, O'Brien has left its mark on many toponyms all over the island. There are two townlands named Ballybrien in counties Limerick and Longford, they derive from Irish *Baile Uí Bhriain*, "O'Brien's town(land)". Furthermore, there is a townland in Tipperary called Ashpark, but this name does not appear until the nineteenth century. Historical evidence dating back to 1552 shows us that *Baile Uí Bhriain* was a former name for the townland (PNB). Derryvreen in Cork derives from *Doire Uí Bhriain*, "O'Brien's oak-wood", as does Derrybreen in Tipperary<sup>38</sup>. Other townlands in Tipperary include Cloneybrien, from *Cluain Uí Bhriain*, "O'Brien's meadow/pasture", and Lisheenbrien, from *Lisín Uí Bhriain* "O'Brien's small ring-fort". The etymology of Rosbrien in Cork is *Ros Uí Bhriain*, which the Placenames Branch translates as "the high place of O'Brien"<sup>39</sup>. The surname is also immortalised in the townland of O'Brienscastle in Co. Clare, which is clearly an English composition. All but one of the above townlands are in the province of Munster, which is to be expected, given that that is where the surname originated, and where the various branches of the family became chieftains. None are in Co. Wexford, Eduardo O'Brien's native county.

### 3.8 O'Gorman

This is one of a number of streets in the city of Buenos Aires which is named after eminent Irish residents. See for example other streets in the city named Lynch, O'Higgins, and O'Brien (IPLA). The O'Gormans hailed from Ennis in Co. Clare and upon arrival in Argentina, many members of the family went on to be instrumental members of the Irish Argentine community. Thomas O'Gorman was in Buenos Aires from as early as 1797 and it has been suggested that he may have been central in creating a continuous migration scheme from Co. Clare (Murray 2005, 21-22). Father Patrick J. O'Gorman was another member and he first arrived in Buenos Aires in 1831 and became just the second Irish chaplain in Argentina (141).

The surname originally comes from Irish *Mac Gormáin* and Woulfe (1923, 381-82) states the "Ó" prefix was a later addition, giving us *Ó Gormáin*. They were formerly a powerful Leinster family. After the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, they lost their territory and were dispersed; some went to Co. Monaghan, but others went to Co. Clare. This latter group are undoubtedly the ancestors of the Irish Argentine family of O'Gorman.

<sup>38</sup> *Doire* means "oak-grove" or "oak-wood" and is a very common word in Irish place-names (IPN, 70). The most notable example is the city and county of Derry, in the north of Ireland.

<sup>39</sup> The word *ros* may cause difficulty for place-name scholars as it has two completely separate meanings. It may mean "promontory, headland" or "wood, grove" (IPN, 137-138; Ó Dónaill s.v.). The Placenames Branch also gives the significance "(wooded) height". See: <www.logainm.ie> (03/2021).

There are quite a number of place-names in Ireland containing this surname as the specific element. There are places called Ballygorman in counties Armagh and Donegal (*Baile Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s town(land)”). Elsewhere in Ulster we have Killygorman (*Coill Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s wood”) in counties Fermanagh and Monaghan. Limerick seems to be the county with the most instances of this surname in its nomenclature, with a townland called Coolygorman (*Cúil Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s corner/nook”) and a further three townlands called Gormanstown. Gormanstown also appears as a townland name in Tipperary, as well as Gormanston in Co. Meath. Tipperary has a place which is interestingly named Kilballygorman (*Cill Bhaile Uí Ghormáin*, “the church of O’Gorman’s town(land)”). Remaining in Munster, we see the surname appear twice in Co. Cork, Cloonygorman (*Cluain Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s meadow”) and Meengorman (*Min Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s mountain pasture”)<sup>40</sup>; and once in Co. Kerry, Derrygorman (*Doire Uí Ghormáin*, “O’Gorman’s oak wood”). Another Derrygorman, in Co. Mayo appears to be the sole example in the province of Connaught, and the PNB gives the postulated Irish form as *Doire Mhic Gormáin*, “Gorman’s oak wood”; using the “Mac” prefix as opposed to “Ó”. As a result of all of this, a connection between our O’Gormans and any of the places mentioned above seems extremely unlikely.

#### 4. Observations

Coghlan’s genealogical catalogue (1987) is an invaluable source for determining the demographics of Irish emigrants to Argentina. It lists Westmeath, Wexford, and Longford as the counties from which the most emigrants came. Therefore it is not entirely surprising that of the eight people who gave rise to the Argentine place-names under discussion, six came from one of these three counties. As can be seen from the discussion under each name above, we may be able to draw some connections between our place-names in Argentina and their Irish counterparts. With others, due to a lack of toponymic parallels in the homeland of our emigrants, no connection makes itself immediately apparent. It seems that by examining the full corpus of Gaelic surnominal place-names in Argentina, there is scope in this area for further research. In doing so, we may be able to raise a number of queries; have surnames from other migrant groups also been employed in place-names in Argentina? If so, what is the difference, between them and the Irish names? Is it possible that the Irish naming followed a pattern which was already established in the country? In due course, we may be able to answer these questions in further studies on the surnominal place-names of Argentina.

#### 5. Glossary

**Province.** This is the largest administrative division in Ireland. There are four provinces: Ulster, Leinster, Connaught, and Munster. There were once five, however, with Meath being a former province.

**County.** Counties were created by English administration in Ireland and they became the major subdivision within the provinces. There are 32 counties in Ireland.

<sup>40</sup> *Min* can cause difficulty for place-name scholars as it can signify a couple of different things. As an adjective it means “smooth”. However, when used nominally it can be used in the sense “smooth place” or “smooth’ surface” (IPN, 120-22). In place-name terms, it is often translated as “mountain pasture”, i.e. a smooth place in the middle of rough mountainous land (PNB).

**Civil Parish.** These parishes were based on medieval church parishes, but they became administrative land units. In total there are over 2,500 civil parishes in Ireland.

**Townland.** The smallest administrative land unit in Ireland. There are over 60,000 townlands on the island of Ireland and the majority of our toponyms discussed in this article are townland-names.

**Partido.** The second-level administrative subdivision, and they are only in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. They are considered to be a single administrative unit, and usually contain one or more population centres.

**Provincia.** Similar to the Irish provinces mentioned above. Argentina is subdivided into 23 provinces or *provincias*.

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