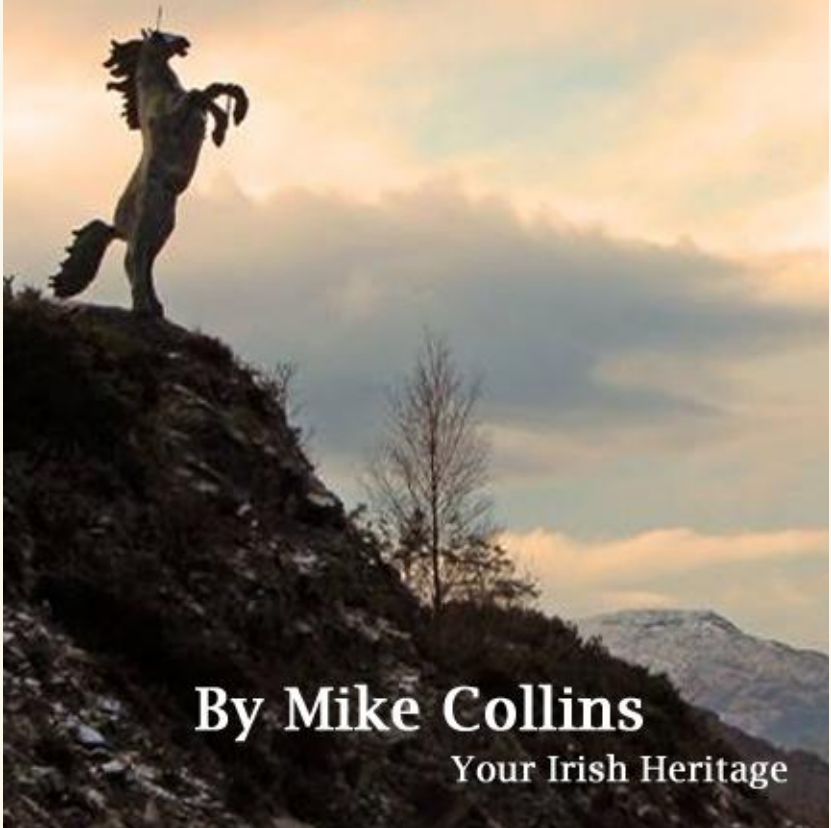


Tribes of Ireland

1156 AD

Ireland at the
Birth of your surname



By Mike Collins

Your Irish Heritage

The Tribes of Ireland: 1156

**Ireland at the Birth Of Your
Surname**

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First published 2014 by

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Carina, Evan and Rosaleen – my own history and future – and the thousands of readers of Your Irish Heritage who make the journey so wonderfully worthwhile.

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Disclaimer.

Now, it may seem odd to start a book with a “Disclaimer” section. Just what is it that I am “disclaiming”?

The reason I have included this section is because I notice that us humans (including Irish humans) have a tendency to believe what we want to believe - especially when it comes to researching the significant people (and royalty who owned many castles) from which we are descended.

I have noticed this in the hundreds of conversations I have with the readers of Your Irish Heritage. I have the same tendency myself.

So, I want to bring your attention to the following facts:

1. This is the First Edition of this book. The second edition will be published at the beginning of September, 2014. In the meantime - each chapter of this edition is open to your comments, questions and suggested corrections. You can add your input on the special forum that is open to you when you purchase a copy of this book. I feel this approach is necessary because ...
2. It is much more interesting (and fun) to open this project up to the reader's of Your Irish Heritage - than for me simply to proclaim myself an expert in the field of your family history. This leads me to the next point.
3. I am neither an academic Historian nor professional genealogist. I am a resident Irish man who has also lived in many other parts of the world as an emigrant. I have a passion for engaging with others on the history of this beautiful Island and the world that surrounds it. Those “others” are typically people of Irish ancestry living in many different parts of the world - people like you who have come to value this aspect of your heritage. You also have a surname (or two) around which you wish to develop the story and journey of

Your Irish Heritage. And to my final point.

4. I believe that history is an open book. It is open to interpretation and discussion and there are many subjective truths. This is very much the case for the time we are looking at Ireland - 1156AD. A time that is often skipped over in the history books (and many of the written histories were written by the victors). We are also up against the many “genealogies” that were written by the paid employees of the leading families of the time. These books recorded the great victories and defeats and often sought to invent a royal lineage for the “up and coming” families of the time. As a new King arose - he had the power - now he needed the lineage.

So, I ask you to stay both open-minded and healthily sceptical around all that you read in this book. But I will make you a promise - together we will tease out an even more “useful truth” for you and me as we share and discuss the wonderful story and journey that is Your Irish Heritage.

Mike Collins,

March, 2014.

Preface

As I write these words, I'm sitting on the waterfront of the beautiful port town of Cobh in County Cork. On one side are the waters of Cork harbour – to the other side is a Pub called “Kellys”. Over the door of the pub is a large sign for “Murphy’s” Stout – a locally-made beer.



Figure 1 Cobh, County Cork

Between 1848 and 1950, over 6 million people emigrated from Ireland. Over 2.5 million of these departed from Cobh, making it the best-known port of emigration. Over much of that century, Cobh was known as “Queenstown” – but reverted to its older Irish name when Ireland regained Independence.

Ireland is a country of families and kin – a country of tribes – and it has

always been like that. If you travel around countries like England you will notice that many surnames derive from a place or an occupation.

In Ireland it is different.

When you examine the old Gaelic surnames that emerged after the tenth century, you see the vast majority of surnames are “son of” (Mac) and “Grandson of” (O). It was more important to tell the world which kin and family you belonged to than anything else. That is where the sense of honour, duty and trust came from. Not from place or occupation.

As you travel around Ireland even today – you encounter many surnames above the Pubs and shops – each a distinctive marker for a particular family. You quickly know which territory you are travelling through.

So, sitting here in Cobh – which only got going as an emigrant port at the time of the Great Famine in the mid 1800s – it comes to mind that there was next to negligible emigration before then by the native Gaelic population.

Many hundreds of thousands of Ulster-Scots left for the colonies through the 1700s – sometimes bringing Gaelic indentured servants with them. But the Gaels had a huge attachment to land and kin – one that did not break no matter how bad things got.

But they did get bad. And once the floodgates opened in the mid 1800s – whole extended families of Irish Catholics left Ireland for the shores of America, Canada and the UK. Over the following decades many chose to go further afield of their own free will to Australia and New Zealand.

I look at my own father who emigrated to England in the 1950s. One by one, he found work for each of his siblings and over a short number of years there seemed to be more of his family in London rather than Cork.

The reason I have written this book is to explore the tribes, families, territories, customs and culture of Ireland.

I frequently get asked the question: “My surname is e.g. O’Brien – can you tell me a little more about the name and where it comes from?””

This book is here to answer that question by taking a snapshot of Ireland at a time just before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1170AD. This was a time when Ireland was a fragmented place – both politically and in terms of territory – but was united in language, custom and culture.

It was a time when your Irish family surname came into being for the first time.

How to Read and Use this Book

You might wonder why you need “instructions” on how to read this book?

Well, this first edition of the book is set up in such a way to invite your comments and additions. At the end of each chapter you will find a link to a page on the YourIrishHeritage forum where you can leave comments, questions and requests. I will answer your questions, and many of the answers and comments will make their way into the next edition of the book.

Here is how it works:

- Enjoy dipping into the book in whatever sequence suits you.
- If you have a question, comment or would like to share a story - click the link at the end of each chapter.
- This will bring you to the forum entry - and comment section - for that chapter.

- Have a read of the other comments you find there.
- Want to add a comment or question? No problem, just add it at the end of the comments section. I'll answer as best I can within a short number of days.

Rest in the knowledge that your query or comment will add to the next release of the “Tribes of Ireland” - a wonderful collaboration between all the readers of Your Irish Heritage.

Mike Collins,

Cork,

February, 2014.

Would you like to comment on this part of the book – or ask the Mike a question? Just click on the following link:

<http://youririshheritage.invisionzone.com/index.php?/forum/11-preface/>

Introduction

We all have a given name – mine is Michael – it marks us as an individual. We pay attention when we hear our name – it is often something unique to us in our family.

But surnames are different. Our surname is shared. Shared with many millions of people through the world, but more importantly, shared with our family and kin. Somehow, we carve a shared identity with the others in our family around this surname. And that is what this book is all about – the Irish surnames in your family tree. Not just the names and spellings, but the stories behind those names – their origins and evolution. We will use the Irish surnames in your family to help us uncover these shared histories, heritage – and hopefully uncover an enhanced sense of just what it is to be Irish.

To start our journey, we will travel back to a time when the use of surname was still in its infancy around the world. A time in Europe when population increase, feudalism and land ownership rights forced this new system into place for the first time. We will look at Ireland at the time of the birth of your surname.

Let's Start with a King

O'Connor is just one of many thousands of Irish surnames in use around the world today. The spelling has often changed through the centuries as it travelled through the pens of the clerks of Ellis Island – we find Conor, Connors and I have even seen Okonor. Maybe it's just one of the Irish surnames in your family tree?

Turlough O'Connor – High King of Ireland for almost thirty-seven years – died in Dunmore (in modern County Galway) in May, 1156. Turlough – and all O'Connor's of Connaught - took their surname from Conchobar (Conor in English) – an illustrious ancestor who was King of

Connaught until 973AD. They were known as Ua Conchobair or “descendents of Conor”.



Figure 2 The Irish Surname O'Connor

Although he was born into the royal family of O'Connors and became King of Connaught – he spent most of his life in pursuit of the High-Kingship of Ireland. Forty years navigating the intricacies of Irish political life – splitting other kingdoms to weaken them - forging alliances through marriage, payment and the taking of hostages. He was buried in Clonmacnoise in modern County Offaly – where you can still visit the tombs of Turlough and his son, Rory – to this day.

In this book we will look at Ireland at the end of the reign of Turlough O'Connor. We will look at Custom and law, language and song, territories and tribes – and the family surnames of these Kingdoms and territories.

Let's start by reminding ourselves of two really important facts:

Firstly, human history only really began in the island of Ireland about 10,000 years ago.

Since then.... many different peoples have come to this island intermingled - and from this tiny island exploded across the rest of the world in a way that is quite remarkable.

So, when did humans come to Ireland? Let's have a look at the timeline:

10,000 BC	End of Ice Age – first settlers on island of Ireland arrive.
Up until 500BC	Stone and Bronze ages – People like the “Fir Bolg” and the “Tuatha Dé Dannan” lived in Ireland
Around 500BC	Gradual arrival of the Celts – who intermarry with people on the island. They gradually become known as “Gael”.
Around 400 AD	Introduction of Christianity – and historical record. “Pre-history” before this time.
Around the 800s AD	Arrival of the Vikings – who introduce towns and gradually intermarry with the native Gaels. Start of the surname “system”.
1169 AD	Arrival of the Normans – and their surnames – who gradually intermarry with the native Gaels.
1600s	Demise of the Gaelic chieftains – English take power and start the “plantation” of settlers – who bring their surnames from Scotland and England.
1700s – 1800s	Many Ulster Scots from Ulster to American colonies – with their surnames
Mid 1800s onwards	Famine and emigration of many Catholic Irish to US, Canada, UK etc. – with their surnames
1920s – 1940s	Republic of Ireland established

Where we will start our journey

In this book, we choose a particular moment in time - a time before the arrival of the Normans in 1170AD. We will look at Ireland at the end of the reign of Turlough O'Connor. We will look at Ireland in 1156AD.

At that moment in time:

- The Gaelic “Tribes” and kingdoms of Ireland had been in place for hundreds of years.
- The Vikings had already landed on our shores and set up the first towns. They formed alliances with the native Gaelic kings and intermarried.
- The Anglo-Normans had yet to “invade” and start the gradual colonisation of Ireland.
- The surname system that we familiar with today was slowly being introduced.

pronounced “Ter-lock”) was the King of Connaught and High King of Ireland (with opposition) in 1156. At that time he was about 66 years of age. He ruled over an Ireland of nine provincial Kingdoms that was to shortly change in the most dramatic manner.

IRELAND IN 1156

In 1156 Ireland was an island of Tribes. Each tribe was like a mini-Kingdom (called a “Tuath”). Each occupied its own tribal lands, administered its own justice – and constantly fought with other tribes for expansion of their territories. There were about 55 tribes throughout the island - each allied into a larger provincial over-kingdom.

These over-kingdoms (also showing their ruling families in 1156) were:

KINGDOMS OF THE NORTH:

- Northern Uí Néill – MacLochlainn (McLoughlin)
- Ulaid (Ulster) – MacDuinnsleibe (Dunleavy)
- Airgialla – Ua Cerbaill (O’Carroll)

KINGDOMS OF THE SOUTH:

- Tuamumu (North Munster) – Ua Briain (O’Brien)
- Desmumu (South Munster) – MacCarthaig (McCarthy)

KINGDOMS OF THE EAST:

- Midhe – Ua Maelsechnaill (Mc Glaughlin)

- Laigin (Leinster) – MacMurchadha (McMurrough)

KINGDOMS OF THE WEST:

-Connaught – Ua Conchobhair (O'Connor)

-Breifne – Ua Ruairc (O'Rourke)

Do you recognise any of the family names above - are they one of yours?

Alongside these kingdoms were the Vikings – who had arrived 300 years before. At first, they came on short attacking trips – but over time set up the coastal towns of Ireland — Dublin, Cork, Wexford, Waterford and Limerick. By 1156AD they were still apart from the native Irish, but had evolved into the “Hiberno-Norse” – often called the “Ostmen” by the Irish.

Tribe, Clan and Kin.

When you start looking at Irish history (and Scottish which is quite close) – you will hear lots of terms bandied about: Tribes, Clans, Kin, Septs and so on.

So, it's time for us to make some distinctions.

- **TRIBE:** We will look at a “Tribe” as a group with a common leader who occupies designated Tribal Lands. Within these lands, all come under the same law.
- **CLAN:** The “Tribe” is made up of a number of “Clans”. Now, Clan doesn't actually mean family in the way we understand it – although it is typically an extended Kin group. Its purpose is more administrative and political than a blood connection.

- **KIN:** Within the Clans were a number of “Derbhfine” – a male kin group all descended from a common great-grandfather. This again was a legal structure (in Brehon law) which dictated hereditary rights and so on.

So, tying this together - on the death of a Clan’s king, the surviving members of its Derbhfine would elect from their number a new successor. The wider clan, e.g. cousins who were too distantly related to be members of the Derbhfine, would not have a say in the election (maybe now you can see why it was so important to know your family, lineage and kin in Ireland – a habit we keep to this day). We will cover this in more detail later in the book.

So, you might be thinking “that’s quite small group of people from within which to elect a King”. But let me let you in on a secret. It’s not! Turlough had at least 6 wives and at least 24 sons. Brehon law allowed for children outside marriage and foster children to be included in the “Derbhfine”. As you can see – this extended “family” quickly grew to hundreds of individuals over 4 generations.

And another secret: Many of the Irish-descended readers here are actually descended from Royalty! Why? Well, when a King produces so many Princes — there is huge demand for land and resources among this ruling group. They edge out all the non-royals over some generations – until they themselves are displaced.

But, we are jumping ahead of ourselves – we will come back to the specific families and kingdoms in Ireland – as well as their customs.

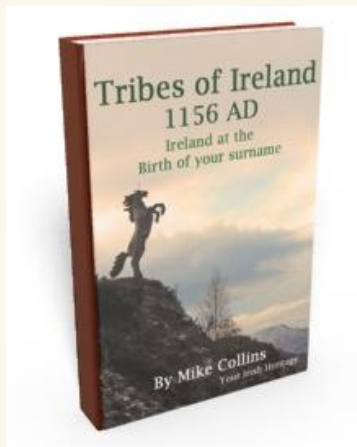
First, however, we need to examine the world outside Ireland at the time. The world of Normandy, Scotland, England and Wales. A world that still contained many of Irish ancestors – ancestors who had yet to arrive in Ireland.

End of Excerpt

For Our *SPECIAL OFFER*:

See: <https://gum.co/odGr>

This Ebook – “The Tribes of Ireland: 1156AD”:



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