

Contaetha na hÉireann - Our Irish Counties

It is a well-known fact that us Irish are very aware and indeed proud of our county (*contae*) origins - none more so than those of us living in Britain. We do not observe the same emotion and intensity of county pride and loyalty within the English shires (with some notable exceptions - e.g. the Roses cricket rivalry between Yorkshire and Lancashire, the prevalence of the black and white Saint Piran's flag in Cornwall).

In the seventies many English county borders were radically altered and indeed some counties were wiped of the map (Westmoreland, Cumberland). One cannot imagine the same scenario being acceptable in Ireland (parts of Cork taken over by Kerry or some of Tipperary being moved into Clare or abolishing Mayo, God forbid) - I think there would be uproar! County pride in Ireland is often associated with GAA rivalry in both hurling and Gaelic football - particularly in the summer months when the all-Ireland series is in full swing.

Though we take great pride in our county heritage, this geographical concept was actually introduced to Ireland by the invader. They were established by the Normans in the 12th century as a method of governing the country. Our provinces however predate the Norman invasion. The Irish word for province is *cúige*, which Irish speakers will recognise as meaning five or a fifth. So why this term when we only have four provinces? This is because Ireland did once have five provinces. In addition to the four we know, the current counties of Meath and Westmeath were once a separate province. So the term *cúige* could be considered a misnomer, but it has stuck. The four modern provinces of Ireland are **Cúige Chonnacht, Cúige Mumhan, Cúige Uladh and Cúige Laighean.**

The table shows all thirty-two Irish counties with associated detail for each - Irish name, Meaning, County Town, Nickname and GAA colours.

The provinces of the counties appear in the order shown above.

County	Contae	Míniú *	Príomhbhaile	Leasainm	Dathanna
Galway	Gaillimh	stony river	Galway City <i>Cathair na Gaillimhe</i>	The Tribesmen	 marún agus bán
Leitrim	Liatroim	grey ridge	Carrick-on-Shannon <i>Cora Droma Rúisc</i>	The Wild Rose County	 glas agus buí
Mayo	Maigh Eo	field of the Yew trees	Castlebar <i>Caisleán an Bharraigh</i>	The Heather County	 glas agus dearg
Sligo	Sligeach	shelly place	Sligo <i>Sligeach</i>	Yeats County	 dubh agus bán
Roscommon	Ros Comáin	St Comán's wood	Roscommon <i>Ros Comáin</i>	The Rossies	 buí agus gorm
Clare	An Clár	the level place	Ennis <i>Inis</i>	The Banner	 crócbhuí agus gorm
Cork	Corcaigh	marsh	Cork City <i>Cathair Chorcaí</i>	The Rebels	 dearg agus bán
Kerry	Ciarraí	descendents of Ciar	Tralee <i>Trá Lí</i>	The Kingdom	 glas agus buí
Limerick	Luimneach	bare area of ground	Limerick City <i>Cathair Luimnigh</i>	The Treaty County The Shannonsiders	 glas agus bán
Tipperary	Tiobraid Árann	well of (the river) Ara	Nenagh & Clonmel <i>An tAonach & Cluain Meala</i>	The Premier County The Stone Throwers	 gorm agus buí
Waterford	Port Láirge	bank of the haunch	Waterford City <i>Cathair Phort Láirge</i>	The Crystal County The Déise	 bán agus gorm
Antrim	Aontroim	one house	Belfast <i>Béal Feirste</i>	The Glensmen	 crócbhuí agus bán
Armagh	Ard Mhacha	Macha's height	Armagh City <i>Cathair Ard Mhacha</i>	The Orchard County	 oráiste agus bán
Cavan	An Cabhán	the hollow	Cavan <i>An Cabhán</i>	The Breffni	 gorm agus bán
Derry	Doire	oak grove	Derry City <i>Cathair Dhoire</i>	The Oak Leaf County	 dearg agus bán
Donegal	Dún na nGall	fort of the foreigners	Lifford <i>Leifear</i>	Tyrconnell	 buí agus glas

Down	An Dún	the fort	Downpatrick <i>Dún Pádraig</i>	The Mourne County	 dearg agus dubh
Fermanagh	Fear Manach	men of Monach	Enniskillen <i>Inis Ceithleann</i>	The Ernesiders	 glas agus bán
Monaghan	Muineachán	(place of) little thickets	Monaghan <i>Muineachán</i>	The Farney	 bán agus gorm
Tyrone	Tír Eoghain	Eoghan's land	Omagh <i>An Ómaigh</i>	The Red Hand	 bán agus dearg
Carlow	Ceatharlach	four lakes	Carlow <i>Ceatharlach</i>	The Dolmen County The Barrowsiders	 dearg, buí agus glas
Dublin	Baile Átha Cliath	town of the ford of hurdles	Dublin City <i>Cathair Bhaile Átha Cliath</i>	The Jackeens The Liffeysiders	 spéirghorm agus dúghorm
Kildare	Cill Dara	church of the oak	Naas <i>Nás na Ríogh</i>	The Lilywhites	 bán
Kilkenny	Cill Chainnigh	St Cainneach's church	Kilkenny City <i>Cathair Chill Chainnigh</i>	The Cats The Marble County The Noresiders	 dubh agus ómrach
Laois	Laois	(people of) Lugaid Laígne	Portlaoise <i>Port Laoise</i>	The O'Moore County	 gorm agus bán
Longford	An Longfort	the fortress	Longford <i>An Longfort</i>	The Slashers	 gorm agus buí
Louth	An Lú	the plain	Dundalk <i>Dún Dealgan</i>	The Wee County Louth and Proud	 dearg agus bán
Meath	An Mhí	the middle place	Navan <i>An Uaimh</i>	The Royals	 glas agus buí
Offaly	Uíbh Fhailí	descendents of Failge	Tullamore <i>Tulach Mhór</i>	The Faithful	 glas, bán agus oráiste
Westmeath	An Iarmhí	western Meath	Mullingar <i>An Muilleán gCearr</i>	The Lakes County	 marún agus bán
Wexford	Loch Garman	lake of the (river) Garma	Wexford <i>Loch Garman</i>	The Model County The Slaneysiders The Yellowbellies	 corcra agus buí
Wicklow	Cill Mhantáin	St Mantán's church	Wicklow <i>Cill Mhantáin</i>	The Garden of Ireland	 gorm agus buí