

Recently I visited the theatre in Royal Leamington Spa to see Brian Friel's play *Translations*. The action is set in County Donegal in the fictional village of Ballybeg (*Baile Beag* - small town) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This drama deals with the Ordinance Survey work of the country at that time, which resulted in furthering the Anglicisation of Irish placenames. These placenames were officially renamed with English ones which involved spelling them in English, closely related to the Irish spelling. However, what resulted was that the new names were a corruption and bore none of the rich descriptive content of the original Irish names - the most obvious example being the replacement of the word *Baile* (town) with Bally (which, apart from its resemblance to *Baile*, really means nothing). Of course many place names in any language become corrupted and incomprehensible with the passing of time. Also, I would agree that plenty of Ireland's place names have a nicer sound to them in the English version - e.g. Dingle probably sounds sweeter and is much easier to handle than Daingean Uí Chúis.

Below are listed some the most common examples of Anglicised headings to Irish placenames along with their original Irish equivalent and examples.

**Bally** - Ballyjamesduff (*Báile Shéamais Duibh*), Ballymena (*Baile Meánach*), Ballymoney (*Baile Muine*).

**Glen** - From the Irish word for a valley or glen (*gleann*) e.g. Glendalough (*Gleann Dá Loch*), Glengarriff (*Gleann Garbh*), Glenshane (*Gleann Seáin*).

**Kil** - This is the anglicised version of the old historical Irish name for a church (*cill*) e.g. Kildare (*Cill Dara*), Killarney (*Cill Airne*), Kilkenny (*Cill Chainnigh*).

**Dun** - the Irish word for a fort (*dún*) it is ubiquitous in Irish placenames e.g. Dundalk (*Dún Dealgan*), Dungannon (*Dún Geanainn*) and *Dún Laoghaire* (by which it is generally now known when it was renamed from Kingstown after independence).

**Rath** - The Irish word for a ring-fort (*ráth*) - it is used in many of Dublin's finer southside suburbs e.g. Rathfarnham (*Ráth Fearnáin*), Rathgar (*Ráth Garbh*), Rathmines (*Ráth Maonais*).

**Lios** - Yet another Irish word for the ancient ring-fort (*lios*) e.g. Lismore (*Lios Mór*), Lisdoonvarna (*Lios Dúin Bhearna*), Lisburn (*Lios na gCearrbhach*).

**Inish** - This is the anglicised version of the Irish name for an island (*inis*) e.g. the three Irish speaking Aran Islands off the coast of Clare / Galway - Inishmore (*Inis Mhór*), Inishmaan (*Inis Meáin*) and Inisheer (*Inis Oírr*).

**Clon** - From the Irish word for a meadow (*cluain*) it is prevalent throughout the country and can be found in many of Dublin's suburbs - Clontarf (*Cluain Tarbh*), Clonskeagh (*Cluain Sciach*), Clondalkin (*Cluain Dolcáin*).

**Tír / Tyr** - From the Irish word for country (*tír*) e.g. Tyrone (*Tír Eoghan*), Tirconnell (*Tír Conaill* - historical alternative name for Donegal).

Finally, while Ballykissangel sounds great on TV I have no idea where it comes from !