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The following is an introduction to a bilingual list of streetnames within the local jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council. A complete list of the English names was initially prepared in electronic format by Ordnance Survey Ireland and the Irish forms of the names were researched by the Placenames Branch, Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. ‘Streetnames’ is used in this article in a general sense to refer to names of housing-estates, of apartment blocks, of roads, of streets and of various other local names. South Dublin corresponds, to a large degree, to the old administrative baronies of *Newcastle* and *Uppercross*. Its extent is described as follows on the South Dublin County Council web site: ‘It [South Dublin] is bounded by the Dublin mountains to the south and stretches from the River Liffey at Lucan through Palmerstown, Clondalkin, south to Newcastle, Rathcoole, Saggart. It includes Tallaght West, South and Central and stretches east to Templeogue and Rathfarnham.’

I shall consider some of the traditional placenames within the region, townland and parish names, as well as streetnames. Over eighty townland and parish names are used as elements in the formation of streetnames, often in the formation of a range of names in the South Dublin region, such as, *Esker Drive*, *Esker Glebe*, *Lane*, *Lawns*, *Lodge*, *Esker Meadow Court*, *Esker Wood Court* etc. The initial element of the previous names comes from the Irish word **eiscir**, meaning ‘an esker’ or ‘gravel hill’. *Esker* / **Eiscir** is the name of a parish of medieval origin situated beside Lucan and is also the first element of two townlands within the parish, *Esker North* and *South*. The original placename, in this instance, consists of a single word which is still intelligible. We know from ecclesiastical sources that *Eskeyr* was already in use in the twelfth century. As this ‘esker’ is regarded as the eastern extremity of the well known **Eiscir Riada**, it also gave rise to another series of new names in Lucan, *Castle Riada Crescent*, *Drive*, *Grove* and *Road*.

There are other extant placenames consisting of a single word, similar to **Eiscir**, which are also found in early sources, such as the parish and townland of *Cruagh* on the slopes of the Dublin mountains. ‘Ecclesia de Creuach’ is recorded, for instance, in *Crede Mihi*, the early register of the Archbishops of Dublin. **An Chraobhach**, the original Irish name, is referred to in a poem composed in the latter half of the sixteenth century, which extolled the preys taken by Aodh mac Seaáin Ó Broin (or O’Byrne), chief of the **Gabhal Raghnuill** territory in Co. Wicklow, from various places in south Co. Dublin and beyond. The name means a place of branches or of trees.

Another example of an early placename, without any qualifier, is *Tallaght* or **Tamhlacht** (earlier **Tamlachta**) in Irish, the illustrious monastery which was founded by Maolruain (earlier Máel-Rúain) who died in 792. There are a number of different places called **Tamhlacht** and it is understood to denote a pre-Christian burial site. Research carried out by the Placenames Branch would indicate that the townland of *Rowlagh*, which is south of *Palmerston* (by Chapelizod), may also contain the word **Tamhlacht**. It was formerly in the possession of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, which was founded by Ailred the Palmer and whose sobriquet endures in the placename *Palmerston*. Early examples of *Rowlagh*, which were recorded in the Register of the aforesaid Hospital, such as *Rouelachteg* and *Roueholachteig* from

about 1190, are probably transcriptions of Irish **Rua-Thamlacht** – **rua** means red-coloured.

The *River Dodder* / (**An**) **Dothra** is undoubtedly an old name and its meaning is obscure. The river flows by *Bohernabreena* / **Bóthar na Bruíne**, signifying the road of the **Bruíon** (earlier **bruiden**) or ‘hostel’. The **bruíon** of the last-mentioned name is equated with **Bruiden Da Derga**, whose destruction is described in a famous early Irish saga. According to the tale, the River Dodder actually flowed through the hostel. Yet another placename consisting of a single word is *Skeagh* / **Sceach**, meaning ‘a thorn bush’, which is the name of a townland located on the border of Co. Kildare, in the Parish of Newcastle. It is also found in early sources, where it is qualified by a personal name. In the notes attached to the *Martyrology of Oengus* (**Féilire Oengusso**) about the eleventh century – the metrical calendar proper was composed at Tallaght about 800 by Aonghas mac Aonghobhann, a disciple of Maolruain – it is stated that a certain **Conlaed**, St. Brigit’s chief artisan, was killed ‘ic Scethaib Connla i taib Liamna i Maig Laigin’, meaning ‘at **Sceich Connla** (Connla’s thornbushes) beside **Liamain** in **Mag Laigen** (the plain of Leinster)’. As the modern townland of *Skeagh* was part of the now obsolete land-unit of *Tibberbride* or *Tobberbride* in seventeenth century sources and as the latter name corresponds to **Tobar Bhríde** in Irish, meaning ‘St. Bridget’s well’, the identification of **Sceich** (nominative plural of **scé**, later **sceach**) **Connla** with *Skeagh* is bolstered further.

The afore-cited **Liamain**, or **Liamhain** in Modern Irish, was a place of considerable importance for a long period of time. It was once the royal seat of the **Uí Dhúinchadha** dynasty in Leinster, whose name is preserved in the original Irish name of *Dolphin’s Barn*, **Carnán Cluana Uí Dhúinchadha**, now shortened to **An Carnán**. **Liamhain** was subsequently a stronghold of the Scandinavians of Dublin, according to the eleventh-century **Lebor na Cert** (‘Book of Rights’). *Newcastle* was built by the Anglo-Normans in the same area, as is evident from early references to it such as, ‘Newcastle de Leuan’ (1223), ‘de Novo castro de Lyouns’ (1340) and subsequently **Caislén Nua Liamhain** in the previously mentioned eulogy of Aodh Ó Broin in the **Leabhar Branach**. The name survives as *Lyons Hill* and *Parish* in Co. Kildare and also in the much more modern *Lyons Road* / **Bóthar Liamhna** on the Kildare-Dublin border. *Knocklyon*, which is situated about fifteen kilometres further east between Ballyboden and Firhouse, is of a different origin. The latter was recorded as *Cnoclin* and *Cnoclyn* in early fourteenth century administrative rolls. The second part of the name is clearly monosyllabic and is possibly the genitive singular of **líon**, a noun variously meaning ‘flax’, ‘net’ or ‘snare’. The Irish of *Knocklyon*, *Knocklyon Road* etc. is therefore incorrectly shown on signage as **Cnoc Liamhna**, **Bóthar Chnoc Liamhna**, instead of **Cnoc Lín**.

By a strange turn of events, the Irish placenames which I have discussed heretofore, consisting of one word (and occasionally preceded by the definite article), are mirrored by a type of nomenclature which is in vogue in present day Ireland. This modern type of name is formed by the English definite article followed by a noun, which may be toponymic and is often obscure or uncommon. The following are some examples from the South Dublin area: *The Briars*, *The Coppice*, *The Covert*, *The Dingle*, *The Garth*, *The Oval*, *The Paddocks*, *The Tudors* and *The Sacra*. I will return to the last-mentioned name further on.

An important group of early placenames are those which have ecclesiastical settlement terms. There are a number of church sites in South Dublin whose names begin with **Cill**, a Latin loan-word, primarily meaning a church. *Kilmainham* which is within the Dublin City Council area, is derived from **Cill Mhaighneann** (earlier **Cell Maighenn**). In the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, compiled at the Monastery of Tallaght about 800 (but prior to the *Martyrology of Oengus*), ‘Maighniu abb. Cilli Magnenn’ celebrates the abbot whose name is perpetuated in the placename. *Killinninny* / **Cill na nIníon** is located, ‘i ttaobh Tamhlachta andes’ (‘beside Tallaght to the south’) according to the *Martyrology of Gorman* (compiled about 1170c). The placename means ‘the church of the daughters’, or ‘the daughters of Mac Iair’ as they are also called. There are, in fact, a number of churches which are named after the daughters of a particular individual, such as *Killiney* / **Cill Iníon Léinín** in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, and the obsolete **Cell Ingen nAilella**, ‘the church of the daughters of Ailill’, which was situated beside **Liamhain** according to one of the notes added to **Félire Oengusso**. *Killinardan* / **Cill an Ardáin** means ‘the church of the small height’. *Kilnamanagh* / **Cill na Manach**, ‘the church of the monks’, is referred to in the genealogy of Irish saints as, ‘Cell Manach Escrach i nUíb Dúinchada’ i.e. **Cill Manach** [by] **Eiscir** in [the the territory of] **Uí Dhúinchadha**. *Kilmahuddrick* is said to be dedicated to St. Cuthbert, a seventh century Anglo-Saxon monk and bishop of Lindisfarne. Early examples of the last-mentioned placename are recorded in Archbishop Alen’s Register, such as *Kylmaccudricke* and *Killmacodricke*.

Teach or **tigh** (originally the dative singular form) is a native Irish word, meaning ‘house’. It often signifies a church in placenames, such as *Tymon* now written **Tigh Motháin**, whose second element may derive from **Muadhán**, a saint’s name. Earlier forms of *Templeogue*, now written **Teach Mealóg** in Irish, such as *Teg Dologa* (late twelfth century) and *Tachmelog* in *Crede Mihi* are consistent with the personal name **Mológa** / **Dológa**. Initial **Mo-** or **Do-** are often part of the pet-forms of saints’ names, such as **Mochua** of **Cluain Dolcáin** who is also called **Crónán** in early sources. Another example of the pet-form of a saint’s name manifests itself in early forms of *Saggart* / **Teach Sagard**, such as ‘Moshacru in Tech Tacru’ (*Martyrology of Tallaght*). Note that in Old-Irish orthography the sound /g/ is written *c* in internal position, as in the previous example of the saint’s name, **Moshacru**. The placename was subsequently recorded in Modern Irish orthography as **Teagh Thagra** in the sixteenth century composition on the O’Byrnes, to which I previously referred. It was recorded as *Tassagard* (with variations) in Latin documents from the thirteenth century and the shortened name *Saggard* didn’t occur until the seventeenth century. It goes without saying that the placename isn’t derived from Irish **sagart**, ‘a priest’. I should also note that *The Sacra*, the name of a relatively new apartment block in the *Saggart* area, displays a total misapprehension of the placename’s origin. **Steach** or **Stigh** is another form of **Teach** occurring in North Leinster placenames. **Steach Guaire**, ‘the house of Guaire’, is an obsolete name which was formerly located in the vicinity of *Palmerston*.

The following placename probably also had initial **Teach** / **Steach**, according to the fourteenth century examples which are preserved in *Alen’s Register: Staghcony, Taghcummy*. It was subsequently transliterated as *Stagoni, Stagonny, Teggonnagh* (?) in the early seventeenth century and as *Tygunny* in the early nineteenth century. The name has survived as *Gunny Hill*, which is located beside *Oldcourt*. In our opinion, the original Irish name was **Teach gConaigh**, meaning ‘the house of **Conach**’. The same personal name occurs in the placename **Ard Conaigh**, an unidentified

ecclesiastical site in Leinster which is recorded in the medieval Genealogies of Irish saints.

Besides ecclesiastical settlement terms, personal names can also be indicative of church influence. *Ballymaice* for instance, which is situated in the civil parish of Tallaght, is derived from **Baile Maoilíosa**. The personal name following **baile**, ‘town(land)’, in this instance, means ‘devotee / servant of Jesus’. **Maoilíosa** was a relatively common name amongst Church office holders, as is evident from the Early Irish Annals. *Ronanstown*, in the parish of Clondalkin, is an English translation of **Baile Uí Rónáin**. The name **Rónán** has long been associated with the monastery of Clondalkin and the death in 1086 of ‘Fiachna ua Rónáin airchinneach [i.e. superior] Cluana Dolcáin’ is recorded in various Annals. Finally, as regards ecclesiastical names, *Calliaghston* / **Baile na gCailleach** in the parish of Rathcoole, signifies ‘the town(land) of the nuns’, and it was once in the possession of the convent of St. Mary of Hogges in Dublin.

The names of many of the saints discussed above are also used in the formation of streetnames in South Dublin, such as *St. Aongus’ Court* / **Cúirt Aonghasa**, *St. Bridget’s Drive* / **Céide Bhríde**, *St. Cuthbert’s Court* / **Cúirt Chuidbhrícht**, *St. Maelruan’s Park* / **Páirc Mhaolruain**, *Kilcronan* / **Cill Chrónáin** and **Cluain Crónáin** (a modern Irish name). I have already referred to the monastery of Lindisfarne, in North East England, in connection with St. Cuthbert. Both Lindisfarne and the monastery of Melrose (in Scotland) were founded by *St. Aidan* or **Aédán** (later **Aodhán**). Hence the origin of streetnames such as *Lindisfarne Avenue* / **Ascaill Lindisfarne**, *Melrose Avenue* / **Ascaill Mhaolrosa**, *St. Aidan’s Close* / **Clós Aodhán**.

One further aspect of placenames that I wish to touch on is the foreign element in placenames. There are very few placenames of Norse origin in South Dublin, in spite of the documented Viking influence within the region. The Viking fortress of ‘Dun Amhlaim oc Cluain Dolcain’ (i.e. ‘the fort of Amhlaib at Clondalkin’) is referred to in the Annals of Ulster in the (corrected) year 867, when it was burned by Irish forces. **Amhlaib** (later **Amhlaóibh**) is an Irish form of Old Norse *Aleifr*. Of course, the name of the fort as recorded in the Annals, is in the Irish-language. The placename *Leixlip*, on the other hand, is of Old Norse origin. It means ‘a place where salmon leap’, referring to a cataract on the River Liffey. The name was subsequently borrowed into Middle English, as distinct from Irish. In fact, the majority of Norse placenames in Ireland weren’t subsumed into the Irish-language.

Moving on to the Anglo-Norman period, some of the townland names within the region refer to the military nature of the conquest, such as the previously-mentioned *Newcastle* and *Castlewarden* on the border of Co. Kildare. The latter is recorded in the *Register of the Abbey of St. Thomas* as *Castellum Warin* (around 1195) and subsequently in a different document as *Castell Warnyng* in 1495, which in turn became **Caislén Bharruin** (or **Bairnin**) in Irish by the sixteenth century (for which see **Leabhar Branach**). The townland of *Brittas* is referred to in *Alen’s Register* as *le Bretage*, *Bretas*, *Bretach* with other variants. **Briotás** is documented elsewhere in the Irish-language and it comes from Anglo-Norman *bretasse*, meaning a temporary wooden breastwork. Considering its meaning, the location of *Brittas*, on the south western border of Co. Wicklow, is of interest.

The following are some townland names of early English origin: *Stannaway* (on the border of South Dublin) recorded as *Stony wey* in 1296; *Newlands* referred to as *le Newland* in 1313; *Coldcut* recorded as *Coldecot* in 1435, meaning 'a cold hut'; *Hazelhatch* written *Haselhyrst* in 1405, meaning 'hazel wood'. *Backweston*, which is recorded as *Bakbyestoun* in 1395, is derived from an Anglo-Norman surname written variously *Bakepuz*, *de Bakepuz* etc. in late thirteenth century documents. It is a local surname, which derives from the placename *Bacquepuis* in Normandy. The surname has endured as final element in the English placename *Kingston Bagpuize* which is situated in Oxfordshire. *Johnstown*, in the parish of Rathcoole, is named after a certain 'John son of John de Penris' (1236). 'Penris' is also a local surname, as it comes from the Welsh placename *Pen-rhys*.

There are various other names of foreign origin which didn't become established in South Dublin until the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, such as *Argos* (a place of historic interest in Greece), *Gibraltar*, *Mountpelier* and *Portobello*. Foreign placenames are undoubtedly greatly favoured in the formation of streetnames in present day Ireland. Examples of foreign placenames occurring in South Dublin streetnames are as follows:

Airton (*Airton Road*), *Aylesbury*, *Beverly*, *Cherbury*, *Eaton*, *Hanbury*, *Kennington*, *Kew*, *Rushbrook*, *Westbourne* and *Willington* (the foregoing are all English placenames);

Airlie, *Drysdale* and *Fettercairn* (Scotland) – *Tay Lane*, on the other hand, is more likely to refer to tea than to the River Tay;

Bewley (< *Beaulieu*) and possibly *Tournville* (France);

First – Fourth Avenue (New York presumably!).

There are, of course, many other streetnames in South Dublin which are derived from historical names within the region itself, such as *Bolbrook Avenue*. That name comes from *Bolbrook Paper Mill* in Tallaght, which is shown on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey six inch map (Co. Dublin, published in 1837). Prior to that, it was named *Boldbrook Paper Mill* on William Duncan's map of Co. Dublin (1821). The name is probably based on the surname *Archbold*, a papermaker, and proprietor of the mill in the mid- eighteenth century.

Finally, I will conclude this introduction with a few streetnames whose obscure origin have defied the best efforts of the Placenames Branch, *Delaford Avenue*, *Kennelsfort Road*, *Magna Drive* and *De Selby Close*. As it happens, *De Selby* is the name of a character in Flann O'Brien's novel *The Third Policeman*!