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Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire

Gastro-Topography: Exploring Food-Related Placenames in Ireland

Most Irish people likely have little or no knowledge of the richness and variety of their ancestors' diet—which included wild garlic, honey, grouse, game, white meats or *bán bhia* (milk, buttermilk, curds etc.), eels, wrasse, oats, rye, gruel, pottage, watercress, apples, hazelnuts, bilberries, sorrel, tansy, and edible seaweed—prior to the arrival of the humble potato. Evidence of this diet can be found in literary sources such as *The Hermit's Song (Márbán to Guaire)*, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, and *Buile Shuibhne* (Crotty 11, 57, 84), but also in Ireland's placenames, which form the focus of the present work. This article champions the methodologies of gastronomy or food studies, encouraging scholars of Irish Studies to bring a “food lens” to their practice. It explores what might be called “gastro-topography,” building from the definition of the word topography which derives from the Greek *topos* (place) and *graphia* (to write), and which, in classical literature, was used to describe writing about a place or local history.

In this special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* on Irish visual, material, and spatial cultures, this article reinforces the position that studies of material culture and landscape—food, place—necessarily complement text-based analysis of Irish culture and society. A focus on gastro-topography can serve as a segue between language, culture, and food. Hence we see a mutually-enriching relationship: the Irish language (and the English one, too) embeds and reinforces the significance of Irish food culture by virtue of the placenames that appeared over the years, while, in turn, the language itself evolved through the connections between what people ate and what they called the spaces in which food was grown, or processed, or eaten.

In a previous volume of the *CJIS*, Riley uses the word “cartography” quite carefully as a metaphor for the Irish literary tradition as she argues that Eavan Boland’s poetry “alters the cartography of the Irish poem.” Cartography, she suggests, “resonates in all of our lives whether we consciously consider the various cultural maps that surround us or not. Maps are instruments of power over knowledge, economics, land, politics, and ultimately history” (61). Discussing cartography in Early Modern Europe, Harley suggests that “when maps became uniform the identities and particularities of local places became lost” (98). Riley argues that Boland captures this loss in her poem on the famine roads “as she addresses the silent history in Irish maps that fail to capture the lives of those who died building British funded roads” (61). As the vast majority of Irish placenames have their origin in the Irish language, the process of Anglicization of these placenames during the first Ordnance Survey resulted in rendering those names unintelligible, a central theme of Brian Friel’s play *Translations* (on the Ordnance Survey, see J. Andrews). This article will explore the etymology of some food-related placenames in Ireland to further enhance our understanding of Ireland’s cultural heritage.

Introductory Overview

For generations food was, even outside Ireland, considered “far too common and quotidian to be considered a field of study” (Nestle 163). However, food studies (which incorporates gastronomy, foodways, and culinary history) has joined other “studies” in staking its place as a field in the academy. Since the publication of *The Oxford Companion to Food* in 1999, there has been a surge in reference books and encyclopaedias around the topics (see Albala; Kraig and Sen; Kiple and Ornelas; Parasecoli and Scholliers; Smith). The study of Ireland’s food heritage has also been enjoying renewed attention in recent years, though it remains under-developed. Goldstein points out that Ireland has suffered twice for its famines and food

shortages: “first due to very real deprivations; and second because these deprivations present an obstacle to the exploration of Irish food. All too often the story begins and ends with potatoes or famine” (xii). In recent years, however, doctoral and other research has cast new and much needed light on previous perceptions of Ireland’s food heritage, which traditionally had focused more on famines than on feasting (Mac Con Iomaire and Maher). A number of individuals have laid the foundations for this work: scholars such as Anthony T. Lucas, Louis Michael Cullen, Kevin Danaher, Bríd Mahon, Leslie Clarkson, Margaret Crawford, Patricia Lysaght, Fergus Kelly, Mick Monk, Finbar McCormick, Liam Downey, Darina Allen, Rhona Richman Kenneally, and Regina Sexton immediately come to mind. Some of this knowledge derives indirectly from research in other fields. There have been discoveries, for example, that have offered archaeological evidence regarding food habits and behaviour, derived from investigations of national road schemes throughout Ireland in recent years. The National Roads Authority publication *Dining and Dwelling* addresses this archaeological evidence for food production, processing and consumption in Ireland from the earliest farmers through to the nineteenth century (Stanley, Danaher, and Eogan).

Writing in 1960, Lucas argued that the native Irish diet of cereal- and milk-based products, augmented with pig meat, survived relatively unchanged from prehistoric times to the introduction of the potato. His work has been revisited recently by Downey and Stuijts and found to be broadly correct. Gaelic reverence for cattle was believed to explain why so little beef was eaten in the Irish diet, which centred on white meats or *bán bhia* (milk, butter, and dairy produce) that did not require the death of the animal. Lucas also noted that the majority of herds was comprised of cows, suggesting that bull calves were killed at birth. Sexton therefore proposes that there must have been a high consumption of veal throughout the calving season among the Gaelic farmers with substantial herds. Noting evidence from Irish legal texts, she also suggests that some herds of bullocks must have been kept for the

aristocratic tables. New data, however, is forcing scholars to reconsider previous estimates concerning the quantity of beef eaten by the early Irish, which was based solely on written sources. Recent zooarchaeological and osteoarchaeological evidence reveals that cattle account for nearly half the bones found, which translates into a meat weight diet of eighty per cent beef, eight to sixteen per cent pork, and two to four and a half per cent mutton and lamb (Beglane). In one excavation in Greencastle, county Down, six per cent of the bones found relate to hare, deer, rabbits, birds, and fish. It is suggested that pig meat was for feasting, thus explaining its frequent appearance in written sources. Although outside the scope of this article, it would be interesting to use zoo-archaeology to identify a form of paleo-land use map, to literally map out the older food geography of pork, beef, and dairy landscapes, and of agricultural practices from the placenames. A similar archaeobotany map might show the geography of watercress, tansy, wild garlic, sorrel, berries, nuts, vegetables, oats, rye, etc., that also feature in Irish placenames. This article will identify a few of these key food products and explore how they inspired the placenames associated with them.

Considering the primacy of food in people's lives generally throughout history, it is logical that food be reflected in toponymic references to environment and landscape. This article taps into a wide range of material including poetry, prose, travellers' reports, mythology, folklore, letters, shipping records, and archaeological evidence, both to contextualize the food-related placenames of Ireland, and to explore what Irish placenames can tell us about the diet and foodways of the past. Ireland's culinary traditions have varied from the first inhabitants who were hunter gatherers, to the Neolithic farmers, the introduction of Christianity and monasteries, the influence of Vikings and Normans in development of commercial towns and cities, the various Elizabethan and Cromwellian Plantations, the introduction of New World foods and beverages (potatoes, chocolate, coffee and tea, etc.), the rise of an Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, the Great Famine of the mid-

nineteenth century, the rise of industrialization, commercialization and expanding middle class, independence, war-time neutrality, late twentieth-century European integration, and participation in today's multi-ethnic globalized society. Such research constitutes an opportunity to revisit existing assumptions, for example with regard to the potato, typically considered the staple of the Irish diet—a point reinforced by the centrality of the Famine in discussions on Irish foodways. As will be demonstrated below, potatoes did not substantially figure in Irish placenames as compared to indigenous foods that characterized the early Irish diet. Such discoveries of the richness and complexity of Ireland's food-related geographical names can enhance our understanding not only of the gastronomic aspects of Irish cultural heritage, but of Irish culture more broadly writ.

Methodology

This article draws on a number of published sources of Irish placenames (Flanagan and Flanagan; Room; Lewis; Joyce; Ó Cearbhaill; Ó Cearbhaill et al.) and on the Placenames Database of Ireland at logainm.ie. The database is a collaborative work between Dublin City University and the Place Names Branch of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, which provides access to the extensive archive of the latter. Prior to 2000, the placenames office was attached to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland.

Some food-related placenames are sourced from previous work on Irish food history (see works cited list). All names have been checked for accuracy using the 1989 *Gazetteer of Ireland* (Ó Cearbhaill et al.) and the Placenames Database of Ireland. The etymology of Irish food-related placenames has been explored using a number of Irish-English and *Gaeilge-Béarla* dictionaries (Ó Dónaill; De Bhaldraithe; Dineen; *OED* online). However, it is important to note that this article is not intended as a definitive collection of Irish food-related

placenames but, instead, explores how topography can illuminate the study of Irish gastronomy and food heritage.

The Language of Placenames in Ireland

This article encompasses a wide number of placenames that are related both directly and indirectly to food, and will address both urban and rural examples ranging from cities and streets to parishes and individual townlands. Over ninety per cent of placenames in Ireland have their origin in the Irish language and a significant number of these date to before the seventh century (Mac Giolla Easpaig). A relatively small proportion of placenames are of Scandinavian origin, stemming from when Viking influence was at its height (c.800 to c.1150), particularly in the East and South of the country. Norman influence on placenames appears to have been a consequence of their introduction of certain foodstuffs: this is evident in rabbit-related placenames, for example, and in the Irish word for rabbit *coinín*. English-language food-related names also exist: street names such as Cook Street, Fishamble Street, and Winetavern Street, for example, identify the associations certain streets had with particular food trades. The name of the village of Horse and Jockey in Tipperary is derived from the name of a mid-eighteenth-century inn linked with that location.

Table 1 consists of a selection of examples that demonstrates connections between Irish-language words for food, and Irish placenames; it also provides the English-language versions or translations of these names to correspond with placenames that appear on English maps. Fifteen counties are listed in Table 1 but food-related placenames from all thirty-two counties of Ireland feature somewhere in the article, indicating the widespread reach of this phenomenon. Here we see references to livestock as well as their by-products such as meat, milk, cheese, butter, etc. Also included are locations where food production (cheese or butter making, milling, etc.) took place. Equally worthy of note are the names derived from wild

herbs and foraged foods (nuts, berries, etc.), such as wild garlic, watercress, and wild tansy that play a minimal role in current Irish foodways. These and other food-related placenames can be either literal or similes. There is a *Druim Bíd* (Drumbee) in both Armagh and Cavan, meaning a ridge of food, but this probably just refers to productive land, whereas *Poll Scadán* (Balscadden) literally means the hole of the herrings—a coastal spot renowned for herrings. There is also another Balscadden (*Baile Scadáin*) in north county Dublin, which means the town of the herrings, the origin of which is explained in the local entry from the primary Schools Folklore Project which was compiled in Ireland in the 1930s (Plate 1).

Foodstuff	Irish	Placename Irish	Placename English & County
<i>Bovine: Cows, Bulls, Calf</i>	Bó, Tarbh, Lao	<i>Cluain Tarbh</i> <i>Droim an Lao</i> <i>Ath na mBó</i>	Clontarf (Dublin) Drumalee (Dublin) Annamoe (Wicklow, Offaly)
<i>Ovine: Sheep, Goats, Kids</i>	Caora, Gabhar, Mionán	<i>Gleann na gCaorach</i> <i>Baile na nGabhar</i> <i>Baile na Mionáin</i>	Glenageary (Dublin) Goatstown (Dublin) Ballyminaun (Wexford)
<i>Porcine: Pigs, Boars</i>	Muc, Torc, Collach	<i>Béal Átha na Muice</i> <i>Ceann Toirc</i> <i>Gleann na Muc</i> <i>Log na gCollach</i>	Swinford (Mayo) Kanturk (Cork) Glenamuc (Wicklow) Lugnagullagh (Westmeath)
<i>Poultry and Feathered Game (Hen, Grouse, Goose, Woodcock)</i>	Cearc, Cearc Fhraoigh, gé, creabhair	<i>Na Cearca</i> <i>Cluain na gCearc</i> <i>Gort an Ghé</i> <i>Muine Creabhair</i>	Carks (Kerry) Cloonagark (Galway) Gortagea (Tipperary) Bunacrower (Mayo)
<i>Furred Game (Deer, Rabbits, Hare)</i>	Fia, Coinín, Giorria,	<i>Dún na bhFiach</i> <i>Droim Coinín</i> <i>Gort na nGiorriacha</i>	Dernaveagh (Antrim) Drumcuinnion (Monaghan) Harefield (Mayo)
<i>Fish</i>	Iasc,	<i>Coill Eisc</i>	Killeisk (Tipperary)
<i>Oats</i>	Coirce	<i>Fearran an Choirce</i>	Oatlands (Dublin, Limerick)
<i>Wheat</i>	Cruithneacht	<i>Carraig na Cruithneachta</i>	Wheat Rock (Galway)
<i>Rye</i>	Seagal	<i>Ceapaigh an tSeagail</i>	Cappataggle (Galway)
<i>Milk</i>	Bainne	<i>Cnoc an Bhainne</i>	Knockavanny (Galway)
<i>Buttermilk</i>	Bláthach	<i>Port na Bláiche</i>	Portnablahy (Donegal)
<i>Butter</i>	Im	<i>Coill Ime</i>	Kilimy (Laois)
<i>Wild Garlic</i>	Creamh	<i>Chuain Creamha</i>	Cloncruff (Offaly)
<i>Honey</i>	Mil	<i>Chuain Meala</i>	Clonmel (Tipperary)
<i>Watercress</i>	Biolar	<i>Dumha Bhiolra</i>	Doovilra (Mayo)
<i>Corn</i>	Arbhair	<i>Margadh an Arbhair</i>	Corn Market (Dublin)
<i>Apples / Orchard</i>	Úll / Úllord	<i>Baile an Úlloird</i>	Ballynahoulort (Kerry)
<i>Potatoes</i>	Fataí	<i>Oileáin Fhataí</i>	Potato Islands (Galway)
<i>Wild Tansy</i>	Brioscán	<i>Béal Átha na mBrioscán</i>	Belllanabriscaun (Mayo)
<i>Berries</i>	Caor	<i>Coill na gCaor</i>	Kilnageer (Monaghan)

Table 1 Selection of Irish Food-Related Placenames

Baile Scadáin. (Balscadden)

This little village is situated West of old Coach road Dublin to Brogheda.

It lies about $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles N.W. from Balbriggan. The village is only about 200 yds from the old coach road. In those days (100 yrs ago) Cromwell's harbour served the fishing fleet along this coast.

A road ran from this harbour, west, to meet the Coaches at Balscadden. The fish was brought over & Balscadden was a fish or herring depot. Hence name.

The fish was sent North, South & West from here by Coach, or other means. Many towns were situated along this Coach road & places or houses are still called by their names. "The Bear", "White Hart", "Bridgefoot" & "The Cock".

There are the remains of an old Church or monastery in ancient cemetery. And local tradition says that St Lawrence O'Toole administered Confirmation here.

Plate 1: Entry for *Baile Scadáin* (Balscadden) Schools Folklore Project

<http://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4428167/4383174>

The remainder of this article will be devoted to an investigation of these and other placenames, in order to suggest what they reveal about Irish social and cultural heritage.

Cattle

Ireland, a lush country where grass grows nearly all year round, is ideal for rearing cattle. Coleman Andrew cites a Tipperary farmer who suggested his field of grass was so fertile it “would fatten a bicycle!” (164). In ancient Ireland, cattle were a sign of wealth and cattle raids such as the famous *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley) were common. Cattle were long valued principally for their milk. Fynes Moryson, the English travel writer, for example, writing in the early seventeenth century, stated

They feede most on Whitemeates, and esteeme for a great daintie sower curds, vulgarly called by them Bonaclabbe. And for this cause they watchfully keepe their Cowes, and fight for them as for religion and life; and when they are almost starved, yet they will not kill a Cow, except it bee old, and yield no Milke. (4:200-201)

The Irish obsession with cattle is evident in Irish placenames. *Bó* and *tarbh* are the words in the Irish language for cow and bull respectively. The word *bóthar* is Irish for road and a road was defined in width by the length and breadth of a cow and even the Irish word for boy (*buachail*) can also mean herd boy or herdsman (Mac Con Iomaire and Gallagher, “Irish Corned Beef”). *Bóthar* can also appear as *batter* as in Stoneybatter, or in a direct Anglicization such as Bohernabreena, both in Dublin. Bovine Irish placenames include Drumbo (Cavan), Lough Bo (Sligo), Annamoe (Wicklow, Offaly), Inishbofin (Donegal, Galway, Westmeath), and also the river Boyne (from *Bóinn*, Boann, or Bovinda—the goddess of the white cow). Some placenames featuring the English bawn, such as Old Bawn in Wexford, derive from *Bó-dhín* (cow fort or walled enclosure) and not from *bán*, the Irish for white (Flanagan and Flanagan). In Dublin you have Red Cow Lane, Bull Wall, Bull Alley, and Drumalee (*Droim an Lao*)—hill of the young calf. The two Irish words *Lao* and

Gamhain both mean calf. There is an *Eanach Lao* (Annaghlee) in Cavan, a *Lios na Lao* (Lisnalea) in both Armagh and Monaghan, and *Móta Lao* (Motalee) in Derry. *Loch Gamhna* (Lough Gowna) in Cavan and *Gort na nGamhna* (Gortnagowna) in Tipperary mean the lake and field of the calves respectively. *Gamhnach* is the Irish for a stripper which the *OED* describes as a cow not in calf but giving very little milk. Magowna (Clare) and Moygawnagh (Mayo), therefore, is the plain of the milch cows. Lullymore (*Loilíoch Mór*) in Kildare gets its name from a milch cow.

Cró, which means enclosure, fold, or pen for animals, is of common occurrence in placenames. It can also mean a glen in Donegal. *Craoi*, which is the genitive singular of *cró*, is also preserved in placenames such as *Cnocán an Chraoi* (Knockanacree) in Tipperary. *Min an Daimh* (Meenadiff) in Donegal is the mountain pasture of the ox (*damh*). The site of the Battle of Clontarf (1014) in Dublin derives its name from *Cluain Tarbh* (pasture of the bulls).

Milk and Buttermilk

Milk and milk based products played an important role in the Irish diet from the medieval period. John Stevens, describing County Limerick in 1690, observed, “The people generally being the greatest lovers of milk I ever saw which they eat and drink about twenty several sorts of ways and what is strangest love it best when sourest” (139). *Bainne* is the Irish for milk and *bláthach* is the Irish for buttermilk, which could be sweet or sour. Placenames include *Log an Bhainne* (Luggawannia)—hollow of the milk—and *Cnoc an Bhainne* (Knocknavanny) in Galway, Castlebanny in Kilkenny, Kishawanny in Kildare, and *Bealach Bainne* (Ballyboni) in Louth. For buttermilk, there are *Cathair na Bláiche* (Cahernablahy) in Mayo, *Port na Bláiche* (Portnablahy) in Donegal, and *Bóithrín na Bláthaí* (Buttermilk Lane) in Galway. *Leamhnacht* is the Irish for new milk and this is preserved in the placename *Inis Leamhachta* (Inishlounaght) in Tipperary by the banks of the River Suir, once the location of

a Cistercian Abbey. *Nús* is the Irish for beestings or the first milk of a newly calved cow and is reflected in the Armagh placename *Doire Núis* (Derrynoose). Maugha in Cork stems from the Irish word *macha* which Ó Dónaill notes can mean a cattle field, or also a herd. It also means a milking field. The word *Buaille* or Booley means cattle fold or summer pasture. Indeed *buailteachas* means summer grazing or transhumance, where the *buachailí* (herd boys) brought the cattle to the hills for grazing. Mahon notes that girls as young as thirteen also spent the summer months booleying and would bring spinning wheels and knitting needles with them to keep busy. Many Irish placenames such as Boolahallagh and Boolabeha in Tipperary, Ballynaboola in both Waterford and Wexford, and Shanabooly in Limerick reflect this origin. *Bligh* is the Irish verb to milk, and *Bliotóg* (Blittoge) in Monaghan means a milking place.

Butter and Cheese

Where there were cows and milk, there was cream, butter, and cheese. In the transhumance tradition, the milk was often preserved as butter and this practice is evident in a number of placenames. Smerwick Harbour in Kerry derives from the Norse *smjor uik* which means butter bay, referring to fertile land near the bay. Butter is made from churning either whole milk or the cream from the top of the milk (Downey and Stuijts). Irish words for churn include *cuinneog* and *meadar* and both are evident in placenames: *Lios na gCuinneog* (Lisnagonoge) in Tipperary and *Carraig na Meidre* (Medery Rock) in Galway.

Meascán is the Irish for butter rolls, so Boolynamiscaun in Clare refers to a booley where butter making was practised. Sometimes the name is applied to a heap of stones shaped like a butter roll, as in *Meascán Mhéabha* on top of Knocknaree, near Sligo where Queen Meadh is reputed to be buried. Bunnaviskaun in Galway could stem from butter production or the shape of butter rolls. Where the Irish word for butter, *im*, is used there is no such

ambiguity. *Coill Ime* (Kilimy) in Laois means the wood of the butter. Both Knockanima and Carrickanima in Galway may be named after places butter was made or stored. Butter was preserved in the bogs of Ireland and other northern European countries. This practice is captured in the place name *Móin na dTobán* (Monadubbaun) in Kilkenny, meaning bog of the tubs, referring most likely to the tubs of bog butter found there. Myrtle Allen of Ballymaloe House in Cork told me that certain fields always produced great butter. This may be how *Gort an Ime* (Butterfield) in both Dublin and Limerick got their names.

Many varieties of cheese have been produced and savoured in Ireland. Some placenames may refer directly to cheese production or may use the term for soft cheese as a simile for soft land. Examples of this are *Maothail* (Mohill) in Leitrim and *Muine Maothail* (Moneymohill) in Limerick, meaning thicket of the cheese, stemming from the words *maoth* (soft) and *maothal* (beestings). There seems to be a differentiation between the *gruth núis* (first beestings) and the *gruth maothail* (second beestings), which is also called *gruth buí* (yellow curds) as it has a thick consistency and yellow colour similar to custard. *Meidhg* is the Irish word for whey, so the placenames *Senadh Mheidhg* (Shanaveag) in Galway and *Muileann an Mheidhg* (Mullinaveige) in Wicklow both suggest dairying or cheese making took place there. *Corr na Fastra* (Cornafotra) in Leitrim is said to mean the round hill of the cheese. This possibly derives from the Irish word *faiscire* or squeezer, referring to the process of squeezing the curds to make cheese, or it may be linked with the Irish word *maistreadh* for butter making.

Pigs and Boars

Pork was a popular foodstuff in ancient Ireland and particularly valued for feasting. It was a wild boar that killed the hero Diarmaid in the Fenian tale *The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*, on top of Ben Bulban in County Sligo (Mac Con Iomaire, *Ireland of the Proverb*).

Wild boars were hunted with great fervour, and the prime cuts were reserved for the warrior classes and certain other individuals. At a feast, a leg of pork was traditionally reserved for a king, a haunch for a queen, and a boar's head for a charioteer. The champion warrior was given the best portion of meat (*Curath Mhír* or Champions Share), and fights often took place to decide who should receive it. In the ninth-century tale, "The Story of Mac Dathó's Pig":

At length one man triumphed over all Ériú: Cet son of Mágu from Connachta. He hung his weapons over those of everyone else; then he took knife in hand and sat down to the pig, saying "Find among the men of Ériu one to match me in feats – otherwise I will carve the pig." (Gantz 183)

Porcine placenames are also found such as *Gleann na Muc* (Glenamuck) in Wicklow—valley of the pigs—*Ros Muc* (Rosmuck) in Galway—headland of the pigs—Muckross near Killarney in Kerry—the pig wood—*Ceann Toirc* (Kanturk) in Cork—headland of the boar—*Coill Torc* (Kilturk) in both Wexford and Fermanagh—boars' wood—and *Béal Átha na Muice* (Swinford) in Mayo—literally the mouth of the ford of the pigs. There is also *Coill Dá Thorc* (Killahurk) in Leitrim. A boar is also known in Irish as a *collach* and this version features in a number of placenames. *Log na gCollach* (Lugnagullagh) in Westmeath is literally the place of the boars. There is a Carrownagullach in Roscommon and both Ceancullig and Coolacuillig in Cork refer to the headland or the corner of the boar. The longest place name in Ireland is *Muiceanach idir Dhá Sháile* (Muckanaghederdauhaulia), meaning pig-marsh between two seas, located in the *Gaeltacht* region of west Galway. In Dublin there is a Pig Lane, and the city has a long association with piggeries. Wild pigs lived off the mast (edible seeds and fruit) of the Irish woodlands, a practice reflected in *Achadh Mheas* (Aghavass) in Fermanagh, literally field of the mast, indicating a place where nut trees such as beech, oak, and hazel grew, affording food for pigs. Kiltynaskellan in Cavan means

woods of the kernels or small nuts, used as mast for pigs. *Sceallán* is the Irish for a kernel or fruit pip and also can be used to describe a small potato, which will be discussed later.

Sheep, Lambs, and Goats

Sheep and goats were kept for milk, cheese, butter, meat, and leather / wool since medieval times but Kelly notes that goats were not as common, and valued less, than sheep in Irish society (77-78). Ovine connections to Irish placenames range from *Gleann na gCaorach* (Glenageary) in South County Dublin—the valley of the sheep—to *Lios na gCaorach* (Lisnageeragh) found in Offaly, Longford, Galway, and Waterford. The Viking origin of Waterford, which is *Vedrafiord*, (*Ueðar – fforðr*), means the inlet of the wether (a castrated ram). The Irish *Port Láirge* literally means the landing place of the haunch (hindquarter of meat). There is a Sheep Street in Limerick, and Ship Street in Dublin actually derives its name from Sheep Street, mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters (1632-1636), still evident in the Irish original *Sráid na gCaorach* (See Plate 2). Over thirty references are made to sheep-related placenames in P. W. Joyce's *Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, ranging from Drumkeeragh in County Down to Garrynageragh in Waterford. Mutton (ovine over twenty-four months old) was more popular than lamb in Ireland and in most of Europe as it had a stronger flavour. "A Plan of Mount Merrion," by Jonathan Barker in 1762, shows a "shoulder of mutton meadow" and a "pigeon park" in this South Dublin manor land, now a well-established residential suburb. *Oileán Caorach* in Clare, *Inis Caorach* and *Oileán Moilt* both in Galway, all translate in English to Mutton Island. The word *molt* is the Irish for wether. Goats and kids also feature in placenames such as *Baile na nGabhar* (Goatstown) in Dublin, *Drom Gabhair* (Drumgower) in Tipperary, and Ballynamannan in Cavan, stemming from *Mionáin* (kids).



Plate 2: Sign for *Sráid Mhór na Caorach* (Great Sheep Street) – Ship St. Gt. Dublin

Poultry, Feathered Game, and Eggs

Hens and eggs feature strongly in Irish mythology and folklore. The Middle Irish tale “*Fled Dúin na nGéd*,” dating probably from the twelfth century, tells of a battle where good, represented by King Domnall mac Aeda, prevails over evil (Mac Gearailt). The king of Ulster, Congal Cláen, attends a feast prepared by Domnall at which goose eggs are served, some of which were stolen from Bishop Erc Sláine and others provided by two monstrous giants. Erc and the giants place a curse on whoever eats the eggs. When the first goose egg, which was served on a silver platter, was placed before Congal, the power of the curse turned the platter to wood and the goose egg into a hen’s egg. The men of Ulster took the happenings as a great insult and a ferocious battle was fought. The storyteller concludes “What is the difference at all between the egg of the red feathered hen and the egg of the

white winged goose. Alas for him who destroyed all Erin for dispute over an egg” (qtd. in Mahon 120). Interestingly, there seem to be very few places named after eggs. *Gort na n-ubh* (Gortnanuv) in Limerick means the field of the eggs. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, eggs were an important source of income for farm women in particular, and there was a network of higglers who used to buy eggs and poultry to forward them in bulk to the large cities or to England (Mac Con Iomaire and Cully).

The number of placenames that include the stem *cark* or *carkfree* from *cearc* (hen) and *fraoch* (heather) is evidence of how popular and plentiful *cearc fhraoigh* (red grouse) must have been in Ireland. There is *Cark* in Donegal and a *Carkfree* in Roscommon. The Irish for black grouse is a *liathcearc*. There is a *Cloonagark* in Galway, *Clonygark* in Laois, *Cavanacark* in Tyrone, *Cornagark* in Offaly, *Farrannagark* in both Cork and Tipperary, and simply *Carks* in County Kerry. *Eshcarcoge* in Fermanagh means ridge of the grouse hens and *Knockaunnakirkeen* in Galway means hill of the little hens, from the Irish *circín* for little hen.

Geese and ducks were important for their flesh and their eggs. The Irish for goose is *gé*, and *Magheranagay* in Mayo, *Derrygay* in Mayo, and *Gortagea* in Tipperary are evidence respectively, of goose greens, woods, and fields. Indeed there is a *Goose Green* mentioned on John Rocque’s “Actual Survey of the County of Dublin,” 1760, near *Drumcondra* in Dublin. Today, a public house called *The Goose Tavern*, situated off *Griffith Avenue*, acts as a reminder and link with the district’s previous name. *Creabhar* (woodcock) and *coileach* (cockerel/rooster) also feature in Irish placenames. *Bunacrower* in Mayo means the bog end of the woodcock, while *Cavanaguillagh* in Monaghan and *Drumguillagh* in Fermanagh mean round hill or ridge of the cockerels.

Furred Game, Deer, Rabbits, and Hares

Furred game was plentiful in the highly wooded landscape of medieval Ireland. The anonymous Gaelic song “*Cill Chais*” (Kilcash) is a lament for the Irish forests, which were destroyed in the sixteenth century (Kennelly 69). The woods were home also to the *ceithearnaigh coille* or wood kernes—native Irish foot soldiers who engaged in guerrilla warfare. Elk and deer were the big game animals with rabbits and hares among the smaller game. The Irish word for deer or elk is *fia*: *fia rua* (red deer), *fia fionn* (fallow deer), *fia mór* (elk), *fia bairr* (stag), and *fia beannach* (antlered deer or stag). The ancient warrior group *Na Fianna*, in Irish history or mythology, takes its name from hunting deer, and according to Keating, spent the months of *Bealtaine* (May) to *Samhain* (November) living off hunting and selling the meat and pelts. The word *fia* can also mean wilderness or wild, and is the basis of the Irish verb *fiach* (to hunt). The other Irish word for hunt is *seilg*, which can also mean to search for food or foraging. *Cró na Sealg* (Croaghnaishallog) in Donegal means the hill of the hunt or chase. Many Irish placenames refer to deer: Derrinea in Roscommon—oakwood of the deer—Derrygortanea in Tyrone, Glenaviegh in Tipperary, and Kilfea in Mayo. The Irish for doe is *eilít*, so Kineilty in Clare means the hill of the doe. *Poc* is the Irish for a male deer or goat, just as *damh* can mean either an ox or a stag. Lispuckaun in Clare is the fort of the he-goats. Killorglin’s Puck Fair in Kerry shares this origin.

Rabbits and hares were a vital part of the medieval Irish diet. *Coinín*, the Irish for rabbit is not a native Irish word but derived from the early-English word *cunin*. Similarly, the word *coinigéar/coinicéar* derives from the early-English word *cony(n)ger* meaning rabbit warren. Evidence of this is found in the historical sources of the Kilkenny placename *An Coinicéar*, for example, as *le Conynger* was the written version of the name dating back to 1300. This same Irish name is found in *Baile an Choinicéir* (Warrenstown) in Donegal. Other rabbit-related placenames include *Cnoc na gCoiníní* (Knocknagoney) in Down and

Lackanagoneeny in Limerick. *Oileán na gCoiníní* (Coney Island in Clare, Down, Derry, Armagh, Cork, Sligo, Donegal, and Fermanagh; or Rabbit Island in Galway and Kerry) is a reminder of the practice of breeding rabbits on islands for both food and pelts where the population could be controlled. The Irish for hare is *giorria*, and this features in placenames such as *Gort na nGiorriacha* (Harefield) in Mayo and *Muine na nGiorria* (Monanagirr) in Monaghan. So plentiful were rabbits in Ireland that they were considered a pest to farmers and gardeners; in 1954 a viral disease, myxomatosis, was illegally introduced, which decimated the population and also changed attitudes to eating rabbits in Ireland.

Fish and Fishing

Since Ireland is an island nation with bountiful lakes and rivers and over a thousand miles of coastline, it is no surprise to find a number of fish-related placenames throughout the country. *Iasc* (singular) or *éisc* (plural) is the Irish for fish. There is a Fish Island, Fishmarket, Fishermans Wharf, and Fishermans Island in Galway, Fish Island and Fisherstreet in Clare, Fisherhill and Fish Curing Station in Mayo, Fishery Lane in Kildare, Fish Quay in Sligo, Fisherman's Quay in Limerick, and Fisherman's Green in Malahide, Dublin. However, the Irish, ironically, eat about the same quantity of fish per capita as the Austrians, who are completely landlocked. There are many historical and cultural reasons for this, one of which is the link between fish and ecclesiastical fasting, restrictions of Irish ownership of large boats following the Battle of Kinsale (1601), and difficulties of distribution of fresh fish inland prior to the steam age (Mac Con Iomaire, "History of Seafood"). The coastal Catholic countries of Spain and Portugal rank today among the world's highest per capita consumers of fish, but the Papal Bulls of the Crusades, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, "permitted the faithful of the Spanish dominions to eat meat on all the days of Lent and other days of fast and abstinence" except for a number of days such as Ash Wednesday, Fridays in

Lent, and certain feast days (Hinojosa y Naveros n.p.). Various kinds of fish and edible seaweed are preserved in the names of Irish coastal features, such as inlets, headlands, and rocks. “Minor names,” locally known but absent or “lost” from maps (Harley 98), such as these may not be readily available in published sources but are included to illustrate the link and to preserve the part they play in Irish cultural heritage. Table 2 displays a small selection of such names.

Variety	Placename in Irish	Placename in English & County
<i>Bradán</i> (Salmon)	<i>Cora na mBradán</i>	Salmon Weir (Cork)
<i>Breac</i> (Trout)	<i>Loch Breac na gCeann Mór</i>	Lough Bracknaganmore (Donegal)
<i>Trosc</i> (Cod)	<i>Rinn Troisc</i>	Reentrusk / Cod’s Head (Cork)
<i>Ballach</i> (Wrasse)	<i>Cuas Rinn an Aonbhallaigh</i>	Coosrinaneanwallig (Kerry)
<i>Scadáin</i> (Herring)	<i>Bá Pholl Scadáin</i>	Balscaddan Bay (Dublin)
<i>Crothóg</i> (Coalfish)	<i>Cuas na gCrothóg</i>	Coosheennagruhoge (Kerry)
<i>Eascann</i> (Eel)	<i>Carraig na nEascann</i>	Carricknanaskin (Donegal)
<i>Portán</i> (Crab)	<i>Áth an Phortáin</i>	Upperlands (Derry)
<i>Báirneach</i> (Barnacle)	<i>Aill na mBairneach</i>	Aillenamarnagh (Galway)
<i>Ruacan</i> (Cockle)	<i>Trá Ruacain</i>	Cockle Strand (Wexford)
<i>Duilisc</i> (Dillisk)	<i>Ard an Duilisc</i>	Ardadillisk (Donegal)
<i>Sleabhcáin</i> (Sloke)	<i>Com an tSleabhcáin</i>	Coomatloukane (Kerry)
<i>Tropán</i> (edible seaweed)	<i>Leac an Tropáin</i>	No English Translation (Kerry)

Table 2: Fish and Edible Seaweed Placenames. Many thanks to Pádraig Ó Cearbhaill for providing these evocative names.

Some of these names are very evocative such as *Cuas Rinn an Aonbhallaigh* (the cove of the point of the solitary wrasse [variety of rock fish]) or *Loch Breac na gCeann Mór* (the lake of the big-headed trout). *Breac geal* (sea trout) appears in a Donegal placename but *breac* also means speckled in Irish and Truthill in Mayo is a mistranslation of the original

name *An Cnoc Breac*. Reentrusk in Cork is the point of the codfish or Cape Cod, and *Cora* is the Irish for a fishing weir, so Cornacarrow in Cavan, Meath, and Monaghan and Cornacorroo in Leitrim, mean the hill of the fish weir. Corries in Carlow means a number of fish dams or weirs, and *Mainistir na Corann* (Middleton) in Cork means the monastery of the weir.

Cereals (Oats, Rye, Barley, Wheat)

Lucas mentions that “from pre-history to the close of the seventeenth century, corn and milk were the mainstay of the national food” (8). The word corn is used in this context as a catch-all for a variety of cereals and not to be mistaken for maize or Indian corn which is a New World food. Archaeobotanical evidence shows that in the early medieval period barley and oats were the primary cereals in Ireland, with smaller amounts of rye, emmer wheat, and bread wheat also harvested (Kyle, Stewart, and Tourunen 83). Cereal drying kilns were a common agricultural feature throughout the country and, due to the damp climate, would have been an essential element of crop processing (Long 19-20). Many cereal crops are mentioned in placenames. *Coirce* is the Irish for oats and there are numerous variations, ranging from *Gort an Choirce* (Gortahork) and Tullyhorky in Donegal, *Cuar an Choirce* (Cooracurkia) in Galway, and *Inis an Choirce* (Inchincurka) in Cork.

Seagal is the Irish for rye and placenames range from *Ceapach an tSeagail* (Cappagaggle) in Galway, *Lios and tSeagail* (Listoghil) in Sligo, Gortaggle in Leitrim, Knockataggle in Kerry, and Knockateggal in Fermanagh, both meaning hill of the rye. The use of rye in English does not automatically have a link with cereals. The Rye Valley in County Kildare, for example, derives from the river Rye which seems to be the same as the Irish word *righ*, later *rí* (fore-arm), whereas Athenry in Galway takes its name from the Irish *rí* or king.

Barley or *Eorna* is found in quite a few placenames from right around the country, including *Baile Eorna* (Ballyorney) in Wicklow, *Buaile na hEorna* (Ballinahorna) in Wexford, *Goirtín Eorna* (Gorteenorna) in Longford, *Carraig na hEorna* (Carricknahorna) in Donegal, *Lios na hEorna* (Lisnahorna) and *Gort na hEorna* (Barleyfield), both in Cork, and Barley Rock in Galway.

Cruithneacht is the Irish for wheat and appears in a few placenames: Mullycrunnet in Tyrone and Articrunaght in Derry, which literally means height of the house of wheat, or a house on a hill that was used as a wheat granary. There is also *Carraig na Cruithneachta* (Wheat Rock) in Galway and *Cruithneachtán* (Crinnaghtane) in Cork, not to mention Wheatfield in Dublin. *Arbhar* is the Irish for corn and appears in placenames such as *Gort an Arbhair* (Cornfield) in Clare.

All these cereals would be stored in a granary, which translates as a *gráinseach* or an *iothlainn* in Irish. Joyce notes that there are over two hundred grange-related placenames, which are medieval, such as Coolnagranshy in Roscommon or Drumnagranshy in Sligo, *Lios na Gráinsí* (Lisnagranshy) in Galway, and *Carraig na h-iothlann* (Carrignahihilan) near Kenmare in Kerry, which is noted in 1841 as “rock of the haggard,” which derives from the old Norse *Heygarthr*, from *hey* (hay) and *garthr* (yard). There is a Grange listed in over twenty-two counties on logainm.ie. Grange/*Gráinseach* can also mean a farm or, more specifically, an outlying monastic farm.

Milling Flour, Porridges, Gruels, and Pottage

To make flour, one had to work the cereal in a quern (*bróinteóireacht*) or millstone. The Irish word for quern is *bró* and this features in a number of placenames such as the famous Poulabrone in Clare, Pollabrone in Galway, Edenbrone in Monaghan, Moybrone in Fermanagh, Lisabrone in Limerick, and Cullenbrone in Tyrone, meaning the holly land of

the millstone. *Carraig an Bhruinntea* (Carrickavrantry) in Waterford means the rock of the smelter. Joyce suggested that millstone materials in inexhaustible quantities abound in this district. The word *bróis* (Brose), which the *OED* defines as “a dish made from pouring boiling water (or milk) on oatmeal, seasoned with salt and butter,” more than likely comes from the stem *bró* (or it may be related to the word broth). Wet porridge or gruel dishes were very common in medieval Ireland. The Irish for gruel is *praiseach* or *brachán*. Brehaun in Cork may be named after gruel or it might be a simile for soft marshy land. *Leite* is the Irish for porridge or stirabout and features in the Mayo placename *Log na Leitean* (Lugnalettin), meaning place of the porridge. The word *praiseach* can also mean pottage, or refer to a type of wild cabbage or kale, and *praiseach bhúí* is charlock or field mustard. The *OED* defines pottage as a type of soup, stew, or porridge, “typically made from vegetables, pulses, meat, etc., boiled in water until soft, and usually seasoned.” Trawfrask in Cork means strand of the pottage or sea kale (*praiseach thrá*). *Trá Phraisce* (Boolakeel Strand) in Kerry probably stems from the latter.

Honey

The Irish words for sweet (*milis*) and honey (*mil*) share the same root and feature in a number of placenames. The placename *Cluain Meala* or Clonmel (honey meadow) is found in four different counties, most famously in Tipperary. Lenanamalla in Roscommon also means meadow of the honey, Coolmillish in Armagh means sweet corner abounding with honey flowers or bees’ nests, and *Carraig and tSaithe* (Carrigataha) in Tipperary means rock of the swarm (of bees). The latin *Fons Mellis*, meaning fountain of honey, is the etymology of the famous Cistercian Mellifont Abbey in Louth, founded in 1142. Mead is alcoholic liquor made from fermenting honey and water, which was universal in use in Ireland until about a couple of centuries ago. Metheglin according to the *OED* is a spiced or medicated variety of mead.

Both medicinal and culinary herbs would have been found in the *Lubhghort* (herb garden) that features in many early Irish texts and also in many placenames such as *Lúghortán* found in Sligo, Cork, and Mayo—although all with differing English translations. The medicinal aspect is outside the scope of this article but details of the use of nature as a twenty-four-hour pharmacy in both Irish and Canadian contexts are available (see Wilson; Mc Coitir).

Salt

Legal and other texts from medieval Ireland mention three sacks essential for a prosperous household: a sack of malt for brewing ale, a sack of wheat for preparing bread, and a sack of salt for making food taste good (O’ Sullivan 125). Kelly notes that there is no mention of salt mines or salt pans in pre-Norman Irish texts and suggests that salt was produced from “sea ash,” the result of burning seaweed (341). The *Críth Gablach* refers to the use of sea ash for salting joints of meat, and the twelfth-century text *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* provides evidence that beef was salted as well as bacon (Crotty 58). Kurlansky notes that in England, placenames ending with *wich*, such as Sandwich, Droitwich, Eastwich, and Norwich, refer to the location of salt-works, salt-pits, brine springs, or salt-making towns. *Salann* is the Irish word for salt and a number of salt-related placenames identify salt-making locations in Ireland. In Wexford the etymology of the Saltee Island is the Scandinavian *ey* and refers to the island of salt—sea salt. Rahallan in Fermanagh is the fort of salt. *Teach an tSalainn* (Ailteenatallin) in Galway and *Kylatallin* in Kerry refer to the cliff of the house of salt, and the wood of the salt respectively. There is *Coire an tSalainn* (Salt Pans) in Donegal and Salthouse Lane in Clare. There is a Salt Island in Down and in Galway the Irish name *Carraig na Sailiú* means the salting rock, referring to the widespread practice of salting fish for preservation. Saltmills in Wexford, however, is believed to derive its name from a mill driven by tidal (salt) water, and not from the production of salt.

Wild Garlic

The number of placenames throughout the country related to wild garlic reveal its popularity as a condiment in the old Irish diet. *Creamh* is the Irish for wild garlic, or ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), which grows in damp woodlands and has broad flat leaves, clusters of white flowers, and bulbous roots that smell of garlic. Both the leaves and roots are edible raw or cooked and were also used medicinally. The wild garlic-related placenames include Glencraff and Lettercraff in Galway, Cloncraff in Laois, Cloncraive in Westmeath, *Corr an Chreamha* (Corracramph) in Donegal, and *Cluain Creamhchoille* (Clooncraffield) in Roscommon, meaning the meadow of the wild garlic wood.

Apples and Orchards

Ireland has a long tradition of apples and orchards, particularly in counties Armagh, Wexford, and Waterford. *Abhall*, *Úll*, and *Úllord* are the Irish names for apple tree, apple, and orchard respectively. *An tAbhallort* (Oulart) and Oulartleigh in Wexford (see Plate 3) and *Baile an Úlloird* (Ballynahoulort) in Kerry all refer directly to orchards. There is a Gartnanoul in Cavan and Clare, Knocknanool in Roscommon, Derryool in Mayo, Rosnanowl in Kilkenny, Coolanowle in Laois, Cappaghnanool in Galway, and both Corrool (Longfort) and Corrowle (Tipperary) mean round hill of the apple trees. There is also Lisheenanoul in Tipperary meaning the little fort/enclosure of the apple trees.



Plate 3: Signpost for *An tAbhallort* (Oulart), Co. Wexford

Wine, Claret, Brandy, Taverns, and Hostels

Ireland has a long tradition of both hospitality and wine consumption, dating back to the thirteenth century when Waterford was the chief port in medieval Ireland for the importation of wine and the exportation of wool and hides. French wines were predominantly imported to both Dublin and Drogheda in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in line with the tastes of the time (Lough). The merchant families of Galway also had strong connections with France, Spain, and Portugal. The Irish were reputed connoisseurs of wine (*fion*) from the sixteenth century. It is calculated that over a million gallons of wine were imported annually from 1720 to 1820, apart from the war years when there were embargos on trade with France and Spain. According to Joyce, quite a few placenames are linked with the smuggling of wine, such as

Slieveaneena, Rahaneena, and Corraneena, all in Galway. Spanish fishing vessels brought cargoes of wine and found a ready market in the cities and towns of the Southern coast (Lough 719-20). Brandy, a spirit produced by distilling wine, also appears in placenames, particularly on the west coast. *Gob an Bhranda* (Gubfadda) in Kerry and *Clochar an Bhranda* (Clogherbrandy) in Galway are two examples. Claretrock in Louth is a translation of *Carraig an fhíona* (rock of the wine). Claret, the red wine of Bordeaux, was considered to be the national drink of Ireland and was actually known as “Irish wine” during the long eighteenth century (Legg). *Port an Fhíona* (Wineport) in Westmeath literally means the landing place of the wine, and today houses the award-winning Wineport Lodge restaurant and guesthouse. The early existence of the wine trade has left its topographical mark on many Irish port towns and a trawl through the Irish Historic Towns Atlas Series identifies Winetavern Streets, Winetavern Courts, Wine Courts, and Alleys found in Sligo, Dublin, and Belfast, and reveals that Scabby Lane in Limerick was renamed Whitewine Lane (Legg). There is a townland in Wicklow called Winetavern, and both *Carraig an Fhíona* (Carriganeena) and *Trá an Fhíona* (Wine Strand) in Kerry suggest landing places for what in the Georgian era was considered the Irish national drink (Mac Con Iomaire and Kellaghan). The Irish for hostel is *Brú* or *Bruíon* and this appears in a number of placenames. *Bóthar na Bruíne* (Bohernabreena) in Dublin, according to Ó Cearbhaill, is named after the famous hostel that appears in the old Irish tale “Da Derga’s Hostel.” There is also *Poll na Bruíne* (Poulanbreena) in Limerick.

Potatoes

Few placenames in Ireland refer to the potato, or to Indian corn or maize, which arrived in Ireland from the New World in about the late sixteenth century. There is *Oileán Fhataí* (Potato Islands) on Lough Corrib in Galway, from *fata* or *práta*. Another possible contender

is *Béal Átha Póirín* (Ballyporeen) in Tipperary, possibly meaning the ford-entrance of the little potato, but the *póirín* may equally relate to either a hole for dying cloth indigo or an enclosure for lambs being weaned (Dineen), each of which have a longer history in Ireland than the humble spud. Yet despite its absence in placenames, the potato has influenced the Irish diet and history more than any other foodstuff (Mac Con Iomaire and Gallagher, “The Potato”).

Miscellaneous

This section points to further varieties of foodstuff identifiable in placenames. For example, *Meacan* means tuberous root and is the stem word for parsnip (*meacan bán*), carrot (*mecan dearg*), etc. Although *Na Meacain* (Mackan) in Leitrim was noted in 1836 to be “abounding in wild carrots” (logainm.ie), the word may have been transferred to the landscape to mean a hill. *Carraige Meacain* (Carricknamakan) in Galway may refer to rocks where *meacan mara* (sea-radish) or *meacan uisce* (water parsnip) grow or may stem from the secondary meaning of *meacan* (whining note, whimper) relating to rocks that have caused sorrow or despair. *Bóthairín an Chabáiste* (Cabbage Lane) in Galway and *Garraí an Chabáiste* (Cabbage Garden) in Dublin reflect a popular Irish green vegetable. *Béal Átha na mBrioscán* (Bellanabriscaun) in Mayo refers to the town of the ford of the *brioscáin*, the Irish for wild tansy, silver weed, or goose grass (*Potentill anserine*). This was eaten like watercress and derives from the word *briosc* meaning crisp. The Irish for watercress is *biolar* and features in the placenames Curraghaviller in Tipperary, and Knockavilra in Galway. *Dumha Bhiolra* (Doovilra) in Mayo means the sandbank of watercress. *Samhadh* (Sorrel) also features in the Monaghan name *Achadh an tSamhaidh* (Aghtamy). Berries (*caor*) feature in a number of placenames from Killnageer in Monaghan, and Ballykillageer in Wicklow, to Dereenageer in Leitrim, meaning the little oak wood of the berries. Fraghan Rock in Galway stems from

fraochán, the Irish for whortleberries or bilberries, and there is *Oileán na bhFraochóg* (Bilberry Island) in both Galway and Leitrim. There is a Spinans Hill in Wicklow that derives from *spíonán* or gooseberry. In Waterford there is a Coolnasmear, from *sméar*, meaning land corner of the blackberries. *Cathair na Silíní* (Cahernashilleeny) in Galway—city of the cherries—is similar to Cherry Orchard in West Dublin. Nuts were important in the human diet as well as for the previously mentioned mast for pigs. There is *Oileán na gCnó* (Nut Island) in Longfort and *Log na gCnó* (Legnagrow) in Cavan. The word *coill* (hazel) is found frequently, such as the Limerick example *Páirc an Choill* (Hazelfield) and hazel nuts have long been revered in Irish cuisine.

From the asceticism of monastic life where nature's bounty is celebrated in the anonymous seventh-century "The Hermit's Song" (*Marbán to Guaire*), it is clear that the island of Ireland supplied a rich variety of foodstuff for her inhabitants.

I can pick my fruit from an apple
Like an inn,
Or can fill my fist where hazels
Shut me in.

To what meals the woods invite me
All about!
There are water, herbs and cresses,
Salmon, trout.

A clutch of eggs, sweet mast and honey
Are my meat,
Heathberries and whortleberries
for a sweet.

All that one could ask for comfort
Round me grows,
There are hips and haws and strawberries,
Nuts and sloes.

And when summer spreads its mantle
What a sight!
Marjoram and leeks and pignuts,
Juicy, bright. (Crotty 11-12)

Conclusions

The study of Irish foodways and culinary heritage needs to draw on multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to enlighten our understanding of the past. Whereas scholars such as Lucas once depended solely on written sources, zooarchaeological, osteo-archaeological, and archaeobotanical evidence now gives us a deeper more nuanced understanding of past diets. This article has argued for the study of Irish placenames as a means of gaining a deeper insight into Irish culinary (and therefore cultural) heritage. It is important to recognize that the meanings of placenames, including those that refer to food and foodways, and the embeddedness of both the names and their referent sites as cultural inheritance, have been impinged on in various ways over time. As already mentioned, the vast majority of placenames in Ireland have their origin in the Irish language, which is therefore a necessary key to decode the true meaning of these placenames: unfortunately, that knowledge is not necessarily a given, either for scholars or for the Irish population more generally. Moreover, the process of Anglicization of these placenames resulted in rendering those names unintelligible. For example, the same English translation Killarney is used for *Cill Airne* in Kerry, *Cill Eirne* in Kilkenny, *Cill Easpaig Sáráin* in Wicklow, and *Coill Fhearna* in Roscommon. Brian Friel's play *Translations* centralizes issues of translation, identity, toponymy, topography, and loss of cultural heritage. The play revolves around the arrival in Donegal of the Royal Engineers to undertake the first Ordnance Survey. The play highlights the contrasting attitudes of Owen, a local hedge school master's son, and the British soldier Yolland, towards preserving the Irish-language placenames in the process of Anglicization for the purpose of cartography. A great deal of scholarly effort is required to establish the correct original forms of the names, a task currently being undertaken by the Place Names Branch of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. The gradual erosion of the language is leading to a contemporaneous loss

of Irish cultural heritage, a theme central to Friel's play. In an interview with Fintan O'Toole, Friel noted that "in fact we are talking of accommodation or marrying of two cultures here, which are ostensibly speaking the same language but which in fact aren't" (23). Dean argues that the naming and renaming of a place, the naming or renaming of a race, a region, a person, is, like all acts of primordial nomination, an act of possession (8). The practice of cartography, then, although problematic, can nevertheless capture and preserve a picture of a place at particular space and time.

In the rural context, there is a growing realization of the need to preserve placenames and to gather the stories and folklore surrounding them. The ongoing work of the Place Names Branch in researching the correct Irish-language form of the placenames of Ireland is invaluable to protect this aspect of Irish cultural heritage. There are also a number of ongoing Irish Field Name Projects that seek to capture local knowledge which to date has been part of the oral tradition (see works cited list). These projects have taken tools from oral history, archaeology, and geography to identify the names of every field in Ireland, map it using GPS, and gather any folklore or data attached to it. Much of this information will be available online with the growth in digital archives.

Advocates for Irish food studies have much to be pleased about, as the significance of original placenames is being increasingly recognized. A close study of John Rocque's "*Actual Survey of the County of Dublin*" (1760), for example, uncovers a number of links to the Irish culinary past that have since disappeared or of which only traces remain, among them the Raheny windmill, the coffee houses in Dun Lary (sic), Chicken Lane in Portobello, and the previously mentioned Goose Green in Drumcondra. Also on this map is Fish Street located off the North Wall, which is now called Castleforbes Road. A reacquaintance with the former name suggests the importance of the North Wall at the time for the fishing fleet, rather than the transport and warehousing of commercial goods which followed. A similar story

emerges for other urban centres from examining the Irish Historic Towns Atlas Series. In a rural context, as demonstrated by the Tipperary farmer's field "that would fatten a bicycle," the Norse Smerwick Harbour (Butter Bay) and Myrtle Allen's reminiscence of a specific field "that always made good butter," detailed analysis of these food-related field names will broaden our knowledge of the Irish culinary past. Without such projects, it is feared that the majority of orally transmitted placenames will disappear within the next decade if left unrecorded, with a great loss to Ireland's toponymic inheritance (Mac Giolla Easpaig).

This article has de-coded a number of food-related Irish placenames. It has also highlighted that there are dramatically more food placenames relating to the early Irish diet than to the New World arrivals, such as the potato and maize, which came to dominate food discourse in Ireland, particularly since the Great Famine. A collaborative approach to identifying a paleo-land use map—to literally map out the older food geography of pork, beef, dairy landscapes, and of agricultural practices from the names would be enlightening. It is hoped that this article will awaken the reader's interest in Irish placenames and inspire a fresh look at the Irish culinary past and heritage which until relatively recently resembled the Leitrim placename *Fás Lúghoirt* (Faslowart)—a deserted herb garden. This article argues for a fuller discussion and engagement with food as a serious part of Irish cultural history.

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