HISTORY OF KILKELLY FAMILY

UP TO 1500 A.D.

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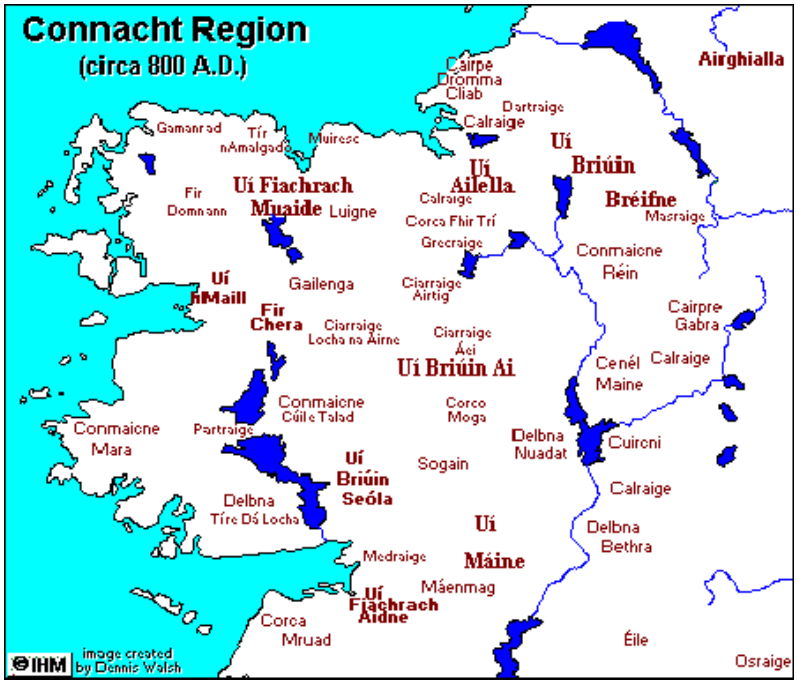
Along with many of the old Celtic families, the Kilkelly's are said to be descended from the Milesians or descendants of King Milesius a King of Spain in ancient times. These Milesians replaced the Tuatha de Danann as rulers in Ireland according to legend. A 16th Century historian called Geoffrey Keating further claims to have traced old celtic names, (including the Kilkellys) further through the Egyptians and right back to Adam! This is not credible from a historical viewpoint and is based more on legend and a desire to please the readers of his time, than on fact.

There are however many credible mentions of the Kilkelly (Mac Giolla Cheallaigh) name in ancient Irish books from the fourth century onwards, including the Annals of the Four Masters, A record of the Kilkelly family name can be derived from these ancient texts.

Surnames came into use in Ireland around the 10th century AD. Before then, people were called by a first name and associated with clans, also known as "septs" or "slughts". The Kilkelly surname began as the Gaelic "Mac Giolla Cheallaigh" meaning follower of St Ceallaigh, a medieval Saint who was slain by a King of the same family.

Many variations of the name are to be found as it became anglicised over the centuries. In historical documents the name appears as McGillaceallaigh, Macgillykelly, Clanmcgillykelly, Gilligelly, Killikelly, KillKelly, and eventually Kilkelly. The name was further changed by many of the family to Kelly or Kelley particularly amongst those who emigrated from Ireland. Presumably this was for convenience in their adopted lands. It is worth noting however that the name Kelly/Kelley has very different roots to the Kilkelly surname.



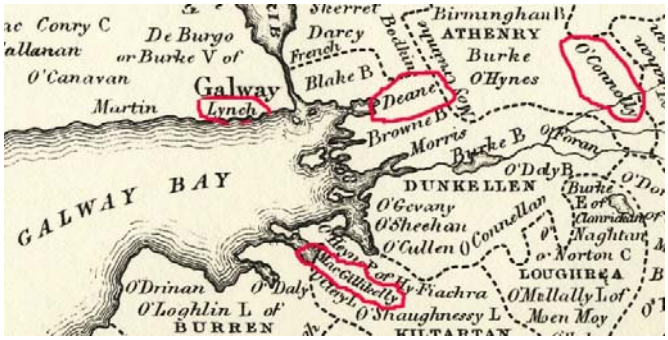
Early Ireland was divided into hundreds of small kingdoms (called Tuatha); about 150 in all. Tuatha is the collective name for a group of people bearing the same surname but living independently under their own kings. The Kilkellys were part of the southern branch of what were called "Uí Fiachra" descended from Fiachra,a nephew of the Irish King known as Niall of the Nine Hostage. The Uí Fiachra were spilt into a

northern branch who settled in the Mayo / Sligo area and the Uí Fiachra of the south known as the Uí Fiachra Aidhne (sometimes called Hy Fiachra) who settled in South Galway. The Kilkellys were one of a number of families who made up the Uí Fiachra Aidhne. These families included O'Clearys, O'Shaughnesseys, O Heynes and Cahills as well as Kilkellys. The territory the tuath inhabited in south Galway was called Hy Fiachra. This territory spanned from Oranmore in the north to Gort in the south and from Galway Bay in the west to the Slieve Aughty mountains in the east. At the height of their powers in the 7th century the Uí Fiachra Aidhne held all the territory southwards to the Shannon and as far as Limerick.

Several tuatha would join together voluntarily to form larger kingdoms such as Connaught. Connaught would have been considered one fifth of Ireland, the other fifths being Ulster, Munster, Meath and Leinster. The Ui Fiachra Aidhne furnished Connaught with several kings during the 6th and 7th centuries. The most famous of these was King Guaire "the Hospitable" who gave his name to Gort (Gort Inse Guaire) in south Galway.

The territory of Uí Fiachra Aidhne covered the same area as the diocese of Kilmacduagh which was approximately 140,000 acres. It comprised the barony of Kiltartan and parts of the barony of Dunkellin and Loughrea in the County of Galway.

Within the territory of Hy Fiachra the Kilkellys held the sub district of Aidhne known as Cinéal nGuaire (also known as Kinel Gowry or Cineal Gabhra), which is the area covered by the modern day Roman Catholic parish of Ballinderreen.



The Kilkelly base was the castle of Cloghhballymore about a mile from the present day village of Ballindereen. This was a strategic spot with views out to sea as well as inland from the castle keep. The original castle (some of which still stands) was built in the 15th century and the Kilkellys lived there until at least 1619. It was then granted to the Ffrenches. This site later became a Blake manor house and later still a nursing home (see below).

History of Kilkelly (Mac Giolla Cheallaigh) name – Up to 1500 AD

The Kilkellys were displaced from Cloughballymore castle and their surrounding lands by Elizabeth I and later Cromwell and were moved to smaller holdings in South Galway where there is to this day a district just north of Gort called Raheen-Kilkelly

The first credible accounts of the family name Kilkelly trace back to Fiachra, a brother of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Niall was one of the most famous Kings of Ireland and his descendants included the O'Neills of Ulster. Fiachra's son was Dathi who bacame the last pagan king of Ireland and was known as Da Thi Mac Fiachra , Lord of Hy Fiachra.

The following table is a summary of the origins of Kilkelly surname from the 4th century onwards:

4th Century	King Eochaidh Muigh Meedon. Eochaidh ruled Connaught from 358 A.D. to 365 A.D. and was known as "Lord Of the Slaves". He is said to have had 4 sons. From three of these sons descended "the Connachta". These sons were Fiachra, Brian and Ailella and their descendants were consequently known as the Ui Fiachra, the Ui Briuin and the Ui Ailella. His fourth son Niall is famous as "Niall of the nine hostages" and among his descendants were the Ui Neill (O'Neills) who were Kings of Ireland and traditional enemies of the Connachta. The Ui Fiachra were divided into the Ui Fiachra of the North and the Ui Fiachra of the South (known also as the Ui Fiachra Aidhne) who supplied at least five kings of Connaught and from whom sprang the families of O'Heynes, O'Clearys, O'Shaughnessys, Kilkellys and others.
5th Century	→ Fiachra Fiachra "of the flowing hair"was a brother of a Niall of Nine Hostages. His name was the origin of the tuath name Ui Fiachra.
	→ Dathi Also known as Da Thi Mac Fiachra, Lord of the Hy Fiachra. Dathi was styled King of Ireland, Alba and of "Brittain". After more than 100 battles he conquered territories reaching into continental Europe. Daithi was the last pagan king of Ireland and ruled 405-428 A.D. . He made many raids into Europe and died during one such raid at the foothills of the Alps in France, killed by lightening. Dathi married four times and had 24 sons.
	→ Eoghaidh Braec One of the sons of King Dathi, possible the 3rd. He had four sons. One of his brothers Olioll Molt was King of Ireland.
	→ Eoghan Aidhne Son of Eoghaidh . This is where the Aidhne comes from in the name of the territory Ui Fiachra Aidnhe. He became know as Eoghan Aidhne as he was fostered by the Fir Bolg who lived in the territory of Aidhne (in south Galway). Eoghan had four sons Conall, Cormac, Seuona and Seachnasach.
	→ Conall → Gabhran → Cobhthach Colman – (King of Connaught) →

7th Century	→ <u>King Guaire Aidhne</u> The most famous of the Ui Fiachra Aidhne Kings. He gives his name to the town of Gort in south Galway and to the Castle in Kinvara "Dun Guaire" which is nowadays used for medieval banquet re-enactments. Incidentally the Kilkellys are said to have owned the castle which lies in ruins close to Dun Guaire. Guarie became King of Connaught in 622 A.D. and moved to the area of Hy Fiachra in 650 A.D.. He was the 12th Christian king of Connaught. He had 3 sons. Aodh, Arthgal and Nar. He was known as King Guaire "the Hospitable" mainly because of the money he gave towards the arts and the clergy. However he was also suspected of being responsible for the murder of St Ceallach. This is the St Ceallach from whom the Mac Giolla Cheallaigh name derives. This deed led to breakdown in relations with the northern Ui Fiachra of Sligo/ Mayo. Guaire died in 662. His reign marked the high point of the power of the Ui Fiachra Aidhne as over the next 1000 years there was a steady decline in their political influence and territory
	→ Artghal , → Fearghal → Torpaid (Torbaidh) → Cathmugh → Camogach → Cumascrach Céadadhach →
8th Century	→ <u>Cleireach</u> Cleary. This is the originator of the surname Cleary. Up to this point Kilkelly and Cleary Families have common origins. The two families split into different branches here. →Maol Fhabhail d A.D. 887 → Flann Maolchulaird "slain by the Munster men A.D. 950" →
10th Century	→ Comaltan O Cléirigh d. A.D 976

11th Century	→ Giolla Cheallaigh (I) (= Kilkelly). He was killed in battle in 1003. → Cú Gaela (Cugaola) d A.D. 1025 He had two sons Braon who was ancestor to the Clearys and Giolla na naoimh (I) ancestor to the Kilkellys.
12th 13th Century	→ Giolla na Naoimh (I) → Flann Mac Giolla Cheallaigh (= Kilkelly) → Conchobhar Mac Giolla Cheallaigh (= Kilkelly)
	→ Aodh Mac Giolla Cheallaigh (= Kilkelly)
	→ Giolla Cheallaigh (II) (= Kilkelly)
	→ Giolla na Naoimh Mac Giolla Cheallaigh (II) (= Kilkelly
14th Century	→ Donough Mac Giolla Cheallaigh c 1320
16th Century	→ Five slughts of Mcgillikelly (Kilkelly) in South Galway See **History of Kilkelly name 1500-1900.**

The height of the influence and territory of the Kilkelly family came around the time of King Guaire in the 7th Centruy. Their influence and territories were diminished over the following 1000 years and were hastened by :

1) Anglo-Norman invasion: The Norman de Burgos (Burkes) made a "tour of Connaught" seizing lands from the native occupants around 1169.
2) Queen Elizabeth 1 : Under a policy called "surrender and re-grant", lands were lost by many Irish ruling families" in the 16th century.
3) Cromwell invasion: Cromwell displaced native Irish landed families in Connaught after 1641 and replaced them with families more "loyal to the crown".

PRE - 4th Century AD

The following is a summary of the origins of Kilkelly surname before the 4th century A.D. :

	King Milesius of Spain married Scota daugther of Egyptian Pharaoh Nectonibus →Hermon - d. 1683 B.C. – 1st Milesian or Celtic King of Ireland. →Irial Faidh - d. 1670 B.C. - King of Ireland →Eithrial - slain in 1650 B.C. - King of Ireland →Foll- aich →Tigernmas d. 1543 B.C. - King of Ireland →Enboath →Smiomghall q →Fiacha Labrrann slain 1448 B.C. – King of Ireland brought Scotland into the Irish monarchs rule →Aongus Olmucach slain in 1409 B.C. – King of Ireland →Main - → Rotheachtach – slain 1357 B.C. - King of Ireland → Dein → Sirna –slain 1030 B.C. King of Ireland → Oliol Aolcheoin → Gialchadh – slain 1013 B.C.- King of Ireland → Nuadhas Fionnfall – slain 961 B.C.- King of Ireland → Aedan Glas → Simeon Breac – slain 903 B.C.- King of Ireland →Muredach Bolgach -slain 892 B.C.-King of Ireland →Fiacha Tolgrach - slain 795 B.C.- King of Ireland →Duach Ladhrach - slain 737 B.C.-King of Ireland →Eochaidh Buadhach →Ugaine Mór - slain 593 B.C.- King of Ireland. Ugaine the great ruled over Islands of Western Europe. Married daughter of King of France. →Colethach Caol-bhreagh - slain 541 B.C - King of Ireland. →Melg Molbhthach - slain 541 B.C. - King of Ireland. →Iaran Gleofathach slain 473 B.C. - King of Ireland. →Conla Caomh d. 442 B.C. - King of Ireland. → Olioll Cas-fiachlach- slain B.C. 473 - King of Ireland. →Eochaidh Alt-Leathan- slain 385 B.C. – King of Ireland →Aongus slain 324 B.C. – King of Ireland →Eanna Aigneach - slain 324 B.C – King of Ireland →Assaman Eamhna →Roighen Ruadh →Fionnlogh →Fionn →Eochaidh Feidlioch - d. 130 B.C. - King of Ireland and father of Maedbh, Queen of Connaught →Bress-Nar-Lathar

	→Lughaidh Sriabh-n Dearg - d. 8 B.C. - King of Ireland - Married to daughter of King of Denmark. →Crimthann-Niadh-Nar – d. 9 B.C. - King of Ireland →Feredach Fionn-Feachtnach – d 36 A.D.– King of Ireland → Fiacha Fionn Ola –slain 56 A.D. – King of Ireland married daughter of King of Alba (Scotland) →Tuathal Teachtmar – slain 106 A.D. – King of Ireland – made Meath into a 5th province. Married a daughter of the King of England. Founded the Tailtean games →Fedhlimidh (Felim) Rachtmar -died 119 A.D. - King of Ireland – married Ughna daughter of King of Denmark. → Conn Ceadcathach(Conn of the Hundred Battles) – slain in 157 A.D.– King of Ireland →Art Eanfhear –slain 195 A.D. - King of Ireland →Cormac Ulfhada or Cormac Mac Art – King of Ireland – held elaborate court at Tara →Cairbre-Lifeachar – slain 284 A.D. - King of Ireland →Fiacha Srabhteine – slain 322 A.D. - King of Connaught and King of Ireland →Muireeadach Tireach – King of Ireland → Eochaidh Muigh Meedon **(See Page 4)**