

HARRINGTON

EYERIES

Beara-Breifne Way
Slí Bhéara-Breifne



The Harrington Sept, or family, derives from County Cork, where the name is still widespread today. Although the name Harrington sounds English, it is an example of a longstanding tendency known as 'Gaelic submergence', whereby old Gaelic Irish surnames were adapted into common English ones with a similar pronunciation. As a general rule, if the bearer of the name is Protestant then it is likely that the name originated in England, but if the bearer is Catholic, it is more probable that it is an anglicised version of the Gaelic original.

The phonetic similarities between the anglicised name, Harrington, and the Gaelic original are remote. Formerly Harrington was 'O'Hungerdell' in English, which was an approximate pronunciation of the Gaelic 'O hIongardail'.

Some Irish Harrington lines do however have English roots. A number of families from the Cumberland and Northumbria areas of England were resettled in Ireland in the eighteenth century. Over time these families embraced Irish culture and, by the nineteenth century, were virtually indistinguishable from their Irish countrymen. There is still a town on the coast of Cumbria named Harrington, and it has been suggested that the early Harringtons were herring fishermen.

Records also show that there were Harringtons in Strongbow's army when he invaded Ireland in 1170. Some of these were subsequently awarded lands in Cork and Kerry. During the epic retreat of 1603, Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare fought a major engagement against the Burkes at Aughrim, and here Donogh O'Hinguerdel saved the life of Captain Maurice O'Sullivan by cutting off Richard Burke's right hand with his sword.

Harrington may be regarded as essentially a West Cork name; 50 years ago almost 90% of the births registered for Harrington were from West Cork, and a comparison with the current electoral register and telephone directories shows that this is still substantially the case.



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