

Roddy-Ruddy One-Name Study

Researched & Prepared by Kim Roddy (2011 - present)

Ancient Origins, Onomatology and Etymology

Onomastics or onomatology is the study of the origin, history, and use of proper names. Etymology is the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time. By an extension, the term "the etymology of a surname" means the origin of the particular surname.

This section addresses the origins and meanings of the Roddy and Ruddy surnames. Like other surnames with old Irish origins, it is important to understand that the spellings of these names as they are used today are based upon Gaelic names that have been Anglicized, mostly during the 16th and 17th centuries. Research into ancient origins, therefore must not stop at the oldest occurrence of Roddy or Ruddy, but also extend into the original Gaelic language. Ireland has an ancient and complicated history which has had a profound influence on Irish surnames, as Joseph Osborne, author of "Irish History (A Mere Grain of Sand)" states:

“There have been many major events that have occurred in Ireland’s long and tumultuous history that have caused that country to evolve into what it is today. One would be hard put to attempt to single out which events have had the most profound and lasting effect on the people of Ireland. Four such events that have had a direct bearing on the surnames of Ireland are the coming of the Vikings in 795, the Norman invasion in 1161, the plantation of Ireland that began in the mid-16th century, and the arrival of Oliver Cromwell in Ireland in the year 1649.”¹

Of all the writings available on the origin of the surnames of Roddy-Ruddy, that of famed author of "Irish Families" and "More Irish Families," Edward MacLysaght, is probably the most accurate, complete, and concise treatment. It is reproduced in full here as an introduction and summary:²

“RODDY, Ruddy, Redehan (O) REDDY REID

Though dissimilar in those anglicized forms, Roddy and Redehan are basically the same name – Ó Rodocháin, the earliest form becoming abbreviated to Ó Rodaigh in Leitrim and attenuated to Ó Roideacháin in Mayo. In the latter county the variant Ruddy is also quite usual today. Reddington, more usually for Mulderrig, has superseded Redahan in some parts of Connacht. O’Rody seems to have been more usual than O’Rodahan at the end of the sixteenth century in the person of Tadhg O’Rody, who in 1683 contributed the description of Co. Leitrim to the Dublin Society’s chorographical survey. He was of the family which had for centuries been coarbs of St. Cullen of Fenagh, one of whom, another Tadhg, was prominent in that capacity in 1515, as we learn from the Book of Fenagh. The same source tells us that he called himself O’Rodachae, the eponymous ancestor being Rodachae. There is a townland called Tir Roddy in the parish of

¹ Introduction to page 1 of Heirlooms of Ireland, by Joseph Osborne

² MacLysaght, Edward. More Irish Families. Galway: O’Gorman, 1960. 182.

Taughboyne, Co. Donegal, named from a family of O’Roddy who were erenaghs there. Canon Maguire in his book Diocese of Raphoe describes them as leading a sept of the Uí Bhreasail branch of Muintir banna (son of Niall of the Nine Hostages). If that is correct they are distinct from the Leitrim O’Roddys: from them, no doubt, stem the Roddy and Ruddy families now located in Donegal and other parts of Ulster. The only O’Roddy in the Jacobite attainders hailed from nearby Co. Tyrone.

Apart from what has been said above it is easy to be led astray in dealing with the name Roddy, because there was a sept of the Uí Maine called Ó Rodaigh and this was sometimes attenuated to Ó Roidigh, resulting in the occasional use of Reddy as a synonym of Roddy. Reddy, however, is I think in most cases a distinct surname: it occurs in such records as the Ormond Deeds in south-east Leinster, where it is chiefly found today and where are Ballyeddy in Co. Kilkenny and Reddysland just over the county border near New Ross. Richard Reddy, who was outlawed in 1659, was a Jacobite of some note: he is described as of Kilkenny city. John Reddy, who was hanged in 1750, was the man who initiated the famous James Freney into the Kellymount gang as a highwayman. Rede, however, which is the Norman le Rede (the Red) and modern Reid must not be confused with O’Reddy. The English name Reid or Reade is very numerous in Ulster, when not that of a settler family in Ireland it is used as a synonyme, but semi-translation, of Mulderig (dearg, red).”

In summary, historians like MacLysaght point to at the very least three distinct septs, or families of separate origins for the Roddy-Ruddy surname:

1. Ó Rodocháin, abbreviated to Ó Rodaigh in County Leitrim, where Tadhg O’Roddy (circa 1515 C.E.) and his ancestors were coarbs of St. Cullen of Fenagh, also linked to Ó Roideacháin in County Mayo, where the Ruddy variant is common.
2. O’Roddy family from County Donegal who were erenaghs leading a sept of the Uí Bhreasail branch of Muintir banna (son of Niall of the Nine Hostages).
3. Ó Rodaigh sept of the Uí Maine, County Galway, sometimes written Ó Roidigh, or Reddy, but separate from the primary Reddy families in Counties Leinster and Kilkenny.

Ancient Origins

Before presenting the results of research of ancient manuscripts and professional heraldry and commercial reports, a discussion is required to understand the subtle distinctions between some of the lessor known and sometimes mis-understood religious titles that have been historically associated with families of the Roddy and Ruddy surnames: *coarb*, *comharb*, *erenagh*, and *airchinneach*.

The following definitions are provided from Wikipedia, which are appropriately resourced and verified to be accurate:

A **coarb**, from the old Irish *comarbae* (Modern Irish *comharba*), sometimes spelled comharb or comarb, were lay-Abbots or lay-guardians and the hereditary farmers and wardens of the church lands belonging to a monastery. The title was necessary if a generation of heirs were not in the monastic order, and therefore couldn't be actual Abbots.

A **erenagh**, from old Irish *érenach*, was responsible for receiving parish revenue from tithes and rents, building and maintaining church property and overseeing the termon lands that generated parish income. Thus he had a prebendary role. The Erenagh had the tonsure but took no other holy orders; he had a voice in the Chapter when they consulted about revenues, paid a yearly rent to the Bishop and a fine on the marriage of each daughter. The role usually passed down from generation to generation in certain families in each parish. After the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries the role of erenagh became subsumed in the responsibilities of the parson in each parish.

From the Celtic Christianity Glossary³

Coarb (Gaelic: *comharba* = heir, successor)

The successor of the founder of a church or monastery, who as such enjoyed high personal prestige. The office was [an] anchorite movement of the 8th and 9th centuries.

Erenagh (Gaelic: *airchinneach* = superior)

An hereditary tenant of church lands. Enjoyed quasi-clerical status. In early Irish Church usage, an abbot or administrator of monastic properties. As with the coarb, the word and the institution kept its vitality because of the continuing connection with the administration of church property. But if similar in function, the erenagh was of lower status than the coarb, as the usage of the term 'chief erenagh' to describe a coarb testifies. In the later middle ages, the term *airchinneach*, in the southern half of Ireland, was also used to mean 'archdeacon'.

The following paragraphs are quoted from *A New History of Ireland*, and provide additional clarification⁴:

“The chief of the lineage in possession was appointed or at least confirmed by the bishop and bore the title of **erenagh** (*airchinneach*; Latin *herinacius*), which had originally denoted the head of a monastic establishment. A single church with extensive lands might have several erenaghs, each the head of a separate lineage occupying particular parts of its lands. If an **erenagh** lineage became extinct, the bishop could – and indeed was supposed to – install another in its place, and in

³ Celtic Christianity Glossary (unsourced) found online at <http://individual.utoronto.ca/power/Celtic/chgloss.html> on 29 Oct 2014:

⁴ Cosgrove, Art, ed. *A New History of Ireland: Medieval Ireland 1169-1534*. Vol. II. Oxford: Oxford U, 2008. 434-435. Print.

the sixteenth century we find a number of lineages that descended from late medieval bishops installed as **erenaghs**.”

“The members of these **erenagh** lineages enjoyed, as they had done in the pre-reform period, a quasi-clerical status, and from them the greater part of the actual clergy in the purely Gaelic areas were recruited. The **coarb** (*comharba*; Latin *converbius* or *comorbanus*) was literally the ‘successor’ or representative of a patron saint and enjoyed as such an indefinable but very considerable spiritual prestige. His office was distinguished by this prestige rather than by any specific functions, but the **coarb** would normally be simultaneously **erenach** of the church lands in possession of his family.”

“In a number of places, however, the office of **coarb** had become by the fifteenth century a simple ecclesiastical benefice corresponding to that of rector and was no longer the hereditary preserve of a particular line. The probable explanation of the change in these cases is that the coarbs in question had acquired an endowment in tithes, and that this had led to their being treated as ecclesiastical beneficed subject to the general rules of the canon law. Where this had not occurred, their original nature would have persisted unchanged.”

The following table is included to assist in understanding some of the ancient Irish titles and adjectives. It is excerpted from “The Irish Septs – Surnames, Variants, Tribes and Locations” by David Austin Larkin in 2007, found online at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~larkin/documents/IrishSeptsVol1.pdf> on 30 Jul 2014:

Cinel	collective descendants of an eponymous ancestor, see Clan
Clan/Clann	a Clan, collective septs or descendants of an ancestor
Co Arb	an hereditary churchwarden, keeper of the saints patrimony
Erenagh	warden or keeper or civil manager of a monastic site
Fer/Feara/Fir	people of a district or community
M’/Mac/Mc	son of, denoting somebody’s son, or a surname prefix
Muintir	the family of an eponymous ancestor
O/Ua/awe	a grandson, or descendant of an eponym as a surname
Tir	the land of (e.g. -Tir Conail = Donegal, Tir Eoghan = Tyrone)
Ui	the collective descendants of an eponymous ancestor, see Clan or Cinel

This table catalogs references to ancient names associated with the Roddy-Ruddy surnames from early Irish Manuscripts.

Year	Manuscript	Text
about 219	In the Age of the World 4981 (~219 BCE) ⁵ . Rudhraighe , son of	<i>Annals of Uladh</i>

⁵ To convert “Age of the World” years to modern, Christ-based years, subtract the given age from 5,200.

BCE	Sithrighe, son of Dubh, son of Fomhor, son of Airgeatmar, after having been seventy years in the sovereignty of Ireland, died at Airgeat Gleann. ⁶ It was by this Rudghraighe that these battles were won throughout Ireland: the battle of Cuirce; the battle of Luachair; seven battles in Cliu; the battle of Gleannamhnach; the battle of Sliabh Mis; the battle of Boirinn; the battle of Ren; the battle of Ai; the battle of Cuil Silinne; the two battles of Fortrasc.	
150 BCE	During this time about thirty-five Kings reigned, all of the Irian race except three or four of the Heremonians. One of the greatest of those Irian Kings of Ulster was Ruadhraidhe Mor (Roorey Mor), who flourished about 150 years before the Christian era; his descendants are called the Clairma Bory, and in histoiy they are frequently named Rudiicians from Stidricvus, the Latinized form of his name Conchobhar-Mac-Nessa (Conoovary or Connor Mao Nessa), an Irian prince, ruled over Ulster about the period of the Incarnation.	<i>"An Historical Account of the Diocese of Down and Connor, Ancient and Modern"</i>
332 CE	Emhain — The royal residence (near Armagh) of the kings of Ulster, until a.d. 332, when the place was demolished by the Brothers Colla, progenitors of the Oirghialla, and the Rudiician septs were driven into the district of Ulidia proper, or the present counties of Down and Antrim.	<i>The Book of Fenagh</i>

⁶ Litarally translated as *Silver Valley*, presumed to have been located in present day County Monaghan

919 CE	Macrodaidhe , son of Dunchadh, airchinneach ⁷ of Cluain-Boireann, died.	<i>Annals of the Four Masters 2</i>
1037 CE	Cairbre, son of Rodaighe , airchinneach of Eaglais-Beag ⁸ at Cluain-mic-Nois, died.	<i>Annals of the Four Masters 2</i>
1050 CE	Diarmaid Ua Rodachain , Bishop of Fearná;	<i>Annals of the Four Masters 2</i>
1372 CE	John Ua Rodachain , successor of St. Caillin, a general sage, died this year.	<i>The Annals of Ulster AD 1202-1378</i>
1377 CE	O'Kelly, Bishop of Clonfert-Brendan; John O'Rodaghan , Coarb ⁹ of St. Caillin, a general scholar; and Mac Morrissy, the Great Dean, died. It was at Rome that this dean died.	<i>Annals of the Four Masters 4</i>
1377 CE	John O'Rodachan , comarb of Caillin, the sage of Erinn, mortuus est.	<i>Annals of Loch Cé 2</i>
1377 CE	Seaan O Rodachain , coarb of Caillin, a sage of Ireland died.	<i>Annals of Connacht</i>
1447 CE	Matha O Rodachain , coarb of Fenagh, a hostel for guests and a well of riches to the churches of Ireland, entered into rest.	<i>Annals of Connacht</i>
1497 CE	Teige O'Rodaghan , Coarb of St. Caillin, a man whose goodness could not be well described, by reason of its exaltedness, greatness, and vastness, died in his own house.	<i>Annals of the Four Masters 4</i>
1532 CE	The Coarb of Fidhnach, namely, Brian O'Rodachain , died this year.	<i>The Annals of Ulster AD 1379-1541</i>
	More research is needed to identify the heraldic connection to the sept of the Ui Bhreasail branch	

⁷ Airchinneach is Gaelic for erenagh, the title bestowed by the bishop on the chief of the lineage in possession of church lands and/or head of a monastic establishment.

⁸ From the *Index Locorum* of the Annals of the Four Masters: "Eaglais-Beag, i. e., the Little Church, at Clonmacnois." Clonmacnois is an early Christian site on the Shannon River on the northwest border of County Offaly, in central Ireland.

⁹ Coarb was literally the 'successor' or representative of a patron saint and enjoyed as such an indefinable but very considerable spiritual prestige. His office was distinguished by this prestige rather than by any specific functions, but the coarb would normally be simultaneously erenagh of the church lands in possession of his family.

	of Muintir Banna (an ancient tribal name for the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, 4th Century High King of Ireland), located by Tir Roddy in the parish of Taughboyne, County Donegal.	
--	--	--

This section lists various ancient names associated with the Roddy-Ruddy surname from various sources, including text and Internet:

O’Rodaighe, O’Rodachain, Redican, O’Roddy

O’Rodaigh - 'descendant of Rodach' (derivative of rod, strong); the name of a branch of the Ui Maine in Co. Galway; also a variant of Ó Rodacháin (which see) in Co. Leitrim.”
From “Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames” by Rev. Patrick Woulfe, 1923, found online at the Library Ireland at <http://www.libraryireland.com/names/or/o-rodaigh.php>

Roddy – Redican, Redahan, Reddington, Redehan, Rodahan, Rodaughan, Rodehan, Rody, Rogan, Ruddy, Rudican, see Groddy, Redden

O’Rodachain – an Ui Fiangalaigh sept of Dunmore, Galway and Ballyroddy, Elphin, Roscommon.

O’Rodaigh¹⁰ – a Partraighe sept, Erenagh of St. Caillin of Fenagh, Leitrim

O’Rodaghain – an Ui Degha sept; Bishop of Ferns, Wexford; and seated at Ballyrogan, Brittas Bay, Wicklow.

O’Rodachain – an Ui Bresail sept of Oriel in Donegal, and at Mulaghrodan, Clonoe, Tyrone.

Groddy – MacGrody, MacGruddy, MacRuddy, MaGrody, Roddy

MagRodaigh – a Cinel Feargus Erenagh sept of Carrigbracky at Desertegny, Inishowen, Donegal

Reddan – Redehan, Roddan, Rodahan, Rohan, Rogan, see Roddy, Rogan

O’Ruadhain – a Clan Cullen Ui Caisin sept, Stewards of Thomond, east Clare.

Ruaidhrí, genitive — id. (the same), Rory, Roderick, (Roger, Roddy); Teutonic — Hruodric, Norse — Rothrekr, fame-ruler; a name introduced by the Norsemen

¹⁰ Originally recorded as O’Rodaghain, but changed to O’Rodaighe by the author to agree with the historic manuscript, “Book of Fenagh”

Mac Rodaigh—IV—M'Ruddie, Ruddy; 'son of Rodach' (strong); a rare Donegal surname.”

Rodaighi – The family of O’Rodaighi (“Muintir Rodaighi”), now Roddy, descended from Fiangelach, son of Anmchadh, son of Eoghan Buacc, son of Cormac, son of Cairpri Crom. This family is to be distinguished from the Roddys of Fenagh, in the county of Leitrim, who were of a different race, as their pedigree shows. *The Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many, commonly called O’Kelly’s Country, translated by John O’Donovan,*

Μουντιρι Ροδαγι

Roddy - Irish: reduced Anglicized form of Gaelic Ó Rodaigh ‘descendant of *Rodach*’, a personal name probably derived from *rod* ‘spirited’, ‘furious’. *Dictionary of American Family Names, Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-508137-4*

Ruddy - English: nickname for a person with red hair or a ruddy complexion, from Middle English *rudde*, Old English *rudig* ‘red’, ‘ruddy’ (see [Rudd](#) 1). *Dictionary of American Family Names, Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-508137-4*

From Ancestry.com. Heirlooms of Ireland [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. Original data: Osborne, Joseph F. Heirlooms of Ireland: An Easy Reference to Some Irish Surnames and Their Origins. Baltimore, MD, USA: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2002.

(O) Redahan (Rodahan, Rudican, **Roddy**); name origin: Irish-Galic; geographic locations: Clare, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo; pseudonyms and synonyms: Reddington; name origin: EN

(O) **Roddy**; name origin: Irish-Galic; geographic locations: Donegal, Leitrim;

Roddy-Ruddy Onomatology

[The meaning of Roddy]

[The meaning of Ruddy]

Roddy-Ruddy Etymology

[The history of the Roddy surname]

[This history of the Ruddy surname]

The Gaelic names O’Rodachain, O’Rodaghan, O’Rodaige, etc. all appear to be efforts to write the ancient names as they sounded and all of these names were eventually Anglicized to

O’Roddy (or O’Ruddy) sometime during the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the 16th to 17th centuries.

The earliest written record for **Macrodaidhe** is in 919 CE as the son of Dunchadh and the airchinneach of Cloonburren, County Roscommon. The earliest record for **Rodaighe** is in 1037 CE as the father of Cairbre, airchinneach of a little church at Clonmacnois, County Offaly. It is significant to note that both of these early Roddys were located only a few kilometers apart on opposite sides of the Shannon River on the boundary between modern day Counties Roscommon and Offaly.

The earliest written record for **Rodachain** is in 1050 CE for the Bishop of Fearná (Ferns), “Diarmaid Ua **Rodachain**.” The Coarb of St. Caillin was reported as dying in 1377 under various names including John Ua **Rodachain**, John **O’Rodaghan**, John **O’Rodachan**, and Seán **O Rodachain**. It seems clear that these names were all spelling variations of the same man’s name. By 1447, the coarb of Fenagh is referenced as a Matha **O Rodachain**. Fenagh is located in modern day County Leitrim, only a few kilometers away from Aroddy.

The Roddy surname most likely has its ancestral Irish origins in the Gaelic O’Rodaighe and O’Rodachain from the early middle ages. Some of the oldest records associated with this family name stem from family history of Tadhg O’Roddy (circa 1517) and the Coarbs of St. Caillin, as documented in the ancient Irish manuscript “The Book of Fenagh.” This same individual is also documented in English court cases of the time dealing with land rights of the ancestral family ownership of the parish lands near Fenagh, about four kilometers northeast of Aroddy, County Leitrim, Ireland.

Irish Naming Conventions

Excerpts from “*Chapter 5: Annotated Summary of Research Visit to Co. Donegal, Northern Ireland, and Dublin, May 2010*,” by Deborah L. Rotman and Rhiannon Duke¹¹

Do not copy or distribute without permission of the author.

“It was the custom to name the first son after the paternal grandfather and the second son after the maternal grandfather. This often led to a multitude of boys with similar names. For example, there were 13 Phil Boyles, all cousins, and all named after the same grandfather or great grandfather...e.g., Charlie Mickey Charlie Hughdie Gallagher was the Charlie, the son of Mickey, grandson of Charlie, great-grandson of Hughdie Gallagher.”

p. 8—“When a child died very young the next child of the same sex might get the same name.”

Other descriptors:

Og = oge = young or junior

Mór = more = old or senior or big

¹¹ Found online on 25 Nov 2014 at <http://blogs.nd.edu/irishstories/files/2012/11/2011-Ireland-Archival.pdf>, associated with “The Beaver Island Project: Historical Archaeology of Nineteenth-Century Irish America in the Midwest,” a University of Notre Dame study found at <http://blogs.nd.edu/irishstories/>

Beag = little or junior

Rua = ruadh = red haired

Bán = bawn = white or blonde hair

Dubh = dhu = black/dark (haired)

Wee = small or junior

Some versions of commonly used names:

Rose = Rosha = Rosie

Con = Connie = Condy = Conchubhar = Cruthar

Wendy = Mandy

Oona = Una = Winifred

Manus = Maney

Roonie = Rory = Ruaidhri = Rodger = Roderick = Roddy

Owen = Eoin = Eoghan = Eoghainin = John = Owenie = Johnny = Johnndy = Johnndan = Jack = Seán

Aodh = Hugh = Hughie = Hughdan = Hughd = Hughdie

Maura = Máire = Mia = Mhia = Mary

Sara = Sarah = Soracha = Saraha

Grace = Gracie = Grania = Grainne

Bridget = Bidy = Brid = Breid = Bridin = Brideen

Dan = Den = Danny

Kitty = Kate = Katie = Katherine = Caitriona = Christina

Madge = Maggie = Madgie = Margaret = Peggy = Meabha = Maeve=Maighread=Mairead

Sophia = Sobha

Anthoin = Antho

ny = Tony

Pat = Paddy = Padraic = Padraig = Paidin = Paudeen = Padeen