

Family Name Origin

Donley

The surname of DONLEY was derived from the gaelic O'DONNGHAILE - meaning valour - descendant of Donnghal. This surname is among the hundred commonest in Ireland. Most, if not all, who bear the name will descend from the sept O Donnghaile which was first located in County Donegal but migrated eastwards and established itself in County Tyrone where their sept centre was at Castle Caulfield, formerly called Ballydonnelly, in Dungannon Middle barony. From this area branches moved farther east and settled in County Antrim. Despite the proliferation of the name the heaviest distribution by far is still in Ulster. When the sparse Irish population began to increase it became necessary to broaden the base of personal identification by moving from single names to a more definite nomenclature. The prefix MAC was given to the father's christian name, or O to that of a grandfather or even earlier ancestor. At first the coat of arms was a practical matter which served a function on the battlefield and in tournaments. With his helmet covering his face and armour encasing the knight from head to foot, the only means of identification for his followers, was the insignia painted on his shield and embroidered on his surcoat, the draped and flowing garment worn over the armour. Most of the European surnames in countries such as England, Scotland and France were formed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The process had started somewhat earlier and had continued in some places into the 19th century, but the norm is that in the tenth and eleventh centuries people did not have surnames, whereas by the fifteenth century most of the population had acquired a second name. The associated coat of arms is recorded in Sir Bernard Burkes General Armory. Ulster King of Arms in 1884. Registered in Ireland. The lion depicted in the arms is the noblest of all wild beasts which is made to be the emblem of strength and valour, and is on that account the most frequently borne in Coat-Armour.

ARMS - Argent two lions rampant combatant supporting a dexter hand couped apaumee between three mullets two and one gules pierced of the field in base the sea therein a salmon naiant proper

CREST - A naked arm embowed grasping a straight sword proper hilt and pommel or encircled with an Irish crown.

MOTTO - - LAMG DHEARG EIRIN
The red hand of Ireland

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