

# NEWSLETTER

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Photo credit Dick Coombes

## Feature Article **THE GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** at Enniscoe

The Great Spotted Woodpecker makes a welcome return to County Mayo. The Enniscoe Estate has long been recognised for its rich BioDiversity and the identification of many species of flora and fauna in North Mayo. Over the last couple of weeks there have been reports of an unfamiliar sound in the woods which has now been formally recorded and identified as the sound of the Great Spotted Woodpecker.

*'This is the first confirmed sighting for this species in this area. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were extinct as a breeding species in Ireland for well over 200 years, until they were discovered in the North and East from 2005 onwards. Since that time the species has successfully bred and are now reported across the island of Ireland.*

*Once Great Spotted Woodpeckers have successfully established and bred in a territory, they will continue to hold the area across the year with young peckers moving away to establish their own territory in the autumn. We hope that this discovery will lead to successful breeding and the continued expansions of this wonderful bird.'* said Ruth-Ann Leak of the Mayo Branch of BirdWatch Ireland.

In the 15 years between 1989 and 2004 there were only three confirmed reports of great spotted woodpeckers on the island of Ireland.

Last year a nest was confirmed in County Wexford and another in County Kilkenny. Juveniles were seen in County Louth last year and at least one other year, there is suspected breeding at several locations in counties Dublin and Meath, and other unconfirmed reports from counties Offaly and Roscommon.

There have been a number of unconfirmed reports of woodpeckers in Co. Mayo. In 2008, a solitary specimen was recorded in the woodland at Moore Hall. Twelve years later, in 2020, another individual turned up in Cong, and in 2021 a single bird was observed on a number of occasions near Swinford. However, it is the fact that this sighting/recording has gone on for a number of weeks and from the same location that has taken the bird watching community by storm. Could there be a breeding pair of Woodpeckers on the Enniscoe Estate? *Only time will tell.*



## THE SHAMROCK

*“May your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow,  
And may trouble avoid you wherever you go.”*



### Brief history of the surname **FITZPATRICK**

Variants include Kilpatrick, Kirkpatrick, Fitzpatrick; ‘son of *Giolla Phádraig*’ (servant of St. Patrick).

The principal family of this name are the MacGillpatricks, or Fitzpatricks, of Ossory, who took their name from *Giolla Phádraig*, son of Donnchadh, lord of Ossory, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

Although this surname is composed with the Norman prefix ‘Fitz’ it is not of Angle-Norman origin. The surname Fitzpatrick was adopted by descendants of the Ossory sept *Mac Giolla Pádraig* in lieu of the usual translation (Mc) Gilpatrick or Kilpatrick.

Both Gilpatrick, which is rare, and Kilpatrick, which was found mainly in Ulster, have survived, however, as surnames, now borne by descendants of those of the sept who did not ‘Normanize’ their name. Fitzpatrick ranks among the hundred commonest surnames in Ireland and is found everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Despite its Norman appearance, ‘Fitz-’ being Norman French for ‘son of’ in the vast majority of cases Fitzpatrick is an anglicisation of the Irish *Mac Giolla Phádraig*, meaning ‘son of the servant of (St) Patrick.’<sup>3</sup>

Of the 249 Fitzpatrick births registered in Ireland in 1890, including all variants, 103 occurred in Leinster, 62 occurred in Munster, 64 occurred in Ulster, while 20 occurred in Connacht.

<sup>1</sup> ‘*Irish Names and Surnames*’ by Rev. Patrick Woulfe,

<sup>2</sup> ‘*Irish Family Names*’ by Brian De Breffny

<sup>3</sup> ‘*Clans and Families of Ireland*’ by John Grenham

The word shamrock comes from the Old Irish “*seamróg*”, which translates as the “little clover”. The Irish word for clover is “*seamair*”, and “*óg*” means “young” or “little”.

It was the Celtic druids who started the shamrock on its path into Irish history. The shamrock was originally associated with the Celtic goddess Ana or Anu, with the three leaves representing her status as the maiden, mother, and sage of Ireland.<sup>[1]</sup> The Early Irish lore had a great belief in the number three, to them it was considered “the perfect number”.

That belief system shifted with the arrival of St. Patrick, Ireland’s patron saint, in 431. Legend tells us he used the shamrock to teach pagans about the Holy Trinity. As literacy levels were a barrier when trying to educate people about Christianity, he used the plentiful plant to illustrate the most basic doctrine. Plucking a shamrock from the grass, he explained to his listeners that the three leaves of the shamrock signified the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>[2]</sup>

In the times that followed, the shamrock began to take on a new, more nationalistic meaning as it became an emblem for various militias during the Irish political upheaval in the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The shamrock altered from being a sole emblem of St. Patrick into a floral representation of the country overall. Some groups that included the shamrocks on their flags and uniforms were the Limerick Volunteers and Braid Volunteers. Most famously, the plant became associated with the United Irishmen, founded in 1791 and led by Theobald Wolfe Tone.<sup>[3]</sup>

From there, the popularity of the shamrock symbol flourished and was featured in songs, poems, art, stories, fashion, architecture, decorative objects, and eventually as State emblems too. Today, the shamrock symbol has been registered as a trademark by the Irish government.<sup>[4]</sup> It is an Irish icon and is recognised worldwide.

St Patrick’s Day celebrations have always held a strong association with the wearing of this little green plant. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children once picked and sold it around the time of the parades on the streets of Dublin. This tradition followed the Irish abroad. In 1952, the first transatlantic flight from Shannon to New York carried 100,000 pieces of shamrock<sup>[5]</sup> ensuring the Irish emigrants had it to wear in honour of the festivities.

[1] [www.irisharoundtheworld.com](http://www.irisharoundtheworld.com)

[2] [www.irishcentral.com](http://www.irishcentral.com)

[3] [www.shamrockgift](http://www.shamrockgift)

[4] [www.claddaghdesign.com](http://www.claddaghdesign.com)

[5] [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie)

### A brief history of **CROSSPATRICK**

(*Cros Phádraig*,  
St. Patrick’s Cross).

This townland is located in the south of the parish of Killala. Bounded on the north by Meelick and Moyne townlands; east and south by Ballysakeery parish; and west by the townlands of Upper and Lower Tawnaghmore and Meelick. It contains 166 acres, 3 roods, 10 perches\*, including 1 acre, 0 roods, 4 perches\* of water.

The property of P. Boyd, Castlebar, and is held by James Knox, who lives in Crosspatrick House, built in the year 1832. The land is let on leases of 21 years at £2 7 shillings 6d. yearly. Soil, heavy clay, producing barley, oats, flax, potatoes, etc. There is a graveyard to the west of Crosspatrick House.

\* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

*Extract from the Ordnance Survey  
Namebooks of 1838*

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