

How Ireland Got its Name

In the ancient times it was, this being the time of the Tuatha de Danaans. And we'd all be knowin' that the kings and the chieftains had their clan gatherings. At this particular time, there were three kings, Eathur, Teathur and Ceathur. They were, each having a bonny, wee wife. Their names were Banba, Fodhla, and Eire.

It was a time of peace and prosperity in the land. One hundred ninety-seven years passed without a war. The clan gatherings were peaceful affairs. So tame, it was, that even very good friends didn't argue. Not much for the storytellin', for we are not rememberin' the gatherings from the long peace. The father of the three kings, was host of this particular gathering. "I'm wantin' to have a grand time this year," he thought. " A contest would liven the gathering up." Ye'd not be knowing about the old man, ye say? Well, that's another story for another time.

When all the chieftains and captains and their families arrived, he announced that a name was needed for the green island they resided upon. "It would be very nice," he said, "if the island were named after one of the queens of the island." The announcement was greeted with a murmur of agreement, for the people were very peaceful and cooperative. They began to consider which was the most elegant, the most gracious, the most benevolent of the three women and which should have the honor. Thus began the week, with each one wanting their own favorite. The old man was pleased and he thought the gathering was already seeming better.

Each queen set out to prove she was the worthiest one. For the entire week of the gathering, never once, did they lose their temper nor were they heard to say an unkind word. When they went out, their silks and hair were beautiful and they wore gold. The eyes of the common people were dazzled at the sight, and they wondered how one could be chosen over the other, for they each seemed to glow in their own worthiness.

But, you see, the old man was very clever. The last evening before the announcement, he visited each queen separately, in her private quarters. "Ach!" he said, "It is YOU that are my favorite queen. I want it to be you the land will be named for, dear lass." Each queen, smiled ever so sweetly, when they heard the old man speak, perceiving she would be the one chosen. "So," the old man continued. "I will tell you how the name will be decided. Every morning, the three of you go for a walk. Tomorrow, after you leave, I will announce to the assembly that the first queen who enters back through the gate of the Dun will win. If it happens to be you, my lass, the island will be known forever by your name. It is a very great honor."

The next morning, the queens prepared for their walk. Each one wearing their very finest dress and all the gold they owned. They walked leisurely, so their elegance could be seen. Out they glided, ever so serenely, through the gate of the town. The people were told of the contest, and went to the ramparts of the Dun to watch the progress of the three queens. Many a comment was heard about the grace and beauty of the three women. Very ladylike, they were, as they walked out to the turning point. They turned, leisurely and elegant, for they knew they were being watched. They began the journey back to the Dun.

Banba was the first to pick up the pace and went out in front. Fodhla and Eire quickened their own steps. For a while, Fodhla took the lead, and the others quickened the pace, again. Unable to keep up at a walk, Eire broke into a jog, kicking off her sandals. The others followed suit. Encumbered by her skirt, Banba picked up the hem and flung it over her

shoulder. The other queens followed suit. They neared the Dun at a flat out run, leaning forward in the effort, they were, so they could inch out ahead of the others.

On the ramparts, the people were beside themselves with amusement. Some were laughin' so hard they could scarcely stand. When the two behind grabbed the leader to pull her back, the watchers slapped their thighs and tears of mirth ran down many a cheek. When they were near to entering gate, their hair was flying and their clothes disheveled. Did I mention that it had been a soft evening the night before, meaning it had been raining? Well, it had, and the entry to the Dun had been trod into mud. Through the slop, the three queens ran, splattering the lovely silks and faces.

Ach, what a sight it was, never to be forgotten by anyone there, and a laugh it would always bring in the re-tellin'. Now, ye'd all know who the winner was. The beautiful, elegant and very ladylike, Queen Eire was the first through the gate. True to his word, the old man bestowed the name of Eire on the island, by which it is still known today.

So you see, a worthy queen, it was, our bonny land was named after, and one who brought joy and laughter, as well. Whether she enjoyed the laugh, herself, we'd not be knowin'.

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Submitted by: Anne Foody, Irish Historian, Division #87
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