

Clan FITZGERALD

Mac Gearailt
Fitzgerald

ARMS not available

The name Fitzgerald means son of Gerald. The Fitzgeralds came from Normandy in 1170. A vigorous family, they integrated rapidly, marrying local Irish women and acquiring vast territories in Kildare, Cork and Kerry, on which they built splendid castles. They acquired exalted titles: Earls of Kildare, Dukes of Linster and, in Munster, Earls of Desmond. One Earl of Desmond bestowed the titles of Earl of Glin, Earl of Kerry and the White Knight on his three illegitimate sons.

In the sixteenth century, the great **Garret Mór FitzGerald**, was the uncrowned king of Ireland. When he was imprisoned by Henry VIII for burning the cathedral of Cashel, he told the King, "If I had not been told that my Lord Archbishop was inside, I would not have done it," to which King Henry replied, "All Ireland cannot govern this Earl, then let this Earl govern all Ireland."

Because of their militant preference for Irish rule to English, four Fitzgerald's were imprisoned and died in the Tower of London. Henry VIII also executed eight of them at Tyburn.

At Kilkea Castle in County Kildare, once a FitzGerald stronghold and now a hotel, the so-called **Wizard Earl of Kildare** is said to emerge from the lake, riding a white horse shod with silver shoes. When another FitzGerald castle, Woodstock in County Kildare, caught fire, the heir, a baby, was rescued by a pet monkey on their armorial bearings.

Finding their castle at Maynbooth too shabby, **Robert**, 19th Earl of Kildare, commissioned Richard Castle to build nearby Carton, a palatial house. **James**, 20th Earl of Kildare and 1st Duke of Linster, built Leinster House in Kildare Street, Dublin, as his town house. Linster House is now where Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament, sits. One of James's twenty-two children was the patriot leader **Lord Edward FitzGerald** (1748-86), a rake and an eccentric, tortured his family, tying his father to a pet bear and locking him up for days. His private army was the terror of Mayo.

The Fitzgerald's were prominent in Europe, where they had their own regiment. They distinguished themselves in America in many spheres. *The Great Gatsby* was written by **F. Scott FitzGerald**.

Desmond FitzGerald, 29th Knight of Glin, an antiquarian and historian, has beautifully restored his ancestral castle at Glin, beside the Shannon estuary.

The Fitzgerald's continue to dominate Irish politics. **Garret FitzGerald** (b.1926) was three times Taoiseach with a coalition government.

This family information was taken from "The Dictionary of Irish Family Names." by Ida Grehan, Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1997

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