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Exchanging names: population movements and the forms of family names in Ireland and Britain

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Family Names of the United Kingdom

FaNUK and the State of the Art

- It is not possible to study family names in Britain without taking account of Irish names (and vice versa).
- Failure to do so led Reaney into error
- FaNUK does not aim at new in-depth research Irish names in depth, but it attempts to give a systematic account :
 - and to add selected evidence from AU, Fiants, and other sources
- For explanations we draw on standard published works:
 - Woulfe (1923)
 - MacLysaght 6th edn (1985)
 - S. de Bhulbh (1997)
 - Black: Scottish Surnames (1946)
 - de Bhaldraithe in Hanks and Hodges (1988)
 - Muhr in the *Dictionary of American Family Names* (2003)
- We are taking a new look at some selected names

Background: population exchanges (1)

- The Normans went through England, Wales, and Scotland like a dose of salts in C11-12
- and to Ireland:
 - Norman surnames established through the invasion of Strongbow (Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke) in 1170, e.g. *Clare, Pembroke, Fitzgerald, Fitzmaurice, Nangle, Prendergast, Bermingham, Corish, Walsh*
 - Other Normans (many high-ranking, powerful) came in esp. under Henry II, e.g. *Butler* (1177, Gaelicized as *de Buitleir*); *Burke, de Burgh* (1171, Gaelicized as *de Burca*), *de Courcy*
 - C16-C17: influx of administrators and adventurers, e.g. *Skeffington*, 1529), *Staunton* (Gaelicized as *de Stonndún*), *Weldon, Hilliard*
 - C17 Plantation names in Ulster from Scotland and the Borders, e.g. *Hamilton, Adair, Burney, Crawford, Nixon, Acheson, Armstrong, ...*

FitzGerald, Fitzmaurice, Redmond

- Gerald Fitzwalter de Windsor, constable of Pembroke Castle (early C12).
- His grandson *Redmond* (Raymond) 'le Gros' *FitzGerald* (died after 1185) led the invasion of Ireland on behalf of Strongbow in 1170.

Bermingham

Bermingham

Current frequencies: GB: 598, Ireland: 1349.

GB frequency in 1881: 117

main GB location, 1881: Lancs

main Irish location, 1847-64: Galway; Dublin

Variants: [Birmingham](#), [Burmingham](#).

language/culture: Irish

Variant spelling in Ireland of the English place-name *Birmingham* (Warwicks), an Anglo-Norman surname brought to Ireland from England by Robert de Bermingham in 1170 and established by his son Piers, conqueror of Connacht, from whom another branch of the family derive the surname [Corish](#).

Early Bearers: William *Bremingham*, 1558 in Fiants §37 (Killyane, Co. Meath); William *Bremyngham*, 1560 in Fiants §260; Patrick *Bremicham*, 1561 in Fiants §374.

(Mc)Corish

Corish

Current frequencies: GB: 161, Ireland: 201.

GB frequency in 1881: 33

main GB location in 1881: Lancs

main Irish location in 1847-64:

Variants: [Corris](#).

Culture of origin: Irish, Norman

Relationship name: reduced form of Irish *Mac Fheorais* 'son of Piers', an Anglo-Norman French form of *Peter*.

The name was adopted by the Connacht family descended from Piers de Bermingham, second lord of Athenry in Co. Galway (died about 1309). It is now mainly found in Co. Wexford. Compare [Bermingham](#).

Early Bearers: Ireland: [Fiants to follow], Catherine *Corish*, 1758 in IGI (Enniscorthy, Wexford); Richard *Corish*, 1806 in IGI (Ballyowens, Wexford).
England: William *Corish*, 1811 in IGI (Liverpool, Lancs).

Gilhooly: standard and less standard

Irish **Mac Giolla Ghuala**, said to mean 'son of the gluttonous lad'. (Woulfe)

- In Ireland there are three established anglicized spellings:
Gilhooly [GV: Leitrim 58, Roscommon 21, Sligo 12]
Gillooly [GV: Roscommon 15]
Gilooly [GV: Roscommon 20 and Leitrim 18]
- GV has 5 other, rarer Anglicized forms: *Gilholly*, *Gilhooley*, *Gillooley*, *Gilluley*, and *Kilhooly*.
- <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/index.htm> gives six more forms spellings: *Giloully*, *Gilloolly*, *Gilolle*, *Gilhole*, *Gilhealy*, *Gilwholy*.
The latter two – the least conventional spellings -- are found furthest away from the Roscommon/Leitrim epicentre (**Gilhealy** in C20 Dublin electoral lists, and **Gilwholy** in 1840 in Dunmanway, co. Cork: Cork and Ross RC parish register).
- In Scotland: *Gilhoolie* and *Giloolie*.
- In England: *Gilloly*

Irish surnames: tradition and evidence

- Diarmuid Ó Murchadha (*Nomina* 1999) identified the eponyms of 53 early *Ó* names (between AD 858 and 1089) and 26 early *Mac* names (between AD 1004 and 1250).
- Some of the ancestors of the more famous families can be traced in the Irish *Annals*. Rich evidence for Irish name forms in *Annals of Ulster*
- Massive evidence for anglicization in *Fiants*
- FaNUK supports explanations with evidence for surname formation and variation – mainly from these two sources

Tudor Fiants [reprint by É de Búrca; digitization in progress at QUB]

- admin records affecting the lives of 1½ million people
- incl. commissions for keeping law and order, appointments (dean, bishop, constable of a castle, etc.); land grants and transfers, and above all, pardons and protections.
- Ken Nicholls, intro p.ix: ‘Most fiants for pardon required those pardoned to appear and give surety for good conduct at the next sessions in their native county or before the Provincial Council; some specify a fine’
- You had to claim your pardon at a particular place and were in danger of being attacked for a ransom on your way there – hence Protections, which were provided for better-off pardonees.

(O')Callaghan in AU and Fiants

- Early Bearers:
 - Archu *Ua Ceilechain*, king of Ui-Bresail, 1037 in AU; Niall *Ua Ceilechain*, king of Ui-Bresail, 1044 in AU; Matadhan *Ua Ceilechain*, vice abbot of Armagh), 1047 in AU.
 - Owen mc Morihirte *Calleghan*, kern, 1577 in Fiants §3150 (Currbegg, Co. Cork); Cnochor McTeig *O'Kallaghan*, 1573 in Fiants §2251; Donell Mc Teig Mc Donogh *O Kallaghan*, yeoman, 1573 in Fiants §2248; Callachan Mc Dermodye *Callacan*, 1574 in Fiants §2464 (Comoraghe, Co. Cork); Laghlin roe McTeig *O'Kellaghain*, 1585 in Fiants §4635; Connor *O'Kellyne*, 1586 in Fiants §4876 (Tullomer); Dermod Mc Theige *Callahane*, 1599 in Fiants §6302; Donell McMorrice I *Kelichun*, 1601 in Fiants §6555.

How to garble an Irish surname

- Owen mcBrian *Yghashidy*, Fiants §2196 ‘Eoghan son of Brian O’Cassidy’ (O’Casydy §1277)
- Morris mcOwen I *Wyrryhirtighe*, Fiants §5522 ‘Muirgheas son of Eoghan O’Moriarty’ (O’Moriertie §4143)
- Elizabeth or Esabelle *Nyeveryn*, §2666 ‘Iseabal O’Heveron’ (O’Heverin §449)

Is it possible to distinguish an Irish surname from a Scottish Gaelic one?

- In many cases, the answer seems obvious: ***Macdonald*** is Scottish; ***McDonnell*** is Irish, though these two different Anglicized forms are both based on *Mac Domhnaill*.
- *McConnell*
- *McConnachie / McDonaghy ... / Duncanson*
- Phonetics and orthography: differences of pronunciation and spelling: Scottish *gille* not *giolla*
- Scots -*ch*-, -*wh*-, and -*z*-: Irish *McKinney* vs. Scottish *McKenzie*

Mac Murchadha/Murchaidh 'son of Murchadh'
Irish Murphy, Scottish McMurchie

- Lysaugh McMorthe and Feaughe dufe M'Morghe, 1558 in Fiants §10
- Phelym mac Sollogh Mac Moroughoo, clerk, 1567 in Fiants §1099
- Donogh m'Shane McMoroho, yeoman, 1573 in Fiants §2304 (Ulick Browne etc)
- Conor roy McMoraky, 1573 in Fiants §2348.
- Terolagh oge McMurigho, gent, 1577 in Fiants §3092 (of Downyn, co. Limerick)
- Daniel moile m'Wm McMorcho, 1582 in Fiants §3959 (Clonmolaghlin)
- Edmund fitz John fitzThomas Murphie, 1562 in Fiants §452 (Bolagh, co. Kilkenny) [Ó Murchadha]

Mac Muircheartaigh 'son of Muircheartach'
Irish Moriarty, Scottish McMurdie/McKirdie

- Faghne M'Morierth, horseman, 1574 in Fiants §2393
- Donald M'Morertagh, kern, 1576 in Fiants §2881 (of Moygawna, co. Waterford)
- Hugh or Effe ballagh M'Moretagh, gent, 1577 in Fiants §2976 (Co. Wexford)
- Murihirtagh oge M'Mwrihirtagh, husbandman 1577 in Fiants §3084 (Co. Limerick)
- Dionysius or Donogho Lea M'Mortagh, 1581 in Fiants §3719 (Co. Longford)
- **Black:** Gilcrist Makwrerdy 1506 (Bute), MacVurarthie 1520, Makmurrarty 1547

Mac Giolla na Naomh 'son of the lad of the saints', Irish *Gildernew* (Sc. *Mcllna*)

- Donogh liegh McGillinaneave, kern, 1585 in Fiants §4734 (Kilkillane, Co. Limerick)
- Donogho lieth McGilla ny neof, husbandman, 1585 in Fiants §4743 (Ballebarre, Co. Limerick)
- Morogh McGilleneeneeffe, 1592 in Fiants §5712 (the Killen, Co. Galway)
- Una reogh ny Gillernewe, 1593 in Fiants §5802 (Belaliege, Co. Galway)
- +(Arm. HMR: Neale McGillownew, 1665, BallymcCally, Lower Fewes; Laughlin McGilernew, 1665, Ballykannell Ardmagh)
- +((Black 305: Patrick Mac gill Nef, c.1200, Kelso)
- Black mentions a family (Mac[G]ilnew, MacIlina, MacIlneive) in Bute:
- Archibald Makgilleneif Tailyour 1517, Ninian Makgilnevis Talzour 1546)

Mac Giolla [Mo] Chuda 'son of the lad of [my]
Chuda',
Ir. McGillicuddy, (Sc. MacIlhagga)

- Donell mcMoriertagh McGillicoda, 1585 in Fiants §4594 (tenant of Sir Owen O Swlyvan)
- Donogh mcDermot Y Sulywane alias McGulluchud, 1590 in Fiants §5521 (Lyttyr, CoKerry)
- John mcDowling McGillecuddee, 1601 in Fiants §6498 (inc. Castlegregory)
- +(Black: Michael Macylhaggow, 1537, Colmonell, Ayrshire (and also Patrick McGilqwhud and Gilbert McGilfud, tenants of the Douglas, 1376 (p.497))

Mac Giolla Bhríde 'son of the lad of Brigid'

Irish McBride

- Morogh McKilbryde, kern, 1570 in Fiants §1598 (Ballycanon, Co. Kildare)
- John more McGillebridy, groom, Fiants §2065
- Owen McGillawred, gent., 1588 in Fiants §5227 (Loughwayltagher, Dartry)
- Naose McKillbridy fitz Patrick moyle, 1592 in Fiants §5723 (with McMahons)
- +**HMR Monaghan** 1664c: Art McIlbreedy, Fedoo, Tehallen, Monaghan

Background: population exchanges (2)

- Continuous population exchange around the Irish Sea
 - Most family names with a Gaelic etymon are Irish
 - Fewer are distinctively Scottish: these include the dozen or so very common clan names of the Highlands and Islands
 - In some cases, it makes little sense to ask “Is it Scottish Gaelic or Irish?”
 - The whole area from SW Munster to the N Hebrides can be seen as “a surname continuum”, with population centres not only in Ireland but also -- esp. after the migration of work seekers in C19 and C20 -- in Glasgow., Liverpool, and the industrial cities of S Lancs.

Folk etymology and surnames

- *McLuggage* and *McCluggage* > *Mac Lúcaís*.
- *McCambridge* > *Mac Ambróis* 'son of Ambrose'. This name has been established in the Glens of Antrim since the 18th century.
- *McCargo* (and *McArgue*?) – probably variants of *McIlhargey*, Irish *Mac Giolla Fhearga* 'son of the servant (i.e. devotee) of (Saint) Fearga'.
- *McGlory* > *Mag Labhradha* (McLory, McClory) (mother of Patrick Bronte). *Labraidh* 'spokesman' is more often found in *Ó Labhradha* -- Lavery.

Geographical Distribution

- Archer's analysis of UK surnames in the 1881 census shows that Irish names are strongly associated with S Lancs and the Glasgow area; less strongly with WR Yorks; Co. Durham and Northumb; W Midlands; S Wales; London
- Pre-Industrial Revolution migration to Wigtownshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Ayrshire, and Argyll
- a few "seaport names" in Britain are of Irish origin
- C19 census data for Ireland was destroyed, so we use Griffith's Valuations (GV) of 1847-64 as a substitute in studying distribution within Ireland
- Maps of GV are in *Grenham's Irish Surnames CD* (Eneclann)

Fashions in national identity

- Ref. Cathy Swift on the surname *Swift* / *O'Foody*
- distinctively Irish spellings of English names, e.g. *Forde*, *Wilde*
- C17-C19: Dropping Mac and O (to look less Irish)
 - e.g. *Begley* (> *Ó Beaglaoich*)
 - “The prefixes Mac and O were very widely dropped during the period of the submergence of Catholic and Gaelic Ireland which began in the early C17.” --MacLysaght
- C19-C20: Gaelicizing Norman names (to look more Irish)
 - e.g. *de Bhaldraithe* (< *Waldron*)

What's the origin of Swinney?

FaNUK WORKING AS A TEAM:

- SIMON: 323 bearers of *Swinney* in 1881 census, mostly in Co. Durham and Northumb – probably a locative name – but from where?
 - EBs include: Agn. *Swinney*, 1571 in IGI (Filey, ER Yorks); Ales *Swinney*, 1587 in IGI (Barholm with Stowe, Lincs); John *Swinney*, 1580 in IGI (Whickham, Co. Durham).
- PATRICK: Isn't it a variant of Irish *Sweeney*? Irish migrant surnames are not uncommon in Co. Durham.
- PAUL: Any takers for *Swinhoe* near Bamburgh in Northumb?
- PETER: Swinhoe > Swinney is a highly plausible post-medieval development. Cf. Tetley/Tetlow in Redmonds (1997), p. 249.
- KAY: 1571 is too early for loss of Mac-, so it's unlikely to be Irish

Conclusion

- Modern forms (anglicizations) of Irish and Sc. Gaelic surnames are often very arbitrary – but conventional, with variations

The most common form is not always what you would expect

- Evidence (in particular AU and Fiants) is essential for understanding Irish surnames
 - In line with FaNUK's general policy
- We are scratching the surface.
 - Much more needs to be done by way of investigating and analysing the evidence for Irish surnames, their history, their geographical distribution (worldwide!), and their etymology.