



The descendants of Brian Boru

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The history of English surnames

- Before Norman conquest in 1066 nobody possessed a surname and people were called by first name in Old English or Norse with occasional nicknames.e.g. Eirik Bloodaxe, Ethelred the Unready
- Spur to surnames in England seems to be desire of leading barons to identify their families with estates back in Normandy .e.g point of origin.
- Most knights in south of England possessed surnames by about 1200 but still not all knights in north by 1300.
- Ordinary people are rather slower but, starting with richer merchants, fashion starts to spread from c.1250 and becomes especially productive c. 1350. Majority of population seems to have acquired surname by c. 1400
- We have a good data base for studying English surnames c. 1400 because of the poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381 which embraced entire adult population. (The 1379 poll tax included occupations).

The nature of English surnames

- Surnames which originate in personal names, especially of one's dad: e.g. Robertson, Dawson
- Particularly common are surnames which refer to district /townswhere one originates
- Occupational surnames e.g. Smith, Carver, Teyllar, Clockmaker etc. Some of these are now obscure: Clouter = leather-worker; Quelewright = wheel-maker; Swynlibber = a man who castrates pigs.



Map of distribution of name GOLIGHTLY in 1881 – meaning a messenger in origin?

NB! Geographical pattern of surnames in England severely disrupted by Black Death and by Industrial Revolution

English surnames in Ireland – the case of Limerick

- Originally founded as Viking base when a fleet is based in the lower Shannon by 845. Sacked by Brian Boru and his brother Mathgamain in 967, it becomes a place of assembly for Brian's dynasty certainly by 1093. The city is raided by incoming Normans in 1175 who are quickly ejected by O'Briens under Domnall Mór but who returned for good after 1194. By 1197, Prince John is offering land grants to Norman settlers, including burgage plots within the city walls; political control of the city was however, retained under Angevin royal control.
- Brian Hodkinson – Curator of Limerick City Museum has produced “Who was who in Medieval Limerick” - <http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/Who%20was%20who%20in%20medieval%20Limerick.pdf>; Cut off date = 1541
- This is a list of Limerick people who came to attention of authorities in Anglo-Norman Ireland rather than a full account of the population of the district.
- Limerick is an English and French speaking colony on the edge of a powerful O'Brien kingdom immediately to the north. Because of difficulties portaging around the Falls of Doonass on the Shannon, the merchants of Limerick city must always have had close links with the O'Briens of Killaloe (where the river becomes navigable again.)

Limerick surnames derived from personal names

- 18 Fitz Adam, 2 McAdam, 9 Adam
- 4 Andrews
- 34 Arthurs
- 3 Arnold, 2 Arnolds
- 2 Daniel
- 3 Eustace
- 1 Gilberd, 1 Gilbard
- 6 Gos, Gose
- 7 Hamound
- 22 Harold
- 7 Hereward = Hereford? + 2 Herward
- 5 Howell (Hywel)
- 4 Huberd + 2 Hubert

Limerick names in FITZ (= “son of” in Norman French)

- 18 Fitz-Adam
- 3 Fitz-Alexander
- 2 Fitz-Alan
- 2 Fitz Audoen
- 10 Fitz David
- 3 Fitzgeoffrey
- 7 **Fitzgerald**
- 3 **Fitzgibbon**
- 9 Fitz Gilbert
- 2 Fitz Hector
- **12 Fitz Henry**
- 12 Fitz Hugh
- 41 Fitz John
- 2 Fitz Jordan
- 2 Fitz Laurence
- 6 Fitz Matthew
- 23 Fitz Maurice + 2 Fitz Moris
- 5 Fitz Milo
- 6 Fitz Nicholas
- 4 Fitz Pagan
- 2 Fitz Pay
- 10 Fitz Peter
- 12 Fitz Philip
- 2 Fitz Poinz + 1 Fitz Poyns
- 3 Fitz Poncius
- 3 Fitz Radulph
- 15 Fitz Ralph
- 2 Fitz Raymond
- 4 Fitz Reginald
- 21 Fitz Richard
- 18 Fitz Robert
- 6 Fitz Roger
- 3 Fitz Rys
- **8 Fitz Simon**
- 7 Fitz Stephen
- 2 Fitz Tankard
- 17 Fitz Thomas
- 3 Fitz Walran
- 12 Fitz Walter
- **23 Fitz William**

Limerick names in MAC (son of) – mostly representing rural Limerick

- Macadam ***McBren McBrene McBrien McBryen***
MacCarthy Maccarayd Macharthan MacKery
Macconmara Mcnamara Macnamara Mac Nemara
Maccrauan MacGilla Phadraig Mac Gilla Vannach
MacGearailt Machun Maclomyn Maclanchie
MacKennery Macmachuna McMayhowne McMahon
Mac Murchadha McMorogh Mac Craith McRichard
McTayg McTeige
- AD 1280-81 MacBren paying in fine for burning Natherlach (Aherlow)
- AD 1306 Agnes de Valence takes case against MacBren re theft in Esgren (?Esclon? =Carrigogunnell)
- AD 1338 Macbrene - tenant in inquisition into Caherconlish
- AD 1341 MacBrien burgess of Aherlow



Killkeedy

Lisnrick

Cahirconlish

[River]

O'Briens in sources for medieval Limerick

- O'Brien, Bernard (Ybryayn). 1464, receives canonry and preb. of St Munchin's
- O'Brien, Brian. 1331 and many felons have laid waste manor of Grene and Esgrene
- O'Brien, Dermot (Obreyn). 1476 first fruits for canonry and preb of St Munchin's
- O'Brien, Donal. King of Limerick. 1180-85, charters to Kilcooley and Holy Cross
- (COD 1, 4 & 5). Documents relating to donation of patronage of Corcomohide church
- O'Brien, Donat. 1428, priest of L detaining in Killaloe (CPR 8, p. 5). 1428 not promoted at Rathronan (A 16)
- O'Brien, Donat. 1496, cleric of L to have canonry of Galbally in Emly (CPR16, 738).
- O'Brien, Donough, Ara. 1502, died, lord from Adare to L. (AFM; W1, 70).
- O'Brien, Douenald (Obren). 1295, against king's peace (CJR1, p. 4). 1295, said to have stolen from vicar of Corcomohide (CJR1, p. 48).
- *O'Brien, Fynola (Inybren). 1426, owes money to Thomas Arthur according to TA's will (AM p. 15).
- O'Brien, Maurice (Maurus Obeyn alias Omukom). 1469, to be removed from vicarage of Kilkeedy (CPR 12, p. 707).
- **O'Brien Moel** (Obreen). 1382, captain of Thomond usurped by **Obreen Shramagh**
- O'Brien, Patrick (o Breyn). 1376, owed money according to will of Martin Arthur
- O'Brien, Shramagh (Obreen, Murgh). 1382, takes over from Obreen Moel (CICL,
- O'Brien, Tatheg (Obren, Thathog). 1287 deprived Agnes de Valence of Esgren (W1,
- O'Brien, Tetricus . 1487, cleric of L, age 14 approx. gets treasurership of L and vicarage of Killely
- O'Brien, Thaddeus. 1505, gets canonry and chapel (CPR 19, 1372). !505 first fruits
- of Kilpeacon and vicarages of Crecora, Kythonyzyn [cahernarry/caheravally?] and Fedamore
- O'Brien, Thady (Obryen). 1426, owes money to Thomas Arthur according to TA's will (AM p. 15).
- O'Brien, Thady. 1487, challenges for prebend of St Munchins (CPR 14, p. 200).
- O'Brien, Theodoric. 1488, canon of L, which church his ancestors founded, getting archdeaconry and rectory of Croom O'Brien, Turlough (Terdelwach Obren). 1285-7, takes Charconlish (Caherconlish)

Point 1: The O'Briens control territories outside Clare in high middle ages and these territories can be found in and amongst Norman-controlled lands.

This increases likelihood that O'Brien descendants are already scattering in thirteenth –fifteenth centuries and has implications for the unity of their genetic genealogy.

Limerick surnames – same names are recorded under various languages

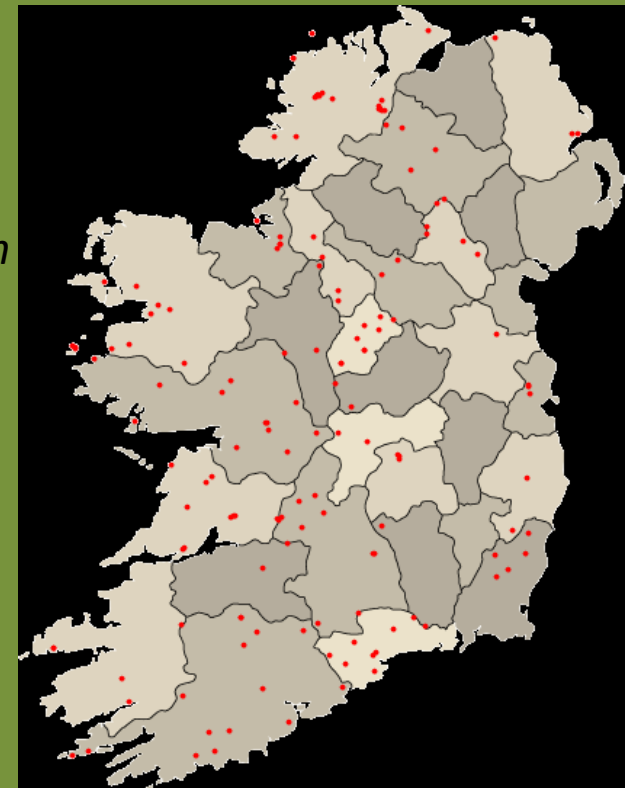
- 16 Albus, 2 Wyte White = 46 in Limerick phonebook today – see also Ballyneety
Baile an Faotigh – town(land) of Whites – 3 Limerick, 2 Waterford, 1 Tipperary, 1 Mayo



Also 8 Blond, 23 Blound, 25 Blund – 3 Fyn (modern Finn) – see *fionn*
In townland names

- 13 Blake/Black 1 Dub, 5 Duff
- 28 Brown + 19 Brun + 3 Bron – also 3 Donn, 2 Dun

- Pettit, Beg
- 5 Big + 3 Byg/bygge
- 2 Child, 3 Childe, 18 l'Enfant



Limerick surnames derived from profession

- Archer
- Butler
- Carpenter
- Carter
- Chaplain
- Chapman
- Clerk/Clarke
- 3 Coco (1 de Cocis) - 1 Cockeye + 3 Cook
- Dene /Dean
- 2 Fowler, 1 le Foulere, 1 the Foulere
- Glover
- Harper
- Mareschal Marshall
- Marchand Mercer Merchant
- Miller
- Myneter Minitier
- Porter
- Serjaunt Sargent
- Sexton
- Smith
- Spicer
- Stabeler
- Taverner
- Venur

Appearances are deceiving – the case of Edmund Sexten “First Irish mayor of Limerick”

1534 “Edmund **Sexten**, alias **Sesnan**, sewer of the Chamber, Humphrey, Nicholas, George and Robert Sexten, alias Sesnan, all merchants of Limerick, making them and their posterity capable of bearing offices as mayors, sheriffs, bailiffs, constables etc in any part of Ireland, especially in Limerick”

Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of Henry VIII 7, p.443

Context: “no-one who is an Irishman by blood and nation, shall be mayor or exercise any office within our said city”

Charter of Henry VI for Limerick in 1423

1538 the citizens of Limerick “beare him displeasure and, as they say, they moche abhorre him, because he is an Irishman by blode and he usethe him self according to his nature. Howbeit he is made denizon and free by the King so as he hathe been Mayour there, contrary the Inglishe statutes and there liberties.”

Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII 3, p.107

SES NAN as surname found in *Genealach Ua Ronghaile* in 17th C *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*

- Maol Dúin from whom are Múinter Néill, Muintir Uainidhe, Muintir Bhearcdha, Muintir Bhréanainn, **Muintir Sheastnáin** and Muintir Riada.
- Maol Dúin s. Cathghal, s. Dubh Dhá Leithe s. Rónghal from whom are the Uí Rónghaile son of Maol Caoch son of Rónán son of Aonghus son of Cáirtheann Fionn.

Ua Ronghaile are claimed thus to be part of the wider Dál Cais network of families but their connection is traced back to one of the twelve sons of the founder and thus to belong to era of St Patrick.

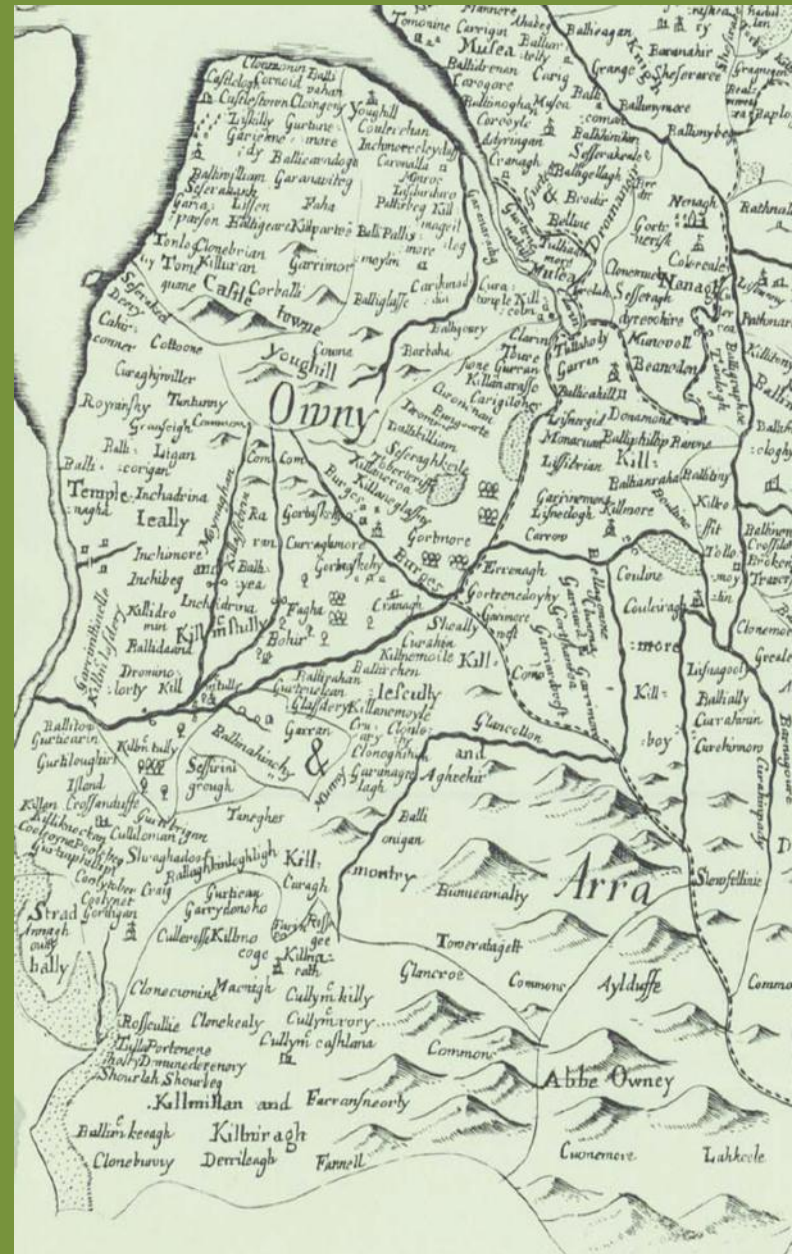
*Muintir Uainidhe = Greens? 5 Grenes in Who's Who of medieval Limerick
Muintir Bhearcdha = ? 13 Berkleys in Who's who?*

BUT

- *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach* is work of Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh active in mid 17thC, 100 years later than Edmund Sexton.

An Irish personal name Seastnán is only attested in that text once – “Loingsech son of Seastnán son of Coinghealtach son of Donnchadh son of Eochaid son of Brocán son of Bearach”.

This is linked to genealogy of Uaithne Thíre (OWNY) from Slíabh Fraoich, next to Lough Derg.



“Irish genealogies were far from being the dispassionate observations of scholars. Detailed analysis shows that, even when made about the remote past, **genealogical statements might have contemporary use in justifying the claims and flattering the pretensions of ruling dynasties.** They might cast a cloak of legitimacy over an embarrassingly recent climb to power or assert the high rank of dynasties which had been the victims of more successful neighbours. Genealogies were thus sometimes associated with the origin legends which explained how peoples had come into existence, how dynasties had lost or gained dominant positions and even how they came to have relationships of alliance or enmity with other peoples or kindreds.”

T. Charles-Edwards, *Welsh and Irish kinship*
(Oxford 1993), 112

So which side of Shannon did Edmund Sexton come from?

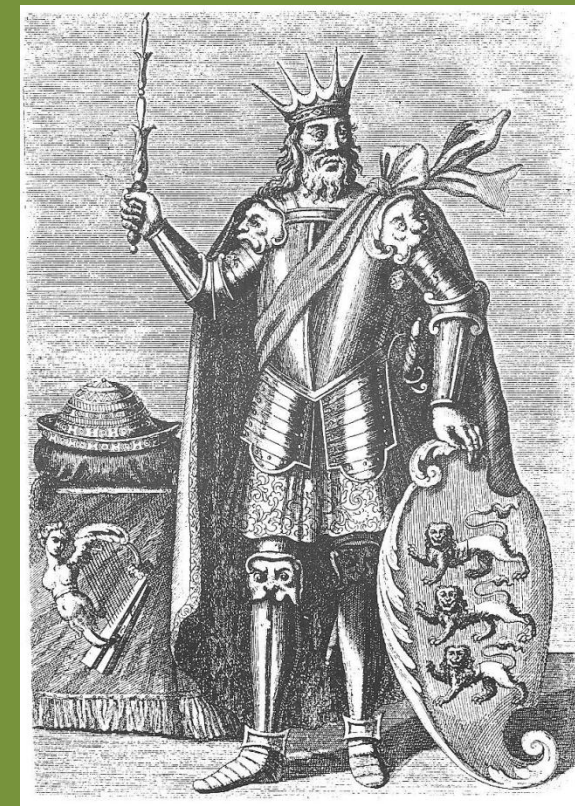
- The area linked to **Muintir Sheastnáin** in the 17thC is ruled by Ó Seancháin who became (O') Shanahans.
- Unlike Ses(t)nen, Senchán is a well attested Old Irish personal name.
- In 17th C genealogies, ancestor of O'Shanahans is identified as Seanchán son of Flaithbheartach son of Coscrach son of Lórcán i.e. son of Brian Boru's first cousin.
- This man is identified in *Annals of Inisfallen* as someone who made pilgrimage to Scattery Island in 1024 and whose son was identified in 1027 as *rígdomna Muman* "worthy of being king of Munster" when he died in army of Brian's son, Donnchad mc Briain.

Answer to this conundrum ?

My conclusion, therefore, is that (O')Shannahans of Clare are indeed closely related to O'Briens but that Edmund Sexton of Limerick is imposter without O'Brien ancestry and that, as an Irishman by blood, his most likely homeland is north Tipperary, east of Lough Derg.

As an ambitious merchant family of Limerick, however, the (Irish-born) Sextons are giving themselves royal O'Brien pedigree (from a suitably remote ancestor) in time-honoured Irish fashion.

Point 2: In frontier zone,
languages and affiliations
can change frequently –
surnames are therefore not
a good guide to ethnic
identity.



Brian Boru with O'Brien
crest



Flag Lower
Normandy



Flag Upper
Normandy



Royal banner of England

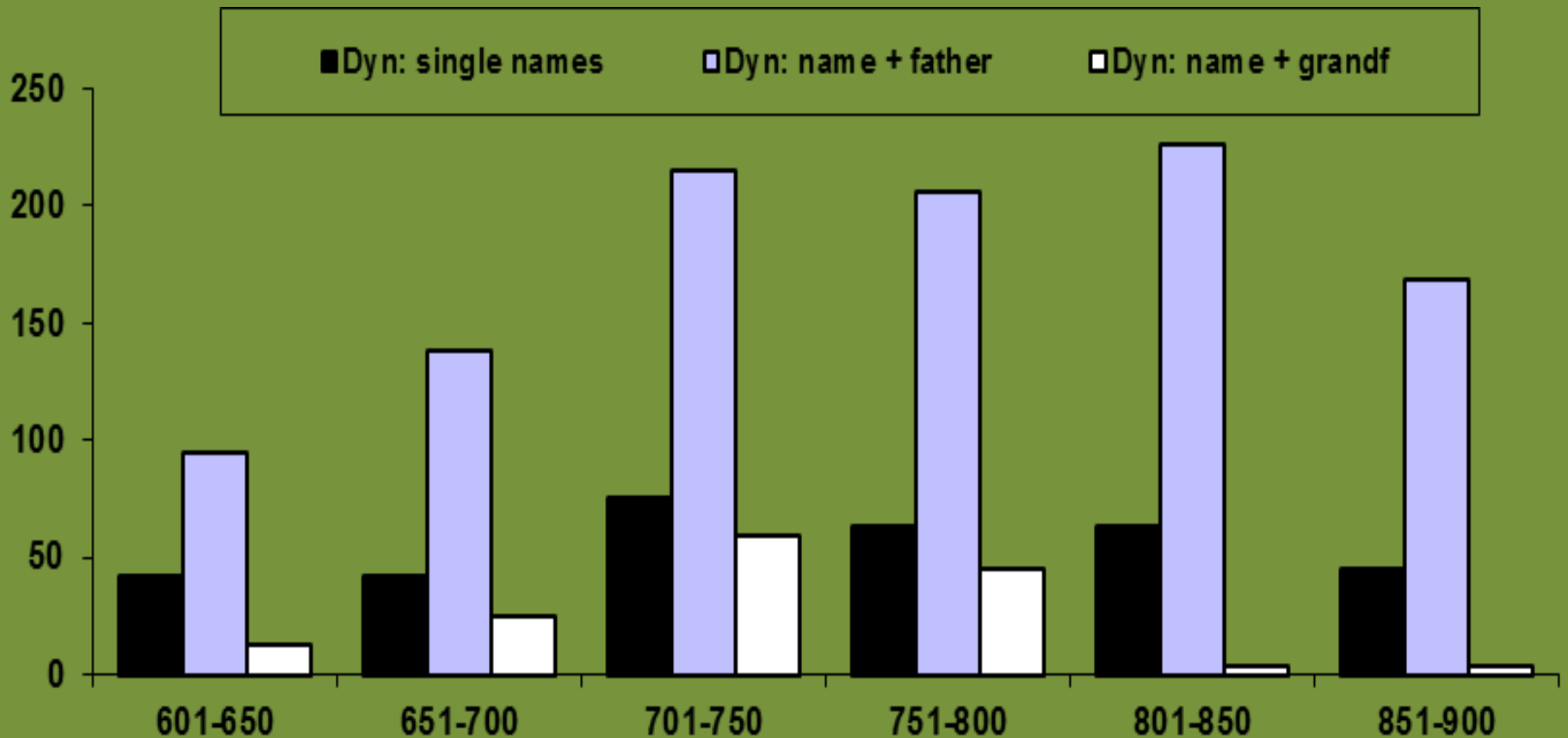
The nature of Irish language surnames

- From the time of St Patrick, the most common way of identifying Irish males was by personal name and father.
- 50% of names recorded on Ogham stones are of this type.



Ballylanders: **MAILAGNI MAQI GAMATI**
Little Bald One son of Cow-Possessor

Statistical analysis of names in the *Annals of Ulster* from AD 600-900



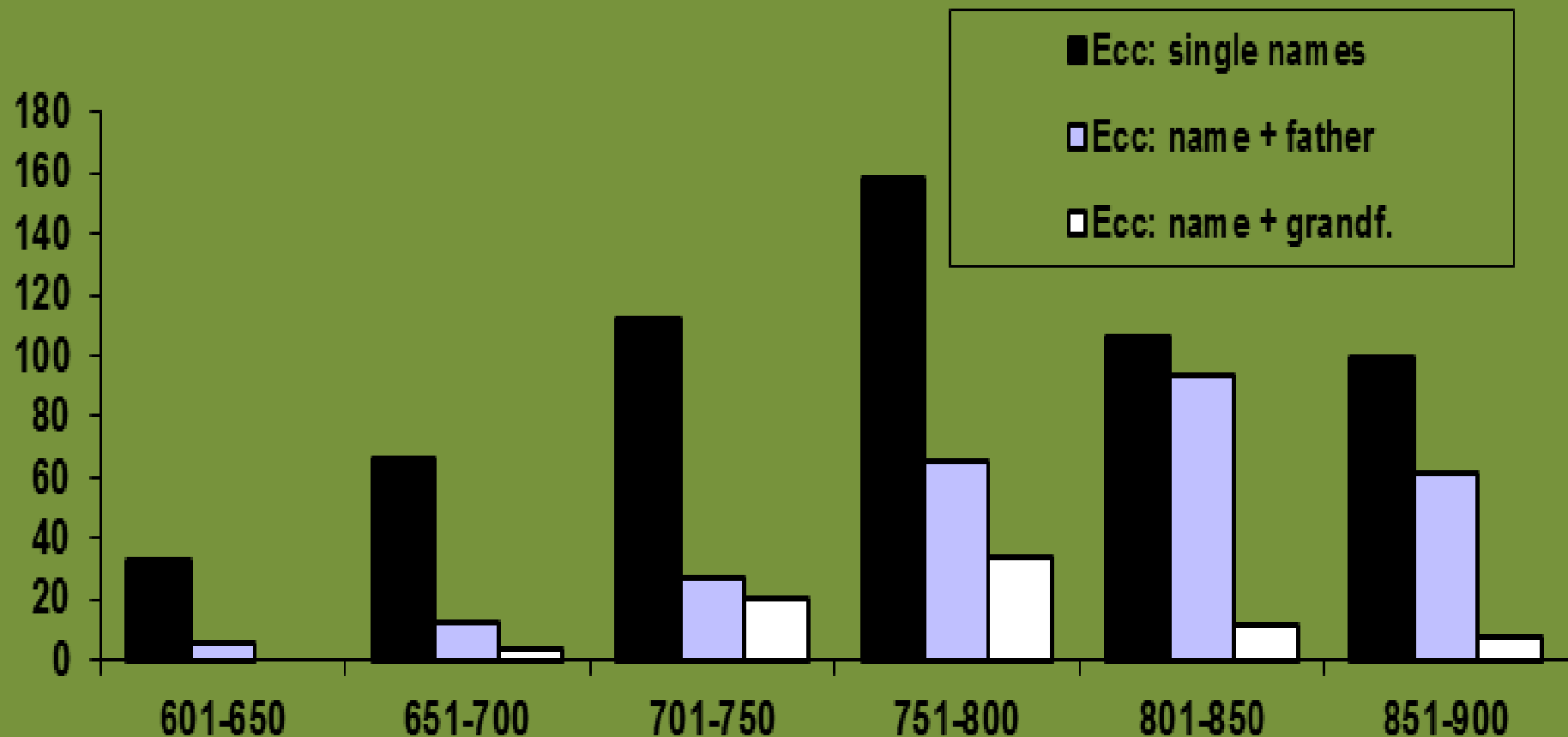
The development of Irish *sloinnte*: **How widespread was Irish habit of marking dynastic progenitors through reference to ancestors?**

- **13th C *Acallamh na Senórach: Tales of the Elders of Ireland*:**

“Canas táncabair” ar in tóclách. Innisit do a nainm agus a slonnad agus a tuirthechta. “Cuich thusa” ar iat. “Blathmac Bóaire mise” ar sé.

“Where do you come from?” asked the warrior, They told him their names, their *sloinnte* [lineages] and their adventures. Who are you, dear man?” they asked. “I am Blathmac Bóaire [of the rank of commoners]

Churchmen have different pattern – their status depends more heavily on their own achievements – at least till Viking period



Pádraig de Bhulbh, *Sloinnte Gaedhael is Gall: Irish names and surnames* (Dublin 1922)

- “Irish surnames came into use gradually from about the middle of the tenth to the end of the thirteenth century and were formed from the genitive case of the names of ancestors who flourished within that period by prefixing *Ó* (also written *Úa*) or *Mac* (sometimes written *Mag*) as

Ó Briain

Mac Aodhagáin

Ó hAodha

Mac Cárthaigh

Ó Néill

Mag Uidhir

G.B. Adams, “Prolegama to a study of surnames in Ireland” *Nomina* 3 (1979), 81-94

- “The earliest surname of the Ó type or *Úa* as it was sometimes written seems to be *Ua Cléirigh* recorded as a surname in 916 and they went on being formed till about the middle of the twelfth century, to be followed by a new type beginning with the prefix *Mac* ‘son’. These arose in part from the break-up of many of the older families following the Anglo-Norman invasion in the second half of the 12th century and at this stage the system spread to Scotland where there are extremely few Ó surnames, and to the Isle of Man.”

Ó Cuiv 1986, 33/4: AFM 916 reference to *Úa Clerig* may be simply a reference to a real grandfather/grandson relationship. AU 980, however, is clearly the use of *Úa Cleirig* as a surname

Dublin Citizen Roll of c.AD 1200: approximately 1600 names

- almost no trace of use of Irish *sloinnte* in Ó. People identified by location, profession and patronymic – mixture of English and Irish habits

9 names with no other element

746 names with origins marked: *X de* (French)
+ 19 names with origins marked: *X of* (English)
+ 50 names with origins marked by adjective: *X ..us*

267 names with profession
210 names with 2nd noun: *X Y*
95 names with adjective specific to individual

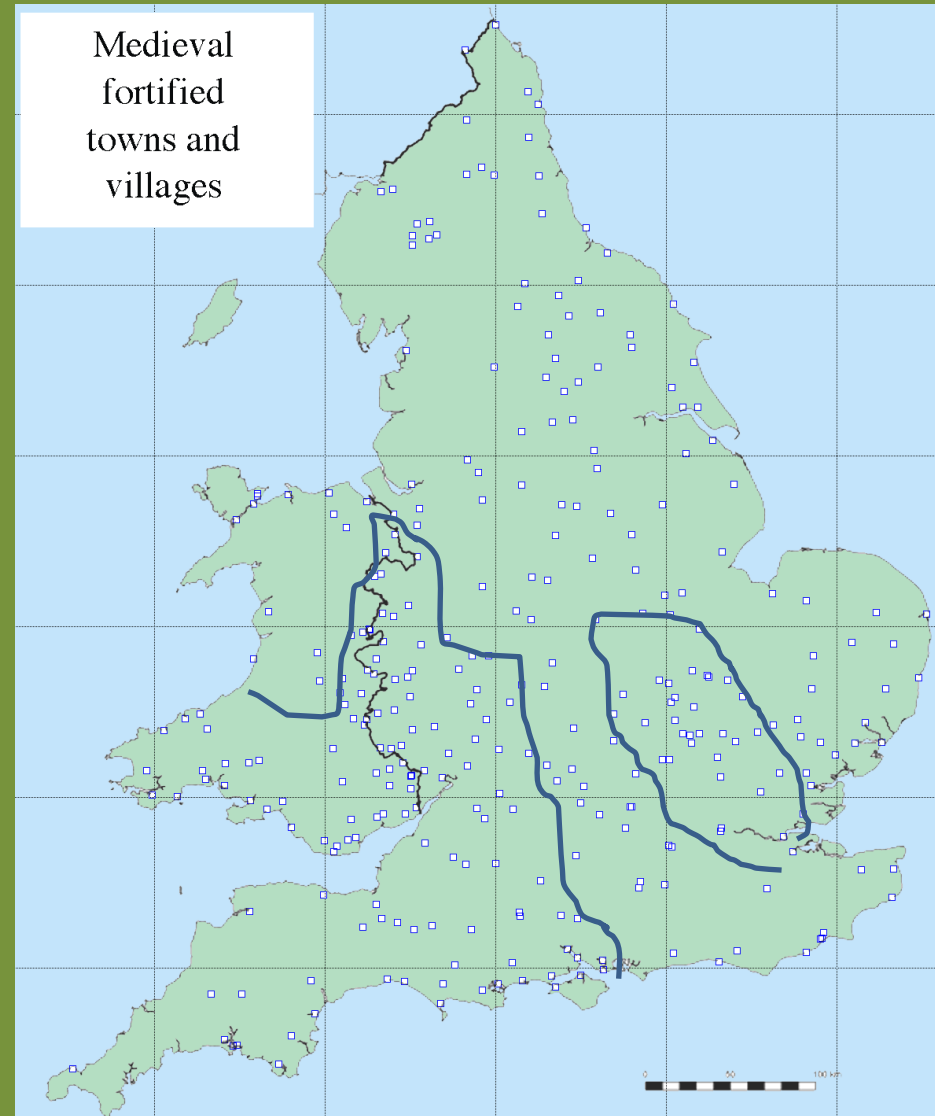
296 names with patronymic marked: *X filius Y*
30 names with brother marked: *X frater Y*
15 names with descent marked: *X nepos Y*
7 names with relative marked: *X cognatus Y*
5 names with relative marked: *X gener Y*
3 names with patronymic and grandfather: *X filius Y filius Z*
1 name with Irish patronymic marked: *X mac Y*
1 name with Welsh patronymic marked: *X ap Y*
1 name with English/Norse patronymic marked : *Xson*



Origins of Dublin citizens c. 1200 in order of frequency: **310 places of origin**

- 36 Cardiff
- 26 Worcester
- 26 Gloucester
- 18 Cornwall
- 19 London
- 13 Bedford
- 13 Exeter
- 12 Bristol
- 12 Northampton
- 11 Haverford West
- 8 Oxford
- 8 Striguil/Chepstow
- 7 Taunton
- 7 Cardigan
- 6 Warwick
- 6 Lichfield
- 5 Bodmin
- 5 York

NB! 207 places only mentioned once!



John O'Donovan's list of "progenitors of various important native families" in *The topographical poems of John O'Dubhagain and Giolla na naomh O'Huidhrin* (1862): Munster and south Connacht examples

- O'Brien of Thomond, died 1014.
- O'Callaghan of Desmond, flourished 1092.
- O'Conor of Corcomruadh, died 1002.
- O'Dea of Thomond, flourished 1014.
- O'Donnell of Corco-Bhaiscin, slain 1014.
- O'Donoghue of Desmond, flourished 1030.
- O'Donovan, slain 976.
- O'Dugan of Fermoy, flourished 1050.
- O'Faelain of Decies, flourished 970.
- O'Flaherty of Iar Connaught, flourished 970.
- O'Heyne of Ui-Fiachrach, flourished 950.
- O'Keeffe of Desmond, flourished 950.
- O'Loughlin of Burren, died 983.
- O'Mahony of Desmond, slain 1014.
- O'Quin of Thomond, flourished 970.
- O'Scanlan of Ui-Fiachrach, flourished 946.
- O'Sullivan of Desmond, flourished 950.

Point 3: Development of Irish language surnames begins with important political dynasties and develops from c. 1000 AD

Irish Brehon Law:

ONLY HALF HONOUR-PRICE GOES TO SAGES – SUÏD – IF IT IS NOT TO A FAMILY (OF SAGES) THAT THEY ARE BORN

‘HE WHO IS NOT THE CHILD OF A NOBLE OR A POET OR A LEARNED CHURCHMAN (EGNA) SUES FOR ONLY HALF HONOUR-PRICE UNTIL HE SERVE LEARNNG DOUBLY

Despite early twentieth century assumptions, it is not clear that these are surnames in the English sense – at least in initial stages.

Brian Boru dies in 1014 – what evidence is there for early development of the O’Brien surname?

Evidence recorded in O’Brien (Killaloe) annals,
The annals of Inisfallen

- SONS Donnchad mac Briain (died 1064) & Tadg mac Briain (died 1023)
- GRANDSONS In 1051 Diarmait Ua Briain was killed by Murchad Ua Briain. Key grandson and heir = Tairdelbach Ua Briain (normally given full title).
- GREAT GRANDSONS - 1084 – *da maic Thairdelbaich* “two sons of Tairdelbach” but in same entry, Muirchertach Ua Briain mac Tairdelbaich.= - great grandson
- 1086, Muirchertach’s brother is called Diarmait Ua Briain.

(Muirchertach frequently identified by his personal name only but in 1101, he is called Muirchertach son of Tairdelbach).

1110 – Murchad mac Taidg Ua Briain died.

1111 – Mac Murchada Ua Briain

1114 - Brian mac Murchada

1115 – Domnall Ua Briain (=son of Muirchertach)

Only ruling kings and their immediate family automatically get title Ua Briain?

Brian Ó Cuiv, “Aspects of Irish personal names” (DIAS lecture 1986)

- In O’Brian’s 1962 *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* as compilation of twelfth-century genealogies— there are c. 12,000 individuals sharing something over 3,500 names between them. (Many occur only once).

Frequency lists include

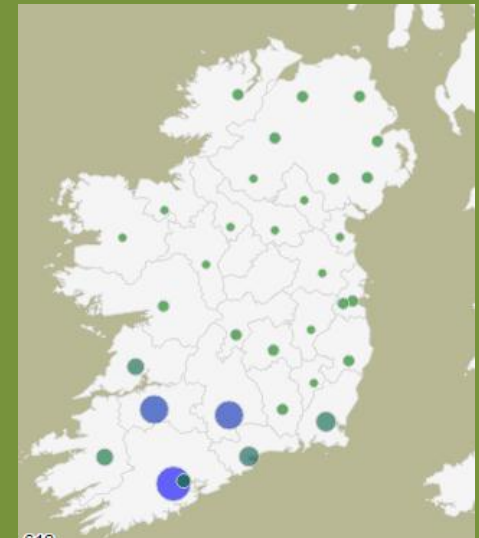
Áed (c. 250 examples) - (becomes Hayes – see map)

Cormac (c. 100 examples)

Conall (c. 50 examples)

Echthigern (c. 14 examples)

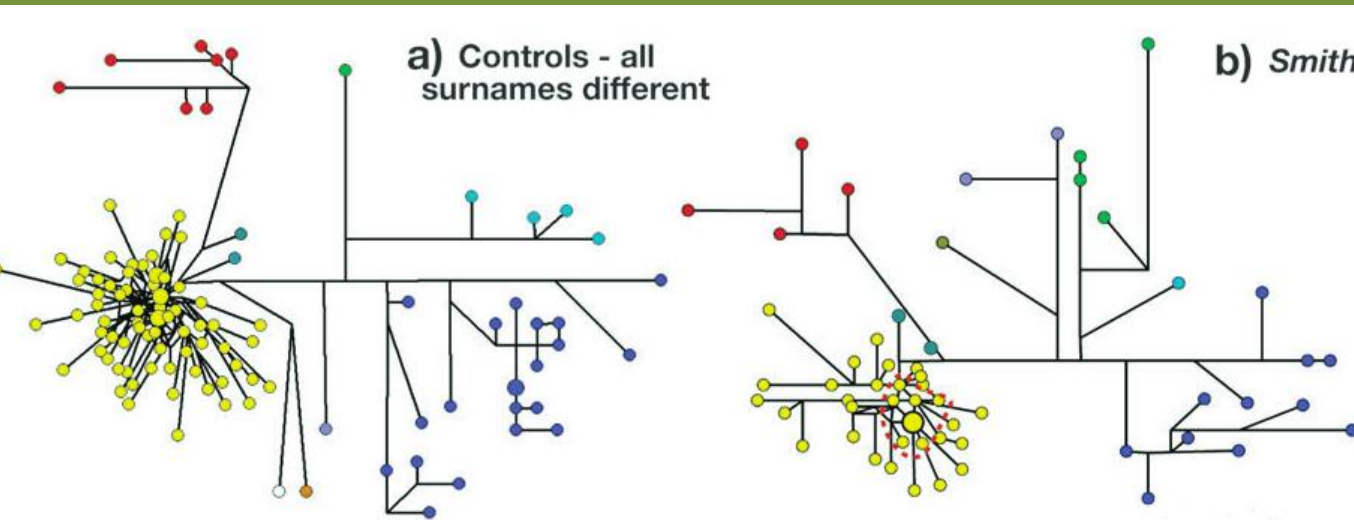
Mathgamain (c. 12 examples)



The frequency in the genealogies is not necessarily reflected in the frequency of names in other texts such as *Cóir Anmann* where only ten examples of Áed are given.

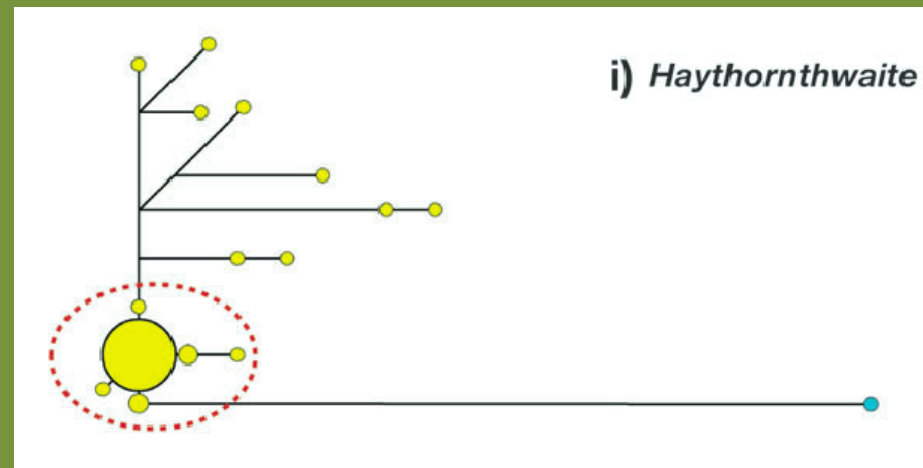
Ó Cuiv 1988, 79: “number of [male] names in common use was between one hundred and two hundred”

Frequency of personal names has impact on the probability of a single originating progenitor.



Pattern showing haplogroup and Y-STR haplotype diversity where there are multiple progenitors

Pattern showing haplogroup and Y-STR haplotype diversity which seems to indicate a single founder



How many individual Brians may have given rise to O'Briens?

Annals of Inisfallen:

Brian son of Maíl Ruanaid, king of Uí Briúin Connacht died 1004 (Roscommon/nth Galway)

Brian Ua Dubtai died 1025 (Mayo/Sligo)

Annals of Ulster pre 1201

Brian Ua Conchobuir in 1028 (Connacht)

Brian son of Murchad

Brian Mainech Ua Conchobuir in 1159 (Connacht)

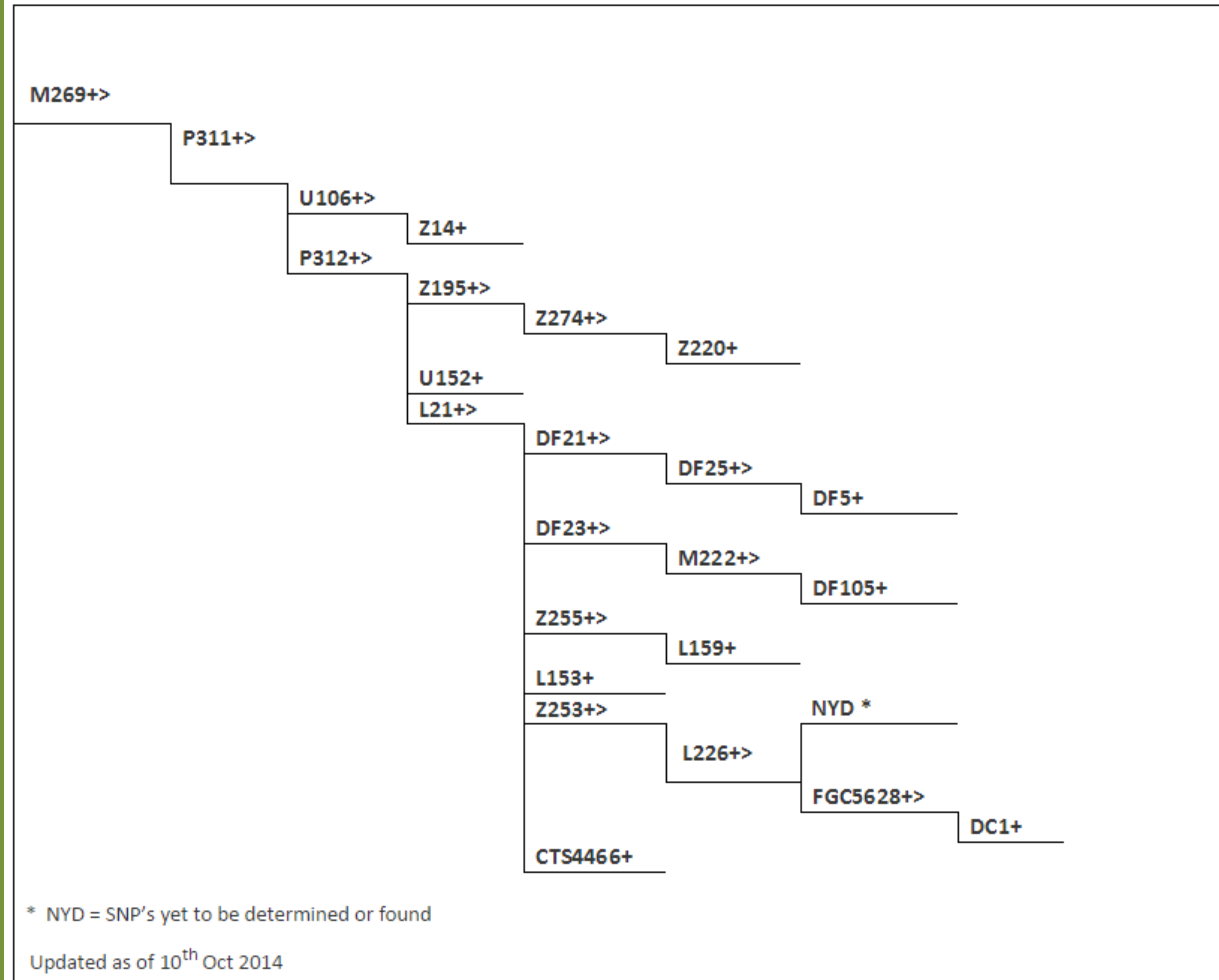
Brian Breifne Ua Conchobuir in 1184 (nth Connacht)

17th C genealogies – **263 separate Brians**



Some Brians gave rise to Bryants, Breens, Bryan, MacBrien etc etc.

R1b1Haplo Groups as related to the O'Brien Surname Project



Point 4: every O'Brian wants to be descended from Brian Boru; the evidence of the documentary sources is that this would be unlikely.

Genetic studies of O'Brian DNA are substantiating this as they are producing evidence of multiple haplogroups.

A study of Brian Boru's genetic ancestry is published in "Genetic Investigation of the Patrilineal Kinship Structure of Early Medieval Ireland" published in *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 2008 by Brian McEvoy, K. Simms & D.G. Bradley

Questions posed in this article include:

- Do kingdom names such as Uí Néill or Connachta reflect the ancestor of an élite dynasty or of the population of the primeval "tribal" group as a whole?
- 2006 paper argues that strong IMH haplotype (section of DNA) within surnames identified as Uí Néill argues that there is strong evidence that that "tribal group" was marked by strong DNA links between descendants.

[NB! This conclusion was subsequently questioned on historical and genealogical grounds – Swift 2013]

- Intention to test this conclusion by looking at other "tribal" groups, Eóganacht and Brian's dynasty, the Dál Cais.

Argument of McEvoy *et al* 2008.

- Although their name derives from a pre-historic and **quasi-mythological** founder Eógan Mór, the group called Eóganacht claimed descent from his **apparently** 5th century AD descendant “Corc” (see Fig.2). The Eóganacht had several geographically distinct branches **reputedly** descended from Corc’s sons.
- The Dál Cais grouping, which came to dominate Munster from the Eóganacht in the 10th century AD, is widely believed to have **forged** a genealogical connection between its eponymous founder (Cas) and Eóghan Mór to legitimize the change in power.
- NB! this remote ancestry fits well with the mid 2000 theories re rate of mutation of Y Chromosome and time back to TMRCA(time to most remote common ancestor.)

McEvoy *et al.* 2008: Investigation of 247 individuals with Munster surnames

- Stage I: group of 247 individuals was divided into 3
 - Eóganacht,
 - Dál Cais
 - random Munster surnames
- Stage II: Results were tested against 184 samples taken without incorporating surname data. This is called the Munster geographic group.

Geographic Munster data

“We next investigated the Munster surname data for evidence of important additional founding lineages (see Fig. 5). **Two potential founding male signatures** (frequent Y-chromosomes surrounded by subsidiary diversity) are apparent, centered or ancestral on haplotypes A and B.

These two clusters of leading Y chromosomes **are scattered between individuals of the three groups used e.g. Eóganacht, Dál Cais & random Munster surnames”**

Results of McEvoy *et al.* 2008 study

“Amongst the Eóganacht nor the Dál Cais surname groupings (nor both together) **none showed significant differences at the tribal level when compared with the Munster surname control sample** (P = 0.769, 0.952 and 0.808, respectively), indicating that neither designation is under-laid by extensive shared ancestry as a whole.”

This means there is nothing much unifying the various surnames which the 2008 study thought descended from Eóganacht ancestry AND nothing unifying Dál Cais surnames either

Conclusions of McEvoy *et al.*, 2008

[While] “our analysis cannot exclude the possibility that some level of patrilineal kinship underlaid the Munster Eóganacht and Dál Cais entities, it does seem that if any existed it was not comparable in extent to the widespread kinship in the contemporaneous Uí Néill grouping from the North of the Island, presumably the descendants of the ancestral eponym “Niall of the Nine Hostages” and his clan.

“Although the Uí Néill and Eóganacht are often thought of as major contemporary rivals from the North and South of the island respectively, genetic evidence combined with surname information suggest they were founded, established and perhaps led by different means and this may reflect wider differences in organization of Irish tribal societies.”

POINT 5

This paper was framed by geneticists to answer genetic questions (such as the extent to which a single progenitor might be successful in creating a population group sharing genetic traits) ; it **WAS NOT** designed to answer questions concerning the descendants of Brian Boru or of the evolution of Irish surnames in general and it cannot be used in such an attempt.

From a surname historian's standpoint...

- Far more interesting are the results from 2006 study by same group which states that “the average probability of a man sharing an identical 17 STR Y-chromosome haplotype with another man of the same surname is 8.15%. This value is over 30 times greater than the background Irish population Y-chromosome match possibility of 0.2%. However, the extent of sharing differs widely between surnames. Amongst the most extensively sampled names (with a sample size of >50) it ranged from a 47-fold higher probability over background levels in Ryan to a more modest 4.5 fold increase in Kelly.”

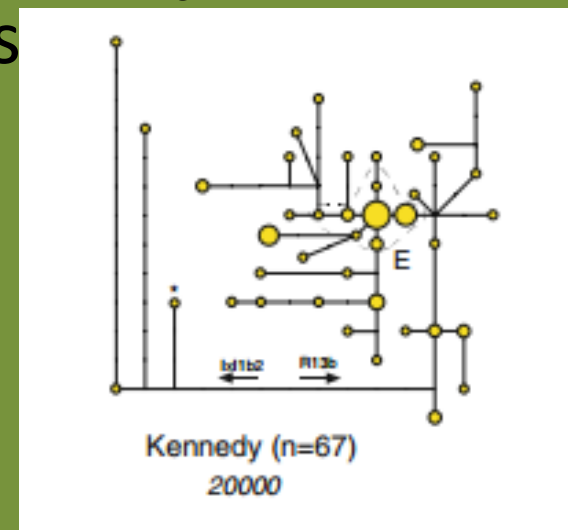
B. McEvoy & D. Bradley, “Y-chromosomes and the extent of patrilineal ancestry in Irish surnames”
Human Genetics 119 (2006), 212–19.

So in studies at the 17 STR level, people with the surname Ryan are more likely to be descended from a few ancestors while people with the name Kelly are likely to be descended from much larger number of Cellach ancestors.

And for students of Brian Boru's impact on Ireland...

“As expected from match probability statistics, most surname groups are clearly distinct from the background Irish phylogenetic structure. Many, specifically, Ryan, O’Sullivan, O’Neill, Byrne and Kennedy show one predominant Y-chromosome, which forms the ancestral haplotype of a broader diversified lineage. Such phylogenies are consistent with one major eponymous ancestor to these surnames

But note that while this pattern suggests a single (?) highly successful male progenitor, the jury is still out whether that progenitor belongs to Brian Boru’s era or is a far more obscure Cinnéig of much more recent date. Recent investigation of mutation rates by Mark Jobling and Turi King suggests more recent ancestors have produced our genetic evidence than in theories of mid 2000s.



Surnames, DNA & Family History by George Redmonds, Turi King and David Hey (Oxford 2011), 190-1

“The chance of a surname founder some twenty generations ago having offspring surviving today was only about 10 per cent. ..What the simulations show is that it is likely that not all the founders of a surname will have surviving offspring and that the number of descent clusters that we see today is probably a very poor reflection of the true number of founders. Drift is acting to blur, or possibly even overwrite, the original genetic picture of a surname’s origins and, with it, a true indication of the number of founders that a surname had. Genetics can act only as a guide in this matter and DNA analysis alone cannot determine the number of founders.”

The latest work on O'Brien descendants has been published by D.M.Wright in *Journal of Genetic Genealogy* 2009

- It is getting cheaper to test to higher level of accuracy (with haplotypes of 25, 37, 43, 67, 75 and even 111 markers)
- The popularity of genetic genealogy projects is growing very fast so the available data for analysis is increasing all the time..
- This work identified the Irish Type III signature which is shared by a number of families who come from north Munster.
- The author outlines a non-paternity event in the 17th C to explain the fact that some Butlers share this genetic signature with Dál Cais families. He also suggests that some people adopt the surnames of their chiefs and that this would also explain that Type III is not shared by all members of a certain surname even when some members do show Type III.

http://www.irishtype3dna.org/Dal_gCais.pdf

The DNA Signature of the Dál gCais

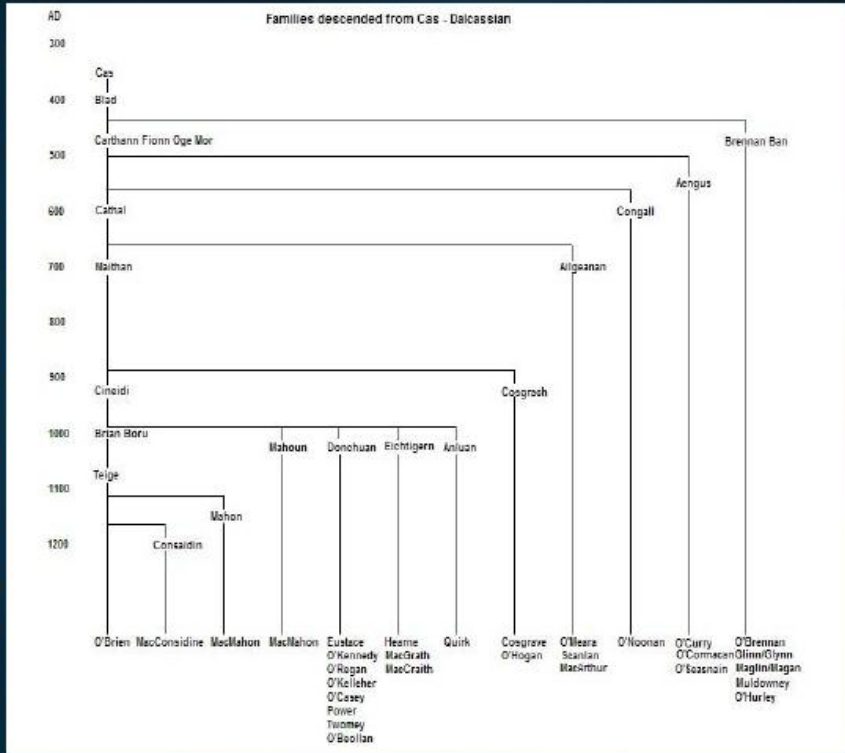
We are merely the present-day custodians of our Ancestor's genes.

© Dennis Wright 2014 

See also <http://www.jogg.info/51/files/Wright.pdf> and <http://irishtype3dna.org>

Surnames seen in current database

- **O'Brien** 50
- **(O')Bryan(t)** 42
- **Casey** 33
- **Crow(e)** 29
- **Kennedy** 29
- **Hogan** 28
- **McCraw McGra(w)(th)** 26
- **(O')Mahony Maloney** 20
- **Kelly** 19
- **Butler** 15
- **Hart(igan)** 14
- **Carey** 13
- **O'Neill Neal** 13
- **Lynch** 12
- **McNamara** 11
- **Cain(e) Kane Keane** 11



In his 2009 paper, Dennis Wright was identifying families as O'Brien related on the basis of a 19thC study which relied heavily on *An Leabhar Muimnech* – (an 18th C collection of genealogies.) Much more detailed work could be done on this, using earlier genealogies and databases of local names.

FTDNA “Walk the Y”

- Extended SNP test over 100,000 bases in 2009
- 10 Irish Type III men contributed \$75 each to have a member tested
- Kevin O’Brien selected as he:-
 - Matched the Irish Type III modal at 25 markers
 - Was an O'Brien, the principal family of the Dalcassians
 - Could demonstrate his pedigree originated in Co. Clare, Ireland
 - Had tested 76 markers



Was L226 Definitive for Irish Type III?

- L226 available to order – October 2009
- Three possibilities:-
 - L226 is a 'private' marker found only in Kevin O'Brien and his immediate family (perhaps back 100-500 years).
 - L226 is a defining marker for the Irish Type III cluster and appears in no other clusters. (so perhaps 800 - 1,200 years old)
 - L226 is downstream of L21 but occurs more generally, across several clusters. (Perhaps 1,500-3,000 years old)

Current view is that L226+ represents Dál Cais genealogies. However there are names such as Lonergan which are rare in medieval sources and which appear to originate in immediate family members of Brian Boru who are not included in this database apparently



R-L226 Project started at FTDNA

- In Dec 2009 the R-L226 project was started
[https://www.familytreedna.com/public/R-L226 Project/default.aspx](https://www.familytreedna.com/public/R-L226%20Project/default.aspx)
- Or Google R-L226 FTDNA
- 200 members in 2014
- Results separated into STR clusters/branches

Big-Y Results

- 20 SNPs parallel to L226
- Are they before or after the emergence of L226?
- Two new Branching SNPs FGS5628 and DC1
- FGS5628 an early branch as five of the six +ve
- DC1 a later branch with two of the five DC1+
- 5 to 29 Private SNPs
- Some may be found to be further branches

So what can historians offer to this type of project and the resulting debates?

1. More information on the history and evolution of surnames in Ireland.
2. Suggestions as to possible family connections across surnames such as Greens, Sextons Shanahans and O'Briens which can be investigated
3. Suggestions as to linguistic interplay between names – Finn and White which may yield genetic information.
4. Geneticists are trying to work out reasons for the DNA patterns which they are discovering. Traditionally their modelling is drawn from observing animal world especially short-lived animals but humans are not snails. Historians are needed to help create models for geneticists which fit with the historical evidence as well as with the data collected by citizen scientists.
5. What strikes one forcibly is the sheer quantity of work being done. It lies outside of traditional bastions of academic endeavour especially here in Ireland where the TCD group which produced number of important works in mid noughties has now dispersed. This poses challenges for all of us but the answer has to be as much collaboration and dialogue between professional academics and citizen scientists as possible.