

Resources

General

The most complete index of reliable web articles about pre-1600 names, with links to articles covering many European naming cultures, including English, Scottish (Highland & Lowland), Irish, Welsh, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, etc.:

The Medieval Names Archive — <http://www.panix.com/~mittle/names/>

16th Century English Names (in English)

Faire Names for English Folk: Late Sixteenth Century English Names

by Chris Laning

<http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/christian/fairnames/>

16th Century Scottish Lowland Names (in Scots¹)

Early 16th Century Scottish Lowland Names

by Sharon L. Krossa

<http://www.MedievalScotland.org/scotnames/lowland16/>

16th Century Scottish Highland Names (in Gaelic)

Historical Name Generator: Sixteenth Century Irish and Scottish Gaelic Names

by Sharon L. Krossa

<http://www.MedievalScotland.org/scotnames/hng16gaelic/>

Quick and Easy Gaelic Names

by Sharon L. Krossa

<http://www.medievalscotland.org/scotnames/quickgaelicbyname/>

Scottish Gaelic Given Names

by Sharon L. Krossa

<http://www.MedievalScotland.org/scotnames/gaelicgiven/>

16th Century Scottish Highland Names (in Scots¹)

(Currently there isn't any particularly useful reliable article on this available online.)

16th Century Irish Names (in Gaelic)

Historical Name Generator: Sixteenth Century Irish and Scottish Gaelic Names

by Sharon L. Krossa

<http://www.MedievalScotland.org/scotnames/hng16gaelic/>

Quick and Easy Gaelic Names

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<http://www.medievalscotland.org/scotnames/quickgaelicbyname/>

Index of Names in Irish Annals

by Mari Elspeth nic Bryan (Kathleen M. O'Brien)

<http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/mari/AnnalsIndex/>

16th Century Irish Names (in English & Latin)

Names and Naming Practices in the Fitzwilliam Accounts from 16th Century Ireland

by Heather Rose Jones

<http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/tangwystyl/lateirish/fitzwilliam.html>

Historical Names²

In General

Common structure:

<given name> + <byname>

A **single given name** (aka “first name”, “forename”, “Christian name”) chosen from a limited, relatively small name pool determined by

naming culture
specific time period
gender

Specific form of the given name determined by the *language* being used/spoken (which may be different from the native language of the person named).

A **single byname** (aka “last name”, “surname”) chosen from a name pool determined by

naming culture
specific time period

Gender and *marital status* can also affect the byname, and again the specific form of the byname determined by the *language* being used/spoken (which may be different from the native language of the person named).

The **ONLY** way to know for sure whether a given name, byname, and/or whole name structure is historically plausible is to find that given name, byname, and whole name structure used for the names of real human beings in historical records from the naming culture and specific time period of interest in that particular way and context.

16th Century English Names (in English)

Common structure:

<given name> + <inherited family byname>

Most common **given names**:

for English men (80% of all men):

John (29%)	Nicholas (3%)
Thomas (14%)	Walter (2%)
William (14%)	Edward (2%)
Richard (7%)	
Robert (6%)	
Henry (3%)	

for English women (75% of all women):

Elizabeth (15%)	Isabel (4%)
Joan (12%)	Jane (3%)
Margaret (11%)	Mary (3%)
Anne (9%)	Katherine (2%)
Alice (8%)	Margery (2%)
Agnes (6%)	

Example **inherited family bynames**: Gifford, Davy, Johnson, Ashton, Taylor, Slyfield, Glover, Pettit, Smith, Brown, Baker.

Men and never-married women used the same byname as their fathers. Married women used the same byname as their husbands.

Example **whole names**: John Smith and his son Thomas Smith, Robert Ashton and his daughter Elizabeth Ashton, John Slyfield and his wife Margaret Slyfield, Joan Glover and her son William Glover, Katherine Brown and her daughter Anne Brown.

16th Century Scottish Lowland Names (in Scots¹)

Common structure:

<given name> + <inherited family byname>

Most common **given names** (based on early 16th century Aberdeen, rough frequency order):

for Scottish Lowland men:

John	Robert
William	Gilbert
Alexander	James
Andrew	Patrick
David	Duncan
Thomas	

for Scottish Lowland women:

Elizabeth	Katherine
Margaret	Christian
Agnes	Marjory
Jonet	Annabell
Marion	Ellen
Isabel	

Example **inherited family bynames**: Anderson, Buchan, Menzies³, Mar, Leslie, Collison, Cullan, Reid, Smith, Gray, Baxter.

Men, never-married women, and married women used the same byname as their fathers. (Scottish Lowland women did *not* normally change their byname at marriage!) Example **whole names**: John Smith and his son Thomas Smith, Robert Buchan and his daughter Elizabeth Buchan, John Baxter and his wife Margaret Reid, Jonet Mar and her son William Leslie, Katherine Anderson and her daughter Agnes Cullan.

16th Century Scottish Highland Names (in Gaelic)

Common structure:

<given name> + <literal patronymic byname>

Specifically, for **men**:

<given name> + **mac** + <father's given name⁴> ("mac" = "son" and was pronounced roughly \mahk\)

For **women**:

<given name> + **inghean** + <father's given name⁴> ("inghean" = "daughter" and was pronounced roughly \NEE-yen\)

Some common **given names** (alphabetical order):

for Scottish Highland men:

Alasdair	Gille Easpaig
Aodh	Griogair
Aonghus	Lochloinn
Cailin	Maol Choluim
Cainneach	Niall
Domhnall	Ragnall
Donnchadh	Seamus
Dubhghall	Uilliam
Eoin	

for Scottish Highland women:

Afraig	Marsail <i>or</i> Marsaili
Beathag	Mór
Caitríona	Muirgheal
Cairistíona	Ragnailt
Dearbháil	Seonaid
Ealusaid	Sitheag
Iosbail <i>or</i> Iosobal	
Mairghread	
Maol Mhuire	

Literal patronymic bynames based on the common men's given names above:

for Scottish Highland men:

mac Alasdair	mac Gille Easpaig
mac Aoidh	mac Griogair
mac Aonghuis	mac Lochloinn
mac Cailin	mac Maoil Choluim
mac Cainnich	mac Néill
mac Domhnaill	mac Ragnailt
mac Donnchaidh	mac Seamuis
mac Dubhghaill	mac Uilleim
mac Eoin	

for Scottish Highland women:

inghean Alasdair	inghean Ghille Easpaig
inghean Aoidh	inghean Ghriogair
inghean Aonghuis	inghean Lochloinn
inghean Chailin	inghean Mhaoil Choluim
inghean Chainnich	inghean Néill
inghean Domhnaill	inghean Ragnailt
inghean Donnchaidh	inghean Sheamuis
inghean Dubhghaill	inghean Uilleim
inghean Eoin	

Scottish Highland women did *not* change their Gaelic byname at marriage! Example **whole names**: Domhnall mac Alasdair and his son Eoin mac Domhnaill, Seamus mac Aoidh and his daughter Ealusaid inghean Sheamuis, Eoin mac Uilleim and his wife Mairghread inghean Donnchaidh, Seonaid inghean Eoin and her son Uilliam mac Cainnich, Caitríona inghean Ghriogair and her daughter Iosobal inghean Chailin. People with these example whole names could belong to **any** Scottish Gaelic clan!

16th Century Irish Names (in Gaelic)

Two common byname styles, used either separately or in combination.

First common Irish Gaelic byname style:

<given name> + <literal patronymic byname>

Specifically, for **men**:

<given name> + **mac** + <father's given name⁴> (“mac” = “son” and was pronounced roughly \mahk\)

For **women**:

<given name> + **inghean** + <father's given name⁴> (“inghean” = “daughter” and was pronounced roughly \EEN-yen\)

Some common **given names** (rough frequency order):

for Irish men:

Tadhg	Cormac
Eoghan	Muircheartach
Brian	Seán
Donnchadh	Toirdhealbhadh
Domhnall	Niall
Éamonn	Tomás

for Irish women:

Mairghréag	Onóra
Siobhán	Gráinne
Máire	Catairíona
Mór	Róis
Aibhilín	Síle
Caitilín	

Literal patronymic bynames based on the common men's given names above:

for Irish men:

mac Taidhg	mac Cormaic
mac Eoghain	mac Muircheartaigh
mac Briain	mac Seáin
mac Donnchadha	mac Toirdhealbhaigh
mac Domhnaill	mac Néill
mac Éamoinn	mac Tomás

for Irish women:

inghean Taidhg	inghean Chormaic
inghean Eoghain	inghean Mhuircheartaigh
inghean Bhriain	inghean Sheáin
inghean Donnchadha	inghean Toirdhealbhaigh
inghean Domhnaill	inghean Néill
inghean Éamoinn	inghean Tomás

Irish women did *not* change their Gaelic literal patronymic byname at marriage! Example **whole names** using **literal patronymic bynames**: Muircheartach mac Taidhg and his son Éamonn mac Muircheartaigh, Domhnall mac Eoghain and his daughter Gráinne inghean Domhnaill, Taidhg mac Tomás and his wife Mairghreag inghean Donnchadha, Siobhán inghean Sheáin and her son Toirdhealbhadh mac Néill, Catairíona inghean Chormaic and her daughter Mór inghean Bhriain. People with these example whole names could belong to **any** Irish Gaelic clan!

Second common Irish Gaelic byname style:

<given name> + <clan affiliation byname>

Specifically, for **men**:

<given name> + <father's clan affiliation byname>

For **women**:

<given name> + **inghean** + <father's clan affiliation byname⁴>

Example **clan affiliation bynames** (alphabetical order):

for Irish men:

Mac Carthaigh	Ó Briain
Mac Domhnaill	Ó Dochartaigh
Mag Aonghusa	Ó Domhnaill
Mag Uidhir	Ó Néill
Ó Baoighill	Ó Ruairc

for Irish women:

inghean Mhic Carthaigh	inghean Uí Bhriain
inghean Mhic Domhnaill	inghean Uí Dochartaigh
inghean Mhig Aonghusa	inghean Uí Domhnaill
inghean Mhig Uidhir	inghean Uí Néill
inghean Uí Bhaoighill	inghean Uí Ruairc

“Mac” was pronounced roughly \mahk\, “Ó” was pronounced roughly \oh\, “inghean Mhic” was pronounced roughly \neek\, and “inghean Uí” was pronounced roughly \nee\.

Irish women did *not* change their Gaelic clan affiliation byname at marriage! Example **whole names** using **clan affiliation bynames**: Muircheartach Mac Carthaigh and his son Éamonn Mac Carthaigh, Domhnall Mac Domhnaill and his daughter Gráinne inghean Mhic Domhnaill, Taidhg Ó Baoighill and his wife Mairghreag inghean Uí Bhriain, Siobhán inghean Mhig Aonghusa and her son Toirdhealbhadh Ó Ruairc, Catairíona inghean Uí Dochartaigh and her daughter Mór inghean Mhic Carthaigh.

Combined Irish Gaelic bynames:

<given name> + <literal patronymic byname> + <clan affiliation byname>

Specifically, for **men**:

<given name> + **mac** + <father's given name⁴> + <father's clan affiliation byname⁴>

For **women**:

<given name> + **inghean** + <father's given name⁴> + <father's clan affiliation byname⁴>

Example forms of **father's clan affiliation byname** for use **after** either a man's or a woman's literal patronymic byname:

Mhic Carthaigh	Uí Bhriain
Mhic Dhomhnaill	Uí Dhochartaigh
Mhig Aonghusa	Uí Dhomhnaill
Mhig Uidhir	Uí Néill
Uí Bhaoighill	Uí Ruairc

“Mac” was pronounced roughly \mahk\, “inghean” was pronounced roughly \EEN-yen\, “Mhic” was pronounced roughly \veek\, and “Uí” was pronounced roughly \ee\.

Irish women did *not* change their combined literal patronymic and clan affiliation bynames at marriage! Example **whole names** using **combined literal patronymic and clan affiliation bynames**: Muirheartach mac Taidhg Mhic Carthaigh and his son Éamonn mac Muirheartaigh Mhic Carthaigh, Domhnall mac Eoghain Mhic Domhnaill and his daughter Gráinne inghean Domhnaill Mhic Domhnaill, Taidhg mac Tomás Uí Baoighill and his wife Mairghreag inghean Donnchadha Uí Bhriain, Siobhán inghean Sheáin Mhig Aonghusa and her son Toirdhealbhach mac Néill Uí Ruairc, Catairíona inghean Chormaic Uí Dhochartaigh and her daughter Mór inghean Bhriain Mhic Carthaigh.

Name Transformation

Names were transformed to fit the language being used/spoken. Depending on the specific time period, naming culture(s), languages involved, and name element (that is, whether given name or byname), transformation could include translation, substitution, and/or phonetic rendering — or in some cases even the use of a different name altogether.

The Irish and Scottish Gaelic **given names** above were commonly transformed into these English and Scots¹ language names:

Men:		Women:	
<i>Gaelic</i>	<i>Scots/English</i>	<i>Gaelic</i>	<i>Scots/English</i>
Alasdair (S)	Alexander <i>or</i> Alastair	Aibhilín (I)	<i>uncertain, perhaps</i> Aveline
Aodh (I & S)	Hugh	Afraig (S)	Effrick <i>or</i> Effie <i>or</i> Efame
Aonghus (S)	Angus	Beathag (S)	<i>phonetic</i>
Brian (I & S)	Brian	Caitilín (I)	Katherine
Cailin (S)	Colin	Catairíona (I)	Katherine
Cainneach (S)	Ken ³ ocht ³	Caitrína (S)	Katherine
Cormac (I)	Cormack	Cairistíona (S)	<i>uncertain, perhaps</i> Christian <i>or</i> Christine
Domhnall (I & S)	Donnel (I) & Donald (S)	Dearbháil (S)	<i>uncertain</i>
Donnchadh (I & S)	Donagh (I) & Duncan (S)	Ealusaid (S)	Elizabeth
Dubhghall (S)	Dougal	Gráinne (I)	<i>uncertain</i>
Éamonn (I)	<i>uncertain</i>	Iosbail <i>or</i> Iosobal (S) & Isibéal (I)	Isabel
Eoghan (I & S)	Owen (I) & Ewan (S)	Máire (I)	Mary
Eoin (I & S)	John	Mairghread (S)	Margaret
Gille Easpaig (I & S)	<i>uncertain</i> (I) & Archibald (S)	Mairghréag (I)	Margaret
Griogair (S)	Gregor	Maol Mhuire (S)	<i>uncertain, perhaps</i> Marion
Lochloinn (S)	Lachlan	Marsail <i>or</i> Marsaili (S)	Marcell[a]
Maol Choluim (S)	Malcolm	Mór (I & S)	More (I & S) <i>or perhaps</i> Mary (I) & Marion (S)
Muirheartach (I)	<i>uncertain</i>	Muirgheal (S)	Muriel
Niall (I & S)	Neil	Onóra (I)	Honor[a]
Ragnall (S)	Ranald	Ragnailt (I & S)	Rinald[a] (S)
Seamus (I & S)	James	Róis (I)	Rose
Seán (I)	John & Shane	Seonaid (S)	Jonet
Tadhg (I)	<i>uncertain, perhaps</i> Teague <i>or</i> Thadeus	Síle (I)	Giles <i>or</i> Cecily
Toirdhealbhadh (I & S)	Tyrrillawgh (I) & Tarloch (S)	Siobhán (I)	<i>uncertain, perhaps</i> Joan
Uilliam (I & S)	William	Sitheag (S)	<i>phonetic</i>

English and Scots language **byname**s used for Gaels were sometimes completely unrelated to their Gaelic bynames. However, in the 16th century a (rough) phonetic rendering of a person's Gaelic byname was usually one possible option. (It was not uncommon for a Gael to be called by one byname in one English/Scots context and a different byname in a different English/Scots context.)

Theatrical Considerations

For non-English/Scottish Lowland names, there are three basic approaches:

1. Use native language form of name when speaking (or supposedly speaking) native language and use English/Scots language form of name when speaking English/Scots. (That is, follow actual historical practice.)
- or 2. Always use native language form of name.
- or 3. Always use English/Scots language form of name.

¹ Scots is a language closely related to contemporary English that was spoken in the Scottish Lowlands, royal court, and towns.

² All names given with modern standardized spellings except where historical standardized spellings are used to better represent 16th century pronunciation.

³ The letter **3** is a *yogh* and is pronounced roughly \y\, like the “y” in English “yes”.

⁴ Changed as required by Gaelic grammar, which usually affected both spelling *and pronunciation*.