

Family Names of Ireland

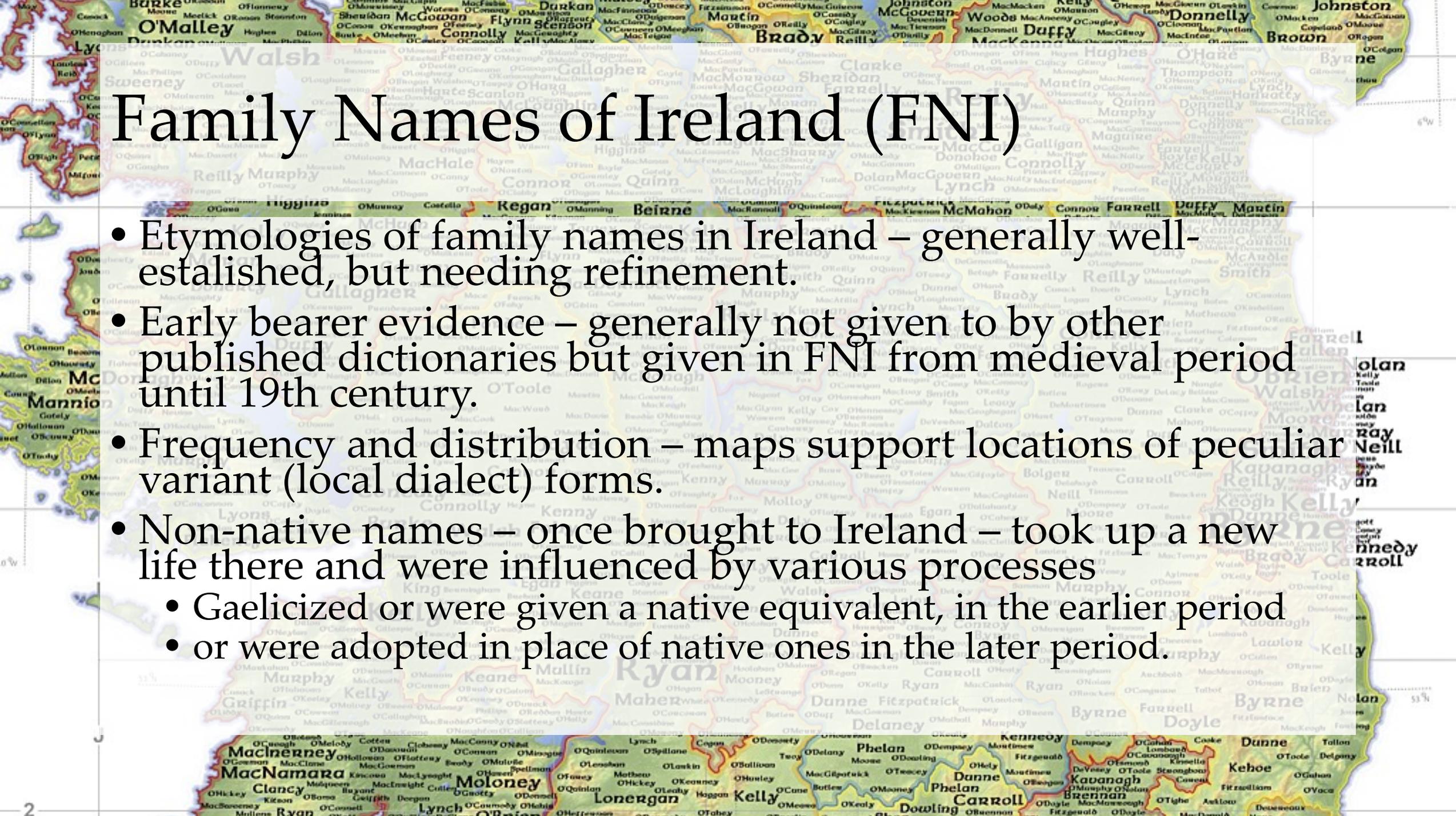
Kay Muhr and Liam Ó hAisibéil

Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland

Spring Conference, 10 April 2021

Family Names of Ireland (FNI)

- Family Names of Britain and Ireland (FaNBI) – published as the *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain & Ireland* (Nov. 2016).
- Proposal to Oxford University Press for standalone volume on surnames in Ireland in mid-2015 – work began mid-2016.
 - Created a new Irish family names database – thanks to Adam Rambousek, database population by Gregory Grefenstette, and distribution maps by Stephen Archer.



Family Names of Ireland (FNI)

- Etymologies of family names in Ireland – generally well-established, but needing refinement.
- Early bearer evidence – generally not given to by other published dictionaries but given in FNI from medieval period until 19th century.
- Frequency and distribution – maps support locations of peculiar variant (local dialect) forms.
- Non-native names – once brought to Ireland – took up a new life there and were influenced by various processes
 - Gaelicized or were given a native equivalent, in the earlier period
 - or were adopted in place of native ones in the later period.

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.

Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.

No. on Form B. 34

FORM A.

RETURN of MEMBERS of the FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.

The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names of Ireland

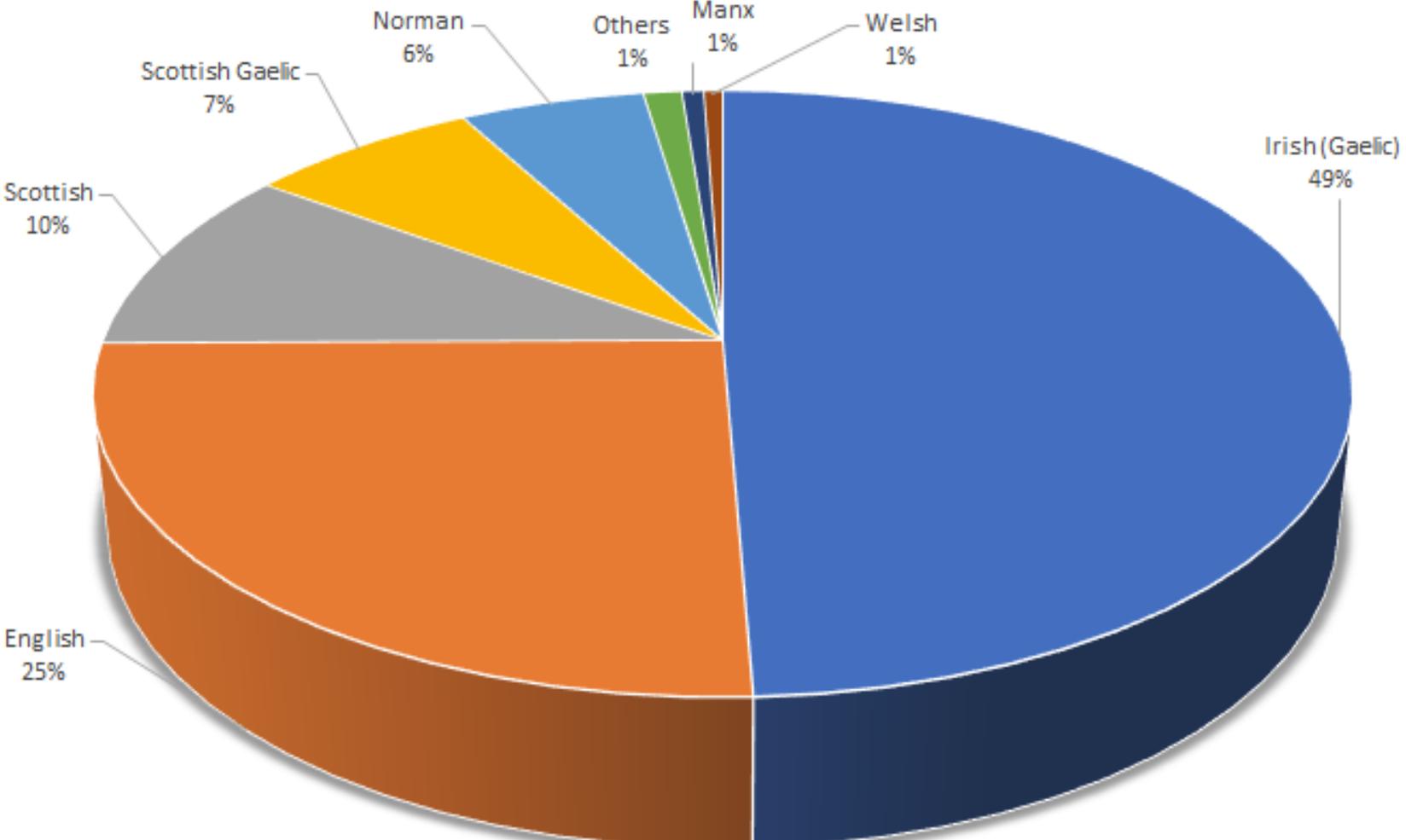
- The published dictionary contains the origin, meaning, frequency, geographical distribution and sample of early bearers of 3,828 family names (≥100 bearers 1911 Census of Ireland).
 - Arranged by anglicized and English language headwords.
 - Index of standardized Modern-Irish forms.
 - 338 names with >2,500 bearers in 1911, only 8 names with >20,000 bearers (all native Irish but for *Walsh*).
 - Majority of names in the dictionary are those with between 100 and 500 bearers in 1911 (2,505 names).

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 10 Edw. VII, and 1 Gen. V., cap. 11, that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

Joseph Daniel Flood Signature of Head of Family.

Linguistic Origins of Family Names



Linguistic origins of the 3,828 names in FNI – note that at least one quarter of names of English-language origin have also been adopted in place of Irish (Gaelic) names. For example, Bradley, Nugent, Harrington, Flood, Swift are usually native Irish.

Methods of Anglicization of Irish Names

Transliteration

Kelly, O'Brien, Kinsella, Murphy, O'Flaherty, McDonagh

Adoption

Darcy, Nugent, Thornton, Harrington, Bradley

Translation

Clerk, Fox, Flood, Bird, Earley, Rock, Rush, Salmon

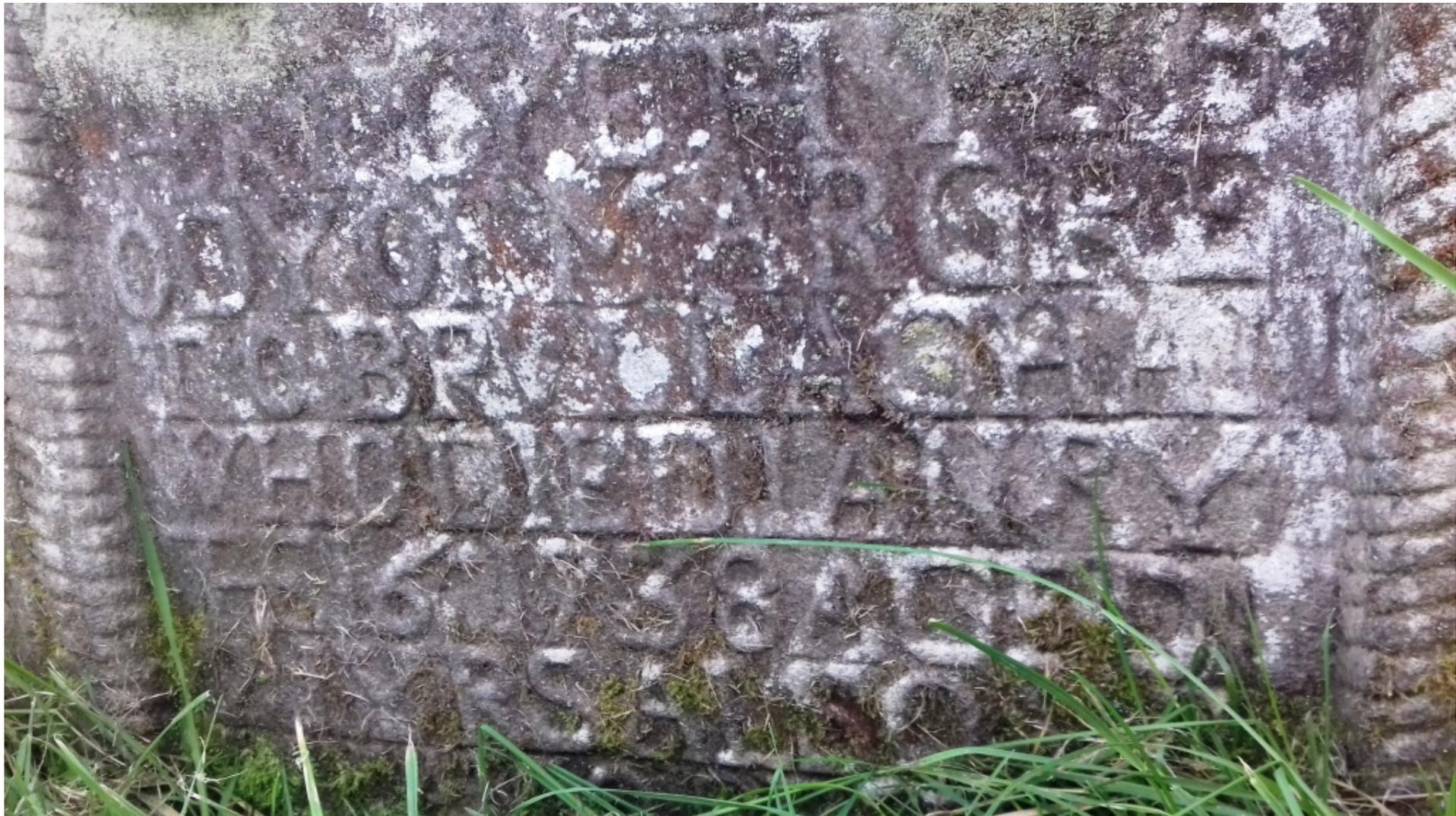
The learned and ecclesiastical Ulster family of Ó *Brolacháin*, now Bradley (locational surname, Yorks.)

- Sample of early bearers (after 1200 transliterated):
 - Mael-Brigte *Ua Brolchain*, chief wright of Ireland, 1029; Mael-Isu *Ua Brolcain*, master of wisdom and piety, 1086; Mael-Coluim *Ua Brolchain*, bishop, 1107 (all AU); *O Brillaghan* 'principall Irish name' in Donegal, 1660 in Census & Poll; Thirlo *O'Brallaghan* (Clantigarry, Dungiven) and Dermoyt *O'Brilleghan* (Tirgorvill, Maghera), 1663 in Hearth Money Rolls, Derry; Rev. Patrick *Bradley* or *Brillaghan*, Roman Catholic bishop of Derry, 1751 in OS Memoirs 27: 102 (Killelagh, Derry).

Ranulph Bradley, with the Yorkshire locational name, was granted lands in Ulster in 1218. Much later, in the 18th century, this surname (also including *Br-* and *-l-*) was adopted for Ó *Brolacháin*, as in Bishop Patrick *Bradley* above.



Most adoptions are later than transliteration: Look at gravestones. The old church of Ballinascreen (*Baile na Scríne* 'settlement of the shrine') in mid-Derry, with helpful notes on the gravestone inscriptions from the local Historical Society (and publisher Graham Mawhinney)



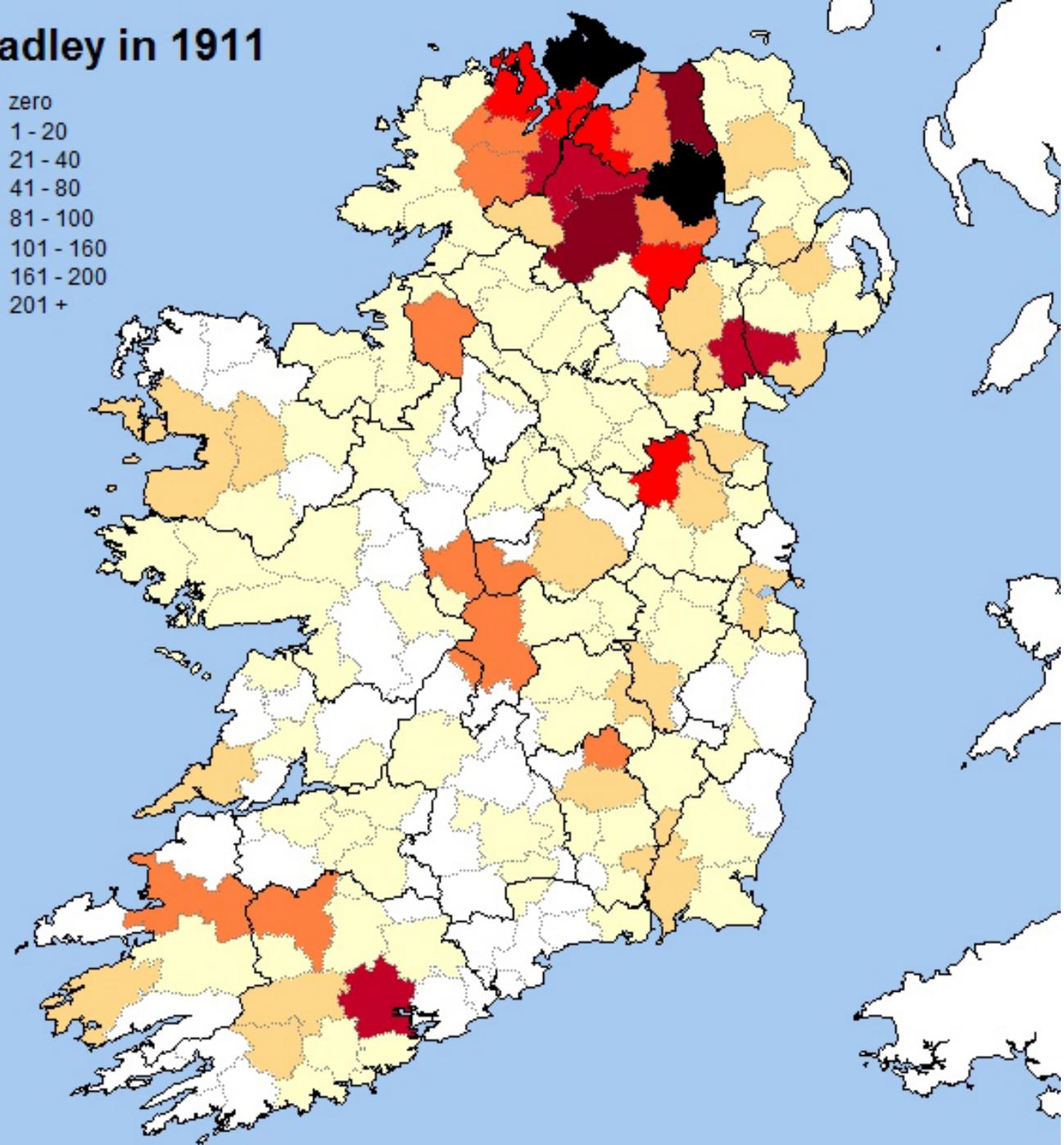
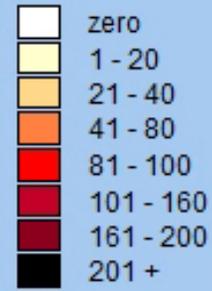
**HERE LYETH YE B/ODY of MARGRE/T O BRULLAGHAN/ WHO DIED
JANRY THE 16 1738 AGED 21 YRS ALSO.....**
Stone in the old graveyard of Ballinascreen, Derry



**IHS. HERE LYETH THE BODY OF DOMINICK BRADLY WHO DEPARTED THIS
LIFE JANUARY THE 21ST ?1760**
Stone in the old graveyard of Ballinascreen, Derry

Areas shaded black represent the highest frequency of this name in 1911, concentrated in registration districts in Inishowen in N Donegal, and in mid-Derry (the location of Ballinascreen parish and the graveyard in the preceding pictures).

Bradley in 1911



Many unusual surnames came from Britain in small numbers: **Blennerhasset, Manifold, Corscadden**, and we do not always know how. For example, the English surname **Halfpenny** was used by bearers of *Ó hAilpín* in 16th-century Meath:

- The adoption of **Halfpenny** for *Ó hAilpín* antedates the English surname in Ireland, and may be a pun on the English word. In 1900 Halfpenny and **Halpin** were still ‘interchangeably used in several Districts’ (Matheson 1901, 25).
 - English liberty to John *O’Halpyn*, and William and Thady, his sons, 1551 in *Fiants Edward* §814; English liberty to John *O’Halpen*, chaplain, 1552 in *Fiants Edward* §937; Tirelagh and Molaghlin *Halfepeny*, 1578 in *Fiants Elizabeth* §3430 (Meath).
- It is relevant that they were a clergy family, where an Irish surname post-Reformation might be an impediment to employment (Jefferies *Armagh Clergy* 1997, 47-8).

The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names of Ireland

- Available by late-July, 2021.
 - ISBN: 9780198803263; £125.00
 - <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-dictionary-of-family-names-of-ireland-9780198803263#>
- Online version, including distribution maps, will also be available.

THE OXFORD
DICTIONARY OF
FAMILY
NAMES
OF
IRELAND

KAY MUHR
LIAM Ó hAISIBÉIL