

# Family Names of Ireland

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# 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

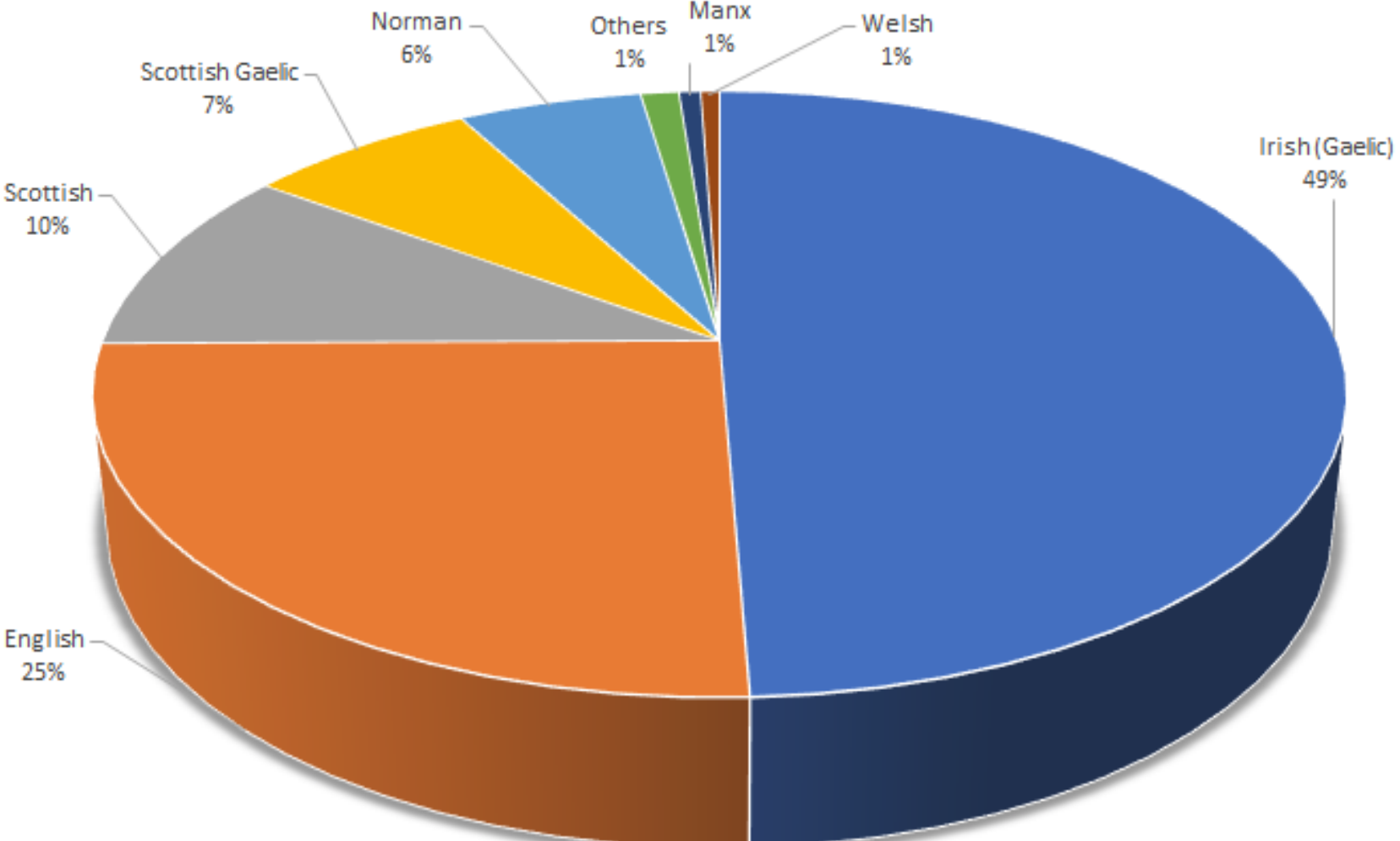
- The published dictionary contains the origin, meaning, frequency, geographical distribution and sample of early bearers of 3,828 family names (≥100 bearers 1911 Census of Ireland).
  - Arranged by anglicized and English language headwords.
  - Index of standardized Modern-Irish forms.
  - 338 names 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

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## Transliteration

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

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## Adoption

Darcy, Nugent, Thornton, Harrington, Bradley

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## 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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)





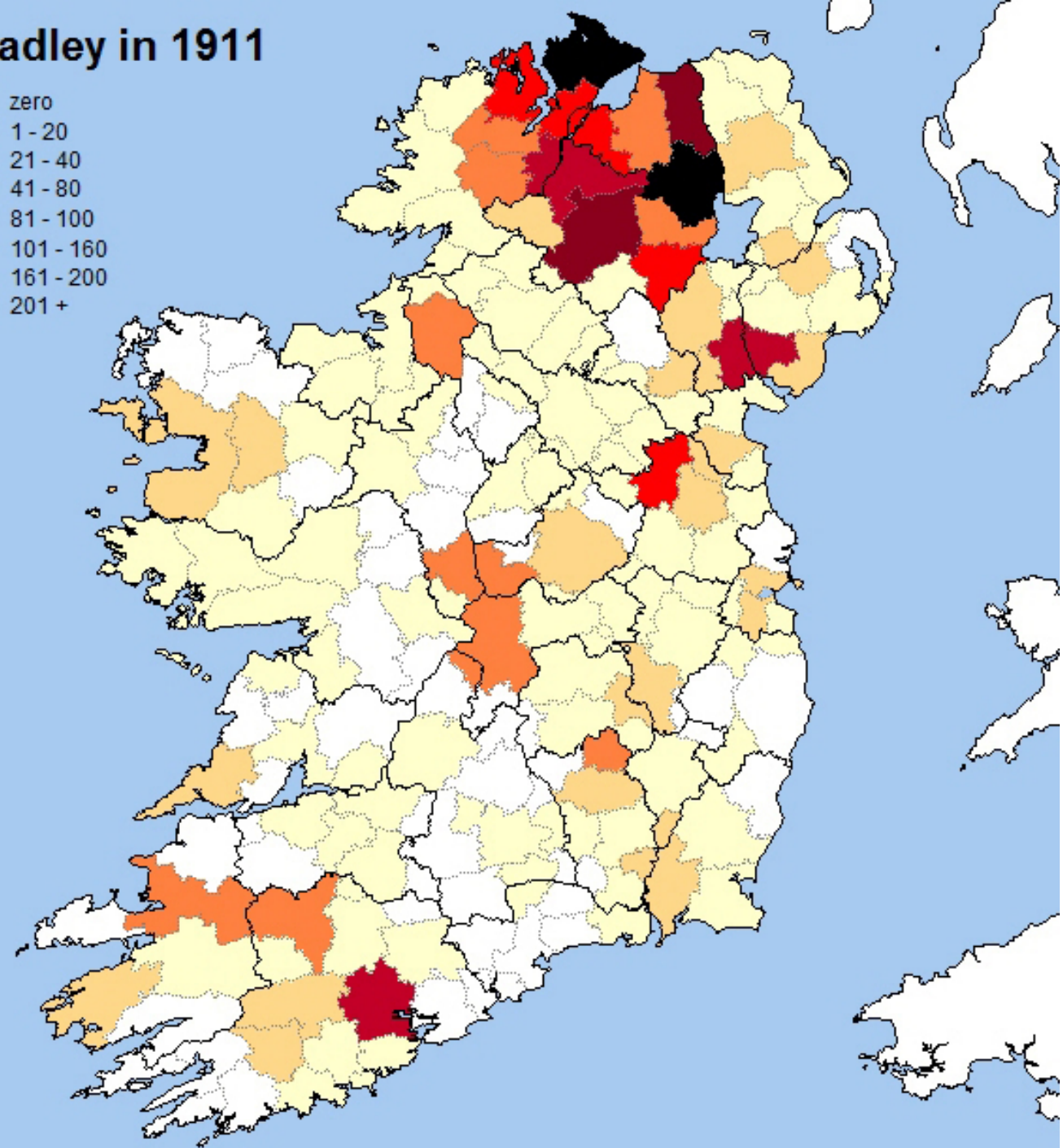
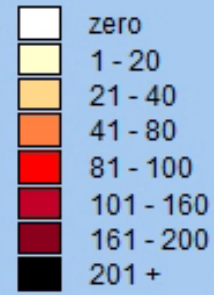
**HERE LYETH YE B/ODY of MARGRE/T O BRULLAGHAN/ WHO DIED  
JANRY THE 16 1738 AGED 21 YRS ALSO.....**  
Stone in the old graveyard of Ballinascreen, Derry



**IHS. HERE LYETH THE BODY OF DOMINICK BRADLY WHO DEPARTED THIS  
LIFE JANUARY THE 21<sup>ST</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup>-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  
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KAY MUHR  
LIAM Ó hAISIBÉIL