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## What's in an Irish surname? Connollys and others a century ago

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**What's in an Irish Surname? -  
Connollys and Others a Century Ago**

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**UCD SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
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What's in an Irish Surname?  
Connollys and Others a Century Ago<sup>1</sup>

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ABSTRACT: The digitization of the 1901 and 1911 censuses of Ireland has prompted renewed interest in them as sources for economic and social history. This paper highlights what they tell us about the regional spread of Irish surnames, and what those surnames reveal about Irish cultural history.

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Alan Fernihough for Figure 1, to Donnchadh Ó Corráin for the information on Congal and Congalach, and to David Fitzpatrick and Peter Solar for some great comments.

*Níl ionam ach ball de chorp san mo shinsear.*

Máirín Feirtéar (2013: 5)

*Introduction:*

How the Old Age Pension Act of 1908 seriously distorted patterns of age reporting in the 1911 Irish census is well known. Still, handled with care, that census has long been a rich, indeed unrivalled, source for social and economic historians. Ethnographer David Symes' study in the early 1970s of farming in two townlands in Ballyferriter in county Kerry in the early 1970s seems to have been the first to exploit the individual household enumeration forms. Studies by scholars interested in the comparative history of household structure quickly followed. Over the decades, the census household forms have provided the raw material for many valuable research projects; their digitization in the late 2000s opens up new, exciting possibilities for researching the Irish past—and not just the genealogical past. Topics addressed through using the household enumeration forms range from the age at leaving home in rural Ireland to the determinants of infant and child mortality rates, and from the incidence of intermarriage to the presence of a quality-

quantity trade off in couples' marital fertility strategies.<sup>2</sup> This essay focuses on just one more area where the census sheds some new light.

The age misreporting in 1911 was prompted by fears that information given on census night might be used as evidence against individuals who had obtained the pension before they were entitled to it (Lee 1969). However, the details remained confidential, and the census commissioners allowed those who completed the forms considerable leeway in how they described themselves. Accounts of details such as literacy, occupation, religion, and knowledge of the Irish language were rarely questioned or amended. And so one of Sean Connolly's more famous namesakes, who confided to an associate in 1908 that 'though I have usually posed as a Catholic, I have not done my duty for 15 years, and have not the slightest tincture of faith left...'<sup>3</sup>, described himself as a Roman Catholic on the household census form in both 1901 and 1911. And although he was born to Irish parents in the Edinburgh slum of Cowgate on June 5 1868, he believed—or so he declared—that he

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<sup>2</sup> Examples include Symes 1972; Bourke 1993; Fitzpatrick 1983; Guinnane 1997; Ó Gráda 1985, 2006, 2008, 2013; Fernihough 2011; Shimizu 2013, 2014; Fernihough, Ó Gráda, and Walsh 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from James Connolly to John Carstairs Matheson, 30 January 1908.

had been born in county Monaghan (Lysaght 1972: 88). By the same token, although he was certainly no fluent Irish speaker—he moved to Ireland for good only in 1895, although he had served there in the army in his youth—this ‘kinsman’ described himself to be a speaker of Irish and English in both 1901 and 1911 censuses.

### *The Surname ‘Connolly’:*

Connolly is a familiar and relatively common Irish surname. Bearers of the name or variants of it include Scotland’s best-known comedian, a Connemara man accused of cannibalism during the Great Famine, one of the most successful Irish politicians of the eighteenth century, and a revolutionary leader and a great Galway hurler in the twentieth. In Ireland in 1911 those with names such as Murphy (56,720), Kelly (46,520), Sullivan/O’Sullivan (38,040), Ryan (30,594), Byrne (28,268), Connell/O’Connell (17,958), Doherty (17,779), Burke/Bourke (17,582), and Kennedy (17,562) easily outnumbered the 11,696 Connollys. But the Connollys were more numerous than the Fitzpatricks (9,617), the Whelans (8,263), the Cullens (7,249), the Gradys/O’Gradys (5,272), and the Lees (4,898).

Some Gaelic Irish surnames get completely lost in mistranslation. Good, amusing examples are Mac Cathmhaoil/Caulfield/Campbell; Ó Síoda/Silke; Mac Taidhg/Montague; Ó Luain/Lambe; Ó Duibhne/Peoples. Some, such as Connolly, encapsulate a range of Gaelic origins and generate multiple versions in English. In addition to the 11,742 Connollys, in 1911 there were 1,950 Connellys, 3,013 Conneelys, 206 Conollys, 106 Connolys, and 17 Conneellys. And there were also 622 Kennellys, yet another variant of Connolly, not to mention small numbers of Kinealys and Kineallys. Thanks to the digitization of the Irish censuses of 1901 and 1911 such numbers can now be produced effortlessly.

In Ireland a century ago, surnames were a useful predictor of regional origin (Matheson 1909; Ferrie 1997; Smith and MacRaid 2009a, 2009b). So 4,315 of the 10,726 the island's Boyles lived in Donegal; 305 of the 567 Durcans in Mayo; 3,778 of the 6,403 Cronins in Cork; 1,015 of the 1,129 Ferrys in Donegal; 1,176 of the 1,784 McInerneys in Clare; and so on. The Connollys were much more widely dispersed. In 1911 they were most numerous in counties Galway (1,288), Cork (1,136), Monaghan (1,132), Dublin (1,099), and

Antrim (733).<sup>4</sup> In relative terms ‘Connolly’ was most common in Monaghan (15.8 per thousand population), Leitrim (7.3), Galway (7.1), Sligo (5.8), Laois (5.9), and Offaly (5.6). The 1911 census corroborates the findings of Sir Robert Matheson (1909: 42) that the Connollys were to be ‘principally found’ in Cork, Monaghan, Galway, Antrim, and Dublin, but provides a somewhat different ranking than his.

Figure 1 describes the distribution of Connollys at a more disaggregated level, the district electoral division, in 1911. It highlights their strength in Monaghan, but also the presence of concentrated pockets of the surname in west Cork (especially around Glengariff), north Sligo-Leitrim, and Conamara (Clifden, An Cheathrú Rua, and Ceantar na nOileán). But the point about the wide spread of the surname is confirmed.

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘Conneely’ version of the surname was almost entirely confined to Galway (2,961 of 3,013). Note that totals are liable to change marginally as corrections are made to the data.



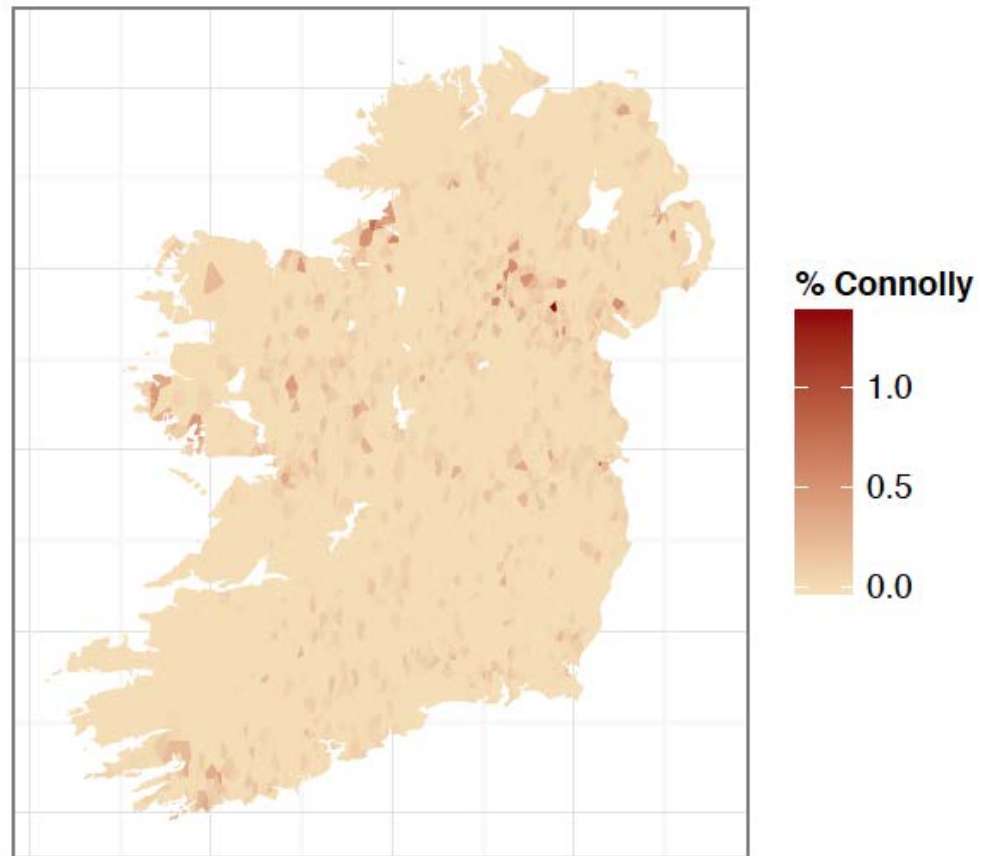


Figure 1. The distribution of 'Connolly' by DED, 1911

The problem with Connolly is that it derives from two first names: (i) Congal and (ii) its adjectival derivative Congalach. Congal gives Ó Conghaile, whereas Congalach gives Ó Conghalaigh, and they both fall together as (O) Connolly. The dispersion of the Connollys across so many counties was due to their being descended from distinct Congals and Congalachs. Because the first name is common, the surname is widely distributed, with different unrelated Connolly families. Of these the most distinguished were

the Ó Conghalaigh of Airgialla in south Ulster: both revolutionary labour leader James Connolly (1868-1916) and *parvenu* politician William ‘Speaker’ Conolly (1662-1729) were linked to this clan. Although ‘Speaker’ Connolly was born in south Donegal, his father, an ambitious innkeeper who had conformed to the state church, was from Monaghan, as was James Connolly’s father. The Galway Connollys belonged to the Ó Conghailes, while the Cork Connollys are also of Ó Conghallaigh stock. Whereas the Galway Connollys were concentrated in Connemara, the Cork Connollys were more likely to be found in west Cork.<sup>5</sup> We return to this topic below.

The 1911 Connolly county rankings are broadly anticipated in the Tithe Applotment Books (TABs), which contain lists of landholders liable for tithe payments for the upkeep of clergy of the established church. The TABs were compiled between 1823 and 1837. Combining Connollys, Conolly, and Conneelys, the surname was most common in Monaghan (328 of 1,369 observations), followed by Cork (166), Galway (120), and Tipperary (92). Dublin (66) came sixth after Leitrim (80).<sup>6</sup> As a source on the relative frequency of surnames, the TABs are seriously biased against

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<sup>5</sup> The classic source on Irish surnames is MacLysaght (1972).

<sup>6</sup> The data for counties Antrim and Derry are lacking or have not yet been digitized.

counties such as Galway, however, since they exclude those landless labourers and occupiers of less than one Irish acre of land who were more dominant in the west and south. In Griffith's Valuation, the pioneering and exhaustive survey of land and buildings in Ireland conducted between 1847 and 1864, Galway again leads the way with 727 Conolly/Connollys against Monaghan's 540 and Cork's 469; and 771 of the 784 Conneelys lived in Galway. Here too the data refer to household heads only.

*The Kilkenny Connection:*

Sean Connolly's paternal roots are quite some distance from the Connolly strongholds mentioned above. Sean's father Thomas was born not far from Mooncoin in south Kilkenny<sup>7</sup> or, to be more precise, in the townland of Ballynamona in the civil parish of Dunkitt, barony of Ida, in 1905. In 1911 Thomas's family was one of three households of the surname in the civil parishes of Dunkitt and neighbouring Rossinan.

These Connollys were no blow-ins, because the TABs listed seven occupiers of land named Connolly in Dunkitt in the mid-1820s. They included Thomas Connolly (Skeard) who held 47

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<sup>7</sup> Private communication, November 2013.

plantation acres; John Connolly (Blossom Hill), 16 acres; Richard Connolly (Ballymountain), 3 acres; and Richard, James, Patrick, and William Connolly (all of Smarts Castle), about 11 plantation acres each. Given that the last four lived in the same townland, and that they held similar amounts of land, they may well have been brothers.

Griffiths's Valuation of Kilkenny, which was conducted immediately after the Great Famine, lists nine holders of houses or land named Connolly in the same area. One, William Connolly of Killaspy, was described as an Esq., and his property was valued at £30. Patrick and William Connolly, both in the townland of Skeard, were valued at £60 each, and held roughly equal holdings of about sixty statute acres. The rest of the Connollys, including two females, were either smallholders or held no land, with valuations ranging from 8s to £4 12s.

In 1911 Thomas's father and Sean's grandfather, Michael Connolly, was the only householder named Connolly in Dunkitt district electoral division, although 60-year old Joanna Connolly, a single farmer, lived with her nephew and three servants in Skeard in neighbouring Rossinan district electoral division, and so did 63-year

old spinster farmer Eliza Connolly, her nephew and niece, and three servants. Joanna and Eliza were almost certainly descended from the two strong farming households in Skeard listed in Griffiths Valuation and the Thomas Connolly listed in the TABs. In 1901 Joanna held the land on which four other smaller dwellings were located, while Eliza was 38-year old Betsy, then living with 80-year old mother Mary Connolly, an Irish speaker, three unmarried siblings (aged between 32 and 52), a niece, and a servant. Betsy/Eliza's ageing by 25 years over the decade is striking, particularly since she was an unlikely candidate for the Old Age Pension.<sup>8</sup> But if their mother was indeed an octogenarian in 1901, it is unlikely that Eliza and her sister Kate (32) were as young as reported in that year's census. Their co-resident niece Mary-Kate aged by only 9 years (from 19 to 28) over the decade.

Michael Connolly must have descended from the other, less prosperous Connollys: according to the census he was an illiterate 45-year old farm labourer living in a three-room 'third-class' cottage with his 43-year old wife Mary, four children, and two relatives. The cottage had a perishable, presumably thatched, roof. Michael and

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<sup>8</sup> On how the pension affected age-reporting see Lee 1969; Ó Gráda 2002.

Mary, all born in county Kilkenny, had been married twenty years by then, and Thomas was the youngest of their four surviving children; hardship and ill-health is hinted at by deaths of three others before 1911. It is perhaps significant that despite the poverty of the household and Michael's illiteracy, the census form records Mary and their four children—even 6-year old Thomas—as being able to read and write.

I could not find Michael and Mary Connolly in the 1901 census; perhaps they had temporarily migrated to England, where a niece, 25-year old Mary Synnott, who was living with them in 1911, was born. 20-year old Nicholas Synnott, an agricultural labourer, also shared accommodation with the Connollys in 1911. These are most likely the Nicholas Sinnott and Mary Sinnott, aged 10 and 14, who were living in Haresmead, Horetown, in the southern part of county Wexford in 1901. Their father—married, perhaps, to Michael's sister—was a labourer and their mother a domestic servant. But no details are given of the Sinnotts' places of birth in the enumeration form. Another Connolly family, headed by 50-year old Edmond, a farmer, lived in Dunkitt parish in 1901, in the townland of Cappagh. But I could find no trace of Edmond or his

family in 1911, in Dunkitt or anywhere else.

South Kilkenny was a very traditional part of the country in many respects. Louis Cullen has drawn attention to the use of the archaic quern there into the 1830s and to the thatching of double-story houses in more recent times, while Jack Burtchaell has documented the survival of its medieval farm villages.<sup>9</sup> The Irish language clung on there longer than anywhere else in Leinster<sup>10</sup>, with the exception of the Carlingford peninsula. In the Mooncoin area the older generation was still Irish-speaking a century ago.<sup>11</sup> Edmond Connolly spoke Irish, but his wife did not; curiously, their 17-year old daughter was described as an Irish speaker in 1901, but not their two sons (aged 16 and 14).

Like many other Connollys before him, Sean's father moved to Dublin. A century ago perhaps one-third of Dublin's Connollys had been born outside the city. Two points about these immigrants stand out. First, they were more likely to have been born in Leinster than in the traditional Connolly strongholds: at least half were born in the eastern province, with Meath and Kildare alone supplying

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<sup>9</sup> Compare Cullen 2012: 33, 100; Burchaell 1988.

<sup>10</sup> For a sampling of song and poetry in Irish from the area see Ó hOgáin 1980.

<sup>11</sup> Cullen 2012: 33; FitzGerald 2003: 203; Breatnach 1992.

one-quarter of the men, and Wicklow and Kildare supplying one-fifth of the women. Second, about half of both the male and female Connollys returned humble occupations requiring few skills, with domestic service to the fore for women, and occupations such as general or agricultural labourer, gardener, messenger, porter, and shop assistant prominent for men. I could find no latter-day ‘Speaker’ Connolly blow-in among the elite or managerial classes: a few of the men made it to the status of teacher or clerk, and a few of the women were nurses, but there were no lawyers, no medical practitioners, no engineers, no major employers.

The wide spatial spread of the name Connolly was attributed above to the popularity of Congal and Congalach as first names. Besides those mentioned earlier, there are Connollys, for example, in the Killarney district as an offshoot of the Éoganacht Locha Léin and in Corcu Duibne, where they became O’Connell (and so ancestors of the great Dan)—but these are two quite different families. The name does not crop up in South Kilkenny in the medieval period. However, there are two families of Ó Conghalaigh who belong to Dál Cais, i.e. collaterals of the O’Briens. The first, Ó Conghalaigh (meic Lorcaín), descended from a brother of Cennétig



(father of Brian Boru). The second Ó Conghalaigh descended from Mathghamhain, brother of Brian Bóroimhe. The entry about the second in *An Leabhar Muimhneach* (Ó Donnchadha 1940: 236) reads:

Ó Mhathghamhain mac Cinnéidigh tángadar na sloinnte seo síos .i. Ó Beolláin, Ó Spealáin, Ó hAnnracháin, Ó Siodhcháin, Mac Innéirghe, Ó Conghalaigh, agus Ó Tuama.

Given the proclivity of the collaterals of the O'Briens to spread widely into east Munster in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, perhaps some of the second group of Dál Cais Ó Conghalaigh ended up in south Kilkenny at that time. But this is only speculation.

#### *The Burkes and the Bourkes:*

As Roland Fryer and Steven Levitt (of *Freakonomics* fame) and others have shown, the first names that parents give their children are important markers of religion, social status, and aspiration. Similarly, Gregory Clark and Neil Cummins have recently shown how English surnames carry economic information and can be

exploited to measure social mobility, or the lack of it, over time.<sup>12</sup>

The name Connolly does not carry any obvious socioeconomic baggage. But in Ireland people in the past have chosen between Nolan and Nowlan, Smith and Smyth, and Bourke and Burke. What did such choices signify? Were the Bourke's 'posher' than the Burke's?

In 1911 Ireland contained 14,251 people named Burke and 4,331 named Bourke. Like the philosopher Edmund Burke, the explorer Robert O'Hara Burke, and Irish scholar Canon Ulick Bourke before them, and Mary [Bourke] Robinson and Chris de Burgh today, they bore the name brought to Ireland by one William de Burgh (c. 1160-1204), who arrived in 1185 and was awarded vast estates in Leinster and Munster in return for fighting King Henry II's wars. Shortly before his death he 'plundered Connacht, as well churches as territories; but God and the saints took vengeance on him for that; for he died of a singular disease, too shameful to be described'<sup>13</sup>, and his son Richard (Riocard Mór) became 1<sup>st</sup> baron of Connaught<sup>14</sup>.

Although most of William and Richard's humbler descendants on

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<sup>12</sup> Fryer and Levitt 2004; Clark and Cummins 2013. See too Biavaschi, Giulietti, and Siddique 2013.; Olivetti and Paserman 2013.

<sup>13</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters* (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100005C/text004.html>), M1204.3.

<sup>14</sup> Empey 2004.

the male line were known as Burkes, some leading members of the family preferred Bourke.

We turn to the 1911 census for some insight into the choice between Burke and Bourke. A glance at the regional spread of the two variants suggests that the version chosen was in large part determined by county of birth. Between them the counties of Limerick, Mayo, and Tipperary contained nearly two-thirds of the Bourkes, but less than one Burke in four. Galway contained 22.4 per cent of the Burkes, but only 2.1 per cent of the Bourkes.

One relevant and readily estimated measure of the relative status of the two groups is their numeracy. Here we use age heaping—the tendency for people, particularly in poor countries, to round their age—as a measure of numeracy and, more broadly, human capital. We employ a common measure of age heaping, the Whipple index, which is defined as:

$$W = [\Sigma(n_{25}+n_{30}+\dots+n_{55}+n_{60})/0.2 \Sigma n_i, \text{ where } i = 23, \dots, 62$$

Here  $n_i$  is the number of observations for  $i$  years of age; only those aged 23 to 62 years are included in the analysis. The measure assumes that people who are only vaguely aware of their age are

prone to rounding their estimates to the nearest 0 or 5. By this definition  $W = 1$  implies no innumeracy.

Table 1 reports  $W$  values for male and female Bourkes and Burkes in 1911 for Ireland as a whole, and for counties Dublin, Tipperary, and Galway. In some cases the number of observations is uncomfortably small, and more confidence should be placed in the values for males and females together, rather than for either singly. The pattern for the country as a whole is compromised by the spatial spread of the surnames noted above. However, the results for counties Dublin, Mayo, and Tipperary suggest that in those counties the Bourkes were less prone to age heaping than the Burkes, and therefore probably better endowed with human capital. Still, one can proceed only so far with this kind of exercise, since the spelling for illiterate household heads was often determined by the census enumerators, i.e. the police, perhaps inflating the proportion of the lower-status Burkes.

<i>Table 1. Whipple index values for Bourke and Burke in 1911</i>				
<i>Area</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>All</i>
All-Ireland	Bourke	1.40 [1001]	1.41 [939]	1.40 [1940]
	Burke	1.40 [3034]	1.56 [3957]	1.48 [6991]
Dublin	Bourke	1.13 [71]	0.94 [90]	1.02 [161]
	Burke	1.22 [299]	1.47 [351]	1.35 [650]
Tipperary	Bourke	1.47 [231]	1.54 [286]	1.50 [515]
	Burke	1.70 [286]	1.57 [331]	1.66 [617]
Mayo	Bourke	1.41 [167]	1.15 [183]	1.24 [350]
	Burke	1.73 [294]	1.64 [302]	1.69 [596]
Source: derived from 1911 census. Number of observations is given in brackets.				

Data on where they lived in Dublin city and county offer another window on the Bourkes and the Burkes. By and large, the Bourkes tended to live in the same parts of the city as the Burkes; the correlation between their numbers in Dublin city's wards is +0.74 ( $n = 20$ ); across city and county combined the correlation was even higher, +0.78 ( $n = 38$ ). In 1911 both Bourkes and Burkes were spread more evenly across the city and county than the Connollys.

The representative Burke lived in marginally more congested and lower-valued ward than the representative Bourke, but there wasn't much in it. Thus within the city, the average population density where Bourkes and Burkes lived was 60 and 69 persons per acre, respectively; for Connollys it was 57 persons per acre. The average poor law valuation per head for where a representative Connolly lived was £4.4 per head; for a Bourke it was £3.4, and for a Burke £2.9. The averages for the typical Dublin resident were 64 persons per acre and £3 per head. In city and county combined, the densities were 53, 57, 51, and 48, respectively; the valuations per head £3.3, £3.2, £4.8, and £3.8. But those numbers reflect the averages where people lived: they are not data based on individual details.

*He has taken the 'O'*<sup>15</sup>

In Anthony Trollope's second novel, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, where the action takes place in rural Ireland on the eve of the Great Famine, it is the landlord character, Francis O'Kelly, Lord Ballindine, who bears the more Gaelic O'Kelly name while his

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<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to Patricia Fleming for this resonant expression.

tenants and distant cousins, Mrs. Kelly and her son Martin, stick to the shorter and more Anglicized version. This is the reverse of the pattern exhibited by Trollope's contemporary, Daniel O'Connell, who proudly carried the 'O' at a time when his myriad poorer kinsmen were mere Connells. 'I have heard much about Mr. O'Connell's father, Morgan Connell, who kept a huckster's shop in Cahirciveen, and of his pedigree and assumption of the 'O' before his name', noted the *Times* correspondent, Thomas Campbell Foster (1846: 532). Nowadays the Connells are relatively few, but they were still common a century ago, as were the Learys, Sullivans, and Dwyers.

The 'greening' of such surnames, a gradual process, is evident in the increase in the proportions using the 'O' between 1901 and 1911. If the change is seen as a crude quantification of cultural shift, then few surnames were immune during that decade. The only important examples we could discover were the Briens, most of whom had already made the transition to O'Brien by 1901 in any case, and those named Dea. Why some surnames—such as Connolly—never made the transition is an interesting question without a clear answer. All one can say with confidence is that

those with some traction already by 1901 are most likely to have ‘taken the O’ today.

Neither Sean O’Casey (initially ‘Johnny’ in his autobiographies) nor Kevin O’Higgins persuaded many other Caseys or Higgins’s to prefix their names with an ‘O’. The 1911 census contains no O’Caseys, although it lists twenty-one Ó Cathasaighs, including 31-year old Seághan Ó Cathasaigh, a member of ‘*Eaglais Protústúnach na h-Eireann*’, and a ‘*sclábhaidhe do lucht an bhóthair iarainn*’. O’Casey, who described himself as ‘*fear an tighé*’, filled the census form in almost flawless Irish on behalf of his mother and brother; perhaps he had received instructions on how to fill the forms *as Gaeilge*. Ten years earlier he was John Casey, a 21-year old junior delivery clerk, and he knew no Irish. He adopted ‘Ó Cathasaigh’ in about 1905 and continued to sign his letters thus until 1923, when he changed to O’Casey when launching *Shadow of a Gunman* at the Abbey Theatre.<sup>16</sup>

The only O’Connollys in the 1911 census were Donal O’Connolly, a 42 year-old grocer’s manager living on Gullistan Terrace in Ranelagh, his wife Josephine, and their children Michael

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<sup>16</sup> Chris Murray 2004: 77-79; O’Casey 1975: 105-118. I am grateful to David Fitzpatrick for pointing me towards these references. As David notes, Yeats continued to address O’Casey as Casey ‘when in patronizing mood, as when rejecting the *Tassie*’.



and Kathleen. There were no Ó Conghailes or Ní Chonghailes in the 1901 census, but there were sixty-seven in 1911 (thirty-two in Galway, nineteen in Monaghan, eight in Antrim, seven in Waterford, and one in Dublin).<sup>17</sup>

The Connollys who switched to Ó Conghaile or Ní Chonghaile for census purposes in 1911 may have been only a tiny fraction of all Connollys, yet they were part of a broader phenomenon. Between 1901 and 1911 the number of Mac Gearailts rose from 3 to 30, Mac Giolla Phádraigs from 1 to 7, Ó Murchadhas from 0 to 85, Ó Briains from 0 to 51, Ó Riains from 0 to 59, Ó Súilleabháins 1 to 46, Ó Broins from 1 to 25, de Búrcas from 0 to 60, and Ó Laoghaires from 1 to 16. The number of males whose surnames began with ‘Ua’ (an older form of ‘Ó’) rose from 51 to 1,741. Females were also involved, with the number using ‘Ní’ leaping from 10 to 656, and that with ‘Uí’ from 1 to 90. Those using the Irish version of surnames beginning with ‘de/De’ grew from 2 to 225.

One suspects that these rather remarkable shifts were largely the product of a grassroots campaign organized by the Gaelic

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<sup>17</sup> The current (2013) Eircom phone directory lists only one O’Connolly, but there are twenty subscribers named Ó Conghaile and four named Ní Chonghaile.

League.<sup>18</sup> The increase in ‘Ua’ among staff and students in St. Patrick’s College Maynooth—from just two in 1901 to 83 in 1911—is particularly noteworthy. Overall the disproportionately urban and youthful character of those using ‘Ua’ in 1911 is consistent with the influence of the Gaelic League. Of the 1,728 individuals for whom ages are available, 322 were aged 0-9 years, 335 aged 10-19 years, 400 were in their 20s, 239 in their 30s, 147 in their 40s, 133 in their 50s, 70 in their 60s, 85 in their 70s, and 17 aged 80+.

The rather high proportions of those living in the heavily Irish-speaking pockets of Dunquin/Dún Chaoin (93 of 576), Dún Urlainn/Dunurlin (209 of 799), and Kilquane/Cill Chuáin (98 of 805) in west Kerry who filled in their household forms in Irish—these proportions were much higher than in any other Gaeltacht area—is also worth noting and hints at an organized campaign. On the Great Blasket, by contrast, no household filled in its form—or had it filled in—in Irish in 1911. Sixty-year old Thomas Crohan—*An tOileánach*—allowed the enumerator to do the filling in, but he signed the form himself in the Gaelic script as Tomás Ó Criomhthain. In 1901, the policeman/enumerator also filled in the

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<sup>18</sup> *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 March 1911 (letter to the editor from Patrick O’Daly, secretary of the Gaelic League, stating that arrangements were in place by census commissioners).

form, but Tomás—then aged only forty-four!—signed in a fluent hand as Thomas Crohan. In 1911 the constable also filled in the census form of illiterate Blasketman, Patrick Guiheen; his wife Margaret, who presumably could have done it for him, would always be better known as Peig Sayers (Ní Mhunghaile 2009).

Table 2. Adding 'O's to Surnames between 1901 and 1911

Name	1901 with/without	% with 'O'	1911 with/without	% with 'O'	Eircom phonebook (% with 'O')
O'Brien	22744/11714	66	24518/12818	66	98
O'Carroll	428/14216	3	568/13788	4	16
O'Connell	6119/10672	36	7286/9277	44	83
O'Connor	14634/16544	47	16876/16543	50	93
O'Dea	1418/625	69	1318/741	64	96
O'Doherty	439/17923	2	632/17779	3	13
O'Donoghue	1219/3691	25	1620/3442	32	78
O'Donovan	622/9319	6	911/8822	9	76
O'Driscoll	1168/4929	19	1690/4378	28	97
O'Dwyer	1275/6711	16	1674/6297	21	66
O'Farrell	617/12784	5	744/12543	6	13
O'Flynn	342/13638	2	524/13561	4	18
O'Gorman	1177/5812	17	1479/5491	21	57
O'Flaherty	646/4143	13	705/3929	15	44
O'Grady	1855/3284	36	2066/3206	39	92
O'Hagan	1221/2480	33	1411/2370	37	75
O'Halloran	1253/2217	36	1342/2169	38	93
O'Hanlon	1168/3623	24	1376/3462	28	58
O'Hara	4116/900	82	4276/912	82	99
O'Kane	2065/6754	23	2208/6207	26	21
O'Keefe	4356/3589	55	5025/3378	60	100
O'Leary	4474/6486	41	5471/5726	49	99
O'Mahony	1289/8365	13	1955/7660	20	85
O'Meara	931/1717	35	1278/1429	47	99
O'Neill	16994/11954	59	18386/10917	63	97
O'Regan	1183/6432	16	1565/6306	20	65
O'Reilly	3411/20106	15	4566/19551	19	62
O'Rourke	1694/3943	31	2422/3637	40	95
O'Shaughnessy	956/1532	38	1016/1679	38	71
O'Shea	3605/8907	29	4474/7977	36	97
O'Sullivan	7405/31012	19	9167/28873	24	90
O'Toole	1718/3691	32	2221/3504	39	99

Sources: 1901 and 1911 censuses; Eircom online 2013 phonebook  
[\[http://www.eircomphonebook.ie/q/name/](http://www.eircomphonebook.ie/q/name/), Republic of Ireland only].

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