

Development of the Trohanny McMahon Family Tree

(Combining Y-DNA test results with historical information)

(To be read in conjunction with 'Trohanny McMahon Pedigree' [Workbook](#))



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Introduction

Since publishing **The McMahons of Trohanny** (<http://www.peterspioneers.com/mcmahongenealogy.pdf>) twelve years ago and **The McMahons of Kilbeg**¹ in 2017, the authors have endeavored to connect all the varied bits of information into a cohesive family dynastic tree. This has proceeded in fits and starts and usually came to a stop by being unable to show which of the two McMahons in the Robertstown area of Co. Meath (Roger or William) fathered James, our earliest proven ancestor. The early historical part of the tree starts with Ardghal, d. 1427, and is taken from that reproduced in Fig P8 (p.155 of “The McMahons of Trohanny”). The information available for these early ancestors was limited to historical dates of death (d.o.d.’s).

About 8 years ago, one of us (PM) developed an optimization model which allowed candidates to be compared for different variable inputs. The aim of this was to identify candidates who were chronologically consistent (back and forth through the generations) for different inputs such as possible ages for ancestral relatives. This enabled us to see the effects, up and down the tree, resulting from different input values, *i.e.* in order to eliminate candidates whose data resulted in nonsense values for births, ages *etc.* of ancestors/descendants. This was largely successful and was able to predict William (of Moate’s) date of birth (d.o.b.) before it was known. The main stumbling block was the lack of key documentary evidence as to how the family was linked to the historical genealogy, *i.e.* the analysis had hit the proverbial brick wall.

Recently, with the arrival of precise DNA information for 1937Patrick and 1947Peter, wondering who and when the family moved from Monaghan to the Robertstown/Moate region of North Meath and what lay behind Fr. Paddy’s² cryptic comment “..... *the family was Protestant at one stage, you know*” has led us to review the data and come up with what we hope is a consistent genealogical tree³.

The Scope of the study

This study is limited to those perceived to be direct line ancestors and descendants of the Trohanny McMahons and is intended for the immediate family. This has necessitated omitting some side branches in order to keep the presentation as simple as possible. The underlying theme is that of Y chromosome (patrilineal) inheritance so descent through the female line is omitted. Cousin descendants are shown in outline form only and readers wishing to pursue these will find the necessary information in the two references cited in Paragraph 1.

The Conundrum

The family documents show that our great-great-grandfather (g-g-grandfather) was a James born towards the end of the 18th century. We knew the family ancestral farm was at Moate, tenanted by a William McMahon in 1828 (Griffith’s Evaluation) and that a Roger McMahon had purloined the Barnwall tomb in nearby Robertstown cemetery “*for himself and his posterity*”. The conundrum is: does our g-g-grandfather James descend from Roger (as believed by our father and Uncle Jim) or from William, since the name William has been perpetuated in the family down through the generations?

Key Historical Facts

- The 1662 will of Conn MacMahon which permitted connectivity (in the early 17th century) between the early and later parts of the tree.
- The key to unlocking the present round of analysis was the Church of Ireland (CoI) baptismal record for William, born to Hugh and Sara of Clones in 1774 thus fulfilling Fr. Paddy’s assertion and the Monaghan location of an ancestor.
- A second CoI baptismal record for Jane, born to William and Martha in Clones, 1810, showing that William had not migrated by that date.

¹ The McMahons of Kilbeg, Eugene McMahon, 2017 – Private Publication.

² One of our uncles - he was a RC missionary priest who lived to the age of 97.

³ Readers wishing to avail themselves of just the family tree, without justifying arguments, should go to spreadsheet 5.

- Tithe record for William in Griffith's Evaluation in 1828 for Moate Farm indicating William's arrival in Moate was before 1828 and presumably after 1810 (above), assuming it was the same William.
- James born to Roger and Judith in Ardee, 1793, indicating that this branch of the family had moved to the North Meath area prior to William.
- Hugh of Ardamagh, Nobber, died 1788: probable, but not proven, son of Roger of Drumully.
- The 1783 will for Hugh of Carn, born 1699: originator of one family line and father of a second Hugh.
- Roger of Drumully: married 1718 (Protestant record): burial "*This stone and burial place belongeth to Roger McMahan and his posterity 1745*", Abbey graveyard, Clones - originator of second family line.

Suppositions

These can be divided into

Key ones:

- That 1774 William of Clones was the same William present in Moate Farm in 1828 (Tithe Census).
- That Hugh of Ardamagh was Roger of Drumully's son, father of Roger of Ardee, and had migrated to Meath before 1788.
- That Roger of Drumully was the son of Rory Mac Conn Mac Rory Óg.
- That Roger of Drumully was the Roger buried in the Abbey graveyard, Clones in 1745.

Supportive ones:

- That the William who fathered Jane in Clones, 1810, was 1774 William.
- That Jane's listed mother, Martha, was 1774 William's second wife.
- That Judith McMahan buried in Rathkenny was the Judith Hand who was married to Roger of Ardee.
- That 1811 Peter was 1774 William's son by virtue of him inheriting Moate Farm (Tithe and Griffith's Records refer) and that William also had a presumed son, Roger, who was cited in Moynalty Petty Sessions for evicting a tenant from his land at Ballintillin.

The Analysis

Genetic Structure

It is fortunate that a member from each parallel family line (1937 Patrick and 1947 Peter Joseph) have taken the most sophisticated paternal (Y chromosome) tests available today. These show unequivocally that both have the SNP mutation, BY115195, a mutation that no other McMahan tester possesses. Other mutational differences indicate that the 'Time to Most Common Ancestor' is no greater than 300 years at a probability of 95%. This translates into a 95% probability that the date of separation was around 1640 (spreadsheet 1 (Genetic Structure) of Trohanny McMahan Pedigree work book).

Only tester dates of birth (d.o.b.'s) were necessary for the construction of a skeletal tree. This used the simple expedient of working back from the tester d.o.b.'s in 30-year increments (the average generation used in genealogy) to establish the 10 generations that make up the 300-year separation. This skeletal tree acted as a template on which to build the family tree, recognizing that not all progenitors would obligingly reproduce within every 30-year period, often because of second marriages.

Further information presented in spreadsheet 1 shows the position of the R-BY115195 mutation in the evolutionary tree. This shows a cluster of haplogroups (9 so far) descended from R-Z16280, accounting for 58% of Colla McMahons (among those who have tested). A working hypothesis is that R-Z16280, which has been dated to c.1400 CE, could well have originated with Rory Mor (c. 1392) or his father, Ardghal (c.1362). The subsequent spread of R-Z16280 through the bulk of Oriel McMahons in parallel lineages could be accounted for by the progeny from their many sons.

Building the Tree

The next stage (spreadsheet 2) was to overlay the known family members and the historical ones that best fitted the structure. Documented d.o.b.'s are shown in green, predicted ones from the optimization model are shown in orange and historical dates of death (d.o.d.'s) are shown in grey.

The fit of the actual family members and the putative historical ones to the proposed skeletal tree is remarkably good. This is a reassuring finding and supports the view that the proposed historical members are a logical fit. This is not a proof although given the rarity of William and Roger (see below), it is the most likely outcome.

The exceptions are where there are skipped generations due to late starters. These are termed 'Skip Gen', the best documented being our grandfather (Patrick) who was born in 1868 (two years from the end of his generation) and fathering our father (Eugene) in 1904 at the age of 36.

Populating the Tree

This is largely mechanical, filling in biographical details and some data points of Tree members (spreadsheet 3). It became apparent at this stage that in addition to the brick wall alluded to in the conundrum, there was a second one between Roger of Drumully/Hugh of Carn and Conn of Killshanlish.

Demolishing the brick walls and finding the Missing Link

Spreadsheet 4 shows the evolutionary tree from Rory Óg (c. 1597) to 1937 Patrick and parallel lines. The likelihood of finding 3rd cousins elsewhere, with the rare names of William and Roger that fit the chronology, is slim to nil. There is only one instance of another William in Monaghan and he is a generation later (than 1774 William). William is firmly anchored to the Hugh of Clones line and in turn, 1947 Peter is descended through William's son, Thomas. The genetics dictate that 1937 Patrick is descended from Roger of Drumully through Roger of Ardee. Descent (of 1937 Patrick) through 1774 William is ruled out on the basis that this would only be a 5 generation separation whereas the DNA results indicate a 10 generation separation.

The original perception over the years was that our more recent ancestor, 1793 James, was descended from William largely because of the continuous use of the William name among his descendants. On closer inspection this now looks to have been misleading. The evidence of Jane being born to William and Martha in Clones in 1810 is indicative that this branch of the family hadn't moved from the Clones area by this time. James would have been 17 and unless Mary McInteggart (William's wife of 1796) was his mother, of which there is no evidence, then the existing record of Roger siring James in Ardee in 1793 must stand.

Removal of the second brick wall was facilitated by the information contained within Conn MacMahon's will of 1662⁴. This was for Conn of Killshanlish which gave his d.o.d. as 1663, his father's name as Rory (who was executor of the will) and the names of his children, the sons being Owen, Shane and Rory. These were declared as minors who were presumably under the age of 14 (or maybe younger). I have assigned 12yr, 8yr and 6yr to them on the basis they were minors and fitted the chronology in the predictive model. Our original take on the descent at this stage was that Conn of Killshanlish had a son, Conn Óg of Drumsloe, but this was not evident from the literature of O'Mórdha (Clogher Record). Instead, he recounts a Conn (of Killshanlish) fathering Rory, Eoghan and Shane, the latter who then went on to father Hugh in 1699. Conn's father Rory is shown as Ruadri Óg in Figure P8 (The "Óg" part of the name was specifically cited elsewhere by O'Mórdha), thus enabling the connectivity between the early and later parts of the tree.

This removes the major blockages and leaves the hunt for the missing link. The biology and genetics dictate that Roger of Drumully must have had a son who in turn had Roger of Ardee. A likely candidate is Hugh of Ardagh, Nobber, d. 1788. Hugh fits the chronology (born about the time Roger of Drumully⁵ married Eliz Beattie in 1718) and shows that that branch of the family had moved to Nobber, probably about mid 18th century.

⁴ Source Clogher Record, 1974, pp. 197-8 cited by O'Mórdha's in the Clogher Record of 1991.

⁵ Roger's headstone is in the Abbey Graveyard, Clones and reads "This stone and burial place belongeth to Roger McMahon and his posterity 1745" (Clogher Record).

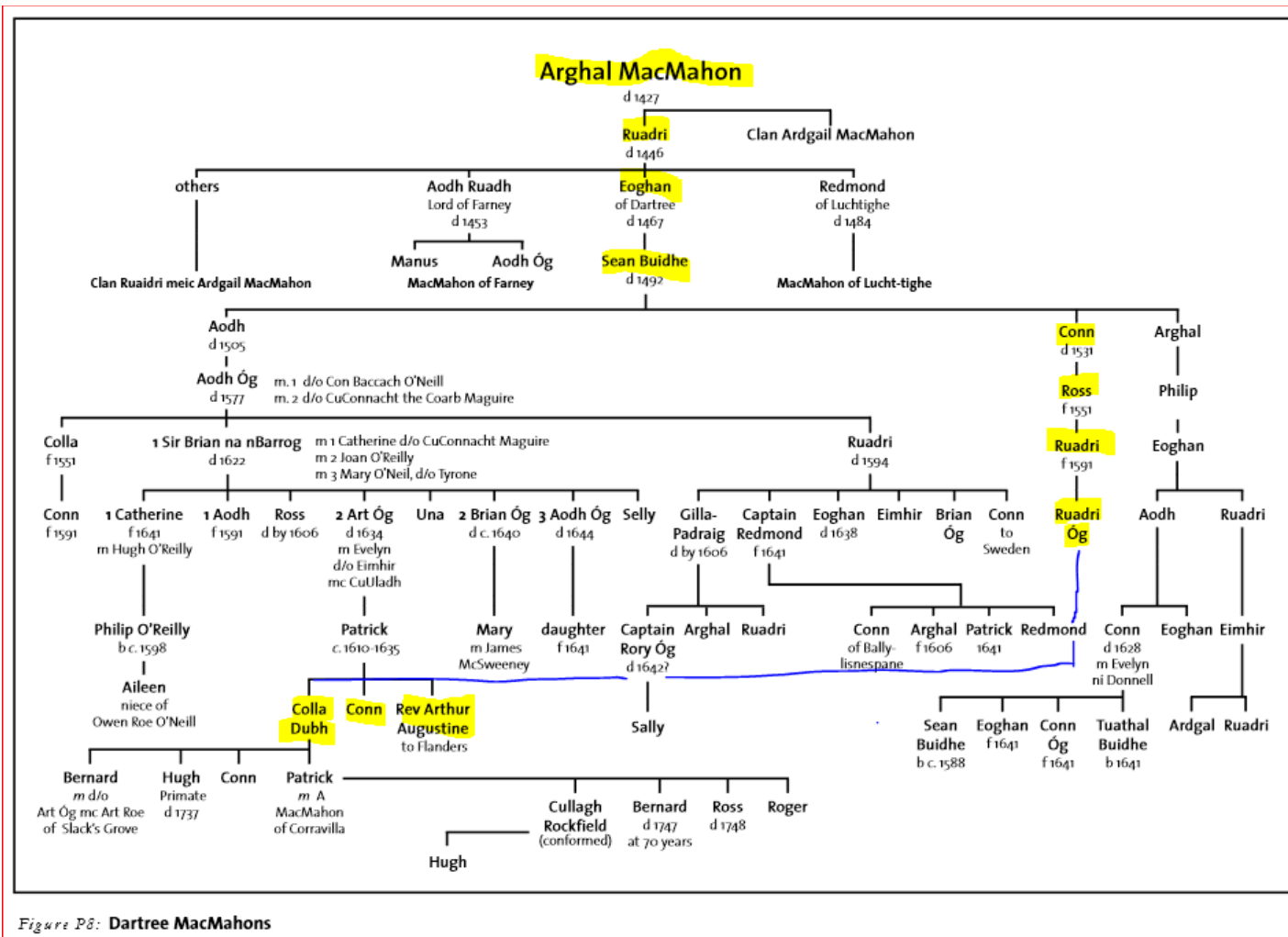


Figure P8: Dartree MacMahons

14th century to 21st century Tree

The genetic, genealogical and geographic evidence indicate that the family belongs to the Dartrey Branch of McMahons. From the mid-15th century onwards, the MacMahon ruling class in Oriel was descended from a common ancestor, Ruairi Mor (Rory the Great) MacMahon, Ur-Ri Oirgialla (d. 1446). Of Ruairi’s 16 sons, Reamonn (d. 1484), Aodh Rua (d.1453) and Eoghan (d.1467) subsequently gave rise to the three major branches of the family (Figure P8⁶):

1. Reamonn (Redmond) in the barony of Farney in Southern Monaghan
2. Aodh Rua (Red Hugh) in the barony of Luchtighe in North-central Monaghan
3. Eoghan (Eugene) in the barony of Dartrey in Western Monaghan.

Highlighted in the above figure is the linear descent of the family from Ardghal MacMahon (c.1362-1427) to Conn MacMahon (c.1628-1663). Spreadsheet 5 shows this part of the tree joined to the later part and finishing in the 21st century.

Discussion

Conn of Killshanlish’s will is probably the most significant piece of evidence in this study. Not only does it give his precise d.o.d. (1663), but it also names his father and sons. It defines generations 8 to 10 (1570 to 1659) and indicates how the two parallel branches (as predicted by the DNA results) arose in the Trohanny McMahons. As a presumed Protestant, it was confusing to see in his will that he left money “to the Friars of ...”, that is until examining the record of his conviction of being a Popish Recusant (*i.e.* one who would not

⁶ Taken from ‘The McMahons of Trohanny’ p 158 (<http://www.peterspioneers.com/mcmahongenealogy.pdf>). Unfortunately, the original contains a drafting error shown corrected with the blue line of descent from Ruadri Óg to Colla Dubh, Conn and Rev Augustine.

attend Anglican services) in 1657. This would suggest a somewhat reluctant Anglican hedging his bets.

Roger of Drumully didn't migrate to Meath as his gravestone is in Clones, but it looks probable that his sons Hugh and Michael moved to Ardamagh, Nobber around the 1750s. There is a strong association over 3 generations from then on with this townland in North Meath. Hugh (or Michael) sired Roger (of Ardee) c. 1747, presumably in Ardamagh. Roger married Judith Hand c. 1782 who delivered two sons (1785 Edmund and 1793 James) in Ardee, their new place of residence. Judith died in 1800 and was buried in Rathkenny, Parish of Nobber. It may have been around this time that Roger acquired another property in or around Robertstown, possibly Moate farm (before William), and laid claim to his own burial site⁷, aka the Barnwall slab tomb in Robertstown cemetery. This half of the descent line (from Rory or Owen, sons of Conn of Killshanlish) is distinguished by the fact that there is a record of a Roger siring a James in 1793 in Ardee but no such record has been found for William of Clones or Moate siring a James.

The simplest explanation for 1793 James at first appearing to be descended from 1774 William was that he may have been 'taken in' by William for any number of reasons. James could have become landless on the death of his father Roger in 1813 and the subsequent loss of their tenancy or William simply needed labour to help with setting up his new tenancy in Moate. James possibly lived and worked for William before and possibly after he married Anne Cahile sometime prior to 1819. He named his first recorded son William in 'honour' of what was effectively his surrogate father.

The results show that Hugh of Carn, with a given d.o.b. of 1699, is likely to have been a first cousin of Roger of Drumully (the genetics supports this view as well). Hugh of Carn sired Hugh of Clones c. 1737 who married Sara and fathered William in 1774, as evidenced by the CoI baptism in Clones for that date. This 1774 William may well have been the William who married Miss Mary McInteggart in Dundalk in 1796 (when he was 22) but there is no record of children until 1810 when Jane was born to William and Martha in Clones. This was followed by the births of Peter, Thomas and Roger most likely in Moate. William would have been over 36 when these births occurred, which strongly suggests that William had a second wife (Martha perhaps?) by this stage.

The genetic evidence supports this genealogy in that 1937 Patrick and 1947 Peter Joseph have identical Y chromosomes *i.e.* they are both Haplogroup R-BY115195 and therefore share a common ancestor. As Patrick is descended through Roger and Peter through William, the most recent common ancestor has got to be Conn of Killshanlish (c. 1628). Secondary genetic evidence shows there is a 95% probability that their common ancestor was no further back than 1637-1647 which is a good fit to the genealogy chart.

Conclusions

The aim of the analysis has been met in that

- A consistent dynastic tree was constructed using the described methods.
- Linkage through Rory Óg (father of Conn of Killshanlish) to 1557 Rory Mac Ross and back to 1392 Rory Mor, was established.
- Early membership of the Church of Ireland has been established
- The Monaghan connections have been established
- 1793 James descended from Roger of Ardee rather than from William of Moate
- A suitable candidate (Hugh of Ardamagh) was found for the missing link and when this branch came to North Meath
- Most distant family common ancestor is c.1628 Conn of Killshanlish
- Common ancestor of the Trohanny and Rathbawn branches is 1793 James (1904 Eugene and 1896 Joseph acknowledged they were 2nd cousins).

⁷ This tombstone was amateurishly over chiselled with, "*Ys monument renewed by Rogr McMahan for his posterity*". The date 1813 looked as if it had been chiselled by a different hand and was presumably his d.o.d.