



## **The Clan Ewing of Loch Lomond – An Alternate View**

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The following statement by Elbert William Robinson (E.W.R.) Ewing in his *Clan Ewing in Scotland*<sup>2</sup> summarizes the most common origin postulated for the Ewings of Glasgow and Loch Lomond.

“The name is distinctly of Gaelic and clan origin, and except where particular family histories and other evidence point to a different conclusion, persons bearing the name and traceable to the localities known to have been occupied by the early clan, its septs and descendants, are of the same race and probably sprung from the MacEwens of Otter. In the Lowland districts the blood has mixed largely with that of the Lowland inhabitants.”

DNA lends some credence to this theory as most of the Ewings do match the NW Irish modal; and by pedigree the Clan MacEwen of Otter are said to be Ui Neill, descended from the Irish O'Neills (NW Irish). But there are several problems with this theory, the first of which is that the pedigree linking the MacEwens and other clans to the Ui Neill of Ireland is most likely a medieval fabrication; and secondly the fact that the Ewings do match the NW Irish modal does not necessarily mean they were descendants of Nial or descended from the Irish O'Neills.

Several Scottish families in both Irish and Scottish genealogical manuscripts are said to descend from Anradan, said to be a son of Aedh Athlaman, the Irish king of Aileach who died in 1033, the ancestor of the Irish O'Neills. These families include the MacSweeneys of Ireland and the Maclachlans, Lamonts, MacEwens of Otter, known collectively as the Anradan kindred.<sup>3</sup> The McNeills of Scotland are also commonly included in this kindred, but erroneously, based on a mistranslation of an old Scottish manuscript by William Skene.<sup>4</sup>

The Anradan pedigree first makes its appearance in the historical record in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote,<sup>5</sup> both written in Ireland circa 1400 A.D. But in Irish manuscripts only the line of the MacSweeneys is traced. There are no corresponding pedigrees for the other Scottish Argyll clans in either manuscript. In contrast, William Skene discovered an old Scottish manuscript in the early 1800s, which also contained versions of the Anradan pedigrees. In this manuscript, the MacSweeneys are absent but the Maclachlans, Lamonts and MacEwens of Otter do appear. Based on names in the pedigrees, Skene dated the manuscript to about 1467 AD, somewhat later than the earlier Irish versions of the same pedigrees.

Most Irish historians believe the original pedigree in the Books of Ballymote and Lecan was a fabrication designed to link the MacSweeneys, a gallowglass<sup>6</sup> clan from Argyll, Scotland, with an appropriate “Irish”

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<sup>1</sup> This article complements *Origin of the Ewing Name* compiled by James R. McMichael and available on the *Clan Ewing* WebSite at [www.clanewing.org/Ewing\\_name01.html](http://www.clanewing.org/Ewing_name01.html).

<sup>2</sup> Ewing, Elbert William Robinson, *Clan Ewing of Scotland*. Ballston, Va., Cobden Publishing Company, c1922.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Anradan kindred see: [members.aol.com/lochlan/anradan.htm](http://members.aol.com/lochlan/anradan.htm).

<sup>4</sup> See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Forbes\\_Skene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Forbes_Skene) and [www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/fab/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/fab/index.htm).

<sup>5</sup> See: [www.timelessmyths.com/celtic/lib-celt.html](http://www.timelessmyths.com/celtic/lib-celt.html).

<sup>6</sup> The gallowglass were usually Scottish mercenaries imported into Ireland by Irish kings (the term means foreign fighters). Many of them settled permanently in Ireland (as did the MacSweeneys) and came to be regarded as “Irish”

pedigree after they had settled in Donegal in about 1300 under the O'Donnells. Presumably the other Argyll clans were also linked to the same pedigree because of their common location in Argyll. Even worse is the fact that an alternate pedigree for the same Anradan appears in Skene's manuscript 1467<sup>7</sup> which links him not to the Irish O'Neills but to the line of Somerled and the MacDonalds.

Book of Ballymote c. 1400 AD.

Pedigree of MacSweeney

mc Suibhne [of Castle Sween in Scotland]

a quo clann Suibhne

mc Aedh Alaidh

called Buirche

mc Anrathan

mc Aedh Athlaman [King of Aileach d. 1033] where they join the Clann Neill

mc Flaithbertach an trostain [King of Aileach d. 1036]

Gaelic Manuscript 1467

Pedigree of Lamont

Dunsleve son of Burc son of Anradan son of Gilbert (King of the Western Isles of the Sudreys)

son of Murdoch son of ... son of Donald son of Ivor, from whom the clan is named, son of

Martin the Brown, son of Neillgusa of Lochaber.

The pedigree for Lamont in Manuscript 1467 links Burc, a son of Anradan, to Gilbert, King of the Western Isles and ends in Neillgusa of Lochaber, the same Neillgusa who also appears in the traditional pedigree of the MacDonalds.

It should be obvious that when we find two conflicting pedigrees for the same person — in this case Anradan — one of them must be a fabrication. In fact it's likely that neither pedigree is historically accurate. The pedigree of the MacDonalds link them to the Airgialla of Ireland, ending in Colla Uais, one of the famous Three Collas of Irish history. But DNA research has recently shown the MacDonald chieftains to be Norse; and there are no DNA links with the clans in Ireland said to descend from the Three Collas. None of them test NW Irish or Ui Neill, which they should since the pedigrees make the Collas cousins of Nial 'of the Nine Hostages,' the fabled Irish High King who died in 405 A.D.

The pedigrees of the Anradan kindred then are fabrications. These families were not descended from the Ui Neill of Ireland nor from the same line as the MacDonalds. In essence then we have nothing in the way of an historical record linking the Anradan kindred (which includes the MacEwens of Otter) to the Irish Ui Neill. The DNA evidence is to date less conclusive. Few if any Scottish Maclachlans, Lamonts or MacEwens have been tested. One MacEwen who has been tested (John McEwen, whose ancestors came from Argyll) does not match the NW Irish modal.

What then are we to make of the Ewings of Glasgow and Loch Lomond who mostly do match the NW Irish modal?

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septs. A branch of the MacDonalds is described in the *O'Clery Book of Genealogies* as Mac Domhnaill galloglaigh (gallowglass). Other prominent gallowglass families from Scotland were the Lamonts (Meg Buirc) and the MacNeills.

<sup>7</sup> [members.aol.com/lochlan4/1450.htm](http://members.aol.com/lochlan4/1450.htm). See: Genelach Clann Ladus

There are a huge number of Scottish matches to the NW Irish modal in Scotland, the great majority of them in lowland Scotland, ranging from Galloway to the Scottish borders and into northern England. If there is one thing about the NW Irish DNA the experts do agree on, it is that not everyone who matches the DNA is actually descended from Nial 'of the Nine Hostages.' John McEwen states that the NW Irish DNA originated between 3,000 and 9,000 years ago, or between 1,000 BC to 7,000 BC. Even though everyone that matches the NW Irish modal (as the Ewing Clan does) is somehow related to the Ui Neill in Ireland, they are not necessarily direct descendants. The jury is still out on what this really means. Some experts claim the NW Irish DNA originated in NW Ireland; others, such as David Faux,<sup>8</sup> admit the possibility that it may have originated in Gaul or Spain.

The Ewing surname is said to be derived from Eoghan, an Irish name, as in the Clan MacEwen of Otter (Mac Eoghain). In Ireland, the same name appears as McKeown or McKeon, anglicized in a variety of ways, including Magone, MacCune, McEwen, and MacGeown. But the same name (Eoghan) is also common in Wales (as Ywein), now anglicized as Owens. Some writers (Spooner) even speculate a Germanic origin for the name:

"An English writer on surnames puts it among the earliest Saxon names ending in *ing*, as Harding, Browning, etc. It may be of Danish rather than Saxon origin, as it is still common in Norway, one of the recruiting grounds of the so-called Danes of early English history, and especially as its early location was in the western part of Scotland, which was long subject to the raids of the Danish sea-kings."

There is no reason to assume (or guess), as many writers do, that the surname Ewing came from the Argyll Clan MacEwen. It could well be of Cymric or Welsh origin, as E.W.R. Ewing states in his *Clan Ewing of Scotland*.

Lastly, we might consider briefly the theories of Thomas O'Rahilly (*Early Irish History and Mythology*).<sup>9,10</sup> O'Rahilly, drawing heavily on ancient Irish pedigrees and mythology, described several invasions of Ireland by Celtic tribes, the last of which he described as a goidelic invasion of Q-Celtic speaking Celts. O'Rahilly described a two-pronged invasion of Ireland by two Q-Celtic tribes, which he referred to as the northern and southern goidels. Based largely on the evidence of Ptolemy's map of Ireland, O'Rahilly dated this goidelic invasion to between 300 and 50 BC and stated certain sources indicated an origin in southeastern Gaul. Unfortunately O'Rahilly did not tell us what these sources were so we can't judge for ourselves. But he did suggest the Quariates tribe of SE Gaul were Q-Celtic and a possible candidate.

The northern goidels were none other than the Ui Neill; or more accurately the Connachta, an earlier tribe name, for the Ui Neill themselves did not exist as an identifiable clan until after the time of Nial (400 A.D.). And for the next several centuries the Ui Neill consisted, according to John Byrnes (*Irish Kings and High Kings*)<sup>11</sup> of no more than a handful of dynasties scattered across central and NW Ireland.

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<sup>8</sup> See: [www.davidkfaux.org](http://www.davidkfaux.org).

<sup>9</sup> O'Rahilly, Thomas F., *Early Irish History and Mythology*. Dublin, Ireland, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, December 1964.

<sup>10</sup> See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_mythology).

<sup>11</sup> F. J. Byrnes, *Irish King and High Kings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rev Ed. Dublin, Ireland, Four Courts Press, December 2001.

If O'Rahilly is correct and the Connachta or northern goidels did not come to Ireland until possibly as late as 50 B.C. direct from Gaul, then alternative explanations for the presence of NW Irish DNA matches in lowland Scotland present themselves. Under this scenario there would be no reason to assume the NW Irish in lowland Scotland came from Ireland. They may, like the Connachta in Ireland, have migrated from Gaul at some point in history. It is even possible the Connachta themselves came to Ireland from Scotland after an origin in Gaul.

Whatever the truth is, Clan Ewing was a part of this great Celtic tribe that included the Connachta of Ireland and the Ui Neill. They probably were not descended from the Clan MacEwen of Otter in Argyll, Scotland. The true origins of their surname will probably not be determined until the origins of the NW Irish are determined, of which they are a part.