

A. INTRODUCTION: PRIMARY USE OF 'OG'

The primary use of the byname "Og" ('Young'), as a comparator with which to identify the younger of two closely related bearers of the same forename (usually either father and son or brother and brother), is sufficiently well-known not to need illustration here.¹ However, not infrequently one finds a bearer of the byname "Og" who lacks an immediate, elder, homonymous kinsman. In these cases, therefore, the byname must have a different use.² This note identifies two such different uses.

B. SECONDARY USE OF 'OG'

William J. Watson identified and partly explained one such different use. In discussing a poem that names its subject "Dhomhnaill òig Abraich", Watson wrote:³

"2514 This poem is addressed to Donald Cameron of Lochiel, celebrated for his share in the rising of 1745, and known as "the Gentle Lochiel." He is called Domhnall Og, 2530, though a man of middle age, because his father, John Cameron, was still alive."

Watson's part-explanation gives the impression that any man whose father was still alive might acquire the byname 'Og', but the crucial point here is that, although his father was still alive, Domhnall Og was in effect the chief of the clan (or, at least, the owner of the clan's lands) because "In 1706 John Cameron, appreciating the dangers he was likely to incur as a known Jacobite sympathiser, deemed it advisable to make over his estate to his young son Donald" so "when later he was attainted for his participation in the 1715 rising, the estate could not be forfeited for it no longer legally belonged to him".⁴ In this use of "Og", it seems that the byname is bestowed on a son who has inherited, or has possession of, either titles or power, within his father's lifetime. Here follow some examples, starting with the one provided by Watson.

1. Donald Og Cameron of Lochiel (b.c.1695; d.1748).

John Cameron of Lochiel (b.c.1663, d.1747) had made over his estate to his son Donald (b.c.1695, d.1748) in 1706, so preserving it from forfeiture when John was attainted for taking part in the 1715 rising.⁵ Thus, from 1706 to 1747, Donald was the Laird of Lochiel whilst his father was still alive.

2. Angus Og MacDonald of the Isles (k.1490).

Angus's father was John (b.c.1434, d.1502/3), last Lord of the Isles, whose forfeiture in 1475 and resignation in 1476 of the Earldom of Ross, led to civil war in the Isles.⁶ Steer & Bannerman wrote:⁷

"It may be that John was willing to accept the loss of the earldom of Ross. At any rate, subsequent efforts to maintain Clan Donald authority and prestige in the area were headed not by John but by his son Angus Óg. And all the evidence suggests that, until his death in 1490, Angus Óg played a major part in the affairs of the Lordship."

Angus, supported by the MacDonalds, had rebelled against his father, John, who was supported by most of the other Hebridean clans. In effect, Angus had become the Chief of the Clan Donald during the lifetime of his father.⁸

3. Torcall Og MacLeod of Lewis [b.c.1320] (fl.c.1343).⁹

This Torcall Og was the first MacLeod to have been named Torcall, which was apparently a MacNicol name¹⁰ 'inherited' via his mother, who became the heiress to Lewis (and Waternish and Assynt) upon the assassination of her father, the chief of the MacNicol there, by her husband, Murchad MacLeod. One supposes that Torcall Og became the Laird of Lewis, Waternish and Assynt at some time during his father's lifetime (he received a royal charter for Assynt about the same time as his paternal uncle, Gillecalum MacLeod, Murchad's supposed elder brother, received a royal charter for Glenelg), especially as circumstantial evidence hints that Murchad not only had his own estate but also was succeeded in it by his heir by a previous marriage, for the 'heiress' of the MacNicol seems to have been no less than Murchad's second wife.¹¹

C. TERTIARY USE OF 'OG'

There are some instances of the byname 'Og' being used for a person who became the chief of his clan whilst still under the age of majority. However, other instances of the use of the byname broaden the picture and lead one to suspect that the byname was used not because the person was young when he had become chief, but because he was young when his father had died.

USAGE: THE BYNAME "OG"

1. Ruaidhri òg¹² / Ruairidh Og MacLeod of Dunvegan (b.c.1674; d.1699).¹³

He succeeded as chief of the *Sìol Tormoid* upon the death of his father, Iain Breac, in 1693,¹⁴ when he was only about nineteen years old. His nearest-related, elder namesake was his uncle, Ruairidh Mir MacLeod of Dunvegan, who had died in 1664.¹⁵ Another namesake, his grand-uncle Sir Roderick MacLeod of Talisker, seems to have died in the 1670s.¹⁶

2. Tormod Og MacLeod of Dunvegan (b.c.1685; d.1706).¹⁷

He succeeded as chief of the *Sìol Tormoid* upon the death of his brother, Ruairidh Og, in 1699, when he was only about fourteen years old. His nearest-related, elder namesake was his grand-uncle Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray (who, admittedly, did not die until 1705.03.03).¹⁸

3. Eachann Og MacLean of Duart (b.c.1578; d.c.1623).

He succeeded as chief of the MacLeans of Duart upon the death of his father, Sir Lachlan Mor, on 1598.08.05, when he was about twenty years old.¹⁹ His nearest-related, elder namesake was his grandfather, Eachann Og (son of Eachann Mor) MacLean of Duart, who was dead by 1575.04.22.²⁰

4. "Raghail òg" / Ranald MacDonald of Clanranald (b.c.1677; d.1725.06.13).²¹

Although he was an adult when he succeeded his brother as chief in 1715, he was young at their father's death in 1686 because not only was he a younger son of a marriage that had taken place in November 1666²² but also his elder brother, Allan, was born about 1675,²³ which suggests that he himself may have been born about 1677. His nearest-related, elder namesake was his grand-uncle, Ragnall Óg (son of Donald of Clanranald), who had died in 1636.²⁴

5. "raghnall óg" (d.1636) and "alasdair óg", sons of Donald of Clanranald.²⁵

Their elder brother, John Moydertach, was born about 1600/1601,²⁶ so they were no more than teenagers when their father died in December 1617.²⁷ Although the nearest-related, elder namesake of Ragnall Óg (died in 1636) was only his uncle, Ranald of Benbecula (who also died in 1636),²⁸ the nearest-related, elder namesake of Alasdair Óg was his great-great-grandfather, Alexander of Clanranald, who had died about 1530.²⁹

D. POSSIBLE OTHER USES

1. First namesake of eponym.

In the 'fake' section of the version of the MacCailin lineage from the lost Kilbride MS and its congeners there appears an *Artúir Mhóir* who is the grandfather of an *Artúir Oig* who in turn is the ancestor of all the other Arthurs in the lineage. In discussing this, Gillies referred to similarly-bynamed Colins in the 'real' section of the MacCailin lineage:³⁰

"... the assignment of the epithets *mór* and *óg* to the first two Colins of the 'historical' period is an example of a familiar tendency amongst the Highland shennachies to assign the epithet *mór* '(the) Great' to the eponymous ancestor and *óg* '(the) Young(er)' to the next bearer of the [p.152] numinous name. This practice was naturally exploited when it came to differentiating the multiplicity of Arthurs."

If true then this would supply a quaternary use of 'Og', but, if so then one would like to have other examples of it: the two Arthurs belong to a faked section of the lineage (although the appearance of the byname 'Og' in relation to the byname 'Mor' could still be correct usage, if that is what it is) and the bynames of the two Colins, although belonging to the 'real' section of the lineage, may not be trustworthy. Colin Mor's grandson, 'Colin Og' (supposedly), was the grandfather of another Colin, 'Colin Iongantach' (supposedly), but there is some evidence to suggest that the bynames in the MacCailin lineage were unstable and that 'Og' and 'Iongantach' have been swapped over so that originally it was Colin Og who was the grandson of Colin Iongantach (who was the grandson of Colin Mor). That would mean that the MacCailins do not meet Gillies's criteria, but, even if the bynames of the MacCailins are trustworthy, there is another factor which rules out the MacCailins from meeting Gillies's criteria, which is that the eponym of MacCailin was not actually Colin Mor but was his grandson, that Colin who (by virtue of his royal charter of 1314/5.02.10) had founded the family of Campbell of Loch Awe.

2. Unknown.

In as much as it is hard to assign it to any of the three (or four) uses already mentioned, there is the possibility that the application of the byname to John Og MacDonald (k.1585) son of James of Castle Camus (fl.1575-1589)³¹ represents yet another use of 'Og', but if so then it is not clear what that use is.

REFERENCES ABBREVIATED IN THE END-NOTES

- Book of Clanranald** as published in Alexander MacBain, M.A., & Rev. John Kennedy (1894) *Reliquiæ Celticæ Texts, Papers, and Studies in Gaelic Literature and Philology left by the late Rev. Alexander Cameron, LL.D., ... Vol. II. Poetry, History, and Philology*, pages 138-309
- MacDonald (2008)** Norman H. MacDonald (2008) *The Clan Ranald of Garmoran A History of the MacDonalds of Clanranald*
- Matheson (1979.04.11)** William Matheson (address delivered 1979.04.11) 'The MacLeods of Lewis' (*Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Volume LI 1978-80* (1981) pages 320-337)
- PSHS** *Publications of the Scottish History Society* [followed by Series number / Volume number]

- ¹ The elder namesake is sometimes distinguished by the byname "Mor" ('Great', or 'Big').
- ² Matheson (1979.04.11), pages 324 & 327, identified the father of "Shivak Mckleud, Torkiloig of the Lewis his daughter" with the first MacLeod to have been named Torcall. In endnote 37 (page 333) he stated: "The epithet *Og* was attached to a son because his name was the same as that of his father; but there could also be other reasons", but he did not explain what those "other reasons" were, which is what piqued this author's interest in this matter.
- ³ William J. Watson (1918) *Bardachd Ghaidhlig Specimens of Gaelic Poetry 1550-1900*, page 278, note to verse-line 2514, referring to the name given in verse-line 2530 on page 95.
- ⁴ John Stewart of Ardvorlich (1974) *The Camerons A History of Clan Cameron*, pages 90 & 94.
- ⁵ John Stewart of Ardvorlich (1974) *The Camerons A History of Clan Cameron*, pages 88-90.
- ⁶ (PSHS 4/22) Jean Munro & R. W. Munro (1986) *Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336-1493*, pages 309-313.
- ⁷ K. A. Steer & J. W. M. Bannerman (1977) *Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands*, page 207.
- ⁸ Compare the Cromartie MS (William Fraser (1876) *The Earls of Cromartie Their Kindred, Country, and Correspondence, Vol.II*, pages 462-513), page 477: "McDonald (who, because John his father wes on lyfe, was called the Tiernoige, that is, the young lord, for tiern extendit to all persones of qualitie then)", albeit he misnames him "Donald" (pages 475 & 478) instead of Angus (and claims he was captured by the MacKenzies at Blairnapark, albeit released six months later – pages 478-481).
- ⁹ Matheson (1979.04.11), pages 324 & 327.
- ¹⁰ Matheson (1979.04.11), pages 320-321 & 324-327.
- ¹¹ This author hopes to explain these statements in future work.
- ¹² William Matheson (1970) *The Blind Harper*, page 70, line 998.
- ¹³ Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, page 145.
- ¹⁴ Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, pages 135 & 144.
- ¹⁵ Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, pages 129 & 133.
- ¹⁶ The Dunvegan Memorial MS of 1767 (whence Sir Robert Douglas of Glenbervie (1798) *The Baronage of Scotland; ...*, page 381, whence later works, e.g., Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, page 133) claims that Sir Roderick MacLeod of Talisker died in 1675 but apparently there is a bond of relief by him dated 1677.05.28 (Dunvegan Castle Muniments Catalogue, page 209, Volume 1 Reference 792), so perhaps the "5" in "1675" is a mistake for '8' or '9'.
- ¹⁷ Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, page 149. His byname "Og" is recorded not in any MacLeod history but in the Book of Clanranald, page 216, which traces his (presumably contemporary) lineage back to Leod.
- ¹⁸ Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, pages 120 & 133-134.
- ¹⁹ The Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair (1899) *The Clan Gillean*, pages 111, 141, 149 & 159.
- ²⁰ The Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair (1899) *The Clan Gillean*, pages 106-107; Nicholas MacLean-Bristol (1995) *Warriors and Priests The History of the Clan MacLean 1300-1570*, page 178.
- ²¹ William J. Watson (1918) *Bardachd Ghaidhlig Specimens of Gaelic Poetry 1550-1900*, pages 144, line 3888, & 287, note to line 3811; Melville Henry Massue Marquis de Ruvigny & Raineval (1904/1974) *The Jacobite Peerage Baronetage, Knightage & Grants of Honour*, page 32.
- ²² Alick Morrison (1986) *The Chiefs of Clan MacLeod*, page 127; MacDonald (2008) page 258.
- ²³ MacDonald (2008) pages 262 & 308.
- ²⁴ Book of Clanranald, page 172.
- ²⁵ Book of Clanranald, page 172.
- ²⁶ MacDonald (2008) pages 186 & 238.
- ²⁷ MacDonald (2008) page 182.
- ²⁸ Book of Clanranald, page 172.
- ²⁹ MacDonald (2008) page 93.
- ³⁰ William Gillies, 'The Invention of Tradition, Highland-Style' (A. A. MacDonald, Michael Lynch & Ian B. Cowan (1994) *The Renaissance in Scotland Studies in Literature, Religion, History and Culture Offered to John Durkan*, pages 144-156), pages 151-152.
- ³¹ 'Obligation, James MacDonald of Castell Came to the Bishop of the Isles, 1575-6' (The Iona Club (1847) *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis*, pages 9-12), page 11, "my sone Jhone Oig"; the Rev. A. Macdonald & the Rev. A. Macdonald (1904) *The Clan Donald Vol. III*, pages 499-500.