

McLeods of Condah

Saturday, 8 April 2017

## The writing of Gaelic surnames

Neil McLeod



## A. Extracts from *The Burns Birthday Book*. (See page 2, below.)

The signatures were initially compiled by Leslie Cyril McLeod, in the 1920s, with some subsequent additions. In these extracts, the surname has a variety of forms.

- (a) **MacLeod**, with some hint of a **space** after Mac: no.s 1 and 15
- (b) **M<sup>c</sup>Leod**, with **superscript c**—no.s 3, 5, 7, 8, 10
- (c) **M<sup>c</sup>Leod**, with one or more dots under the **c**—one dot: 4; two dots: 13; three dots: 2.
- (d) **M<sup>c</sup>Leod**, with two lines under the **c**—no.s 11, 17
- (e) **M<sup>c</sup>Leod**, with a line + one or two subscript dots under the **c**—one dot: 12; two dots: 6, 9, 14, 16.

**NOTE:** There is often a distinct space after M(a)c; see especially no.s 2, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17

## B. Gaelic origin of name: **MacLeòid** < **mac** (son) + **Leòid** (of Leòd)

Edward MacLysaght,\* *The Surnames of Ireland* (7<sup>th</sup> edn. p. x):

I need hardly again refute the once prevalent idea that the Mac is a sign of Scottish origin, since everyone must now be familiar with such essentially Irish names as MacMahon, MacGuire, MacNamara, MacCarthy etc. And here let me also refer to the fallacy that Mc is Irish and Mac Scottish (or was it vice versa?).

The practice of differentiating between Mac and Mc (not to mention the now almost obsolete M') is fortunately dying out. There is no difference: Mc is simply an abbreviation of Mac.

There is, of course, no difference in pronunciation between **Mac** and its abbreviation **Mc**.

John Wells, *Sounds Fascinating: Further Observations on English Phonetics and Phonology* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) p. 37.

As we all know, the prefix *M(a)c-* means 'son of' in Irish and Scottish Gaelic. The general rule is that:

- before a stressed syllable it is pronounced **mæk**, or in a more formal style perhaps **mæk**; thus *McBride*, *McDonald*, *McEwan*, *McPherson*
- before an unstressed syllable it is **mæk**, and is itself stressed; thus *McAnulty* 'mækə'nalti, *McAvoy* 'mækəvɔɪ, *McEnroe*, *McIntosh*, *McNamara*
- but before **k** or **g** it is reduced to **mə**, thus *McCarthy* mə'ka:(r)θi, *McCorquodale*, *McGill*, *McGonagall*, *McQueen*.

**Note:** The words in bold are in the phonetic alphabet. Despite what Wells says, *m(a)c* does not mean 'son of'; it means 'son'. As to the second dot point: *MacAnulty* < *Mac an Ualtaigh*; *McAvoy* < *Mac an Bheatha*; *MacNamara* < *Mac Con Mara* etc.

\* Keeper of manuscripts, National Library of Ireland; Chairman of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, Chief Herald and Genealogical Officer of the Irish Office of Arms.



## The Burns Birthday Book

[Norman c. 1818] = [Susan c. 1827]

[Ruairidh c. 1846] = [Elizabeth c. 1859]

[Norman c. 1848] = [Jane c. 1855]

1 Norman  
9 May 1886[Donald  
1890]2 Rhoderick Charles  
5 Dec 18983 Charles Leslie  
25 Jan 1902

[Hugh Duncan 1881]

*Norman MacLeod**Rhoderick McLeod*4 = Sarah May  
9 Sept 18885 = Bessie Ruth  
23 Nov 1901*Charles L. McLeod*

= [Mary Elizabeth 1886]

*May McLeod**Bessie Ruth McLeod*6 Norman Keith 8 Feb 19107 Kenneth Norman 26 Jan 1918*Norman Keith McLeod**Kenneth N. McLeod*8 Leslie Cyril  
15 Aug 1911  
(d. 18 Sept 1934)  
9 Norma May  
7 March 1914*Leslie C. McLeod**Norma McLeod*10 Donald Wallace  
10 Jan 1918*Donald McLeod*11 Alan Murchison  
6 Dec 1919*Alan McLeod*12 Betty Isabel  
17 Nov 1922*Betty McLeod**7 years 1922*13 Thomas Roderick  
22 March 1926*Thomas R. McLeod*14 Ian Douglas  
11 Jan 1930*Ian Douglas McLeod*15 Rex  
16 Aug 1931*Rex MacLeod*16 Dorothy Ruth  
11 Sept 1933*Dorothy Ruth McLeod*17 Leslie Charles  
11 Jul 1935*L. C. McLeod*

Boys' books exchanged for twenty  
foreign stamps (no German).—Donnie  
McLeod, Westerlea, Condah, V.

The Age 3 Oct 1930, p. 14, "Anything to Exchange?"

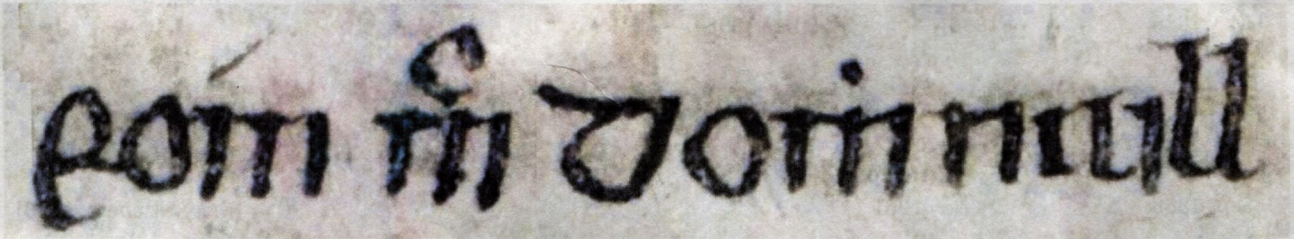


### C. Medieval Gaelic Orthography: *mac* written *m* + *c* superscript; followed by a space

16<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Gaelic medical manuscript (MS 72.1.1, folios 24v and 42v), National Library of Scotland:

Example (a): Eóin mac Domhnaill

[anglicised as 'Ewen MacDonald']



Notes: 1. length marks were frequently placed on the stressed syllable rather than the stressed vowel. (Capitals and length marks were often omitted: here *mac Domhnaill* rather than *Mac Dòmhnail*.)

2. a superscript *c* represents *ac* (occurring most commonly in *mac* 'son' and in *gac* 'each').

3. dotted *m* represents *mh* (originally a nasalised bilabial fricative *v*, but by now silent).

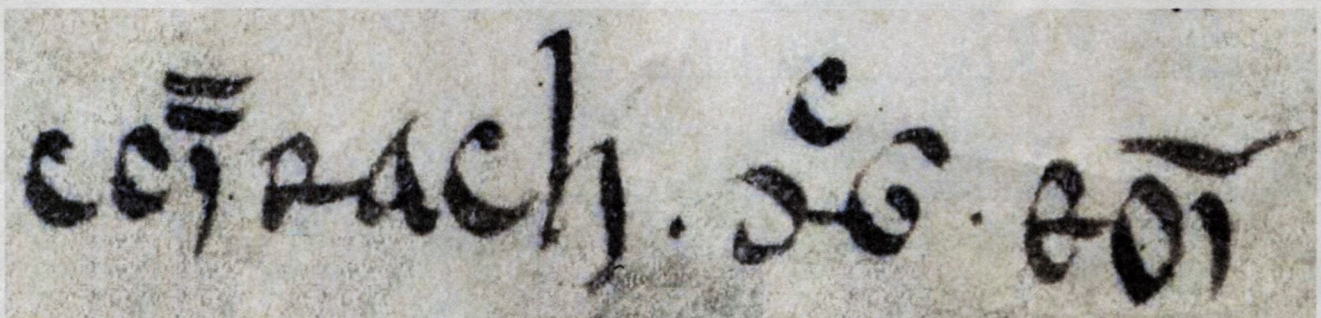
4. The words for 'son' and 'Donald' are written separately from each other

5. The surname is based on the personal name *Dòmhnall*. For son *of Dòmhnall* we need the possessive case: *Dòmhnail*. Note how the possessive case of this name is formed by writing an *i* before the last letter. That *i* is not itself pronounced, but alters final broad *-ll* to a slender *-ll*.

The same thing happens in *MacLeòid*. The final *-d* changes from the **d** in 'do' to the **d** in 'dew' (or even to the **dg** in 'edge').

Example (b): coinneach . Mac . eoin

[anglicised as 'Kenneth MacEwen']

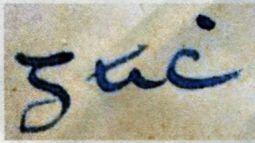


Notes: 1. A short superscript line represents an *n*. Here we have two *ns* over the first letter *i*, and one *n* over the final letter *i*.

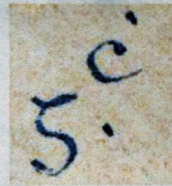
2. In this example, the only capital letter occurs in *Mac*. The spaces between the three words are filled with 'fullstops'



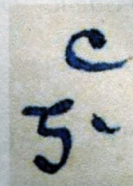
D. Early Modern Gaelic manuscripts: raised *ac* compendium written with subscript dot



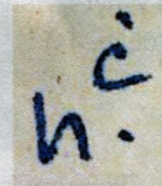
*gach*  
(‘every’)



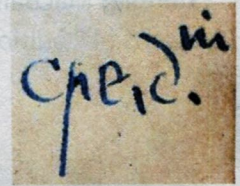
*gach*



*gac*



*nach*  
(‘any’)



*creideamh*  
(‘belief’)

New Norcia prayer-book, Irish Gaelic, perhaps late 18<sup>th</sup> century (pp 18, 39, 118, 55, 27)

Similarly, in medieval Latin manuscripts, abbreviations sometimes involved superscript letters.

q̄

*quo* (‘who’)

Typeface by Conrad Kachelofen, Leipzig, c. 1500.

q̄d

*quod* (‘what’)

Later, these superscript letters were written separately, but underscored. So, Latin *numero* is the basis for the modern English abbreviations: *N<sup>o</sup>* *N<sup>o</sup>* *N<sup>o</sup>* (but now usually: *No.*)

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, English abbreviations were also commonly raised—often underscored with lines, double lines, single dots, or double dots.

**ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, FEB. 10<sup>th</sup>,**

**ON WEDNESDAY, 25<sup>th</sup> INST.**





## E. Hyphenation of 'Mac' Surnames

**Example:** MacBain and Whyte, *How to Learn Gaelic—Orthographical Instructions, Grammar, and Reading Lessons* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1906, p. 44)

IAIN BEAG MAC-AINDREA.

Tha e air 'aithris gun robh Iain Mac-Aindrea o chionn nnaoi-fichead bliadhna a' tàmh an Dail-na-h-Aitnich, an sgrìre Ghlinn-Ceatharnaich, ann an Srath Spé.

Translation: LITTLE JOHN MACANDREW It is said that Little John Macandrew lived some hundred and eighty years ago in Dalnahatnich, in the parish of Duthil, in Strathspey.

- Note: 1. In the Gaelic text, Duthil is called *Glenn Ceatharnaich*. Note the hyphen in the text **above**.  
2. It was common for place names to be hyphenated in texts of this period. For example, this was true of street names. For example, *The Horsham Times* 12 Oct. 1906, p. 4:

being allot 4, section 60, town of **Hamilton**, containing about  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre, frontage to **Scoresby-street**, with comfortable W.B. house of 4 rooms erected thereon. The purchaser was John M'Donald at a highly satisfactory price. I have also sold on account of the exors. of the late E. M. Klug, all those pieces of land being part allots. 13 and 14, section 5, town of **Hamilton**, with stone dwelling house of 10 rooms and all improvements erected thereon, frontage to **French-street**, at present occupied by F. Muller. The purchasers were J. Thomson and Co. at a highly satisfactory price for cash.

## F. Writing Mac + Patronymic as one word in both English and Scottish Gaelic:

Scottish Qualifications Authority: October 2009, p. 18:

### e Surnames

Surnames including *Mac* and *Nic* should be written as one word, but with a capital letter on the second and any succeeding elements:

- ▶ *MacAilein, MacCoinnich/MacChoinnich, MacDhòmhnaill, MacIlleMhaoil, NicIlleDhuinn, NicLeòid, NicThòmais*

Exceptions are surnames which include the definite article:

- ▶ *Mac a' Ghobhainn, Mac an Aba, Nic a' Phearsain*

NOTE: 1. *NicLeòid* means 'daughter of MacLeod'.

2. The definite article *an* ['the'] is unstressed and uncapitalized (cf. Dutch *van der* 'of the').



## G. Leaving a space after M(a)c in handwritten English versions of Scottish names

It may be that *mac* was still felt to be a separate element, like an affix—the main element being the patronymic (e.g. *Leod*) which was not only **capitalised**, but also **stressed**.

Compare the stressed syllables in the following names (stressed syllables in bold):

Gaelic 'mac'	English 'son'	Anglo-Norman 'fitz' (< <i>fiils</i> 'son')
McLeod	Johnson	Fitzgerald, Fitzpatrick, Fitzroy
McKenzie	Wilson	
McAskill	Murchison (< Gaelic <i>Mac Murchadha</i> 'McMurphy' ?)	

## H. Innovative treatments (e.g. McCloud)

McLinden A F & N L  
 15 Forestview Blv Ellenbrk ..... 9296 7114  
 D 10 Harley Tce Mos Pk ..... 9286 2467  
 M 43 Simper St Wemb ..... 9387 1152  
 P 12 Melbourne Loop Clrksn ..... 9408 5036  
 V J & P J 5 Haig Rd Atdale ..... 9330 1668  
 McLinden J 27 Melinga Ct  
 Krrwa ..... 0447 825 683  
 J 125 Waterloo St Trt H ..... 9444 9991  
 McLinn J 37 Lakefront Circle  
 The Vines ..... 9296 8706  
 McLintock E J & M J 14 Crofton Cove  
 Mndre ..... 9305 9859  
 R 42 Dalkeith Rd Ndinds ..... 9389 1802  
 S 342c Marmion St Mivle ..... 9330 4603  
 S 70 Bangap Pl Oakfd ..... 9397 2494  
 MacLiver A 29 Preston Point Rd  
 E Ftle ..... 9339 3491  
 Avril 21 Landsdale Rd Darch ..... 9302 1379  
 C N 23 Kalamunda Rd Klmda ..... 9293 1856  
 I A & C M 8 Alexandra Ave  
 Clrmnt ..... 9385 1806  
 J 12 Bridget Pl Shly ..... 9457 1113  
 M J 30 Cornfield Pl Hlrys ..... 9307 3731  
 M J & L A 19 B The Esplanade  
 Ascot ..... 9277 1590  
 P J 10 Pier St E Ftle ..... 9319 1451  
 Mcloed F 11 A Michael St Bcnsfld ..... 9314 1413  
 McLoone J 11 Vellgrove Ave  
 Prkwd ..... 9457 8368  
 P 23 Cox St Maylds ..... 9473 0621  
 McLorinan I R 28 Marangaroo Drv  
 Mrngroo ..... 9343 2920  
 MacLou G W & J M 385 Utley Rd  
 Hopeland ..... 9525 7917  
 L C & A 18 Netherby Rd Dncrg ..... 9246 2061  
 T 424 Canning Hwy Atdale ..... 6364 0464  
 Maclou R 4 Ivy Pl Thnlie ..... 9493 1787  
 Y 9 Cowle St W Pth ..... 0414 605 044  
 McLoughlan C 1 Cotton Sq  
 The Vines ..... 9297 4536

The element after M(a)c is sometimes written without a capital.

Mcloed seems to represent an even more radical departure from traditional ways of writing the name.

Note that the order of names in the phonebook recognises that both Mac and Mc are ways of writing Mac.

Perth White Pages, 2011/12

### Wikipedia 'Mac and Mc Together'

A convention of sorting names with the Scottish and Irish **patronymic** prefixes **Mac** and **Mc** together persists in **library science** and archival practice. An example is from the Archives at the Yale University **Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library**.<sup>[1]</sup> It is also applied in areas such as **voter registration**, where Mac and Mc names may be sorted together in a **listing**.<sup>[2]</sup> Technically this is a convention in **collation**.

On the other hand, **ASCII** is a computer standard and its corresponding sorting is gradually replacing this exception to ordinary **alphabetisation**. Rules once used for filing have been dropped for some newer computer systems, and the interfiling of Mac and Mc names is an example, according to a 2006 book.<sup>[3]</sup>



H. Reduction of Mac to M<sup>c</sup>Cf. M<sup>c</sup>Donald in the *Horsham Times*, at 'E' above.*Hamilton Spectator*, 21 Sept 1909, p.4**MATRIMONIAL-****M'LEOD-MALSEED.**

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

CONDAB, Monday.

An interesting ceremony was performed at Pine Grove, Myamyn, the residence of Mr Thos. Malseed, on Thursday last, the occasion being the marriage of Mr Malseed's second daughter, Sarah May, to Mr. Norman M'Leod, eldest son of Mr. Rhoderick M'Leod, of Condab. The Rev. R. J. Houston, of Branzholme, officiated. The bride was tastefully attired in white muslin, trimmed with embroidery and lace, with a spray of orange blossom across the corsage. An embroidered tulle veil was worn over a coronet of orange blossom. The bride carried a bouquet of white flowers, and wore a handsome gold bracelet, the gift of the bridegroom. The bridesmaids were Miss E. Cole, cousin of the bride, dressed in a handsome blue costume, with trimmings of cream insertion and lace, with hat to match, and wearing a gold brooch, the gift of the bridegroom. She also carried a bouquet of pink flowers. Miss Belle Malseed, sister of the bride, wore a white embroidered muslin dress, with white silk hat to match. She also wore a gold chain and pendant, the gift of the bridegroom, and carried a basket of pink flowers. At the customary wedding

breakfast the usual toasts were duly honoured, and the happy pair were driven to Condab, where they caught the afternoon train en route for Wellington, New South Wales, where their future residence will be. The bride's travelling costume was of blue serge, with hat to match. The happy couple were the recipients of many valuable and useful presents, and as both were well and favourably known throughout this district they carry with them the best wishes of the community for their future welfare.



1909 Norman McLeod and Sarah May Malseed  
[Ian McLeod, *McLeods and Malseeds* (2002), p. 63]

Michael G Collins, 'M<sup>c</sup>Culloch and the turned comma', [http://www.greenbag.org/v12n3/v12n3\\_collins.pdf](http://www.greenbag.org/v12n3/v12n3_collins.pdf)

In addition, the use of the reversed apostrophe is not only *not* a typo, it is not functioning as an apostrophe either. An ordinary apostrophe (i.e., a non-reversed apostrophe) might act as a placeholder for one or more missing letters.<sup>5</sup> Henry Wheaton obviously knew how to use an apostrophe for such purposes, including in proper names.<sup>6</sup> Rather, as noted below, the upside down and backwards apostrophe turns out to have been a routine way for eighteenth and early nineteenth century printers to recreate a lower case, superscript "c" after the letter "M". "M<sup>c</sup>" was itself an early abbreviation of the fully spelled out patronymic "Mac."<sup>7</sup> And the use of the lower-case superscript to indicate a contraction of letters ahead of the superscripted letter had been quite common in handwritten manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>