

The Sons of Shane

When Red Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone sailed away with his close family to Europe in 1607, most considered the primary line of leadership to have sailed away with Earl Hugh. In truth all of Earl Hugh's sons died without raising to great significance in their lifetimes and only one son had another son. And he died with no male heir. At that point, the many enemies of the O'Neill did their best to convince the world that the O'Neill line was dead and no new Chief would step forward. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact his nephew Owen Roe, son of Art McBaron, came forward and led the Rebellion of 1641-49. When he died, the line of Mathew Kelly did in fact cease. But it is important to remember that Mathew Kelly was only part of the more important line of the descendants of Conn Bacach, first King and then Earl of Tir Owen.

Conn Bacach had a number of sons, all of which were capable to ascend to the Chiefship of the O'Neills. Felim Caoch was the eldest of all of Conn's sons and had the best claim. He died young on a raid, but had a son Turlough Brassileach of whom I will touch on later. Another son, Shane Diomas, did actually take over the Chiefship and was possibly a stronger Chief than Earl Hugh. But for whatever reason, writers like Bagwell give the sons of Shane no place in history nor any legitimacy as possible heirs to the throne of Tyrone.¹ Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact Shane O'Neill ten sons and at least six grandsons, all of whom had an excellent claim to the Chiefship of O'Neill. These men had a very difficult time throughout their life and most of them spent large amounts of it behind bars because of this strong claim to the throne. Both the English and Earl Hugh feared their legitimacy, and as such punished them frequently. "The said sons of Shane O'Neill are taken amongst the Irishry to have more right than any other to the principality in that country, for that they have descended by the right line from the O'Neill's principal house by many descents, and so they think no right against themselves."² And in the attainder of Queen Elizabeth against Earl Hugh, the English government recognizes the nobility of their line when she wrote that "Shane O'Neale's sons, born of more noble parents than the Earl himself."³ Strangely enough, even Bagwell wrote "but they were favorites with the Irish, and by them thought to have right."⁴

Below is a historical account of their lives and children. I hope to show that any heirs of these men do indeed have a right to claim back their hereditary dignity as the sons of the O'Neill Mor.

Shane Og d. 1581 Died while on a raid into Breifne O'Reilly country. Mother was Catherine McDonnell(d).⁵ He was the Tanist of O'Neill 1578/79.

Art d. 1592 Spent time in Scotland with cousin MacLeans building up army to put them in power. Seized by Lord Deputy Perrot in 1585 with brother Henry.⁶ Died while escaping Dublin Castle in the Wicklow Mountains with Henry and Red Hugh O'Donnell. Mother was Countess Catherine MacLean of Duart.⁷ Known to have had a son in Lachlan MacLean's fosterage in Scotland Isles of Duart. Listed in The History of Ulster, by Ramsay Colles as being knighted.⁸

Henry d. 1622/19 He is perhaps the son of Shane we know the most about. Some accounts show him as the eldest of Shane's sons. He lived a long time and prospered following the downfall of Earl Hugh. After his father's death, he was fostered by the O'Quinns, O'Cahans and possibly by the McDonnells. He spent a good deal of time in prison at the hands of his cousins. Including some period of time where he was a hostage for his grandfather, Conn Bacach, to Manus O'Donnell.⁹ His mother was Catherine McDonnell. In 1584 Lord Deputy Perrot imprisoned him after his cousin MacLean invaded with 3000 scots to try and establish his brother as The O'Neill. In 1586 his estate of Tiranny on the border of Oriel in Armagh was forcibly annexed by Earl Hugh. He had lands on the Tynan in Armagh during the war and then the O'Neill lordship south of the Blackwater river for a short time after the war in 1602.¹⁰ He and Conn lived in Fermanagh for a while after giving up those estates and then was granted new lands in 1609 and 1611 of sizable amounts back in Oriel (Armagh).¹¹ Most likely the origin of the name in those regions. Henry is often specifically named by Queen Elizabeth for favor given with land distribution. Active against his cousin Earl Hugh in field and in politics. Henry's son married cousin Earl Hugh's daughter. Conn married The Maguires daughter. 1592, Hugh Roe O'Donnell and Henry and Art McShane O'Neill escaped from Dublin Castle. Art froze to death during the escape and Henry separated from the bunch. He made his way north only to be captured by the forces of his enemy cousin, Hugh the Earl. He, Con and Brian

¹ Bagwell in Vol III wrote of the sons of Shane O'Neill "Their legitimacy is not worth discussing." pg. 220.

² Miler Magrath, Calendar of State Papers of Ireland, Vol. IV, pg. 497

³ Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts. 1589-1600. June 28, 1595 pg. 111

⁴ Bagwell, pg. 220.

⁵ Morgan, 92.

⁶ Morgan pg. 101.

⁷ Tyrone's Rebellion, Hiram Morgan. Pg 92.

⁸ Ramsay Colles, The History of Ulster, Vol. I pg. 271.

⁹ Annals of the Four Masters Vol VI, pg. 2351.

¹⁰ Hamilton, Elizabethan pg. 326 & 327. Mountjoy granted these estates toward the close of the war for their help and in light of their descent and rights to the O'Neill Chiefship. Listed as having come from Fynes Moryson.

¹¹ Plantation in Ulster, Belfast 1877. Rev George Hill, pg. 312.

are all listed as being prisoners of Earl Hugh during the Nine Years War, and that year.¹² D'Alton lists son Cormac as also being a prisoner of the Earl along with his brothers and being freed by Mountjoy in 1602/3.¹³ After his death, the 1000 acres in Camlogh, Down, went to Sir Toby Caulfield who consolidated them into the Charlemont estate. Henry MacShane O'Neale was granted a large estate with many names in Orier in County Armagh, 1500 acres total in 1609.¹⁴

-Sir Henry Oge Later, there is a confusing history revolving around Henry Oge O'Neill. Sir Henry Oge is of the son of Henry McShane, he grew to prominence in the region and eventually was one of the largest post-war O'Neill lords.¹⁵ He was killed by Sir Cahir O'Dougherty in his 1608 rebellion. In 1602, Henry Oge of Portiemiligan, his wife Cortine, his sons Turlough Oge, Con Boy and his priest are pardoned for their prior rebellion.¹⁶

What is most curious about Sir Henry Oge is the hatred between his father and Earl Hugh, yet Henry Oge ends up the son-in-law of Earl Hugh. He was the grandson of Shane, and nephew-in-law of The Maguire.¹⁷ There are numerous references of both father and son (Henry and Henry Oge) serving in the 9 Years War. Sir Henry Oge McShane has the O'Neill surname dropped by the end of the war. At the end of that war, Henry and Conn McShane were granted the two lordships north and south of the Blackwater (Tyrone and Armagh). A few years later, both were convinced to abdicate in favor of Henry's son Sir Henry Oge, and both were given large estates Henry in Armagh and Conn in Fermanagh.¹⁸

Sir Henry Oge McShane and his father, is listed as a chief warrior for Earl Hugh along the Tynan in 1598, near the Fews with 30 horse and 80 foot.¹⁹ The following year, the son is listed as having his own country or Sir Henry Oge's country (Armagh) as "McHenry McShane has 200 foot and 40 horse."²⁰ Most likely the lands granted to his father after the war in Armagh, correspond to the region he defended. At the close of the Rebellion of Cahir O'Dougherty in 1608, both Henry and his brother Conn were living on lands they had "taken from Maguire" in Fermanagh, and Chichester, the Lord Deputy, wanted them removed. Hence, their grants in Armagh.²¹ In 1615 Henry McShane is known to have led an Irish party that killed 57 English soldiers in a glen after a battle with government forces.²² Sir Henry's lands were primarily on the NW bank of the Blackwater River, and those lands were given to his sons after his death.²³

However, Lord Ernest Hamilton wrote that "in the rebellion of 1641 the only two claimants to the chieftaincy of O'Neil were Sir Phelim O'Neill, a grandson of Sir Henry Oge, who was himself a grandson of the great Shane, and Owen Roe O'Neill, who was a nephew of Tyrone (Earl Hugh)."²⁴ Meaning that Henry McShane's son Henry Oge, was knighted and had a son, Sir Turlough and he had a son, Sir Phelim (MacShane) O'Neill.

It is most likely that the McShanes who are listed as being pardoned under Sir Turlough McHenry O'Neill's list hail from this man's company and family.²⁵ "Henry Oge McHarry McShane" the son is listed as possibly being able to be "drawn off" the Earl written from camp by Carew in 1598, along with the Sleight Artes, McDonnells, McSweeneyes, and Sir Art, all traditional enemies of Earl Hugh.²⁶ Although Henry McShane is granted two separate estates in 1611, 1500 in Oriel, Armagh and 1500 in Fermanagh, by his death in 1619, he has been displaced to Dungannon.²⁷ Speculation was that his valuable lands were coveted by English planters, and indeed, Sir Toby Caulfield had they confiscated within the year. The close proximity of the Charlemont estates (northwest Armagh) to Dungannon lead one to believe that although Henry was in Armagh, he remained close to his cousins and brothers in Tyrone. He is most likely the origin of some of the many Armagh septes.

Conn d. 1630 Had some following in an attempt to oust Earl Hugh with brothers. In 1584 he raided Earl Hugh's territory. He was named Tanist for a period by Sir Turlough Lineach. Because he was a threat he was held prisoner for a long time by cousin Earl Hugh in Tyrone at castle Loghreoghoe near Dungannon.²⁸ Many blamed for the death of Hugh Gaveloch due to his slow response to cousin Earl Hugh imprisonment deal. He was granted lands in Fermanagh after 9 Years War.

¹² Ireland Under the Tudors, Bagwell, pg 227. Listed as having come from Sir Carew's Calendar work.

¹³ D'Alton, pg 121

¹⁴ Hill, p 312. As were Con and Shane McTirlagh (*perhaps another Brassileach brother?*).

¹⁵ Hamilton, Rebellion pg. 327.

¹⁶ Calendar of Patent Rolls in Ireland, 18th to 45th Year of Elizabeth, pg. 634.

¹⁷ Calendar of Carew Manuscripts 1589-1600, pg 98. Note connection between Henry Oge McShane and his uncle Conn McShane whose mother was either the daughter of this Maguire or sister.

¹⁸ Hamilton, pg. 327.

¹⁹ Carew, Calendar 1589-1600 pg. 287.

²⁰ Carew, State Papers of Ireland, pg 299.

²¹ Miriam McClain, The Rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Dogherty, pg. 79.

²² Hill pg. 554, From Translation of O'Mellon's Journal pg. 66.

²³ Hill pg. 96.

²⁴ Ernest Hamilton, Elizabethan Ulster, pg. 352.

²⁵ Henry Oge McHenry McShane O'Neill is pardoned along with his wife Cortine O'Neal (nee Maguire) and priest, in the Calendar of the State Papers-Ireland in 1602. There is also a Henry O'Neill pardoned in the Fews Pardon the same year (1602) they are probably the same man.

²⁶ In a letter dated Aug. 17, 1598 from Carew to Bagenell. Carew, Calendar 1589-1600 pg. 282.

²⁷ Hill, pg. 240, 554-555.

²⁸ Calendar of Carew 1589-1600 pg. 264.

Coole and Tircannada & Dromcor were districts and established a manor at Clabby in 1611 of 1500 acres.²⁹ Is known to have prospered and was granted a sizable fortified house in 1619. Mother was a daughter of Shane Og' Maguire.³⁰ He is the probable origin of regional Fermanagh McShanes. Conn had a son named Arte Oge who inherited the estate of Clabbye.³¹ I believe the modern O'Neill of Pomeroy family is a claimant family.

Hugh Gaveloch d. 1590 (of the Fetters) The most popular MacShane during his rise. Spent time in Scotland and built up an army. In 1584 he invaded via Lough Foyle at the head of a Scots army with the intent of claiming the title of O'Neill Mor. Had both the O'Cahan and O'Donnell in his camp before the English pressured him to retire. In 1589 he returned to Ireland and turned in Earl Hugh for conspiring with the Spanish to the English court.³² Nothing came of that and the Maguires seized him.³³ Many in Ireland tried to get Earl Hugh to release him, but a ransom agreement failed. He even offered single combat against the Earl, but Earl Hugh hung him for what he knew and to do away with a rival to the Chiefship.³⁴ His mother was Countess Catherine MacLean.³⁵ Known to have at least one son in MacLean fosterage, his grandfather was Hector Mor, The MacLean of Duart Isle. His epitaph in the Annals of the Four Masters was "There had not among the race of Eoghan, the son of Niall, a man more generally lamented than this Hugh."³⁶

Earl Hugh cut himself off from any Scottish help by killing Hugh Gaveloch. He was by blood a MacLean, any through his mother, a Campbell by marriage. His brothers bloodlines (see below) also tied him to the McDonnells and the Campbells.³⁷ His father's sister was also married to The McSorleys, another scots-irish fighting clan.

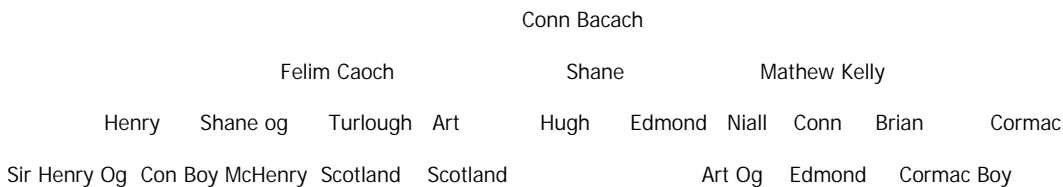
Brian Laigneach d. after 1598.³⁸ Treated with Queen Elizabeth during 9 Years War.³⁹ Held prisoner by Earl Hugh in 1580s. Gained lands in Clinawly, Fermanagh after war. Probable son Edmond also gained lands in Clinawly, Fermanagh near uncle Conn.⁴⁰ His mother was Countess Catherine MacLean.⁴¹

Turlough⁴² d. 1598 The son of Catherine McDonnell, daughter of James McDonnell of the Route and the sister of Ineenduv, daughter of Lady Agnes Campbell.⁴³ Said to be the youngest of Shane's sons.

Edmond. d. before 1602 Hung by his cousin Earl Hugh.⁴⁴

Cormac⁴⁵ d. after 1603. Held prisoner by cousin Earl Hugh. His son "Cormocke McShane Boy" was on the 1608 jury that divided up Earl Hugh's estate in Tyrone.⁴⁶

Niall



²⁹ Hill, pg. 312 & 492.

³⁰ Morgan, pg. 92.

³¹ Hill, pg. 492. From Inquisitions of Ulster-Fermanagh pg. 23 & Calender of Carew I pg. 42. Conn died on 20 Dec 1630.

³² Morgan, Tyrone's Rebellion, pg. 106.

³³ Hamilton, Elizabethan pg. 127.

³⁴ Annals 1590 vol 6, pg. 1889.

³⁵ State Papers of Scotland, pg. 558 The MacLean refers to having two sons of Art and "Hew".

³⁶ Annals-4 Masters, vol. 6, pg. 1889.

³⁷ Hamilton Elizabethan pg. 154.

³⁸ Morgan, pg. 86.

³⁹ See Carew's Manuscript for details of Brian McShanes demands and Queen Elizabeth's response.

⁴⁰ Hill, pg. 320.

⁴¹ Hamilton pg. 40. Also see Book of Howth pg. 209, there is some dispute over Shane Og's mother.

⁴² Bagwell, index Volume III lists seven sons of Shane.

⁴³ Hamilton pg. 40.

⁴⁴ State Papers of Scotland, p XXXXX

⁴⁵ Listed as a son by Carew manuscripts. Also in Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland.VI/i. 125-6. Also Niall is listed as son, no mother given. P 92. See National Biographies-Ireland for the same list of sons.

⁴⁶ Hill, pg. 161.

Sir Tirlough Con Boy

Sir Phelim Turlough X X

Col Gordon

Conn? Catherine