

## PROBLEM NAMES REVISITED

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In the last decade, more and newer information about period naming has come to light that provides evidence of “problem names” once thought to be undocumentable. This article reviews the new documentation for some of the most common “problem names” and discusses new sources for research.

### Key New Names Sources

The modern SCA herald is no longer limited by the books that she happens to be able to afford or which can be found in her local library. A large number of reliable resources about medieval naming can be found on the Internet. Some of the new sources that I have found extremely useful include:

- **Family Search Historic Records:** These records can be found on line and searched at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). The June 2011 Cover Letter from the Laurel Sovereign of Arms of the SCA College of Heraldry [http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/2011/06/11-06cl.html] permits the use of extracted data as name documentation. Only certain of the Batches of records are usable as documentation. Those Batches currently (April 2016) are: B, C, J, K, M (except M17 and M18), or P. When citing Family Search be sure to include the Batch number. [May 2013 Cover Letter (<http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/2013/05/13-05cl.html>)]. The Family Search Records are effectively a no-photocopy source as long as the Batch number is included.
- **British History Online:** British History Online (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>) has searchable primary source records. Some of them have modernized spellings; some modernize only given names and the text but leave the bynames in the original spellings; some preserve the original spellings completely. Look over the source carefully to determine whether a spelling is period. Note that some sources are available only to subscribers. Several senior heralds have BHO subscriptions they are willing to lend out for use.

- **The Middle English Dictionary Online:** <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/> The Dictionary has multiple search functions.
- **Gallica:** This site contains numerous French and Latin primary source documents (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/>). It is searchable within limits. Searches can be sorted by time period. It tends to be most useful for finding 15th, 16th and 17th century printed books unless one is very good at reading scans of period handwriting.
- **PASE Database, part of the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England:** The PASE ([http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=OPEN&st=PERSON\\_NAME&ft=PERSON&value=-1&level=4&cs=A](http://www.pase.ac.uk/pdb?dosp=OPEN&st=PERSON_NAME&ft=PERSON&value=-1&level=4&cs=A)) is a database of individuals mentioned in pre-Conquest English documents, alphabetized by modern standard form; the "recorded forms" heading gives original spellings. The standardized header forms are registerable.
- **Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707:** This fully searchable database contains both transcribed documents in their original Latin or Scots language and modern English translations of the records (<http://www.rps.ac.uk/>).
- **Google Books:** Careful and meticulous searching can locate some excellent name resources on Google Books. Examples of some that I have found:
  - *Dictionnaire des noms de famille en Wallonie et à Bruxelles* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=4bYErd60g3YC>)
  - *Records of the Burgh of Prestwick in the Sheriffdom of Ayr* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=dTU0AQAAMAAJ>)
  - *Le livre des bourgeois de l'ancienne république de Genève* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=rC4WAAAAYAAJ>)

## Specific “Problem Names” For Which We Now Have Documentation

### 1. **Aidan**

*Aidan* appears as the Anglicized form of an Irish name in 'Vatican Regesta 576: 1476', Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 13: 1471-1484 (1955), pp. 53-54. (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=104979&strquery=Aidan>).

The related spelling *Aiden* was found as a 16<sup>th</sup> cen. English surname, which can be used as a given name by precedent. [Sept. 2012 Cover Letter].

### 2. **Arion**

*Arion* was ruled unregistrable in 2001 when the only documentation presented was the name of a semi-legendary 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Greek poet. [Aron the Falcon, 08/2001 LoAR, A-Atenveldt]. Numerous spelling variants are documented to late 16th and early 17th cen. English in “Something Rich and Strange: “Undocumentable” Names From The Family Search Historical Records” by Alys Mackyntoich (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>) (“Rich and Strange”).

### 3. **Bethany**

As recently as May 2008, there had been no evidence that the name *Bethany* was used in period. [Bethan Bacon, 5/2008 LoAR, A-Gleann Abhann]. Numerous spelling variants are documented to late 16th and early 17th cen. English in “Rich and Strange” (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>).

### 4. **Breda**

BREDA MUELLER; Female; Christening; 20 Jul 1535; Basel, Basel-Stadt, Switzerland; Batch: C92753-2

BREDA GULER; Female; Christening; 23 Aug 1548; Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Batch: C73985-8

### 5. **Brianna, Branna, and Brianda**

*Briana* is registrable as an English feminine given name and as a Spanish literary name. Dec. 2001 Cover Letter (<http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/2001/12/01-12cl.html>)

*Branna* can be documented through the Family Search Historical Records:

BRANNA WOODCOCK; Female; Christening; 15 Apr 1627; Penistone, York, England; Batch: C04248-4

*Brianda* can be found in Spanish through Family Search:

BRIANDA DE AZEDO; Female; Marriage; 03 Apr 1588; Santa Maria, Tafalla, Navarra, Spain; Batch: M89497-6

BRIANDA SEVILLANA; Female; Marriage; 04 May 1596; Diocesis De Granada, Granada, Spain; Batch: M79100-8

### 6. **Bronwyn**

*Bronwyn* had previously been registered only as an SCA-compatible name. [Bronwen Gwehyddes Anglesey, 12/1999 LoAR, A-An Tir]. That category of names was eliminated in May 2009. (<http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/loar/2009/05/09-05cl.html>). Family Search now provides documentation for Bronwyn in early 17th century England:

BRONWYN N; Female; Marriage; 26 July 1620; Northaw, Hertford, England; Batch: M01288-1.

### 7. **Carmen**

CARMEN CAVELERIO; Female; Marriage; 21 Jun 1592; Santa Catarina Martir, Santa Catarina-Mexico Ciudad, Distrito Federal, Mexico; Batch: M61906-7

CARMEN CABALL; Female; Marriage; 20 Nov 1617; Marriage; Santa Maria, La Bisbal, Gerona, Spain; Batch: M89250-3

8. **Caroline**

*Caroline* had previously been ruled unregistrable for lack of documentation. [Karolyne, called the Wanderer, 03/2004 LoAR, R-Caid]. It now has been documented to period in France, England and Germany. See “Rich and Strange”

(<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

9. **Catriona**

*Catriona* had previously been treated as an undocumentable Gaelic-English hybrid. [Catrina of Whitemoor, 10/01, A-Meridies]. However, this spelling is found in the Family Search Historical Records from England:

CATRIONA CLOTHIER; Female; Christening; 14 Oct 1621; Alford, Somerset, England; Batch: P01953-1

10. **Cordelia**

Numerous spelling variants are documented to late 16th and early 17th cen. English in “Rich and Strange” (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

11. **Dorian**

*Dorian* had been ruled unregistrable for lack of documentation in December 1992. Now, *Dorian* can be found as a female name in “French Names from Paris, 1421, 1423, & 1438” by Aryanhwy merch Catmael (<http://www.ellipsis.cx/~liana/names/french/paris1423.html>).

12. **Edana**

In 2002, it was ruled that no documentation existed for the name *Edana* in that spelling. [Edan inghean an Druaidh, 06/2002, A-Æthelmarc]. However, both this spelling and a number of variants are found in Family Search as an English name. See “Rich and Strange”

(<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

13. **Erin**

*Erin* was long thought to be undocumentable as a medieval name. However, it has been found both as a male and female name, in this spelling and related spellings, in Family Search. See “Rich and Strange” (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

14. **Garth**

Numerous spelling variants of *Garth* can be documented to late 16th and early 17th cen. English in “Rich and Strange” (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

15. **Gwenna**

GWENNA LLOID Lloid; Female; Marriage; 24 Sep 1583; Pontesbury, Shropshire, England; Batch: M01905-1

GWENNA EDWARD; Female; Christening; 31 Dec 1627; Kerry, Montgomery, Wales; Batch: C04949-1

16. **Heather**

*Heather* had long been disallowed as a purely modern name. [26 Mar 89 LoAR, p. 19]. Family Search Historical Records show its use in late 16th and early 17th century England:

HEATHER ARNOLE; Female; Christening; 16 Nov 1612; Saint Nicholas, Colchester, Essex, England; Batch: K13795-3.

17. **Hywel**

*Hywel* is the standard modern Welsh form and, until recently, we had difficulty documenting this spelling to period. However, the College recently found *Hywel da mab kadell* as a person's name in a Welsh text dated c.1300-c.1350 - BL Harley MS. 4353 - page 1r (Llyfr Cyfnerth)

([http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/ms-](http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/ms-page.php?ms=Harl4353&page=1r&l=c011)

[page.php?ms=Harl4353&page=1r&l=c011](http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/ms-page.php?ms=Harl4353&page=1r&l=c011)). [Hywel ap Wyn, Sept. 2015 LoAR, A-Trimaris]

18. **Ian and Iain**

Although popularly believed to be Scottish, *Ian* can be documented in English:

IAN MOORE; Male; Marriage; 27 Nov 1608; Leconfield, Yorkshire, England;

Batch: M06080-1.

IAN SHARP; Male; Christening; 23 March 1614; Kidlington, Oxford, England; Batch: C03862-2.

In addition, the spelling *Iayn* can be found as a form of John dated to 1542 in Aryanhwy merch Catmael's "Index of Scots names found in Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue"

(<http://www.ellipsis.cx/~liana/names/scots/dost/john.html>). Because i and y were effectively

used interchangeably in Scots (as in Middle and Early Modern English), this cite supports the popularly requested spelling *Iain*.

19. **Jael**

JAEL ASHLEY; Female; Christening; 06 Apr 1589; Conisholme, Lincoln, England; Batch: C02765-1

JAEL WESBY; Female; Christening; 05 Dec 1563; Bocking, Essex, England; P00810-1

JAELA or JAEL KYMME or KYME; Female; Marriage; 07 May 1631; Saint Martin In The Fields, Westminster, London, England; M00145-2

JAELL PUDDINGE; Female; Christening Date: 13 Oct 1577; Saint Michael Coslany, Norwich, Norfolk, England; Batch: C04554-1

20. **Kathleen**

Previously believed to be entirely modern, documentation for *Kathleen* can be found in "Rich and Strange" (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

21. **Lenore**

The February 1983 LoAR noted that "[t]he forms Lenore, Leonore, or Leonara did not occur in England until the 19th century, according to Withycombe." However, various spelling variants of *Lenore* can be found in "Rich and Strange"

(<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

22. **Melisande**

This popular, but long elusive, spelling can be found on p. 18 of *Les généalogies et anciennes descentes des forestiers et comtes de Flandre* by Pierre Balthasar

([http://books.google.com/books?id=0SedED\\_3knYC](http://books.google.com/books?id=0SedED_3knYC)), which was published in 1598. It refers to the historical figure of the 12<sup>th</sup> cen. Queen of Jerusalem rather than a contemporary woman, but it does show that the spelling was in use in 16<sup>th</sup> cen. France.

23. **Ophelia**

Because *Hamlet* was written after 1600, *Ophelia* previously had not been registerable as a literary name. However, variant spellings used by real people have been found in the Family Search Historical Records, including two examples that pre-date the play:

OPHALIA KING; Female; Christening; 07 Aug 1575; Kings Areley, Worcester, England;  
Batch: C13561-5

OPHALIA COLIER; Female; Christening; 13 May 1599; Kings Areley, Worcester, England;  
Batch: C13561-5

OPHILA TYLMAN; Female; Marriage; 24 Aug 1629; Colyton, Devon, England;  
Batch: M00185-1

In addition, the June 2014 LoAR states: “The submitted spelling Ophelia was only documented using an I batch within FamilySearch. I batches are not suitable as the sole documentation for a name element. Withycombe, s.n. Ophelia, notes that an Ophelia Marchant of Bath married John Rickman (born 1587). After the Pelican decision meeting, Siren was able to date this marriage to 1610 ([hive.org/stream/myancestors00penn/#page/n11/mode/2up](http://hive.org/stream/myancestors00penn/#page/n11/mode/2up), pp. 42 and 65). The date of the marriage and the appearance of the variant spelling Ophalia well before 1600 makes it implausible that the name only came into use after its appearance in Hamlet. Therefore, the submitted name can be registered.” [Ophelia le Fayre, June 2014 LoAR, A-Atenveldt].

#### 24. **Rowan**

*Rowan* previously had been registerable only as an SCA-compatible name. [Rowan Bridget Blackmoor, 01/2002 LoAR, A-Atenveldt]. Thanks to the Family Search Historical Records, we now have documentation for both *Rowan* and *Rowen* as given names.

ROWAN MARKE; Male; Marriage; 26 Nov 1599; Madron, Cornwall, England;  
Batch: M00169-1.

ROWEN WALTER; Male; Marriage; June 1559; Sedgley, Stafford, England; Batch: M00998-7

#### 25. **Sabrina**

*Sabrina* previously had been ruled unregisterable for lack of documentation. [Sabrina Keeley de Josephi, 12/1993 LoAR, R-Atenveldt]. It can now be found in the Family Search Historical Records in England, Spain and Germany:

SABRINA COCROFTE; Female; Marriage; 07 Feb 1598; Heptonstall, York, England;  
Batch: M00748-1

SABRINA HOLLAND; Female; Christening; 07 Apr 1599; Norton, Derby, England; Batch: P01370-1

SABRINA SATLERS; Female; Marriage; 1568; Evangelisch, Bopfingen, Jagstkreis, Wuerttemberg; Batch: M92388-3

SABRINA WETZEL; Female; Christening; 01 Apr 1616; Heilbronn, Neckarkreis, Wuerttemberg; Batch: C94699-3

SABRINA [no surname]; Female; Marriage; 27 Oct 1597; San Juan Bautista, Mendavia, Navarra, Spain; Batch: M89442-1

SABRINA SANZ; Female; Marriage; 05 Jun 1628; Santa Maria Del Castillo, Muriel De Zapardiel, Valladolid, Spain; Batch: M87285-2

#### 26. **Tam**

TAM [no surname]; Female; Marriage; 15 Jan 1598; Churston Ferrers, Devon, England; Batch: M05047-1

TAM FAIRER; Male; Marriage; 26 Dec 1621; Pencaitland, East Lothian, Scotland; Batch: M11716-2

#### 27. **Wendy**

It has long been thought that *Wendy* was invented by the Victorians. The Family Search Historical Records show that this was not the case:

WENDY EVANES; Male; Marriage; 25 Aug 1636; Bassingbourn, Cambridge, England; Batch: M10977-1.

WENDY OXFORD; Male; Christening; 24 Sept 1615; Harston, Cambridge, England; Batch: C13087-1.

## 28. **Wilhelmina**

*Wilhelmina* had been ruled unregistrable for lack of evidence of its use in period. [Wilhelmina Lafaye, 10/2007 LoAR, R-Gleann Abhann]. Various spellings, however, can be found in early 17th century England and Germany.

WILHELMINA PHILLIPES; Female; Marriage; 12 Nov 1565; St James, Bristol, Gloucester, England; Batch: M17286-1

WILLAMINA DAVIS; Female; Christening; 16 April 1610; Saint Botolph, Lincoln, England; Batch: C02988-2

WILHELMINA HELMUNDT; Female; Christening Date: 09 Feb 1592; Dittigheim, Mosbach, Baden; Batch: C95863-1

WILHELMINA STRASSHOFFER; Female; Marriage; 27 Feb 1639; Katholisch, Kaiserswerth, Rheinland, Prussia; Batch: M98970-1

### **“Problem Names” Registrable Using Late Period Surname As Given Name**

In April 2010, Laurel ruled that late 16th and early 17th century English surnames could be used as given names, based on a documented pattern of such use in period. [Alton of Grimfells, 4/2010 LoAR, A-East]. This precedent is usable only for English names, which the Pelican Queen of Arms has defined as effectively any name can be documented in 16th or early 17th century England, regardless of their origin. [Sept. 2012 Cover Letter]. As stated in the Sept. 2012 Cover Letter, “family names documented in sixteenth century England may be used to create given names, even if they are of Scottish or Gaelic origin.” Use of this rule has allowed the College to register the following popular, yet previously undocumentable names.

#### 1. **Corwin, Corwyn, Corwen**

*Corwyn* and its variants had previously been registered only as SCA-compatible names. [Corwin of Saxony, 11/2001 LoAR, A-Ansteorra]. The Family Search Historical Records provide evidence of Corwyn in various spellings as a late-period English surname. See “Rich and Strange” (<http://heraldry.sca.org/names/SomethingRichandStrange.html>)

#### 2. **Donovan**

The Sept. 2012 LoAR states: “Donovan was documented as a 1584 English family name from Leicester. While it is presumably of Irish origin, it is functioning as an English family name here and can be used to create a given name following the pattern of late period English surnames used as given names.” [Donovan Gunn, Sept. 2012 LoAR, A-Caid].

#### 3. **Frasier**



Although thought of as a Scottish name, *Frasier* can be documented as a late-period English surname in the Family Search Historical Records, and therefore usable as a given name: ABRAHAM FRASIER; Male; Christening; 25 DEC 1599; Walloon Or Strangers Church, Canterbury, Kent, England; Batch: C049021

*Frasier* can also be found as a surname in other late-period English documents:

"Probate records of the courts of the bishop and archdeacon of Oxford, 1516-1732," Volume 93 (<http://books.google.com/books?id=JKZUAAAAYAAJ>) at p. 206 lists Harry Frasyer or Frasiar as a tailor in London in 1596.

"A history of Northumberland" (A. Reid, sons & co., 1930)

(<http://books.google.com/books?id=iG0gAQAAMAAJ>) at p. 129 lists a Robert Frasyer buried in Newcastle in 1577.

Because i and y were used interchangeable in Middle and Early Modern English, these cites support *Frasier*.

#### 4. **Liam**

The original Problem Names article on *Liam* states, "The name *Liam* is certainly a modern Irish pet form of *Uilliam*, but there is no persuasive evidence that it was used before the 17th century." However, the Family Search Historical Records provide evidence of *Liam* as a late-period English surname:

JOANA LIAM; Female; Marriage; 1592; Elsworth, Cambridge, England; Batch: M13053-1

#### 5. **Megan**

Megan and its variants had previously been registered only as SCA-compatible names. The Family Search Historical Records provide evidence of *Megan* in various spellings as a late-period English surname.

WILLIAM MEGAN; Male; Marriage; 9 Sept 1644; Ippollitts, Hertford, England; Batch: M07253-1.

MARTHA MEGHEN; Female; Marriage; 15 Oct 1633; Saint Chad, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England; Batch: M01575-1.

RICHARD MEGHEN; Male; Christening; 11 Dec 1630; Saint Chad, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England; Batch: P01575-1.

#### 6. **Niamh**

In July 2012, Pelican ruled "barring evidence that *Niamh* was used by non-legendary human beings or falls into another registerable category (like a saint's name), it will not be registered after the December 2012 meeting." [Niamh Fhinn, 7/2012 LoAR, A-Atenveldt]. However, *Niamh* is Anglicized to something that sounds like "Neeve" or "Neave," which can be documented as an English surname:

ELIZABETH NEAVE; Female; Christening; 06 Dec 1590; All Saints, Icklingham, Suffolk, England; Batch: C06255-2

MARGARET NEAVE; Female; Christening; 08 Sep 1548; Conington, Cambridge, England; Batch: C130382

#### 7. **Tara**

*Tara* had been ruled unregistrable for lack of documentation. [Alana Buchanan, 11/1997 LoAR, A-Caid]. *Tara* now can be found as a gray-period English surname, and therefore is usable as an English given name:



EDWARD TARA; Male; Christening; 18 Oct 1640; Northam, Devon, England; Batch: C05190-1

THOMAS TARA; Male; Christening; 23 Jan 1647; Knowstone, Devon, England;  
Batch: C05128-1

### **Conclusion**

This article is not intended as an exhaustive study of every “problem name” in the Society. There are a number of names that we continue to be unable to document to period as the names of real people, including *Fiona*, *Moira* and *Rhiannon*.

This article is intended to encourage heralds to continue to research even names that “everyone knows” cannot be documented. Period naming practices were often stranger than we imagine, and the continuing release of new data as period sources are digitized forces us to challenge many of our old assumptions.