At the back of my mind when I suggested this subject for a session at the Aberdeen conference was the hope that I could involve Scottish colleagues in considering the origins of families in Ireland and Scotland who in modern times have the same surname: Agnew. I was therefore delighted when I learned that Professor Geoffrey Barrow would be at the conference, for I expected that he would be able to supply answers where I still had question-marks. Unfortunately Professor Barrow had duties which required his presence elsewhere and so he did not hear my paper. However, I have consulted him since then, and I refer later on to his opinion on "the earliest 'Scottish' Agnew on record" which he has kindly conveyed to me in a letter.

On the eastern side of the narrow sea that separates Scotland from Ireland we have the Agnew of Lochnaw in Calloway whose genealogical descent, as given in Burke's Peerage and Baronetage, starts with Andrew Agnew, Constable of Lochnaw and Sheriff of Wigtown in 1451. A very detailed account of their supposed antecedents, originating in Normandy in the tenth century, was compiled by a later Andrew Agnew and published, under the title The Hereditary Sheriffs of Calloway, in 1893. This was a revised version of a work first published in 1804. I shall return to it later.

On the western side of the North Channel we have the family of Ó Cnámh whose members appear as professional Gaelic poets and as land-holders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although their family name is anglicised O’Neill (O’Neill) in the early years of the seventeenth century and some decades later as O’Neave, it generally appears as Agnew after 1660. The possibility that the Scottish and Irish families were identical in origin has been mooted and it cannot be ruled out without careful examination.

Let us first consider some linguistic aspects. The form of the Antrim surname in Irish sources, including what I believe is an autograph of the poet Fear Flatha, is Ó Cnámh. Both Patrick Woulfe (Sliantme Na Gaidheal i Gall, Dublin, 1927) and Edward Mac Lysaght (The Surnames of Ireland, Shannon, 1969) derive the name from the word gnomh 'deed'. However, as gnomh was originally a y-stem, with genitive gnomh, the form gnomh would be irregular. This does not mean that it would be impossible, for we have similar alternative genitives in Aonghus, gen. Aonghusa, Aonghus, and Donnchadh, gen. Donnchadh, Donnchadh. So a personal name *Gnomh might have given forms Ó Cnámh and Ó Gnomh as surnames. Moreover while anglicised forms O’Neill and O’Neave could well represent Ó Cnámh, the form Agnew would be better explained as coming from Ó Cnámh /oːˈɡ̂ ˈn̪ˠiːv̂/ through /oːˈɡ̂ ˈn̪ˠɪv̂/ /oːˈɡ̂ ˈn̪ˠɪv̂/. And it may be significant that in an English translation accompanying the document which I believe was written by Fear Flatha, and which was also, I think, written by him, we find the anglicised form Fear Flaha O’Cniu. Both in the original Irish and in anglicised forms the stress in surnames is generally on the element after O or Mac. Hence shortening of /oː/ to /ə/ and hence /a/, as in Agnew, would not be surprising. Pronunciation of Agnew in the south of Ireland is now generally /ˈæɡ̂ ˈn̪ˠɪv̂/, with stress on the first syllable, while in the north it is /ˈæɡ̂ ˈn̪ˠɪv̂/, with stress on the second syllable. The latter would be more in accord with an Irish origin.

Next let us consider the evidence relating to persons with the surname Ó Cnámh or Ó Gnomh in Ireland. Oddly enough the only two pieces of evidence I have prior to
the sixteenth century relate to the south of Ireland. The first is in a tract on the
topography and population features of the Fermoy area in Co. Cork, copies of
which are found in the Book of Lismore, which was written towards the end of the fifteenth
century, and in British Library Egerton 92, which is of similar date. The tract
seems to relate to the period before the Anglo-Norman invasion, possibly the twelfth
century. Among places mentioned in it is Carran O nGorma as a fulfil hi Cnina 6
‘Garran O nGorma from which are the Í Chninfh’. Medieval Irish orthography is
such that we cannot say for sure whether the n was lenited or unlenited, but I have
taken it as lenited. However, I have no other references to persons named O
Gorma in this area. I might add that the tract contains references to many other
families supposedly residing in the Fermoy area who are otherwise unknown there.
As we shall see, at least one of these may be relevant to our examination of the Ó
Gormh family. The second piece of evidence from Munster dates from the year 1314
when a "Thomas Ò Cne" was charged 'that he feloniously slew John le Grant at
Ballyglen" (which is Waterford) and was sentenced to be hanged. 7 I have no further
evidence of Ó Gormhna or Ó Gormh na Agnew in Munster, so I turn back to the
Antrim family.

In the seventeenth-century tract ‘De Scriptoribus Hibernicis’ Dubhaltach Mac
Fir Bhaisigh listed the Í Chninfh among the professional poets, osa dána Ó Fínimh. 8
Yet as far as I know there is no record of any poet of that name earlier than the second
half of the sixteenth century. Indeed the total number of Í Chninfh poets that we can
name is very small - apparently only four or five - and the earliest datable composition
by any of them is an address to Brian Ó Néill of Clanmagh in east Ulster who died in
1574. This was composed by Brian Ó Gormh who also, I believe, was the author of
three poems composed about members of the Mac Domhnaill family (in or about
the year 1586). 9 It seems likely that Brian Ó Gormh and his son, Fear Flathach, had the
patronage of members of the latter family.

There is evidence of members of the Ó Gormh family holding lands in the Larne
area of Co. Antrim in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the family were
quite numerous, under the name Agnew, according to later documents, such as the
Census of Ireland of 1659. 10 Nevertheless I can find no record of them in the north
of Ireland, either in the annals or in other documents, before the time of the Brian Ó
Gormh whom I have mentioned already. We must look elsewhere for information on
their early history and origins. I might add that many puzzling features emerge
when we examine the history of some other families of hereditary professional scholars,
such as Clann Bruaidheadh and the Í Óg Óg in Ireland and the Mac Muirchirs and
the Morisons in Scotland. 11

For the Ó Gormh family there are, first of all, genealogies extant in seventeenth-
century manuscripts. In three Royal Irish Academy manuscripts, E 4 v, fo. 13r,
D 13, fo. 60r, and 23 M 17, p. 107, we find, under the heading ‘Genealogica Ó Gormh’:
Fear Flathach mac Brian mac (ví, m. m.) an Phir Dhotrche mac Seasain
(ví, Séin) mec Cormac na Mbaol Mhitbigh Óg mac Mbaol Mhitbigh Mhóir
mac Giolla Bhdraigh mac (ví, Séin) Dóna Flóidhín na Mbaol Mhitre mac Édn,
i. Cnifn (ví, An Gnim) bhfuil an slíomnadh (ví, fine) mec Aonghus Mór
(ma m., M) mec Alasdair mec Domhnall mec Ragnall (ví, fine) mec Alasdair
... 7 only in M which omits the following Giolla Bhdraigh etc.)

Giolla Bhdraigh mec Domhnall mec Brian m. Cormac na Mbaol Mhitbigh
Óg

This may be translated as:

Fear Flathach son of Brian son (ví, son of the son) of An Fear Doirce son of
Seasain son of Cormac son of Mbaol Mhitbigh Óg son of Mbaol Mhitbigh son of
Gilli Bhdraigh son of Seasain son of Dóna Flóidhín son of Mbaol Mhitre son of
Édn, that is Cnifn (ví, An Gnim) from whom is the surname (ví, family) son of Aonghus Mór son of Aladair son of Domhnall son of
Ragnall etc.

Giolla Bhdraigh son of Domhnall son of Brian son of Cormac son of Mbaol Mhitbigh Óg.

Although Dubhaltach Mac Fir Bhaisigh did not include an Ó Gormh genealogy in his
book of Genealogies, we do find one in two extant copies of his ‘Abstract’ of
genealogies: in RIA 23 N 2, p. 130, and Mayssoon B 6, p. 145. This, however, begins
at a point much earlier in the line, namely with the supposed eponymous ancestor of the
family:

Uf Chninfh annso...Édn, darbo comaínna Cnifn (ví, Cnifn, mac Cotradha, i. rl Flóidhain, mec Aonghus Mhór mec Domhnall (a quo Clann Domhnall), darbo deochradhach Ruaidhri (a quo Clann Ruaidhri) mec Flóidhain, mec deochradhach Dubhghall (ví, Cnifn Dubhghall), mec Somhairle (ví, Cnifn)

Herewith the Í Chninfh, that is Édn, who was also named Cnifn whence the
Í Chninfh, son of Cotradh, that is the King of the Flóidhain (Fair
Foreighers), son of Aonghus Mór son of Domhnall (from whom are
descended Clann Domhnall), who had as brother Ruaidhri (from whom are
descended Clann Ruaidhri), son of Ragnall, who had as brother Dubhghall
(from whom are descended Clann Dubhghall), son of Somhairle etc.

I take the first genealogy to be that of the poet Fear Flathach whose floruit was
c. 1580-1645. He is traced back through nine or ten generations, that is about 300 years,
to a certain Édn who was also called Cnifn (whence the surname) or (the
family). Mac Fir Bhaisigh simply states that the Í Chninfh derive from Édn who
was also called Cnifn. When we compare the two traditions we see that Mac Fir Bhaisigh
has interposed Cotradh, described as the King of the ’Flóidhain’, between Édn and
Aonghus Mór and has omitted Aladair between Aonghus Mór and Domhnall
mac Ragnall. This may be a hint that the genealogies are inventions, but I am not sure.

Correlation of these Ó Gormh genealogies with other genealogical material
relating to Scottish and northern Irish families shows that the Í Chninfh are represented
as having common ancestry with the families of Mac Domhnall, Mac Dubhghall and
Mac Ruaidhri, all going back to Somhairle who, according to other genealogies, was
descended from Cola Uais, one of the three sons of Eochaidh Domhíne (who are
supposed to have left Ireland and settled in Scotland in the fourth century. While
scholars have in general accepted that the Macdomnells, as well as the MacDougalls
and the Macryrs, are descended from Somhairle who lived in the twelfth century, opinions
have differed about the descent from Cola Uais and Eochaidh Domhíne. 12 However,
this question need not concern us here. What does concern us is the genealogical
linking of the Ó Gormf family with the MacDunnills which I set out in the following
table in which the Mac Fir Bhaisigh version is represented on the left and the other
version is represented with a dotted line to the right, while MacDunnill genealogies
are centred.
Scotland’ are named O’Gneeve, not Agnew.

In anticipation of what follows I call attention to the fact that these so-called ‘natives of O’Gneeve are described as ‘natives of Scotland, or of the blood of that nation.’ In fact that in a grant of 1624 relating to the tuath of Larne 15 John O’Gneeve and Gilbert Ballach Mac Domhnaill inherited the Glens of Antrim from his mother, Wire Bised. 13 for the I Ghnimh, is the fact that a sixteenth-century O Gnimh poet accepted the I Ghnimh as having lived in the fourteenth century, about a century before Domhnall O

MacDonnell. In this connection it is significant that the Fiant of 1602 referred to this would lead us to believe that the

It is obvious that both of these genealogies represent the eponymous ancestor of the I Chinnfain as having lived in the fourteenth century, about a century before Domhnall Ballach Mac Domhnaill inherited the Glens of Antrim from his mother, Maire Bled, 19 This would lead us to believe that the I Chinnfain had their origins in Scotland and that later some of them crossed over to Ireland and received lands in Antrim from the MacDonnells. In this connection it is significant that the Fiant of 1602 referred to already a pardon for Randal MacDonnell and others, including two members of the O Chinnfain family.

One further item which adds weight to these genealogies, and to a Gaelic origin for the I Chinnfain, is the fact that a sixteenth-century O Chinnfain poet accepted the tradition that his family and the MacDonnells shared a common ancestry going back to Eochaidh Doltmhéin:

Dultan ar-raon go dionn fhranmh, meise a’s fuill Eachadh Doltmhéin, mo lucht cuil is slad Saghain, is ní hí ann an fuill Eachadh-soin, 14 ‘Though we are both from the same root, I and the blood of Eochaidh Doltmhéin, it is the English who are my kindred and not the blood of that Eochaidh.’

A further indication of Scottish antecedents for the O Chinnfain of Antrim is the fact that in a grant of 1624 relating to the tuath of Larne 15 John O’Gnevee and Gilbert O’Gneve are described as ‘natives of Scotland, or of the blood of that nation.’ In anticipation of what follows I call attention to the fact that these so-called ‘natives of Scotland’ are named O’Gneve, not Agnew.

What I have set out so far seems to point to:

(1) a fourteenth-century member of the Clan Domhnaill becoming the founder of a new family with the surname O’Gneve, 10
(2) members of that family taking to the profession of poetry and probably acting as hereditary poets to their close relations, the MacDonnells,
(3) their transference to Antrim, possibly with some of the MacDonnells, in the fifteenth or sixteenth century,
(4) the earliest attested anglicised forms of the surname, such as Ogniiff, replaced later in the seventeenth century by Agnew,
(5) no obvious connection between this family of O Chinnfain and the I Chinnfain who were in Cork in the twelfth century or Thomas O Gneve who was sentenced to be hanged in Waterford in 1314.

However, since the genealogies and the allusion in the poem referred to above may all be part of an attempt by late-comers in the ranks of the professional scholars to give themselves ‘respectability’ and roots, certain features of the family history as indicated in them need further examination, namely (i) the derivation of the name from a by-name or nick-name, viz. Gnfomh, and (ii) the fact that the surname derived from this is O Chinnfain. But first I must turn back to the Agnews of Galloway.

As mentioned at the outset, the Galloway Agnews appear to have provided Constables of Lochmaw and Sheriffs of Wigtown as far back as 1451. For their earlier history we have Andrew Agnew’s account. A less detailed account was given by John M. Dickson in an article published in 1901, 17 and it looks as if Dickson, as well as later scholars, such as George F. Black in The Surnames of Scotland (New York, 1946) and Edward Mac Lyons in More Irish Families (Dublin, 1960), accepted the basic accuracy of Andrew Agnew’s account in so far as it purported to describe how the Agnew family of Galloway had their roots in Normandy.

The salient points of that part of Andrew Agnew’s account which links the Agnews of Galloway with a family of Agnews in Co. Antrim, in so far as they are immediately relevant to this paper; are as follows:

(1) The Agnew family had their origins near Bayeux in Normandy where twins born to a Viking couple died but were miraculously restored to life through the intercession of St. Martin of Tours. Hence they became known as ‘Agneaux de S. Martin’, and in the course of time their descendants took as their surname various forms of the word Agneaux and spread from Normandy to England, to Ireland and eventually to Scotland.
(2) One of these came to Ireland with the Anglo-Normans in 1171, went north with John de Courcy in 1176 and received the tuath of Larne (Larne) as a reward and left descendants in that part of Antrim.
(3) An Agnew Lord of Larne supported Edward Bruce when he came to Ireland in 1315, and later a son of his crossed over to Scotland and was received with favour by Bruce’s natural son, Alexander, and was made Constable of Lochnaw and thus established the Agnew line there.

While Andrew Agnew, in corroboration of parts of his account of the Agnews in Normandy and England, cited documents supposedly extant when he was writing, he admitted that the Irish part ‘rests entirely upon tradition, and is incapable of proof, no Irish charters or state papers of the date having been preserved.’ 18 He went on: ‘At the same time there are some old written notices of the matter, and the traditions connecting the family with Larne are so strong and definite on both sides of the water that we give them for what they are worth.’ It would appear that his main authority on
the Irish side of the water was a Rev. Clanlach Porter who had given an account of the Agnews in an article published in 1844 in the Northern Whig and whom who had sent Andrew Agnew's MS. collection of notices of the Agnews in Ireland... for perusal. 19 On the Scottish side he cited the genealogical manuscripts of Sir George MacKenzie in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh.

We can hardly be inspired with confidence in Andrew Agnew's version of the Irish connection when we find that, having quoted at one point a document which seemed to establish that Henry de Agneux had been drowned in the English Channel in March 1169-70, he later said 'Henry de Agneau may be presumed to have been one of the Norman knights who joined Henry II at Milford Haven... in 1171'. 20 Incidentally, in the account of the Agnews published by John M. Dickson it is a 'Sir Philip D'Agneaux' who is named as having accompanied Henry II in 1171, and the same Sir Philip is described as 'one of the twenty-two Anglo-Norman knights who threw in their lot with John de Courcy in his invasion of Ulster in 1176.'

Where does the truth lie? I have been assured by Irish colleagues that there is no evidence of Agnew as Lords of Larne between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries; nor is there, as far as I know, any mention of either a 'Henry' or a 'Philip' d'Agneau in Henry II's entourage in 1171. Such being the case we must turn to Andrew Agnew's alternative explanation of how the Agnews came to be in Galloway in the fifteenth century.

According to this alternative account the Scottish Agnews would have descended from a John Aignell (or Aignell), a member of a Hertfordshire branch of the Agnews family, who 'bidding a long adieu to the Hertfordshire home, and his half-brother Alexander, to make his way in the Scottish capital.' 21 and this John Aignell in due course arrived in Lochmaw, having been appointed Constable of the Castle of Lochmaw by King David II about 1363. 22

Taking the O Cinnfhl / Agnew stories as I have outlined them so far we find a remarkable agreement on one point, namely the placing of the founder of the O Cinnfhl and Agnew families sometime in the fourteenth century: (i) Edin, alias Cnfhml, who belonged originally to Clann Domhnaill, (ii) the son of the Agnew Lord of Larne who was favoured by Bruce's natural son Alexander, and (iii) the Hertfordshire John Aignell who became Constable of Lochmaw in the time of King David II.

However, a piece of evidence referred to by Professor Barrow in The Kingdom of the Scots (1973) suggests the possibility that while the Agnews were, indeed, of Norman origin, they were settled in Scotland several centuries before the first of them appears as Sheriff of Wigtown. 'This is a Liddesdale charter of c. 1200 issued by the younger Ramulf de Soules... and witnessed by William des Aigneus'. 23 Professor Barrow commented: 'William, incidentally, may be regarded as the first of the Agnews' whatever the original form of his name - being in Ulster. It seems likely that Norman contact came during the lifetime of Domhnall Ballach Mac Domhnaill (t1476) who had inherited from his mother, Maire Bioc, the seven tuns of the Glens of Antrim in which we find members of the O Cinnfhml and Agnew families holding lands in later times.

As regards the supposed Norman origin of the Galloway Agnews there is a linguistic matter which deserves consideration, namely the fact that the names of the form of the name immediately. Professor Barrow tells me that he has found evidence for Agnew in the south-west of Scotland at a much earlier date. As for the Irish connection the only piece of evidence I can offer is a payment in 1460 to Andrew Agnew, Sheriff of Wigtown, for his expenses in going to Ireland 'versus Regulum Onele' by order of James II (Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, vii. 9). There seemed to be two possible explanations for this: as sheriff of Wigtown Agnew was the nearest Royal official to Ireland, or alternatively he had family or other connections there which would make him a suitable emissary. The phrase 'versus Regulum Onele' is, of course, open to different interpretations.

This last item is interesting for it provides the firmest evidence of an Agnew 'versus the original form of his name - being in Ulster. It seems likely that in this context means 'to visit'. The Regulus Onele might have been either Enric O Neill who was inaugurated as King of Ulster in 1455 or the ruling member of Clannaboy. We have already seen that the earliest extant O Cinnfhl poem was addressed to an O Neill of Clannaboy. We may wonder, then, is this Agnew/O Neill contact part of the jigsaw that, when pieced together, may give us a fuller picture of the O Cinnfhl story. And we may also wonder are we to see another piece of the jigsaw in the fact that this contact occurred during the lifetime of Domhnall Ballach Mac Domhnaill (t1476) who had inheirted from his mother, Maire Bioc, the seven tuns of the Glens of Antrim in which we find members of the O Cinnfhl and Agnew families holding lands in later times.
Before leaving the Galloway Agnews I must consider briefly the possibility that they were in fact of Gaelic origin, that is that the form Agnew, attested from the sixteenth century, is an early anglicisation of Gnome or Gnimh. On this point Professor Mac Queen wrote to me as follows:

Agnew fits so well with other Galloway names - Adougan, Ahannay, Aschennan, Askelak, Asloa, probably Adair, where the initial A is a reflex of Ø, as in Ó Gnimh - that I cannot see any real possibility of a different line of linguistic descent for the Lochnaw family name.

Once more I am at a point where I need further help from Scottish scholars, for I must confess that I lack detailed information on the forms and history of Gaelic surnames in Scotland. In general one associates the prefix Mac, rather than Ú, with Scottish surnames, but the Galloway names mentioned by Professor Mac Queen suggest that Ó-names occurred. One must ask, then, are these names which evolved on Scottish soil or are they names brought in by migrants from Ireland? I quote here, from a recent letter to me, a comment by Uilliam Mac Mhathain (William Matheson):

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{whether or not this is pure coincidence.} \\
\text{the reference to} \\
\text{known in the area but whose name could very well be the original form of another} \\
\text{another - though admittedly highly questionable - possibility: that the name is a} \\
\text{gnfomh 'acts'. The word gnfomh is also used as a land-measure and hence in place-} \\
\text{suggestion that has been made about its etymology is that it is the old verbal noun of} \\
\text{surname} \\
\text{with reference to a leader of the Vikings of Cork who was killed in the Fermoy area} \\
\text{Dubhaltach Mac Fir Bhisigh this Viking is named Gnim Cinnsiolach (or Gnim} \\
\text{that we should add Gnfomh to the list of personal names which the Irish borrowed} \\
\text{beolu. Since he has been identified as Grimr Selsh9fuE -2  we have the possibility} \\
\text{from the Scandinavians, viz. Amhlaoibh, Gofraidh, fomhar, Raghnall, Sichfrith,} \\
\text{lenited m /V/ in place of the unlenited nasal in Grimr, and (ii) the change of initial} \\
\text{and there may well have been similar migratory movements across the Irish} \\
\text{Channel into Galloway.} \\
\text{This brings me back to the earliest evidence of the surname Ó Conomh in Ireland,} \\
\text{the reference to I Chomhna in the tract on Fennow in Cork, for one cannot but be} \\
\text{another - though admittedly highly questionable - possibility: that the name is a} \\
\text{borrowing from Old Norse Grimr. The possibility first occurred to me when I noted} \\
\text{in two seventeenth-century versions of early Irish annals the name Grim appearing} \\
\text{with reference to a leader of the Vikings of Cork who was killed in the Fennow area} \\
\text{in the year 867. In a copy of some fragments of Irish annals transcribed by} \\
\text{Dubhaltach Mac Fir Bhisigh this Viking is named Grimn Clionsiolas (or Grimn} \\
\text{Clionsiologh), 24 while in the Annals of the Four Masters (s. anno 865) he is Grimn} \\
\text{beolu. Since he has been identified as Grímur Seisbófr 25 we have the possibility} \\
\text{that we should add Conomh to the list of personal names which the Irish borrowed} \\
\text{from the Scandinavians, viz. Amblaoibh, Conomh, Fombar, Raghnall, Seathruaich,} \\
\text{and so on. 26 I admit straight away that there are linguistic difficulties: (i) the final} \\
\text{limited in /V/ in place of the unlimited nasal in Grimr, and (ii) the change of initial} \\
\text{At 20.} \\
\text{As regards the first there is, one may suppose, the possibility of analogy with} \\
\text{some other borrowed name, such as Amlab from ON Ålfr in which the final b +} \\
\text{The initial syllable of this name, with Aml (*/a avi/)) from Ól, demonstrates the} 
\end{align*} \]

linguistic complexity of the process of name borrowing. And if the evidence of Irish Tomr to ON ThOrarr and of Tomr to ON ThOrir is correct 27 we have two further instances of a liquid (r) in ON giving rise in Irish to a consonant cluster containing a bilabial limited nasal interposed before the liquid. We can point to a certain amount of variation in later times between limited bilabials (nasal and non-nasal) and unlimited bilabial nasal. Thus Cénhr or Qntreb, which had final \(/n\), has become Cèntreñ or Qntreb, \(/n\) changing to \(/n\). Furthermore diminution is manifested in modern Irish dialects in a number of words, such as cuimhe (from cuimhe), limidh (from limshlugadh), sunfrench (from sunshnigh) in Co. Galway, scamag (from scamhag) in Co. Cork, and coinm (from coinm) in many dialects.

The second change is the reverse of one which took place generally in Scottish Gaelic and Manx, in the dialects of much of the northern half of Ireland, and occasionally in Munster dialects, whereby acco changes to croc, gnfomh to gnfomh, mnd to ndr, mhth to trth, limnhi to limr, etc. There is nothing inherently impossible in the reverse change with r- becoming cr-, etc., and examples can be cited from modern sources, thus creamh from creamh 'wild garlic', gnfomh from gnfomh 'griffin', pnaochhach from pnaochhach 'roots', and a Chfion from a Chfion 'o Christ'. An important factor is the question of the date at which such interchanges might have been likely to take place. T. F. O'Rahilly described the change of n to r in the groups cn, etc., as 'a comparatively late one', pointing out that 'English spelling of Irish names is in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that show little or no trace of it.' 28 Interestingly enough, he cited the spelling Gnyve na manach for Conomh na Manach (in Co. Waterford) in an English document of 1551, but he described this as 'quite exceptional.'

Notwithstanding O'Rahilly's view about the date of the change, Eric Hamp showed some years ago that there is evidence from some centuries earlier of the substitution of r for n in such a consonant cluster. 29 The example discussed by him is interesting, for it shows the change taking place in an area of mixed population. The core of his argument is that Ronyan of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales was originally Ninnian and the form with initial r developed in some sandhi context, such as S(h)ant-Ninian /hanteniN'En1 > /hant-neniN'En1 > /hant-en'En1 > /an-'triN'En1. He explained that 'Either of the last two forms could be heard by English speakers, then, as Tronyan, etc... or when coupled afresh with snt either by themselves or by Gaelic speakers, this could emerge as Ronyan, etc.' As to date Hamp pointed out that Watson had cited early instances of the name with initial r: Ronyan (1301 in Bar's Calendar), and 'Norse Ronans-e (now North Ronaldsay, in the Orkneys) in Helmkeirig, if in this fact the same name.'

On the purely phonetic side Hamp's final analysis is interesting:

Old Irish had two phonemes /N/ (which I call 'emphatic') and /n/ (which I call 'non-emphatic'). To judge by the evidence of the modern dialects, /N/ was probably an ambivalent nasal nasal consonant with the tongue fanned out along the teeth, while /n/ was probably a short continuant with alveolar contact. In articulation /n/ may not have been far from /f/, which was probably a single-flap alveolar, as contrasted with /N/. If, during the Old Irish period, /f/ after /r/, g, m, / r/ had a special allophone, say with tongue retraction, the phonetic distance between /f/ and /r/ in this position would have been even less. At any rate, by the time of, say, 1300 the allophone of /f/ in this position had
become something like /r/; so that English speakers often rendered it with their /r/ phoneme as the closest fit; the Norse may have done likewise.

By 1500, at least in many dialects, this [r] had become /r/ with nasalization of the following vowel, thus giving the present-day set-up. It may be that the phonemic shift was made possible by the setting up of an independent nasalization phoneme /ŋ/; thus the nasalization of [r], which had formerly been the component which kept the segment in the /ŋ/ phoneme, now was independent, leaving the tongue-retraction to join the /ŋ/ phoneme. The source of the /ŋ/ may be the falling together of bh /bh/ and mh /gh/ (a nasalized bilabial spirant), when the latter surrendered its nasal component in certain positions to the adjacent vowel; cf. Middle Irish spelling confusions such as noeb - noem "saint, holy, saint".

A spelling that seems to establish that [r] could have been replacing m in Ireland as early as the beginning of the twelfth century is in 'Lebor na hUidre' in the hand of the main scribe. This is mertrech (LU 9098) which must be for regular meirtnech. It is which occurs in a bardic poem composed no later than 1298 and extant in a fourteenth-century manuscript. 30 I believe that this is simply another form of Bricre, or Bricriu.

In the light of the preceding discussion what I would now tentatively suggest is that the nasality of the final part of ON Grfmr could have affected the preceding segments of the form, sounding as /grm(r)/ or even /grm(r)/, and that, with the opposite development to that postulated by Hamp, this could have become /gn'ım/ and subsequently /gn'ım/ in the mouths of Gaelic speakers, and as such could have been adopted as a personal name. Alternatively it could have been borrowed as /gr'm/ and have developed later to /gn'ım/ and thence to /gn'ım/. Either development would account for the annalistic form Gnim used as an equivalent of the name. There seems to be no hint that the sobriquet Gnromh is a Gaelic calque on the Norse name. There seems to be no further evidence of a personal name Gnfomh being in use. It might be pointed out, however, that the Viking Grfmr, alias Galm (= Gnfomh) was active and even more serious. The possibility of a development Grfmr to Gam (= Gnfomh) is suggested by the proposed derivation of a name Gnfomh from Grfmr. But admittedly Agnew in Galloway, and (ii) a statement that a by-name Gniomh, applied to a fourteenth-century member of the Clann Domhnaill named Edin, gave the family their /r/ phoneme as the closest fit; the Norse may have done likewise.

When we turn to the Antrim / Scottish side of the picture the lack of evidence is even more serious. The possibility of a development Grfmr to Galm (or Gnfomh) is the same, but there seems to be no local evidence to point to such a derivation. All we seem to have are (i) family names O Gnfomh (and later Agnew) in Antrim and Agnew in Galloway, and (ii) a statement that a by-name Gnfomh, applied to a fourteenth-century member of the Clan Domhnaill named Edin, gave the O Gnfomh family their surname. There seems to be no hint that the sobriquet Gnfomh is a Gaelic calque on ON grfrm.

There is, indeed, an item which points to the use, in a Galloway context, of an adjective grmn as a sobriquet just about the time that the term Gnfomh is supposed to have been applied to Edin (Mac Domhnaill): Archibaldus . . . dicit Grym sive Terribilis. 31 But this does not relate to an Agnew, but to Archibald Douglas (primus hoc nomine comes de Douglas) whose family were prominent in Galloway in the fourteenth century.

There remain, then, the actual forms of the Irish surname, south and north, that is O Gnfomh and O Gnfom. First of all it can be stated that there is nothing unlikely about the formation of an O-surname based on a borrowed name. Examples are O bhlochain, O Stochara and O bUiginn. Secondly it is commonly accepted that surnames formed with Ó are in general older than those formed with Mac. In fact it is easy to point to families where a Mac-surname distinguishes an offshoot from a wider family group with an O-surname. Thus the Mac Diarmada and Mac Domhnaill families are offshoots of the O MoalU Sliabhail family, and so on. And we may recall that according to Scottish tradition the Mac Muireadhais (Muirich) family were an offshoot of the O Dalraigh family, their eponymous ancestor being the Irish poet, Muireadhach Albanach O Dalraigh. There seems to be some overlapping in time between the later O-surnames and the earliest Mac-surnames, but formation of an O-surname after about 1200 would be unusual. So while there need be no question about the normality of the southern Ó Gnfomh from this point of view, there must be some doubt about the form O Gnfomh as a fourteenth-century family name, for *Mac Gnfomh (or *Mac Gnfomh) would seem to be more likely. In fact a development Mac Gnfomh to Mac Gnfomh to 'as Gnfomh to Agnew would be quite normal.

On the other hand the concept of O as a formant was clearly not abandoned, for a fourteenth-century poet invented the names Ó Allmhurain 'Mr Stranger', Ó Napadain 'Mr Money' and Ó Bhrarrataigh 'Mr Suppliant', with etymological bases allmhur 'one from overseas', airghed 'money' and iarraidh 'seeking'. 32

Before setting out some possibilities which emerge from the preceding discussion, I must add two more items which, it seems to me, increase the number of possibilities but also may eventually prove significant.

Attention has been called to the form O'Gceeve in a grant of 1624 relating to the tuath of Larne. Although the persons named were described as 'natives of Scotland, or of the blood of that nation', they presumably regarded themselves as members of the O Gnfomh family, some of whom were tenants of Randal MacDonnell in 1602 and probably before that.

We have already seen evidence of one of the Agnews of Galloway being a descendant of Sir Andrew, the seventh sheriff, and (ii) a statement that a by-name Gnfomh, applied to a fourteenth-century member of the Clan Domhnaill named Edin, gave the O Gnfomh family their surname. There seems to be no hint that the sobriquet Gnfomh is a Gaelic calque on ON grfrm.

When Sorley Boye's son was confirmed in his seizure of the Rout, one of his first acts had been to offer grants of land to the Agnews, apparently in recognition of prior claims. Sorley Boye was a contemporary of Sir Andrew, the seventh sheriff, and his son, Sir Randall M'Donnell, had grown up on terms of intimacy with Sir Patrick, the eighth sheriff.
Having referred to the acquisition by Sir Randall MacDonnell of a grant of 333,000 acres in Antrim, Agnew went on:

On being installed as a petty king, he seems to have pressed his friend, Sir Patrick Agnew, to hold various estates in Larne, Glenarm, and Kilwaughter under him. The papers connected with these first dealings have been lost, but charters have been preserved dated as early as 1622, all in the form of renewals.

Up to this point Agnew cited no firm evidence but in the following pages he gave an account of a visit to Dunluce made by Sir Patrick Agnew and his son in 1636 on

of Ballikeill in Larn the right and title to the land of Ballikeill which had previously

the Scottish Agnews and the a Gnfmh family of poets.

of occurrence of some Christian names in the

one place, we would seem to have here a further indication of association between the

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Galloway had a long-standing connection with Larne as landholders. As for the land

Antrim' compiled in 1683 in which the author, Richard Dobbs, referred to 'Ballygelly

the said Sir Patrick now enjoys the same', and (ii) an instrument, signed by Sir Patrick Agnew and his son, Andrew, ratifying and securing to a Patrick Agnew

Patrick Agnew and his Tenants in the Loch of Larne, viz. Lelies Druminidonachie,

Drumniho with Beliaderdawn, etc., according to the ancient bounds and limits of the

same, as the said Sir Patrick now enjoys the same', and (ii) an instrument, signed

by Sir Patrick Agnew and his son, Andrew, ratifying and securing to a Patrick Agnew

of Ballikeill in Larne the right and title to the land of Ballikeill which had previously

been held, under an instrument of 20 July 1622, by the assignee, also Patrick.

These documents would certainly seem to support a claim that the Agnews of

Galloway had a long-standing connection with Larne as landholders. As for the land

of Ballikeill held in 1622 by a Patrick Agnew, it is worth noting that a Patrick Agnew

of Ballygally is said by Eamonn O Tuathail 35 to have been High Sheriff of Co. Antrim

in 1668. In this connection O Tuathail quotes from a 'Description of the County of

Antrim' compiled in 1683 in which the author, Richard Dobbs, referred to 'Ballygelly

hill' between Larne and Glenarm. Dobbs wrote: 'Under this hill is a small Building

about 16 feet square upon a rock in the Sea, where one Agnew, an Irish Poet, dwelt in

old Times'. If, as seems likely, Ballygally and Ballygelly are at one

the one place, we would seem to have here a further indication of association between the

Scottish Agnews and the O Gnfmh family of poets.

The second item which I have to bring in at this point has to do with a coincidence

of occurrence of some Christian names in the O Gnfmh and Agnew families. Briefly

they are as follows:

(1) a. In the O Gnfmh genealogy Gille Padraig (* Patrick) is named as son of

Seaan (* John) who was grandson of Edhin, alias Gnfmh, and who was

therefore the first O Gnfmh. His floruit might have been c. 1440,

b. According to Andrew Agnew 36 the first Hereditary Sheriff, who married

in 1426 and died in 1484, had a natural son, Patrick, as well as sons,

Andrew and Gibert. The floruit of this Patrick [Agnew] might also have

been c. 1440.

Amont the legitimate descendants of the first Andrew Agnew listed for the following two centuries there are seven Patricks, the name being

frequent in frequency of occurrence only by Andrew.

(2) a. One of the persons named in the 1624 grant already cited was Gilbert O

Gnfmh, in the genealogical details of the Agnew family for the period c. 1400-1600 the name Gilbert occurs twice.

The name Gilbert is sometimes used as an equivalent of Gaelic Gille

Bridegal.

(3) a. Names Fear Doirche and Domhnall occur in the O Gnfmh genealogies.

b. Names Fardorragh and Daniel, referring to O'Gneeves, occur in an

inquisition of 1635. 37

It remains to set out some possibilities regarding links between the O Gnfmh

and Agnew families that emerge from the above.

(1) The surname O Gnfmh, with variant form O Gnfmha, derives from an

eponymous ancestor called Gnfmh whose name may derive from ON Grimm.

(2) An O Gnfmh family inhabited an area in Co. Cork in the twelfth century,

but apart from one fourteenth-century reference, there is no further trace

of them in east Munster.

(3) The listing of the I Chumin among gos dna Fricnann suggests that their

association with the profession of poetry goes back further than the time

of Brian O Gnfmh (c. 1550-1600). They might have been among families of

professional scholars who emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

many of whom subsequently migrated from their place of origin. 38 They

could have had their origins in Cork, have found their way from Cork to

Galloway and, having established themselves there, left descendants who

retained the O Gnfmh surname which, however, might have been anglicised

early to Agnew in accordance with a local tendency.

(4) In the fifteenth century a member of the Galloway family of Agnew/O Gnfmh

named Andrew acquired power and prestige and was appointed Constable of

Lochmarn and Sheriff of Wigtown, and his legitimate heirs continued to hold

lands and office in Galloway.

(5) This Andrew Agnew's duties caused him to visit Antrim in 1460 about the

time that Domhnall Ballach Mac Domhnaill of Scotland inherited the seven

nurtha of the Glens of Antrim from his mother.

(6) Since Gille Padraig O Gnfmh, son of Seaan Daona Flodhain who was the first

O Gnfmh of the supposed Mac Domhnaill/O Gnfmh line, would have been a

ccontemporary of Patrick [Agnew], illegitimate son of Andrew Agnew, it is

possible that the seventh-century genealogists or some earlier person

wrongly linked the O Gnfmh line with that of Mac Domhnaill. Their O Gnfmh

surname might have had a much earlier origin, hinted at in the preceding

sections.

(7) The association of the O Gnfmh poets with the O'Neills and the MacDonnells

could have begun in the fifteenth century. Early contacts between Andrew

Agnew as Sheriff of Galloway and Domhnall Mac Domhnaill as new proprietor

of the Glens of Antrim could have led to lands in the Larne area being

granted to an Agnew relation using the name O Gnfmh, and this could have

been the beginning of the association of the O Gnfmh poets with both the

O'Neills and the MacDonnells.

It must be clear by now that I have reached no conclusions about the origins of

either the Irish or Scottish families which I have been discussing. I have, I believe,

found a number of pieces of information which I liken to jig-saw puzzle pieces, but I
cannot say whether the missing pieces, if found, would join them all together to make

one unit or would give us two, or perhaps three, separate units. I can only hope that

future research will give us some answers.
NOTES

1. For various forms see the 'Plants' etc. as cited by T. F. O'Rahilly in Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad. 36 C 6 (1922), and other source material cited by E. Ó Tuathaill in Êigse VI (1948-52) 157-60.
3. Irish Grammatical Tracts II § 95.
4. See n. 2 above.
5. In this connection see Professor MacQueen's comments quoted on p. 64 below.
7. Cal. Just. Rolls Ire., 1308-1314, p. 314. Unfortunately the original has been lost.
9. I have given bibliographical references to all four poems in Celtica XVI, 153.
10. Judging from Plant No. 6663 of 1602 'Ogmeiff', 'Perlaha Ogneiff' and 'Bernard Oge Ogneife' were tenants of Randal MacDonnell. For later evidence of members of the family in the Larne area see Êigse VI, 157-60.
11. T. F. O'Rahilly argued (Scott. Gael. Stud. V (1943) 101-5) that the Morisons had migrated 'at some unsubstantiated date' from the Inishowen peninsula in Donegal to Scotland where they settled especially in Lewis and Harris, and that the earliest of them to have lived in Scotland would have been named Ò Muirchearscín.
As regards the use in Scotland of the forms Morrison or Morison as a surname he said: 'Once the literary tradition had been broken, the Ó, unfamiliar to Scotsmen, inevitably fell out; and as the name Muirchearscín was likewise unknown outside the surname, it became easily corrupted. It was inevitable that in English the name should be assimilated to the unrelated English "Morrison" (meaning "son of Morris or Maurice"); and the anglicized form seems to have influenced the Gaelic.'
12. For further discussion see Celtica XVI, 144-50.
13. For Ó Maire see the MacDonnell genealogy in Celtica XVI, 144-5.
16. Since the 'Seáin Dínna Flodháin Mac Maol Mhuiire' of the genealogy is the first person who, in the normal way of things, could have had the surname Ó Cnámha, the epithet 'Dín Flodháin' could be significant. However, I have failed to discover its location. There is a townland named Donfin near Ballinacally in Co. Antrim. On the other hand in the recension of the Deirdre story in the Glenmasan manuscript there is mention of Dín Flomin and Dín Flodhgha (v. Dín Flodh) as places in Scotland familiar to Deirdre (tr. Texte Ir. T. I, p. 127). Dr Colm Ó Buachalla has called my attention to a Dunfan near Jedburgh in Roxburghshire. But I have no compelling reason for equating Dín Flodháin with any of these.

20. Ibid. 196 and 211.
21. Ibid. 207.
22. Ibid. 213.
25. Ibid. p. 222. I cannot explain the element beola in the AFM form of the name. It looks as if Cimsiolach, which I would read in place of the editor's Cimsiolaig, may be a calque on Sélábuidh 'seal-head' with one element translated (i.e. cinn - bhuidh) and the other echoed in a semi-Irish form (i.e. siolach - sel). See NOMINA 3 (1979) 48-50.
29. The Book of Magauran, ed. L. McKenna (Dublin, 1947) Poem VI, q. 9.
31. The Book of Magauran, loc. cit. The poet, Gilliuridh Macc Nemhain, was petitioning Brian Mág Shambhadh in (†1298) for help.
32. See n. 15.
33. Op. cit. II, 43-5, for this and the following quotations. I have been informed by Sir Crispin Agnew of Lochmaw that the two documents are among the Lochmaw papers which are on loan to the Scottish Record Office. Their reference numbers there are GD154, Nos. 506 and 506.
34. Êigse VI, 159.
36. Êigse VI, 159.