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## The Choice of a Clan Name and Eligible Surnames

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The following information is a contemporary review of the need for settling a Clan name and the analysis to support the eligible surnames that may participate in the Clan name settling and the Commander selection process. Individuals who believe that they are descendants of these eligible surnames, but with a variant spelling, may provide proofs via the Notice of Intent documents available at the website

[www.clannameandcommandersearch.com](http://www.clannameandcommandersearch.com) for eligibility review .

To be clear:

1. The reason the Lord Lyon is keen to see the Clan choose a single name is that the process of choosing a Commander is a step towards finding a Chief, and Lyon will recognise a Chief of Name and Arms.
2. Therefore, there must be a single Clan name- Chief of X makes sense, while Chief of X and X and Z does not.
3. This is not about renaming individual Clan Societies in fact it is not anticipated that any Society would change its name; there is no reason why an overall Clan name cannot encompass a variety of eligible surnames, and therefore Societies supporting particular surname variants:
  - Clan Donald encompasses the Various spelling of MacDonald, MacDonnell, Mac Domnhall etc.
  - Clan Dhail gathers together the surnames Davidson, Davidston, MacDavid, Dawson, etc.
  - Clan Alasdair covers MacAlister and also Alister (variously spelled) as well as Alexander
  - Clan Donnachaidh includes the surnames Roberston, McRoberts and also some Duncan, Duncanson and others
  - Clan Aonghais – MacInnes, MacInnes, McAngus, McCanse and others from Islay, Jura, Iona and the Kintyre, but not Innes which is separate and named for the barony of Innes in Moray.
4. Only those “of the Clan” may participate in the choice of a Name, and in the Family Convention. Therefore, there needs to be some agreement on what are the “eligible surnames”.
5. This is complicated by the fact that surnames may change over time. It was only recently that anyone had control over the spelling of their name – usually it was some clerk or registrar (e.g., a census taker or church officer) who wrote down what they heard. This happened often after emigration to America (but not at Ellis Island, where great care was taken and interpreters employed). Highlanders often gave their father’s name first as was the custom – the MacDonalds of Glencoe actually called themselves Maclain, after their patriarch Iain MacDonald. And, some people changed their names (such as removing the Mc or Mac) in order to fit in, not be identified as Scottish or Irish and so on. During the period when the MacGregors were outlawed and the surname proscribed (1603- 1774) many chose to be known as Gregor, Grigor, MacGeorge, and even White or (very often) Murray.  
So, all in all it’s a bit of a minefield.

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This was likely the thinking behind Dr Earle MacPhee trying to draw up such a list (illustrated below). His contention at that time<sup>1</sup> that there are “forty or fifty names ...who shared a common ancestor, the “MacDhubhsith”, is simply incorrect and not borne out by onomastic research.

Dr Earle MacPhee, made other statements that were incorrect including the following:

- **“The clan is registered as Clan MacFie or Clan Macfie”** – It is not clear where such a thing might be “registered”. Dr Earle MacPhee cites as his source Frank Adam’s *The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands*, which has since been found to be not the most reliable of books and which makes no such claim, and only cites four names associated with “Clan Macfie” (Duffie, Duffy, MacGuffie, Machaffie) some of which are not correct at all (see below) and excludes MacDuffie etc.;
- **“No other name of the clan has made application to be armigerous”** – that was not even true in 1981, as there were Arms granted to McGuffie, McHaffie, etc, which by Dr Earle MacPhee’s logic were considered acceptable surnames as part of the Macfie Clan (and since then, there have been other MacPhee, McPhie, MacDuffie etc. who have received Arms);
- **“The Armorial bearings of the Clan MacFie was given to MacFie of Dreghorn, not as a Chief but as an important Chieftain (Lyon Register VII, 89) P. 502”**. This is not correct as Clans do not have Armorial bearings, only individuals, and nowhere in the grants either to Robert Andrew Macfie of Dreghorn (1867) or earlier (1864) to Robert Macfie of Langhouse is there any mention of the word “Chieftain”, and nor could there be without a Chief in place;
- **“The Clan MacFie has four Septs: Duffie, Duffy, MacGuffie, Machaffie (p. 557)”** – the whole business or constructs of Septs is not historically correct. It was promoted by Frank Adam, writing ca. 1900 in Malaya and has been perpetuated by manufacturers of Scottish paraphernalia in their marketing and in some cases by Clan Societies for similar reasons;
- **“There is a Tartan for MacFie of Dreghorn. This tartan is sold as being proper for all members of the clan. The Lord Lyon has not been asked to determine this acceptance as a clan tartan. (p. 617)”** – the tartan Dr Earle MacPhee refers to was first depicted in the 1880 *Clans Originaux*<sup>2</sup> (as McPhee, and nothing to do with Macfie of Dreghorn) and then in W & A.K. Johnston’s book *Tartans of the Clans & Septs* (1906), later officially approved by then-Commander Alexander 'Sandy' McPhie and recorded by the Court of Lord Lyon LCB 79 dated 29th August 1991: and a fine tartan it is, but others have been registered since then with the Scottish Register of Tartan.<sup>3</sup>

There are multiple points in Dr Earle MacPhee’s treatise entitled: **THE MYTHOLOGY, TRADITIONS and HISTORY OF MacDHUBHSITH – MACDUFFIE CLAN (McAfie, McDuffie, MacFie, MacPhee, Duffy, etc.)** where cited historical data, regarding surnames, refers to MacDubhsith, MacDuffie or to Macfie as Chief over the centuries.

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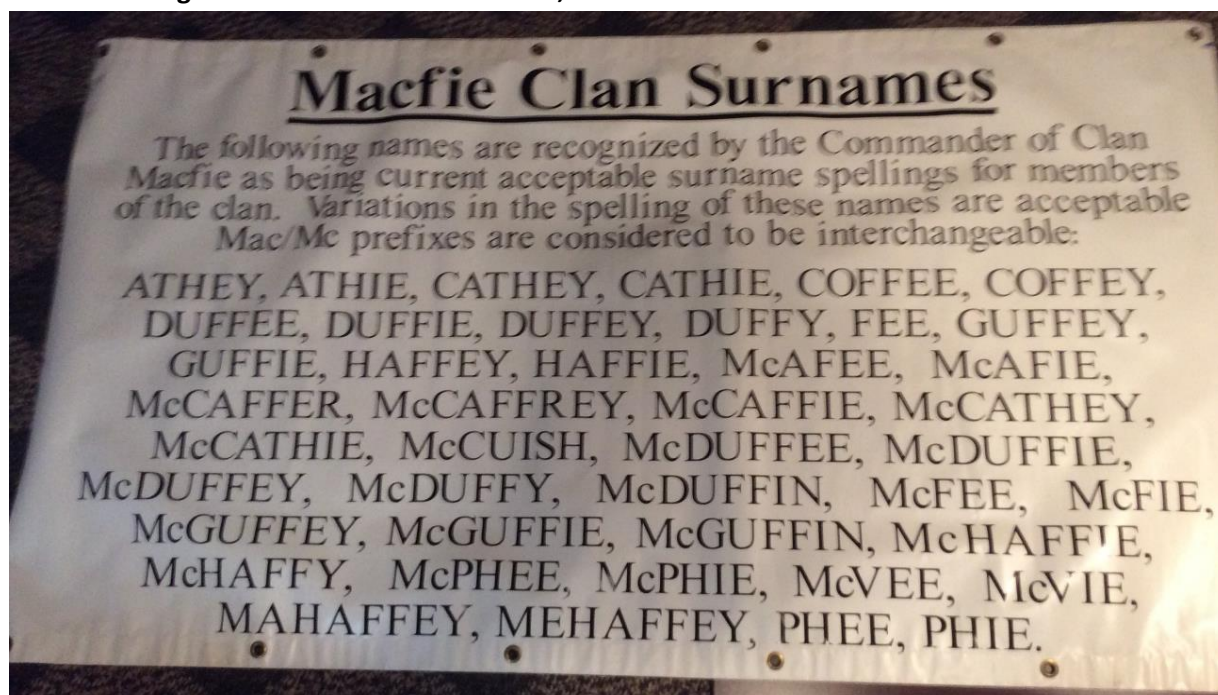
<sup>1</sup> Earle Douglas MacPhee. *The mythology, traditions and history of MacDhubhsith — MacDuffie clan* (1975) Vol. 1 p.1

<sup>2</sup> This was not a publication but a swatch book (a collection of tartan samples) found in Paris ca. 1880 used by J Claude Fres Et Cie who marketed tartan designs from Alsace – so, not even Scottish, although M. Claude likely copied the patterns of Scottish tartan weavers. Incidentally, the only known copy is in the hands of Pendleton Mills in Portland, Oregon, USA.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/qResults?searchString=Macfie>

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The list of “eligible names” referred to above, now discounted.



The following table summarises the best surname information currently to hand, and is the work of many scholars, historians, genealogists and others across the years.<sup>4</sup> Those considered actual variants of MacDuffie, Macfie, MacPhee etc. and derived from Mac Dubhsith or Mac Dhuibhshithe are marked with an asterisk \*.

<b>Athey</b>	Northern English topographic name from <i>atte hey</i> ‘at the enclosure’ – rare in Scotland.
<b>Athie</b>	See Athey – also rare in Scotland except around East Lothian.
<b>Cathey</b>	Short form of <i>MacCathie</i> , a Galloway surname of unknown etymology but possibly a variant of either <i>McCathen</i> (from <i>Mac Cathain</i> ) or <i>McCaughey</i> (from Gaelic <i>Mac Eochaidh</i> or <i>Mac Eochadha</i> ‘son of <i>Eochaidh</i> or <i>Eachaidh</i> ’ meaning ‘horseman’) and the origin of <i>McKechnie</i> , <i>MacEachern</i> .
<b>Cathie</b>	See Cathey.
<b>Coffee</b>	Irish: shortened Anglicized form of Gaelic <i>Ó Cathbhadha</i> ‘descendant of <i>Cathbhadh</i> ’ a byname meaning ‘battle tent’ <i>Ó Cathbhuadhaigh</i> ‘descendant of <i>Cathbhuadhach</i> ’ (‘battle victorious’) or <i>Ó Cathmhogha</i> ‘descendant of <i>Cathmhugh</i> ’ (‘battle slave’). shortened Anglicized form of Gaelic <i>Ó Cobhthaigh</i> ‘descendant of <i>Cobhthach</i> ’ a byname meaning ‘victorious’.  Coffee County, Georgia, is named after a Coffee family originally from England.
<b>Coffey</b>	Irish (Cork and Kildare) variant of Coffee.
<b>*Duffee</b>	Anglicized form of Gaelic <i>Mac Duibhshithe</i> (see <i>McDuffie</i> ).
<b>*Duffie</b>	As for Duffee.
<b>*Duffey</b>	As for Duffee.

<sup>4</sup> In this list, Mc and Mac (and indeed M’) are indistinguishable – the old myth that one is Irish and one Scottish has no basis in reality.

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<b>*Duffy</b>	Irish, shortened Anglicized form of <i>Ó Dubhthaigh</i> 'descendant of <i>Dubhthach</i> ' a byname derived from <i>dubh</i> 'black' (as in the unrelated Duff ), and the name of a 6 <sup>th</sup> Century Christian saint and archbishop of Armagh. Or, a shortened Anglicized form of <i>Mac Dhuibhshíthe</i> 'son of <i>Duibhshíth</i> '.
<b>Fee</b>	Usually Irish, a shortened form of O'Fee from the Gaelic <i>Ó Fiaich</i> , 'descendant of <i>Fiach</i> ' meaning 'raven'.
<b>Guffey</b>	Could be from Gaelic <i>Mac Dhuibhshíthe</i> but usually a shortened form of the variant McGuffey, from MacGuffog, a name from Galloway derived from <i>MacDabhog</i> , 'son of David'.
<b>Guffie</b>	See Guffey.
<b>Haffey</b>	Curtailed form of MacHaffie.
<b>Haffie</b>	Curtailed form of MacHaffie.
<b>*McAfee</b>	Some are doubtless from MacFee etc. but others may be spelling variants of McCaughey etc.
<b>*McAfie</b>	See McAfee.
<b>McCaffer</b>	Irish, from <i>Mac Cathbharra</i> , 'son of Cathbarr', or an abbreviated form of McCafferty.
<b>McCaffrey</b>	Irish, from <i>Mac Gafraidh</i> , 'son of Godfrey'.
<b>McCaffie</b>	Gaelic <i>Ó Cathbhadha</i> ; see Coffee.
<b>McCathey</b>	See McCathie.
<b>McCathie</b>	Could be an old Galloway surname, possibly a variant of <i>McCathen</i> or <i>Mac Catháin</i> (the origin of McKane) but it is most likely a spelling variant of McCaughey since <i>th</i> for <i>ch</i> or <i>gh</i> also occurs in some anglicized Irish spellings.
<b>*McCuish</b>	It seem that some <i>Mac Dubh Shíthe</i> made their way to North Uist and other islands, and the name became McCuish or Macowis/Macowish, and in the Isle of man, Kewish.
<b>*Mac Dhubhsíth</b>	With variant spellings (e.g., <i>Mac Dhuibhshíthe</i> ), from Dhubhsíth, one of the oldest personal names known, possibly from 'man of dark peace' composed of the elements <i>dubh</i> 'black' + <i>síth</i> 'peace' or 'otherworld dwelling', and the surname Macdufthi appears in a Dumfriesshire charter of Alexander II (r. 1214-1249) and perhaps linked to <i>Dubsidhe</i> , known to have been a cleric on Iona in 1164.
<b>*McDuffee</b>	Irish and Scottish: variant of McDuffie , from the Gaelic <i>Mac Duibhshíthe</i> 'son of <i>Duibhshíth</i> ' ..
<b>*McDuffie</b>	Scottish and Irish form of McDuffee - compare McAfee and Duffy
<b>*McDuffey</b>	As for McDuffie
<b>*McDuffy</b>	As for McDuffie
<b>McDuffin</b>	Unknown origin.
<b>*McFee</b>	Scottish and northern Irish variant of McPhee, from <i>Mac Duibhshíthe</i>
<b>*McFie</b>	As for McFee, MacPhie, etc., from <i>Mac Duibhshíthe</i> .
<b>McGuffey</b>	Wigtownshire an Kirkcudbrightshire variant of MacGuffog, itself possible from <i>Mac Dabhog</i> , 'son of David'.

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<b>McGuffie</b>	See McGuffey, MacGuffog
<b>McGuffin</b>	Irish variant of McGaffin, from the Gaelic patronymic <i>Mag Dhuibhfinn</i> from the personal name <i>Duibhfionn</i> , from <i>dubh</i> 'black' + <i>fionn</i> 'fair'.
<b>McHaffie</b>	Form of MacCaffie, a Wigtownshire name from <i>Mac Gille Chathbhiadh</i> , 'son of the follower of St. Cathbad
<b>McHaffy</b>	See McHaffie
<b>*McPhee</b>	Scottish: Anglicized form of Gaelic <i>Mac Dhuibhshíthe</i> 'son of <i>Duibhshíth</i> '.
<b>*McPhie</b>	Scottish: variant of McPhee, above.
<b>McVee</b>	From <i>Mac Bheatha</i> 'son of life' i.e., 'man of religion' the origin of MacBeth and McVey.
<b>McVie</b>	As McVee.
<b>Mahaffey</b>	Irish, variant of McHaffie from <i>Mac Gille Chathbhaidh</i> 'son of the servant of Saint Cathbhadh' (see Coffee, McHaffie).
<b>Mehaffey</b>	Variant of McHaffie, originally a Scottish name taken to Antrim in the 16 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>Phee</b>	Could be shortened form of MacPhee, or O'Fee (from Gaelic <i>Ó Fiaich</i> ) – see Fee
<b>Phie</b>	As for Phee.

Thus, the “forty or fifty” names derived from *Mac Dhuibhshíthe* and *Mac Duibhsíth* reduce to some six major names with spelling variants which could be considered part of Clan Dhubhsíth, Clan MacDuffie or Clan Macfie.

[Duffee, Duffie, Duffey, Duffy]  
[M(a)cAfee, M(a)cAfie]  
[M(a)cCuish] (this was a surprise! - BD)  
[M(a)cDuffee, M(a)cDuffie, M(a)cDuffey, M(a)cDuffy]  
[M(a)cFee, M(a)cFie]  
[M(a)cPhee, M(a)cPhie]

No doubt there are some people out there called Fee, Phee, and so on who can trace their lineages back to a Macfie, MacPhee, etc. in which case they should be considered eligible. The same might go for other surnames which have mutated over time. It should be up to the Applicant to prove the case.

And, of course, MacDuff is different.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, the famous 11<sup>th</sup> Century “MacDuff, Thane of Fife” is possibly a complete invention of Scottish chronicler John of Fordun (d. ca. 1384), later uncritically embellished by other Scottish writers such as Andrew Wyntoun (c. 1350 – c. 1425), Hector Boece (1465–1536) and George Buchanan (1506–1582), and polished to a high gleam by Shakespeare in *The Tragedie of Macbeth*: (ca. 1606). However, there is a Malisius MacDuf recorded in Fife in 1284 associated with the Earls of Strathearn (paternal line of the Durie family). In any case, this MacDuff surname from Fife is completely unrelated to MacDuffie etc. from the Inner Hebrides (Colonsay, Oronsay, Mull, Islay, Jura, etc.).

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