

Origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) Surname

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This is a status report about research and analysis into the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname, which has a single genetic origin. It does not address the origin of the Norman Becket(t)/Bicket(t) surname which appears to be locative, with many different lineages all unrelated within historical timeframes. (See the separate document on the origin of the Norman Becket(t)/Bicket(t) surname. There is also a separate document on the origin of the Bichan surname, which is part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree, but has its own more specific origin story.)

This document refers to the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname, placing the 'i' version first, because 'i' versions of the surname predominated in earlier historical records. Changes to the Becket(t) variants have been comparatively more recent.

This document has been produced for the Becket(t)/Bicket(t)/Bichan one-name study at <https://bicket.one-name.blog>. Feedback will be appreciated, especially concerning section 6 if you know of any other documented theories about the origin of the name. Please write to bicket@one-name.org.

This status report addresses the following:

1.	Origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname: summary	2
2.	Summary bases for conclusions.....	2
3.	Current DNA evidence and implications	3
4.	Historical evidence	6
5.	The Ayrshire origin assertion.....	7
6.	Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins.....	8
7.	The Biggar origin theory	9
8.	Predictions	10
9.	Scholarly findings concerning Scottish surname origins and spelling changes.....	11
10.	Published theories about the origins of the Scottish Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname.....	12
	Annex 1: Chart of Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) Tree Genetic Relationships.....	16
	Annex 2: Branches of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) Tree.....	18
	Annex 3. Variant/Deviant Spellings.....	21
	Annex 4. Explanation of Y-DNA technology.....	22
	Change log	28
	References	28

1. Origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname: summary

We do not have firm evidence about the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname. We do have firm evidence about the genetic origin of the branch, but this does not give convincing evidence for the origin of the surname itself.

According to our best current Y-DNA information, surnames were established for a distinct group of related Ayrshire lineages starting around 1250, including the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) lineage.

The individual who was the immediate ancestor of most Bicket(t)/Becket(t) branches had three Y-DNA mutations beyond the time when many of those lineages were established, which might indicate multiple generations. Furthermore, Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) estimates that the 'most recent common ancestor' for the 22 branches that descended from him was born around 1400. This suggests a possible explanation for the origin of the surname, namely that the person with the first mutation may have left for the nearby town of Biggar, with his descendants returning to Ayrshire one or two generations later, at which time they might have been called Biggarts because of where they had returned from. But this is only one possible origin explanation.

There is no evidence that the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname has any relationship to the Norman/English Beckett surname, which is discussed in a separate document.

This document does not discuss, except in passing, issues related to changes in the spelling of the surname. It is intended to cover these issues in a separate document.

This document refers to the branches by their original letter designations, e.g. branch B or branch X6. Their designations for the overall Becket(t)/Bicket(t)/Bichan project are preceded by 1009, e.g. branch 1009B or 1009X6. A list of all Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) branches is given in Annex 2. See also

<https://onedrive.live.com/?id=1FE384D2363F14D3%21s91ab2abcc6014aa5b2f8cad383fad1f9&cid=1FE384D2363F14D3>.

2. Summary bases for conclusions

The evidence and views cited above are explained in more detail in the remaining sections of this document:

- **Y-DNA.** Extensive Y-DNA testing with 31 males has demonstrated that their lineages are genetically linked within historical timeframes, in particular since about 1150, with most lineages linked significantly later. This Y-DNA testing has also revealed unexpected findings, such as when surnames were established for this and several other lineages in Ayrshire. It has revealed how effective adoptions were responsible for many name changes in those early centuries, some quite possibly as a result of the bubonic plague. (See 3 Current DNA evidence and implications)
- **Historical evidence.** There is little historical evidence for the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname, but we summarize what little exists, for information purposes. (See 4 Historical evidence and 9 Scholarly findings concerning Scottish surname origins and spelling changes).

- **Ayrshire origin.** There is no explicit documentary evidence for the origin of the surname in Ayrshire. However, there is fairly strong circumstantial evidence that it originated there. (See 5 The Ayrshire origin assertion)
- **Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins.** The origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname needs to be understood in the context of the other surnames which were established at the same time. A summary is also given of possible theories. (See 6 Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins)
- **The Biggart origin theory.** A potential explanation for the origin of the surname is a possible connection with the market town of Biggar, within 30 miles of Ayrshire, close to two of Scotland's main rivers, the Clyde and the Tweed. (See 7 Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins)
- **Published theories.** Other theories about the origin of the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname are also discussed. (See 10 Published theories about the origins of the Scottish Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname)
- **Fluid surname spellings.** Within broad limits, surname spellings have been fairly fluid over time. Some brief information about this issue is given. (See 9 Scholarly findings concerning Scottish surname origins and spelling changes).

Some predictions are made about possible future findings as a result of further Y-DNA testing. (See 8 Predictions)

Appendices are included which cover

- **Genetic relationship chart of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree** (Annex 1)
- **A list of known branches of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree** (Annex 2)
- **Variant/deviant spellings** (Annex 3)
- **Explanation of DNA technology** (Annex 4)

3. Current DNA evidence and implications

The Becket(t)/Bicket(t)/Bichan project primarily uses Y-DNA testing which is different from the autosomal DNA testing used by most people doing DNA testing.

Y-DNA evidence is exceptionally powerful for determining male relationships which occurred centuries ago, because it relies on the Y-DNA which is passed down unchanged from father to son except for occasional mutations which are then also passed down. This is in contrast to autosomal DNA which is powerful for finding close living relations on all sides, but which loses relevance the further back in time one goes, because it assesses the mixed DNA from all preceding ancestors on all sides. Annex 4 gives more information about the technology of DNA testing, focusing on Y-DNA testing. The rest of this section discusses the actual evidence for the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree and its implications.

As of June 2025, 31 male individuals from 28 different branches have tested using the Big Y 700 test from Family Tree DNA in Houston, Texas, showing that all of these branches are genetically related within historical timeframes, in particular since about 1150. (Many others have also tested, such as individuals with Norman origins, or using other DNA tests, but this analysis is only concerned with these genetically connected testers and branches as shown by the Big Y 700 test.)

Annex 1 is a chart showing the results of this Big Y testing, with the 'signature' mutations which tell us how the different branches diverged from one another, and approximately when. There are several major observations to make about this genetic tree (or 'haplotree').

- **A single common ancestor for most.** Twenty-two branches all descend from one single common ancestor, born around 1400. This person had three signature mutations (FT104740, FTB88192, and FT219207), and every one of his descendants in all 22 of those branches also has these same three signature mutations.
- **When surnames were established.** Surnames started being established for a number of different surname lineages starting in approximately 1250. (This was also probably when most surnames started being established in the part of Scotland including Ayrshire.) This is shown because there was an individual (before surnames were established) with a signature mutation Y-13224, which FTDNA estimates to have been born around 1250. (All of this person's descendants carry this mutation.) This person's descendants, however, have five different sets of unique mutations, each corresponding to different surname groupings, one of which is the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) group. These groupings and their respective signature mutations are:
 - **Faulkner/Faulconer (also Reynolds).** The signature mutations (SNPs) are Z21729, Y13835, and Z21750.
 - **Wylie/Willie/Wiley (also Findley, Hendricks, and Brown).** The signature mutations (SNPs) are Z40803 and FT94737.
 - **Bicket(t)/Becket(t).** The signature mutations (SNPs) are FT104740, FTB88192, and FT219207.
 - **Culverson/Culbertson (also Graham).** The signature mutations (SNPs) are Z39132 and FT160481.
 - **Adams.** The signature mutation (SNP) is BY98989.

We cannot state for certain which surnames were established back at this point in time, but we do know the surnames of current Big Y testers whose DNA takes them back to then. The predominance of certain surnames in each group suggests that those surnames may have been the original ones established, and they are all reasonably common in Ayrshire, and many trace their own lineages back to Ayrshire. Other surnames included in these groupings may be due to unofficial adoptions (e.g., due to the plague) or illegitimacies.

- **Name changes through effective adoptions.** There are a number of name changes, both to and from the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname, which are not explained just by genetics. In particular:
 - **Six branches of the Beckett, Becket, and Bichan surname which descend from people born before the ‘single common ancestor for most’, and not descended from him.** (These are the four V branches, and also the X1 and X6 branches.) The ancestors of these branches were born two or three mutations (perhaps 160 – 300 years) before surnames were established. The communities they and their descendants inhabited at these times were small and sometimes impacted by events like the bubonic plague, which passed through the lowlands of Scotland in several waves. It would have been common for a woman with children, who lost her husband due to accident, illness, or disease to remarry, and for all of the family to take on the surname of the new husband. It would have required only two such effective adoptions by later Bicket(t)/Becket(t) men to have explained the one grouping of V-branch Becketts, and the second grouping of the Kilwinning Becket and Orkney Bichan branches which did not descend from the ‘single common ancestor for most’.

Incidentally, FTDNA estimates that the most recent common ancestor for the four V sub-branches was born in 1500. The V branch was the first to diverge from the overall tree, but it would have diverged before 1500, with this just being the estimated date for the birth of the person with all four of the V branch’s signature mutations.

- **Wylie branch within the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree.** The effective adoption principle also works in the reverse direction. There is a living branch of Wylies which is genetically part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree, but which does not carry the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname. This branch connects genetically into the tree fairly early, but still descends from the ‘single common ancestor for most’. (In other words, all of these Wylies will have all of the signature Bicket(t)/Becket(t) mutations of the ‘single common ancestor for most’.) The most logical explanation for this is that a woman with a son lost her Bicket(t)/Becket(t) husband, and remarried to a Wylie. This probably happened around 1500. The fact that Wylies were common in the area (as indicated by the surname clusters explained above) is consistent with such a re-marriage.
- **Time break for the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) lineage.** The fact that there are three signature mutations for the ‘common ancestor for most’ creates some ambiguity around exactly when the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname was established. See 7 The Biggar origin theory.
- **A true single ancestor.** The single common ancestor of most Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) branches is mentioned above. However, it is also possible to identify a single common ancestor of ALL Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) branches. This is the single person who would have had the signature mutations before the V branch diverged, at the top of the chart in Annex 1. FTDNA estimates that he would have been born around 1150. This person is identified as having four signature mutations, namely Z21742, FT105080, FT105355, and FT219216. Every single direct-line male descendant in the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree will have these same four mutations, in addition to

other mutations which are the signature mutations for subsequent branchings. However, this person is also the ancestor of the four additional Becket/Beckett/Bichan surname clusters described above.

- **The tree will grow.** We do not create the evolutionary genetic tree (or 'haplotree'), but we merely discover it. As more branches of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree test, we will learn how they fit into the haplotree, and it may also slightly adjust our current understanding of the haplotree. For example, if there are multiple signature mutations shown together, it means that we do not know the exact order in which those mutations occurred. If we find a tester in the future who has just one of those multiple mutations, it will tell us that his mutation occurred first, and that his branch diverged from the tree at that point.
- **DNA can help connect lineages in historical records.** We have already connected two different pairs of lineages in historical records with the assistance of Y-DNA. One pair is the H and R branches (with the R branch now being called the HR branch). The second pair is the D and N branches (with the N branch now being called the DN branch). We expect that we will eventually be able to do this with further branches, such as the B and O branches which are closely related genetically and both of which can be traced back to the Megswell Farm in Kilwinning.

4. Historical evidence

There is little historical evidence about the early periods of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree. Effectively there is no meaningful genealogical evidence at all until parish registers are established. As a case in point, the earliest parish records for Fenwick, one of the hotbeds of Bicket(t)/Becket(t)s, are in 1643. Nearby Kilmarnock initially included Fenwick, but its surviving parish records only start in 1640. (In any case, many of these early registers have limited information, have gaps, and are sometimes difficult to read.) The problems persisted even after parish records started, however, because Ayrshire was a hotbed of religious dissent, often with a majority of the people attending dissenting churches which did not keep birth, marriage, and death records, or if they did, most of those records did not survive. It was not until 1855, with the advent of statutory civil registration in Scotland, that the situation improved significantly.

Jim Beckett (of the J branch in the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree) has downloaded all parish register BMD records relevant to this tree we can identify on ScotlandsPeople (the official Scottish Government website) prior to 1855, including images of the source records. He also made transcriptions directly from the source records, which often include details (such as the farms where people lived, their marriage numbers, and child numbers) not shown in the BMD summary information which is more generally available. All of this information is available to anyone wishing to work with it, including the source images (subject to copyright restrictions as to how they can be published.)

The spelling of the surname in those records varies considerably. See Annex 3 for a list of some of the surname variants and deviant spellings found.

Some examples to demonstrate the nature of these issues are the following:

- **Number of people attending dissenting churches.** There were many dissenting churches in the areas of Ayrshire which were hotbeds for Bicket(t)/Becket(t)s, and most

people attended these. In general they did not keep birth, marriage, and death records, or if they did, most did not survive. The Third Statistical Account of Scotland states the following concerning churches in Fenwick and Kilmarnock.

- For Fenwick: “Religion has played a large and often a stormy part in the life of the parish. ... following the forced settlement of the Rev. William Boyd on the parish in 1780, practically the whole population went over to the Secession Church...”ⁱ
- For Kilmarnock: “Two hundred years ago [*published in 1951, so 1751*] there was only one church in Kilmarnock... The number of churches greatly increased in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the vexed question of patronage, and other issues in church government resulted in a complex series of disputes and secessions.”ⁱⁱ
- **Gavin Bicket.** Despite extensive searching, it has not been possible to find any official Scottish records for the existence of Gavin Bicket, a member of the T branch who went from Fenwick to southern Illinois in May 1840. The only record which has been found (in the 1970s) was held in the trunk of the last elderly niece of the last minister of the last dissenting church in Fenwick. It was a record of regular donations to a missionary society where his name was listed with regular contributions ending at the time he left for the States.
- **Post-1855 Statutory Records.** Early Scottish statutory records (starting in 1855) sometimes recorded if the people getting married had previously been recorded in parish registers. We have examples where people stated that they had not been so recorded.

5. The Ayrshire origin assertion

We cannot prove absolutely that the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree originated in Ayrshire, Scotland. However, the circumstantial evidence is strong:

- **Ayrshire origins for Bicket(t)/Becket(t) branches.** The majority of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree branches (twelve or fourteen – depending on how they are counted) can be traced back to Ayrshire, largely in the 1700s. Two more can be traced back to Paisley (just to the north), and one to Orkney, in the far north, also largely in the 1700s. Four or five (depending on how they are counted) can be traced back to northern Ireland in the 1700s, but northern Ireland was known to be settled extensively by people from Ayrshire. The V branch (with 4 sub-branches, but all with exactly the same signature mutations) can be traced the farthest back, to around 1660, all in northern Ireland, but the earliest of these branches states that it came from England. It is genetically part of the Ayrshire tree, although it is the very first one to split off, so it well could have gone first to England before later migrating to northern Ireland.

FTDNA furthermore shows the self-reported earliest known paternal country of origin for all testers in the 22 branches which have descended from the ‘single common ancestor for most’. These are: Scotland 16, Ireland 3, Northern Ireland 1, and United States 1.

- **Likely Ayrshire origins for related surname clusters.** The other surname clusters which originated at the same time as the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname cluster all carry reasonably typical Ayrshire names. Some are particularly Scottish (e.g. Wylie, Findley, Culbertson, and Graham).

FTDNA shows the self-reported earliest known paternal country of origin for all testers which have descended from the 'true single ancestor'. This includes ALL Bicket(t)/Becket(t)/Bichan branches, plus all of the related surname clusters. These are: Scotland 25, United States 8, Ireland 7, Northern Ireland 5, England 1, United Kingdom 1, and unknown origin 19.

6. Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins

There is no conclusive evidence about the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname. The best we can do is to assess circumstantial evidence.

- **Nothing before ca 1400 ('the single common ancestor for most').** The Y-DNA evidence cited earlier demonstrates that many different surnames originated starting about the same time in the same genetic lineage. There is nothing to indicate that the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname had any earlier origin.
- **Nature of surnames adopted by related branches when surnames were established.** The surnames adopted by related branches when surnames were established are all reasonably 'generic', i.e., there are reasonable common explanations for why people would have been given those surnames. For example (in part from Family Search, using the Dictionary of American Family Names):
 - o Wylie (and variants). Could be a Scots pet form of the personal name William. Or a surname given to the descendants of a William. Alternatively, the descendants of someone who was considered clever or 'wily'.
 - o Culbertson (and variants). Son of Culbert.
 - o Findley (and variants). Common name, from 'white' or 'fair'.
 - o Brown (and variants). Describes the person's hair or complexion.
 - o Hendricks (and variants). Surname from the personal name Hendrick (a variant of Henry).
 - o Reynolds (and variants). Surname from the personal name Reynold.
 - o Faulkner/Falconer (and variants). Occupational name for person who handles falcons.

Based on these observations, there is no reason to assume that the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname established around the same time has any more significant origin or meaning. The question is what that origin might be.

There is nothing to suggest any connection with the Norman Becket(t) surname and its origins, i.e., there is nothing to suggest a connection with France and with the French variants of the surname such as Becquet. Indeed, the DNA evidence indicating a Scottish origin, with multiple surnames established only after about 1250 through perhaps 1400, argue strongly against any Norman or French connection.

Currently there is no known documentary evidence for any particular theory about the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname. The following are possibilities, and this list will be updated if others are identified.

- **The Biggar origin theory.** See 7 The Biggar origin theory.
- **Pocket origin theory.** According to the Scottish National Dictionary, ‘bicket’ was an old Scots word meaning ‘pocket’. An example cited was “Hid was a bonnie playfair [plaything] for ony ane tae hae i’ his bickets.”ⁱⁱⁱ This origin theory seems unlikely, because of its lack of comparability with how other surnames are formed. The spelling ‘bicket’ is also unlikely to have been one of the earliest surname spelling variants.
- **Bick/Beck head origin theory.** Black in his publication “Surnames of Scotland” gives ‘-et’ and ‘-ett’ as suffixes that can be used to denote ‘head of’. He cites it under Beckett as a possible meaning, i.e., residence at the ‘Beck-Head’, but not under Bicket(t). (See 10 Published theories about the origins of the Scottish Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname.) This may work for names derived from the French, but not for Scottish surnames. In researching the Scottish National Dictionary, there are no Scots meanings for Bick or Beck which are location-based. Those listed relate only to a dog, sounds (of or like a grouse, or to call a grouse), or bending (bow or curtsy).

7. The Biggar origin theory

Based on research done in the 1970s and early 1980s, it was theorized that the Bicket(t) surname had derived from the surname Biggart, which would have designated someone who had moved into the area from the town of Biggar. However, the Y-DNA evidence does not strongly support those assessments. There may still be a link with Biggar, but it is not conclusive.

The modified theory which still asserts a link with Biggar is this: a person who was a direct ancestor of the main Bicket(t)/Becket(t) lineages could have left Ayrshire and moved to Biggar. (This person might have had only one of the three mutations of the eventual ‘single common ancestor for most’.) Biggar was a significant market town about 30 miles from Ayrshire, located close to two major Scottish rivers, the Clyde and the Tweed. If the move ultimately was not successful, and he or one of his sons or grandsons (with all three mutations) returned to Ayrshire when surnames were becoming used, then they could understandably be labelled as being the ones associated with Biggar, or Biggarts. This could then have morphed into Biggat or Bichat and Bichet (both pronounced with a hard ‘ch’ as in ‘loch’), and eventually Bicket.

There are many lineages of the Biggar and Biggart surnames, which may reflect people living elsewhere who earlier lived in Biggar. It would be a locative name, so it would be highly unlikely

that most of them with that surname today would have any genetic relationship to the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree within historical periods

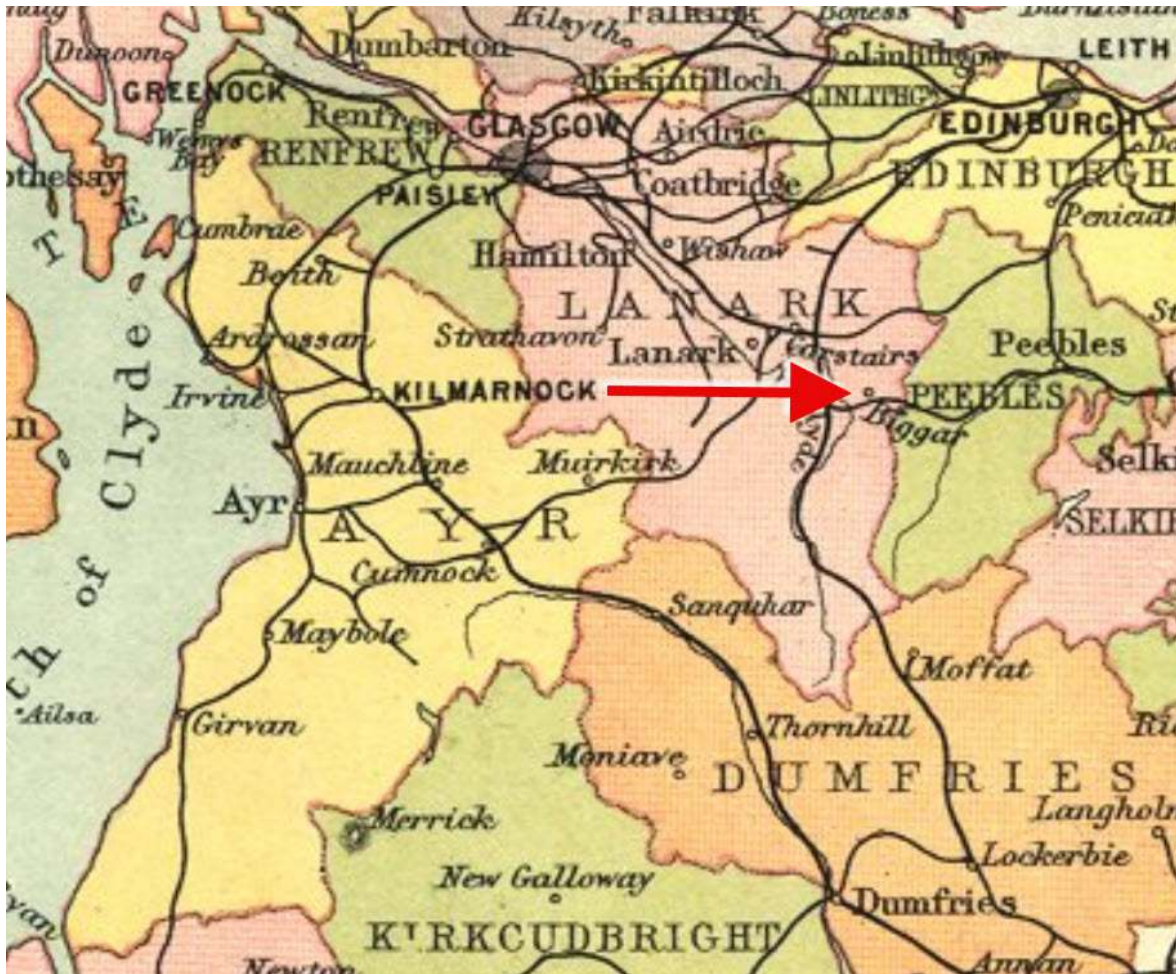


Figure 1 1886 map showing locations of Ayrshire and Biggar with railroads (from maproom.co.uk)

There have been Biggarts living in Fenwick at the same time as Bickets. We have not tried to trace living descendants of those Biggarts to see if they might be related. It could also be interpreted that there is no likely genetic connection between Biggarts and Bickets if both continued to live in the same area, as it would be difficult to understand why one lineage would have its surname spelling change, while the other stayed the same, in the same location.

8. Predictions

Based on the information and analyses in this document, the following are developments which might happen in the future:

- **V Branch English Relations.** Because the oldest documented V branch (Vb) considers that it came from England, but also because it is clearly genetically part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree, it is possible that we will someday find testers in England, or testers who trace their lineages back to England, who are actually part of the Ayrshire V branch rather than of Norman origins.

- **Biggarts in Fenwick and elsewhere in Ayrshire.** It would be interesting to Y-DNA test any Biggarts who trace their lineages back to Ayrshire, and in particular to Fenwick, to see if they are possibly part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree.
- **Genetic relations which trace back to Biggar.** If the speculation is correct that the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname reflects that the family spent some time in Biggar before returning to Ayrshire, then it is possible that some of the family remained in Biggar and did not return. They would not have had the Biggar/Biggart surname because that would only have been potentially given to people who had left. If any descendants of those who remained ever did Y-DNA tests, it might be shown that they are part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree.

9. Scholarly findings concerning Scottish surname origins and spelling changes

A major source of information about surname origins for this document is “The Surnames Handbook: A Guide to Family Name Research in the 21st Century” by Debbie Kennett.^{iv} It includes the following:

Scotland is culturally divided into the Highlands and the Lowlands. In the Middle Ages, the Highlanders spoke Gaelic, a Celtic language, and the Lowlanders spoke Scots, a Germanic language with a close relationship to English. These cultural and linguistic divisions are reflected in the development of surnames in Scotland.

... Most landed families had surnames by about 1300, but the adoption of surnames was a gradual process and surnames were not generally adopted in the Scots-speaking regions until at least the sixteenth century.^v

Based on the Y-DNA evidence discussed above in 3 (Current DNA evidence and implications), surnames were established for a group of surnames in Ayrshire including for Bicket(t)/Becket(t) starting around 1400, i.e., the fifteenth century.

However, this did not mean that the spelling of the surname was fixed. P. H. Reaney in his 1967 book “The Origin of English Surnames” makes a statement which is almost certainly just as true for Scottish surnames as for English surnames.

The man who says his name was always spelled as it is today is talking rank nonsense. The modern form of very many of our surnames is due to the spelling of some sixteenth- or seventeenth-century parson or clerk, or even to one of later date. It is not a matter of illiteracy in our sense of the word. These parsons who kept the parish registers were men of some education. Their ability to read cannot be questioned, but they had no guide to the spelling of names. It was the printing-press which gradually established a recognized system of spelling. That of Tudor and Stuart England was very different from ours, and the spelling of many of our words is not earlier than Dr Johnson’s Dictionary. But there was no recognised spelling for names. A great part of the population was illiterate. Their names were written only at birth or marriage or death, or if they happened to come within the clutches of the law. Then they gave their names orally and the clerk put them into writing as best he could. He wrote them down phonetically, using his own system of spelling, sometimes spelling the same name in different ways at different times, and it is this variation in spelling which often gives us the clue to the real origin and meaning of the surname.”^{vi}

See Annex 3 for a partial list of variant and deviant spellings within the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree.

10. Published theories about the origins of the Scottish Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname

Significant sources claiming information about the origins of the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) are considered here. However, it can be seen that these do not have any historical evidence for their claims, but they are rather speculations based on similarities of spellings with other words and names. They are valuable, however, for the early citations they give of the name or variant/deviant spellings.

There are two main types of sources relevant for Scotland for theories about the origin of surnames in Scotland. One is sources for information specifically on Scottish surnames. There are also more generic books on the origin of surnames. Both types are considered here.

George Fraser Black's 'The Surnames of Scotland: Their Origin, Meaning and History' originally published in 1946, and reprinted many times since then, is sometimes considered the definitive work on the subject. An edition was published in 2015, with amendments and additions provided by his daughter Mary Elder Black.

For the purpose of understanding the origin of the Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname, Black's book has a number of inconsistencies and therefore limitations. The 2022 reprint of the 1946 edition gives the following information, with comments added [in red]:

BICKET, BICKETT. Local, from Bequet, Bechet, or Le Becquet in Oise. [These assertions are more relevant to the Norman Becketts, a separate name origin. Oise is immediately to the east of Normandy.] Surety was found for James Bichat in East Teviotdail, 1569 (RPC., I, p. 661). [Possibly from a Norman Beckett lineage having come north, with a localized spelling.] Peter Bichet, merchant burges of Edinburgh, 1646 (*Inquis.*, 3126). [Possibly from a Norman Beckett lineage having come north, with a localized spelling.] Isobel Bichet in Lidgertwood, 1664 (*Lauder*). [Possibly from a Norman Beckett lineage having come north, with a localized spelling.] James Bichett in Hareschaw, 1666, and John Bichet in Hareschaw was cautioner for another, 1675 (*Corsehill*, p. 68, 124). [These are probably Ayrshire tree members, as there is a Hareshaw in Fenwick, Ayrshire with tree members.] Thomas Bickett was herd in Danzielstoun, 1682 (RRM., III, p. 52). [This is probably an Ayrshire tree member, as Danzielstoun is a district of Glasgow, where many tree members moved.] Robert Bighet in Kilmarnock, 1688 (RPC., 3. ser. XIII, p. 241). [This is probably an Ayrshire tree member as Kilmarnock is one of the main locations where tree members lived.] Thomas Bickitt, portioner of Bowden, 1692, and William Bicket, portioner there, 1810 (*Heirs*, 117, 573). [Possibly from a Norman Beckett lineage having come north, with a localized spelling.] Mr. Thomas Bichett minister at Middlebie, 1743 (*Dumfries*). [Possibly an Ayrshire tree member, as a number were ministers and would have been sent to other parishes.]

[Summary: Black includes a number of spellings under his BICKET/BICKETT listing, namely BICKET, BICKETT, BICKITT, BICHAT, BICHET, BICHETT, and BIGHET. He does not cite any with 'E' (as in BECKET or BECKETT). Those in the south-east of Scotland might be from Norman lineages which have gone north. If that is correct, their surname spellings have been 'localized' as if they were in the Ayrshire tree. This is probably simply a reflection of how Scots heard and represented the name in writing, regardless of where the lineage actually came from.]

BECKETT. An old surname found in the neighborhood of Melrose. [This is in the area of south-east Scotland where it is possible that people from Norman lineages had migrated. It reflects the more Norman spelling of the name, but others living in the same area were recorded with 'i' versions of the name, as suggested in the BICKET/BICKETT entry above.] It may be an abbreviation of Benedict. Old forms are Becket, Bicket, [!!! This is inconsistent with the listing for BICKET above, where there is no suggested connection to the BECKETT spelling.] and Bychat. [This is yet another variant spelling.]

Harrison says from French Béchet or Béquet, or (2) from residence at the Beck-Head. [In his introduction, Black discusses common letter changes, etc, where he states that '-et, -ett represent -head in surnames derived from place names.' Logically this would also possibly apply to BICK-ET and BICK-ETT, but Black does not suggest this in his entry for BICKET/BICKETT.]

[Summary: Black does not give any meaningful consideration to the variation of spelling of the same surname between the 'I' and 'E' versions, although he does cite an 'I' version as an old form of the 'E' version. He also covers the 'et/ett' suffix issue here, but fails to mention it for BICKET/BICKETT.]

BIGGART. Local, probably from Biggart near Lugton, Ayrshire. [This is just north of Stewarton, another hotbed of Bicket(t)/Becket(t)s in Ayrshire.] There is also a Biggarts near Beattock, Dumfriesshire. [Beattock is close to Ayrshire.] Math Biggait, tenant of Wattishill, 1591, is indexed under Biggart (RPC., IV, p. 650). [It is unknown where Wattishill is located.] Adam Bighart appears in Edinburgh, 1612, and Janet Biggait in 1700 (Edinb. Marr.). [Black cites Biggait under BIGGART, although this spelling does not include an 'r'.] Bigard 1607.

[Summary: Black locates the BIGGART surname in or near Ayrshire, suggesting a connection. He also cites BIGGAI under BIGGART, although it does not contain an 'r', and would seem more likely a variant of BICKET. Black does not suggest any connection between BIGGART and BIGGAR, although in his introduction he does note that 't' can be added to the end of surnames.]

BIGGAR. From the old barony, now the parish of the same name in Lanarkshire. ...

It may also be noted that all of the Becketts in the north of Ireland (including in County Antrim) who have been Y-DNA tested as part of the Becket(t)/Bicket(t)/Bichan one-name study are members of the Ayrshire Becket(t)/Bicket(t)/Bichan tree, with one exception, for someone whose great grandfather was known to be illegitimate. There are likewise a number of other branches of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree which have emigrated to other countries and changed their surname spelling to Beckett. This means that the Beckett spelling, often, and in northern Ireland in particular, does not reflect the Norman surname origin, but the Ayrshire tree origin. This might be referred to as 'surname migration'. It is intended to address this topic more in a separate paper on surname spelling changes.

ScotlandsPeople has also published information on Scottish surnames and variants^{vii}. It includes the following text:

Permanent surnames began to be used in Scotland around the 12th century, but were initially mainly the preserve of the upper echelons of Scottish society. However, it gradually became necessary to distinguish ordinary people one from the other by more than just the given name and the use of Scottish surnames spread. ...

Many of the first permanent surnames are territorial in origin...

A significant amount of surnames are derived from the occupations of their owners...

Many Scottish surnames originated in patronymics, whereby a son's surname derived from the father's forename, for example John Donaldson's son might be Peter Johnson, whose son might be Magnus Peterson, and so on. Patronymics present something of a challenge for the family historian in that the surname changed with each successive generation. This practice died out in Lowland Scotland after the 15th century, as patronymic surnames became permanent family names. ...

The more generic sources about the origins of surnames are less helpful. To the extent that they are helpful, it is mostly with respect to the Norman Beckett surname, not the Scottish Ayrshire surname.

The **Dictionary of American Family Names 2nd edition, 2022^{viii}** is cited by Ancestry. (Family Search cites the 2003/2006 version of this book.) It gives the following information about Bicket and Bickett, with which this paper strongly disagrees, as regards the origin of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname:

Bicket Surname Meaning

Scottish (of Norman origin): habitational name from any of the places called Bequet, Bechet, or Le Becquet in Oise, France.

This form of the surname is most common in Ayrshire.

Compare Bickett.

Bickett Surname Meaning

English and Scottish (of Norman origin): habitational name from Bequet, Bechet, or Le Becquet in Oise, France.

This form of the surname is most common in Lancashire.

Compare Bicket.

Possibly an Americanized form of German Bickhart.

The most scholastic published theories and speculations about the origins of the (Norman) Beckett surname are probably those from the 2016 **Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland^x**. It states:

Beckett

Variants: Beckitt, Becket

Current frequencies: GB 9982, Ireland 551

- GB frequency 1881: 5949
- Main GB location 1881: widespread: esp. Norfolk and Suffolk
- Main Irish location 1847-64: Antrim

1 Norman, English, Irish: nickname from Old French, Middle English beket 'small beak' (a diminutive of Old French bee 'beak or mouth'), perhaps with reference to someone with a small beak-like mouth (compare Beak), though the Middle English word appears to have had a wide range of 'pointed object' applications including 'a corbel', 'a kind of arrow', 'a kind of bird', and 'a kind of fish'.

Early bearers: William Bechet, Beckett, about 1155 in Danelaw Documents (Lincs); Robert Beket, 1176 in Feet of Fines (Berks) Thoma Beket, 1379 in Poll Tax (North Duffield, ER Yorks); Robertus Beket, 1379 in Poll Tax (Burton in Lonsdale, WR Yorks); Johanna Beket, 1381 in Poll Tax (Weasenham, Norfolk); Hugo Beket, 1381 in Poll Tax (Formby, Lancs); Alicia Beket, 1381 in Poll Tax (Plungar, Leics); Johannes Beket, 1381 in Poll Tax (Donnington, Gloucs); Agatha Beket, 1381 in Poll Tax (Hambledon, Hants); Willia. Beckett, 1539 in IGI (Limpsfield, Surrey); Robertus Beckett, 1540 in IGI (Betley, Staffs); Roger Beckett, 1541 in IGI (Ipswich, Suffolk); John Beckett, 1546 in IGI (Margaret Roding, Essex); Jhon. Beckett, 1553 in IGI (Rothwell, WR Yorks).

2 English: locative name from Beckett in Shrevenham (Berks).

Early bearers: [... de] Becote, 1179-80, [... de] Beccote, 1284 in Place-Names of Berks (Berks); John de Beckcote, 1279 in Hundred Rolls (Oxon); John de Beckote, 1351 in Patent Rolls (Berks); Ricardo Becot, 1379 in Poll Tax (Worthington, Leics).

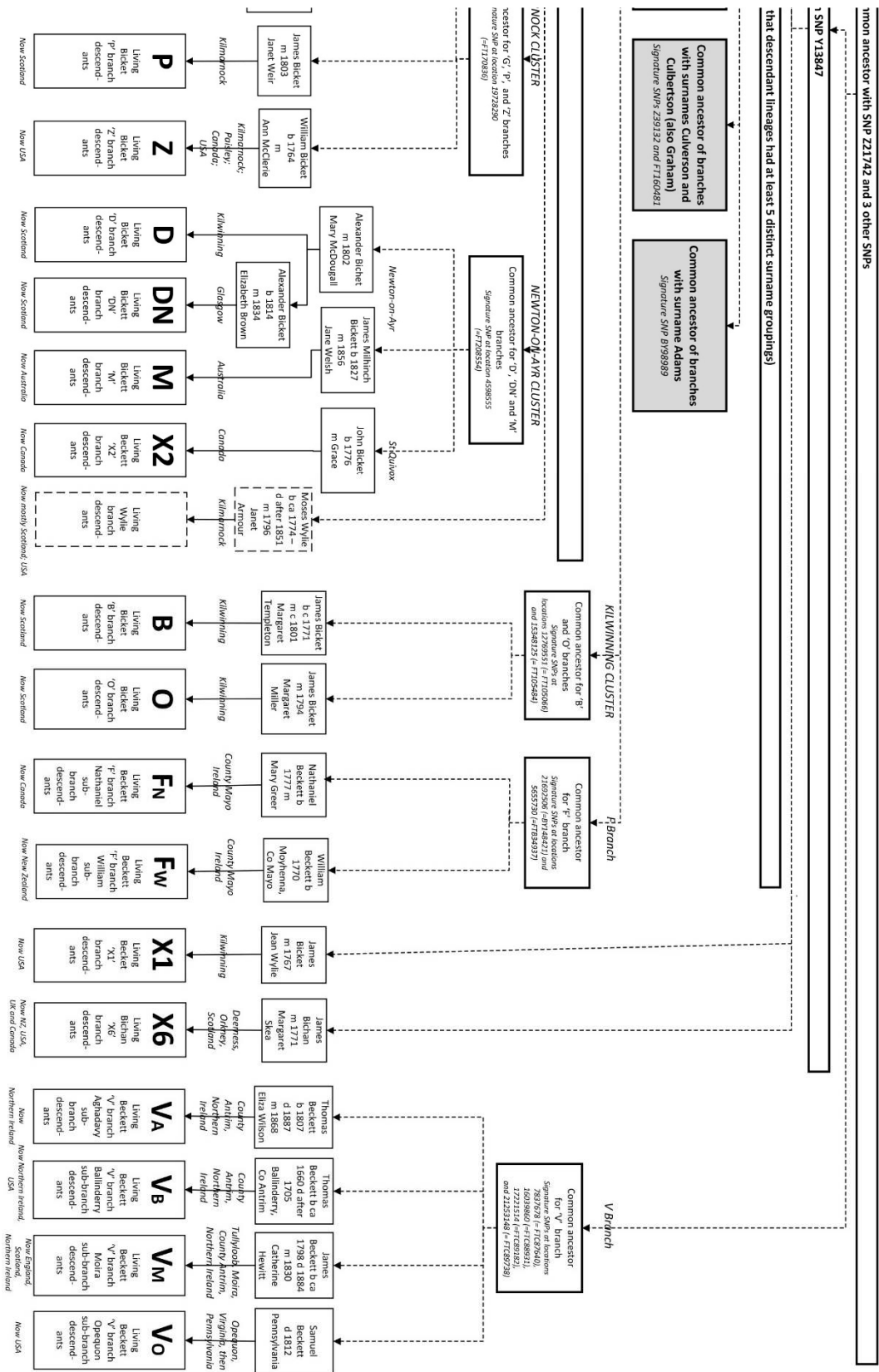
References: Place-Names of Berks, p. 376.

Another important source to note (although from the same publisher with two of the same authors) is the **Dictionary of American Family Names 2nd edition, 2022^x**. This is cited by Ancestry. (Family Search cites the 2003/2006 version of this book.) It reads:

Beckett Surname Meaning: English and Irish (of Norman origin): nickname from Old French Middle English beket 'small beak' (a diminutive of Old French bec 'beak or mouth') perhaps with reference to someone with a small beak-like mouth or a prominent nose (compare Beck) though the Middle English word appears to have had a wide range of applications denoting 'pointed objects' including 'corbel kind of arrow kind of bird' and 'kind of fish'. This surname is also found in Ireland especially in Antrim. English: habitational name from any of the places called Beckett in Berkshire and Devon. The former is named with Old English bēo 'bee' + cot 'cottage shelter'; the latter has as its first element the Old English personal name Bicca. Altered form of Bequette a surname of French origin.

t/Bickett/Becket/Beckett family tree analysis with Family Tree DNA - update of 31 January 2024

Find which branch is yours on-line at bicket.one-name.net and search for one of your ancestors which will show their lineage and branch. Or contact bickett@one-name.org



Annex 2: Branches of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) Tree

This is a list of all of the branches considered part of the Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) tree. It is expected that more branches will be found and added over time.

Branch	Description	Main Spellings	DNA Cluster
A	Used for notional connecting ancestors	N/A	N/A
B	Current Kilmarnock Bickets from Kilwinning	Bicket	Kilwinning cluster
C	US East Coast Bickets from Kilmarnock (extinct branch)	Bicket	unknown because extinct
D (includes N branch)	Scotland Bickets and Bicketts from Kilwinning to Newton-upon-Ayr	Bicket Bickett	Newton-upon-Ayr cluster
E (was ZQ1)	Paisley to US via Canada	Bicket Bickett Becket Beckett	Fenwick cluster
Fn (was IQ3)	Canada Becketts from County Mayo – Nathaniel was earliest ancestor originally identified.	Beckett	Not in any cluster – first branch to diverge from common ancestor of the 22 branches
Fw (was FQ1)	Ireland and New Zealand Becketts from same location in County Mayo as Fn branch. William was the earliest ancestor originally identified.	Beckett	In same branch as Fn
G	USA Becketts from Kilmarnock	Beckett	Kilmarnock cluster
H (includes R branch)	Australia/Liverpool Bickets from Fenwick	Bicket	Fenwick cluster
I	USA Bicketts from brothers Adam and William from County Antrim	Bickett	Fenwick cluster, in the same sub-sub-cluster as the S branch
J (was ZQ2)	Canada and US Becketts from Paisley	Beckett	Fenwick cluster
K	Kentucky Bicketts from Kilmarnock	Bickett	Fenwick cluster
L	Liverpool Bickets from Kilmarnock - extinct branch	Bicket	unknown because extinct
M	Milhinch Bicketts in Australia	Bickett	Newton-upon-Ayr cluster
N	See D branch	Bickett	
O	Glasgow Bickets from Kilwinning	Bicket	Kilwinning cluster
P	Glasgow Bickets from Kilmarnock	Bicket	Kilmarnock cluster
Q	Was previously used for 'question' lineages.		
R	See H branch	Bicket	
S		Bickett	

(was IQ2)	US Bicketts and Becketts from County Sligo, Ireland	Beckett	Fenwick cluster, in the same sub-cluster as the I branch.
T	USA Bicketts from Fenwick	Bicket	Fenwick cluster
U	Bickett branch from Mass, USA at same time as K Bicketts	Bickett	Fenwick cluster, in same sub-sub-cluster as the K branch
Va	Ireland Becketts from Agahadavy, County Antrim, Northern Ireland.	Beckett	Branch from before surnames were established. DNA confirms this is part of the V branch, but we have not yet found the link in historical records.
Vb	Ireland and US Becketts from Upper Ballinderry, County Antrim, Northern Ireland	Beckett	Branch from before surnames were established. DNA confirms this is part of the V branch, but we have not yet found the link in historical records.
Vb-cousin (was VQ2)	Ireland Becketts, part of the V branch because the wife was from the V branch, but the husband was a Beckett of unidentified origin. He was likely a cousin, but pending DNA testing and proving his relationship in historical records, it needs to be identified as a potentially different branch for the purposes of male descent.	Beckett	No tester at present, but living male descendants exist.
Vm (was X5)	Becketts which can be traced back to Moira in County Down, Northern Ireland	Beckett	Branch from before surnames were established. DNA confirms this is part of the V branch, but we have not yet found the link in historical records.
Vo (was X4)	US Becketts. Family information says the branch originally came to Opequon, Virginia in 1730, from the area around Banbridge, County Down, in Northern Ireland.	Beckett	Branch from before surnames were established. DNA confirms this is part of the V branch, but we have not yet found the link in historical records.
W (was IQ1)	US Becketts from County Antrim, Northern Ireland	Beckett	Fenwick cluster
X1	US Becketts from Kilwinning	Becket	Branch from before surnames were established.
X2	New Brunswick Canada Becketts from Ayrshire	Beckett	Newton-on-Ayr cluster
X3	Ireland Becketts from Ballymoney, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, which believes it is of Scottish descent	Beckett	Being researched
X4 - See Vo			
X5 - See Vm			
X6	Bichan which can be traced back to Orkney in the north of Scotland, especially Deerness.	Bichan	Branch from before surnames were established.
X7	Scotland Becketts that can be traced back to Belfast	Beckett	Being researched

Y	US West Coast Bickets from Stewarton - extinct branch	Bicket	unknown because extinct
Z	US from Paisley via Canada - Mac Bicket branch	Bicket	Kilmarnock cluster

Annex 3. Variant/Deviant Spellings

Variant spellings are spellings that become accepted and are used repeatedly.

- Bicket
- Bickett
- Becket
- Beckett
- Bichan

Deviant spellings are transitory spellings that are typically the result of a clerical error (e.g., how it sounds to the person writing it down). This list is not comprehensive.

- Backet(t)
- Bechet(t)
- Bechot
- Beckers
- Beckett
- Beggert
- Beckett
- Bichat(t)
- Bichet(t)
- Bichiet
- Bichot
- Bickat
- Bickel
- Bickers
- Bickott
- Bickutt
- Biggar
- Biggart
- Biggert
- Bighet
- Bighot
- Biket
- Birget
- Bishat
- Bisket(t)
- Bochot
- Bocket
- Boggert
- Buckett

Annex 4. Explanation of Y-DNA technology

This is an excerpt from an article 'Thoughts On DNA Testing for One-Namers' from the Journal of One-Name Studies, Apr-June 2023, by David Bicket

Annex 4.1 Relevance of DNA test types for one-name studies

How one uses DNA testing depends on the details available from testing, and on how they are presented. These vary over time, and also in cost. There are multiple companies performing the different types of DNA testing relevant for one-name studies.

All types of DNA tests can potentially be useful in a one-name study, in particular to provide hints about where further research in historical records may produce information about connections. Because of this, all types are listed here. However, it is the different types of Y-DNA testing which are most useful in surname studies, so they will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

- **mtDNA (mitochondrial DNA) testing.** These are the least relevant types of DNA tests for one-name studies based on patrilineal male descendency, although there are some unusual cases where they could be helpful, such as in the case of Richard III of England. But consider trying one for yourself for the experience. Family Tree DNA and YFULL are the only major companies offering stand-alone mtDNA testing.
- **atDNA (autosomal DNA) testing.** These tests are primarily useful for finding close living relatives, including those with the same surname, and possibly NPEs. However, these are limited to identifying relatives connected through relationships at most five generations ago, i.e. they are of little use linking with anyone based on relationships prior to around 1800. If you can afford it, try one yourself with every major testing company, e.g., FTDNA, Ancestry, 23andMe, and MyHeritage. You may be surprised at the results! Ancestry is generally the best to start with because of its huge database for matches, but MyHeritage is often better for European matches, and 23andMe may produce results from people who were interested in its quasi-medical information who do not test with the other companies.
- **Y-STR (Simple Tandem Repeats) DNA testing.** Today these tests are primarily useful for demonstrating if two males are related within the surname era, i.e., that they share a STR grouping, but not how they are related. See also the further explanation below of 'Differences between STR and SNP testing'. Ancestry offered this type of testing at one time, but no longer. It is now primarily offered by FTDNA (where Y-37 is its recommended starter test for Y-DNA testing), and by YSEQ.
- **Y-SNP (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms) DNA testing.** Usually when we refer to Y-SNP testing, we are referring to Y-SNP discovery testing, i.e., testing many tens of thousands of locations for possible mutations. (See also the next entry for 'pack' or 'panel' Y-SNP testing.) Y-SNP discovery tests are primarily useful for demonstrating exactly how two males, and their respective branches, are genetically related, by showing the genetic point at which they had a common ancestor, and how they have diverged separately since that point. See also the further explanation below of 'Differences between STR and SNP testing'. 23andMe offers some limited information about SNPs, but not discovery tests. The only companies which currently offer

meaningful SNP testing are those which offer NGS and WGS testing, as described further below. It is also possible for advanced users to read some Y-SNPs on autosomal test results, but this is not considered a practical way of obtaining Y-SNP information.

- **Y-SNP Pack or Panel testing.** This refers to testing for a limited number of SNPs which are specified in advance, and so contrasts with discovery testing. This is a relatively inexpensive way to confirm if a tester has specific SNPs. A typical use might be to determine exactly where on the existing haplotree to place a tester who is a member of an STR grouping for which there is already a fairly well-defined haplotree, so that its defining SNPs can be specified from a SNP pack/panel test. The limitation is that the tester may have further mutations, which the test does not recognize because of its design, and therefore does not enable the tester to identify his exact place on the haplotree. Both FTDNA and YSEQ offer pack/panel SNP tests.
- **Y-NGS (Next Generation Sequencing) DNA testing.** Next Generation Sequencing refers to DNA analysis by 'sequencing millions of small fragments of DNA in parallel'. 'NGS can be used to sequence entire genomes or constrained to specific area of interest'.¹ This is a testing methodology, which finds both Y-STRs and Y-SNPs.
- **Big Y 700.** This is a branded version of Y-NGS DNA testing offered by FTDNA, which uses 'target enrichment' to try to read certain areas of the Y-DNA and not others. It reads 94% of the SNPs of the current best YSEQ WGS test.² It includes Y-STR results for 700 different markers, and Y-SNP results for over 50,000 locations. It is believed to be the most popular NGS Y-DNA test.
- **WGS (Whole Genome Sequencing) DNA testing.** Whole Genome Sequencing refers to DNA analysis which results in the sequencing of (essentially) the whole genome, not just specific areas of interest such as FTDNA's Big Y 700 test. (The only exception to WGS's full coverage can be some hard-to-read areas of DNA, and even these are slowly being conquered by new technologies, in particular nanopore WGS.) The main company currently offering WGS for genealogical purposes is YSEQ. Findings and developments in this type of testing are continuing at a rapid pace. Although it is now possible to obtain WGS tests that are no more expensive than the FTDNA Big Y test, there are disadvantages: there is presently a much smaller data base with which to compare results, the amount of data to handle is vast and cumbersome, and analysis techniques digestible by laymen are still evolving.

Annex 4.2 Differences between STR and SNP testing for genealogical purposes

There are significant differences in the usefulness for genealogical purposes of Y-DNA tests for Simple Tandem Repeats (STRs) and Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs, or 'snips'). There is also considerable historical 'baggage' in their use, or non-use. The original use of STRs was for forensic purposes, e.g., for identifying crime suspects from their DNA. This was the type of

¹ 'What is next generation sequencing', 28 Aug 2013, National Institute of Health, National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3841808/>, accessed 5 June 2022.

² Source: <https://ydna-warehouse.org/benchmarks>

Y-DNA testing that was later adapted for genealogical purposes, and there is a large legacy of STR DNA tests which were performed from approximately 2000. SNPs were known about, but the lack of technology for reading them in sufficient detail meant that they were viewed as being only meaningful for understanding 'deep' or pre-historic evolution. However, developments in the last 6 years or so, and especially since the advent of Big Y 700 in 2019, have totally changed the situation for SNPs, as they can now be read in the detail needed to show DNA trees and branching down to current generations.

The following are the characteristics of STR and SNP mutations as currently known which determine their respective uses for genealogical purposes.

- Y-STR characteristics and testing approaches and their implications
 - o The cheapest FTDNA Y-DNA tests available.
 - o Strong indicators of being genetically related within the surname era. In theory, the more STR marker counts two men share, the closer they are related; however in practice it is now recognised that this generality can be very misleading.
 - o Limited number of locations ('markers') tested. When only a limited number of locations are tested, there is significant opportunity for 'false positives' (apparent matches which are not correct) and 'false negatives' (true matches which are not identified). The less markers, the worse. 12 and 25 marker tests were so unreliable that they have now effectively been abandoned. In theory the more markers, the better, but in practice few people get much benefit above 37 markers, including the 111-marker level. Almost no one has found any benefit from the 700-marker level included with FTDNA's Big Y 700 test.
 - o Frequent back-mutations. STRs frequently back-mutate, meaning that there can be no assurance that current test results accurately reflect the mutations of prior generations.
 - o Parallel mutations and convergence. Because of the above characteristics of STRs, there can be parallel mutations in unrelated lineages, and likewise mutations in one lineage which result in its converging in its markers with another lineage with which it has no recent common ancestor.
 - o Conclusions: STRs are good for showing whether two testers are likely to be related within the surname era, and as a consequence they are good for grouping different testers who are all likely to be related within the surname era. However, it is now generally recognized that STRs are highly unreliable for suggesting exactly how testers are related, i.e., how their respective lineages connect. (In technical jargon, they cannot "build an accurate 'phylogenetic' tree, that is the branching tree from a common ancestor, whether a historical person or a prehistoric distant ancestor."³)

- Y-SNP characteristics and testing approaches and their implications
 - o The most expensive FTDNA Y-DNA discovery tests available.
 - o They scientifically demonstrate exact DNA relationships between two testers, including the DNA mutations shared by their most recent common ancestor, and how their DNA lineages have evolved separately since then.
 - o Over 50,000 discrete locations tested (compared to 700+ STRs)

³ p121, 'Tracing Your Ancestors Using DNA', 2019

- Transmitted to all sons, usually without modification, and they rarely back-mutate to their original value.
- Definitive cascades of mutations. Because mutations are transmitted to sons, and because they rarely back-mutate to their original value, each tester has a definitive cascade of mutations which clearly define his place in the Y-DNA haplotree.
- Since SNP mutations are random, and can occur anywhere in the haplotree, the same SNPs can occur in different branches (clades) of the Y-DNA haplotree. However, the fact that SNPs are inherited in definitive cascades means that the same SNP occurring in a different branch of the Y-DNA haplotree does not cause any confusion, since the cumulative cascade of SNPs for each person will be definitive for their own haplotree branch.
- The NGS testing process can result in some locations having few reads, which are therefore considered low quality reads. However, recognizing the cascade of mutations which is intrinsic to SNPs can allow calling poor quality reads.
- While the essentials of SNP testing are quite well established, there continues to be work on some issues, such as
 - The reading of SNPs in areas of the DNA which are considered unreliable by some researchers and companies
 - How to deal with SNP insertions and deletions ('Indels')
- Cost implications of STR testing compared to SNP testing
 - The cost to get SNP discovery results is higher per test, but much more detailed data is obtained, and in principle only one tester is needed per lineage as established through historical records research.
 - This compares to the typical need to get several STR testers per lineage so as to determine the modal STR values of the lineage. (In theory only two STR tests are needed to identify a modal STR values of a surname grouping or branch, and hence distinguish between branches of the surname that have evolved during the surname era, but in practice more are typically obtained.)
 - Overall, the total financial cost to get meaningful results from either approach is similar, with SNP results being much more definitive.

Annex 4.3 Importance of the Y-haplotree

A haplotree is simply a genetic family tree derived from SNP data. The human haplotree is nature's family tree of humankind. The branches of a haplotree, called haplogroups, are defined by their grouping of single nucleotide mutations, or SNPs. There is a Y-haplotree which shows the male line of descent, and an mt-haplotree, which shows the female line of descent. For surname studies we are primarily concerned with the Y-haplotree.

We do not create the haplotree, but rather we discover it. As our ability to test gets better, and as we get more testers with their Y-DNA testing results for their specific haplogroup, we continue to get an increasingly well-defined view of nature's haplotree, and of our places in it. There can be issues about how much of the Y-DNA we read, and how accurately we can read it. Those are testing methodology issues, and not issues with the haplotree itself. Prior to 2016-2019, the Y-haplotree was so poorly understood, with so little of it discovered, that it was of little use for anything but deep ancestry and ethnology. Since then, however, the situation has dramatically changed. This is because the haplotree is defined by SNPs, and recent advances

in SNP testing allow us to understand the haplotree down to present times, and place testers on it.

The importance of the Y-haplotree, given these recent advances in SNP testing, is that the haplotree allows the clear definition of genetic relationships between different testers, i.e., it shows how testers are related, however distantly or closely. STR groupings generally show only if testers are likely related within a genealogical timeframe, but not how. SNPs show where the testers fit on the haplotree, and therefore they show how those testers are related, whether within a genealogical timeframe or not. SNPs can also resolve issues related to uncertain STR groupings because there is no guesswork required.

While it is not a very exciting term, the 'haplotree' is transformative in terms of how it allows genealogists to understand relationships with a precision never before possible.

Annex 4.4 Differences between Y-DNA testing companies

Since Y-DNA testing is the most significant for surname studies, this section considers only those companies which offer Y-DNA testing. Companies are listed in order of recommendation, with comments added to each to explain this.

- **Family Tree DNA (FTDNA).** This is the main DNA testing company used by most one-namers, based in Houston, Texas, and now owned by myDNA Life Australia Pty Ltd. Its main advantage is that it has the largest database of both STR and SNP testers available and publishes probably the most comprehensive and up-to-date YDNA haplotree. Therefore, its Big Y testers have the greatest likelihood of finding close matches on the Y-DNA haplotree and therefore of determining other testers most closely related to them, whether within the surname era, or before, regardless of the surnames carried by those matches. FTDNA also offers good support facilities for surname projects. Although understanding and working with Y-DNA test results is not simple, FTDNA overall is probably the easiest to use, without demanding that users understand all the intricacies of Y-DNA testing. However, many criticise its website, and some believe it exploits its near monopoly position.
- **YSEQ.** This is the second-most used company for DNA testing for one-namers, founded by someone originally with FTDNA, and based in Berlin, Germany. It offers a large range of tests, but most importantly full WGS, not just limited Y-NGS as does FTDNA with its Big Y 700, and it therefore gives results covering autosomal, full Y, and mitochondrial testing. Its WGS test costs less (as of writing) than FTDNA's more limited Big Y 700. It does not do analysis, which can be done by transferring results to a company called YFULL.
- **Nebula Genomics.** This company founded in 2019 is based in San Francisco (according to Wikipedia) or Miami, Florida (based on the contact location on its website). It offers three WGS tests, although the cheapest 'standard' test is stated by their website to have only .4 coverage. It has impressive credentials based on its own website, but it is not known how well it performs in practice.
- **Full Genomes Corporation (FGC).** This company, based in Rockville, Maryland, offers a range of products including WGS at various coverage levels, and also interpretation of results from other companies. Prices are higher than for YSEQ. They do not ship to the EU or the UK, apparently because of potential GDPR exposure. Most information about them externally appears to be from at latest 2016; the latest short update on their own website

appears to be from 2020; and links on their own website are broken. Based on these factors, it is difficult to recommend them, but it may be useful to know about their existence as a company.

Change log

26 06 2025	- Initial draft
06 07 2025	- Updated section on Ayrshire Bicket(t)/Becket(t) surname origins. - Citations added in section on published theories for Bicket and Bickett surname origins, from Ancestry's citation of the Dictionary of American Family Names, 2 nd edition. - Other editorial improvements - First version to be published on project website (https://bicket.one-name.blog)

References

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- ^{vii} <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/help-and-support/guides/surnames>
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- ^{ix} "The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland", by Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates, and Peter McClure, 2016, Oxford University Press
- ^x "Dictionary of American Family Names 2nd edition", by Patrick Hanks, Simon Lenarčič, and Peter McClure, 2022, Oxford University Press, cited by Ancestry.co.uk at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/name-origin?surname=beckett> on 14 Dec 2024.