

## SURNAMES

Surnames were introduced in England following the Norman Conquest, developed during the 12th & 13th centuries, firstly in the south of England, the area where the Royal Court was mainly based, and later in the north of England. Necessity to identify individuals, particularly for such matters as rents and taxes, gradually led to general use of surnames and by about 1400 surnames in England and lowland Scotland had mostly settled down and become hereditary.

## PATRONYMIC SURNAMES

These surnames are some of the most common in the country. Simply by adding -son or -s to the end of the father's name placed an individual within one family, e.g. **Williamson, Johnson, Lawrenson, Phillips, Johns**. There are, however, a few surnames that are derived from women's names - **Dyson** (Dionysia's son) and **Margerison** (Margery's son)

A servant would often have their surname attributed to them from their master - **Prior, King, Barron**. Also, the -s added to the master's name could become a surname.

The Normans often used the word Fitz- to denote the son of someone - **Fitzwilliam**; the Scots used Mac or Mc - **MacDonald, McKay**; the Irish used O' - **O'Connell**; the Welsh used ap - **ap Rhys**, which eventually became **Price**.

## OCCUPATIONAL SURNAMES

These are very common and reflect the everyday trades and occupations when surnames were evolving. **Taylor, Cook, Thatcher, Fletcher, Archer, Baker** and **Turner** are examples of occupation-based surnames. Examples of less obvious occupational names are **Chambers**, a person charged with guarding and managing the lord's living quarters; **Chandler**, candle maker; **Woodward**, a forest keeper; **Granger**, one who looked after a large farm or grange; **Leech**, a physician.

Probably the most common is **Smith**, but there were many different types of smiths around - blacksmith, whitesmith, tinsmith & coppersmith to name just four. All people named Smith are not related, but every family attached to a person bearing that name has its own identity and is separate to all the others.

## NICKNAMES

These surnames evolved from a way of walking, the colour of someone's hair, their height, their way of living and were another means of identification where there were several individuals with the same forename. So, **John Crisp**, a man with curly hair; **John Redhead**; **John Grey**, someone with grey hair; **John Tripp**, a person with an odd gait.

Some of the nicknames could be tongue in

cheek, - **Gotobed** (could be very industrious or very lazy); a distinctive gown they wore - **Mantle**; the way they thought of themselves - Proud.

**Potfulofale** and **Oilthegate** are two nicknames that were used in early documents in Yorkshire. Some nicknames were extremely rude, even for the Middle Ages, and families dropped these names when they became 'respectable'.

Aliases were often used by the clerks writing out documents to distinguish one person from another who had the same surname - **Thomas Warren, alias Capper, feltmaker, Shipley**.

Another type of alias that evolved into surnames were those that were picked up from the Medieval Miracle Plays - **Prince, Abbott, Pope, Everyman, Death**. Families would take the same role year after year and become known by the character they portrayed.

## LOCALITY SURNAMES

These names originated when a person moved from home or village to another place, sometimes only a mile or two away, usually to seek work and were best identified by their birthplace. The name place could even have been just a small collection of farms and cottages, which is now difficult to find on a map.

But a name could change during a person's travels. If John from Dyneley moved to Holme in Cliviger, 2 or 3 miles away, he would be known as **John Dyneley**. When he moved to Burnley he could be known as **John Holme**. When he got a better job and moved to Manchester, he could become **John Burnley!!!!**

The surname may also be a topographical name from the same word used independently. Topographical surnames were some of the earliest to be created, as topographical features, whether natural or man-made, provided obvious and convenient means of identification. Such examples are **Hill, Heath, Dale,**

### IMMIGRANTS

When immigrants arrived in the country they often Anglicized their surnames. Some of their surnames, though, have given new surnames to the British nation - **Schmidt - Smith; Marx - Marks; Beharrell - Barrel; Belle - Bew**

There are some surnames that are truly English, but sound extremely foreign - **Gaukroger** - from a small rocky, locality near Sowerby in Yorkshire, and **Dracup** - a Catholic family who probably used this as an alias and the name stuck.

### SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

**Useful broad-brush picture for each surname**

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/learn/facts>

**Especially for forenames**

[www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com)

<https://www.bounty.com/pregnancy-and-birth/baby-names/baby-name-search>

**Especially for surnames**

<https://surnames.behindthename.com/>

<https://www.surnamedb.com/>

<http://www.surnamesearchutility.com/>

**(Mainly USA. Pay for access)**

<http://britishsurnames.co.uk/>

**(Also has some statistics and maps)**

[www.houseofnames.com](http://www.houseofnames.com)

**The Surname Atlas is available from**

<http://www.archersoftware.co.uk/satlas01.htm>

Gives distribution maps for all of the surnames and forenames found in the 1881 census of England, Scotland and Wales.

## LFHHS Chorley Branch

### LFHHS Chorley Family History Research Centre



### Surnames

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