

BRITISH FAMILY NAMES

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Some months ago I gave a lecture on the subject of this paper to a study-group within the University. The lecture was well received, and it was suggested that I should use the pages of this Bulletin to acquaint a wider audience with this fascinating subject. Although a philologist, I became interested in British family names not much more than ten years ago, not long after I came to Japan. As Japanese family names are written with Chinese characters, the meanings of most of which are known to everybody, such names possess a greater degree of semantic transparency than the majority of European names, and I suppose it is only natural that a great many Japanese should have asked me the meaning of my own family name, expecting that I would know it. In fact, most British (and other European) people do not know the meaning of their family name unless it is also a common word in the general vocabulary, such as Smith or Baker. Even in such cases, however, they may well be misled by accidental similarities with common words or be unaware that the meanings of words may have changed over the centuries: the ancestor of Mr Law, for example, did not acquire his name because of any connection with the law, and Mr Pretty might not feel flattered if he were to learn that his name used to mean 'cunning', though it might reassure Mr Coward to know that his ancestor was not a coward but a cow-herd.

In the 5th and 6th centuries AD the language and culture of most of Britain and Ireland, and a good proportion of their racial stock, were Celtic. The Celts, of whom I shall say more later, had migrated to Britain from the European continent between the 8th and the 5th century BC. In these centuries, that is, the 5th and 6th centuries AD, large numbers of Germanic people from the coastal regions of what are now Holland, north-west Germany, and southern Denmark, including many from the tribes of the Angles and the Saxons, migrated to Britain. By the 9th century they had occupied most of what is now England. Each of these people, who are usually referred to collectively as the Anglo-Saxons, had just a single personal name, e.g. Alfred, Cuthbert, Edmund (these are the modern forms; I shall say more later about the origin and meanings of such personal names). As most of them

lived all their lives in small agricultural communities they would have little need of any identification other than their personal name. At the same time, if, as would usually be the case, there were a number of people in the community with the same name, it would be necessary to distinguish, say, one Alfred from another by referring to him as 'Alfred the son of Cuthbert', 'Alfred the smith', 'Alfred at the hill' (i.e. living on or beside a hill), or, if he had some noteworthy characteristic such as black hair, by a nickname, 'Alfred black'. Such descriptive words or phrases, which are known as bynames, were not attached to a person's name according to any principle: they were given spontaneously merely to distinguish one Alfred or Cuthbert from all the others that the people conversing knew. Again, if for some reason a person moved to another community, he might identify himself, or be identified, by the name of the place from which he had come, as, say, 'Alfred of Davenport' (Davenport being the name of a village in Cheshire). Of course, a person might be called in different ways by different people.

Evidently this situation had existed from very ancient times, and doubtless has existed in all societies everywhere. The documentary evidence for it in England, though, is slight until after the conquest of the country by the Normans (from Normandy, a duchy in north-west France) in 1066: after this date society became much more documented, and more material has survived to the present day from after this date than from before it. In the plentiful records of the 12th and 13th centuries we find people identified by such bynames, and the same man might be identified in different ways in different documents.

The important point to remember here is that, up to this time, such bynames were not hereditary. If William, the son of the man who was usually known as Alfred (the) Smith, became a carpenter, he would not be known as William (the) Smith, but as William (the) Carpenter or by some other byname. And if a man usually known as Edward Black, because he had black hair, had a son Thomas with brown hair, Thomas might be known as Thomas Brown, but not as Thomas Black. Similarly, if a man usually known as William Robertson had a son John, John would not be known as John Robertson but as John Williamson or by some other byname. The exact way in which a son came to adopt the byname of his father, and in which that son's children, in turn, came to have the same name (i.e. the way in which bynames became hereditary) is not entirely clear. In the 12th and 13th centuries the towns grew greatly and stabilized bynames became necessary to identify people more clearly, especially on the documentary level. Also, in this period, a very small number of French personal names had become exceedingly popular among all social classes, especially the names Henry, John, Richard, Robert, and William,

so that, again, a byname was essential to distinguish people, and in a larger community such as a town, which would typically have several thousand inhabitants, a stable byname was obviously an advantage. In the 13th and 14th centuries many people in the towns appear to have had just one byname in regular use and, in these centuries, their children came more and more to call themselves by, and to be known by, the byname of their father.

Among the Normans, as among the Anglo-Saxons, land could be handed down from father to son and at the time of the Conquest some Norman nobles already had hereditary names showing the place where they held land, and the greater land-holders in England tended to continue this practice. There is no evidence, however, that this influenced the development of hereditary bynames among the lower classes. One of the factors that led bynames to become hereditary may be that in relatively large communities like towns, where there was also quite a lot of movement within the town, family relationships would be much less clear than in a small community like a village, which typically would have between two and five hundred inhabitants, and so a common name came to be felt to be necessary to maintain the identity of a family. Another factor may be the relative frequency of names ending in -son, preceded either by the father's name, thus Williamson, or by the father's occupation, thus Smithson: if all the brothers of a family came to be known by the same byname, a feeling would develop that the byname somehow belonged to the family. A third factor may be that women, who tended to use the personal name or the byname of their father as their byname until they married, generally took the usual byname of their husband after marriage, so that if both husband and wife had the same stable byname, this too would come to be felt to belong to the family. It is at any rate a fact that hereditary names were adopted more quickly in the towns than in the countryside, and sooner by the higher social classes than the lower, but by the end of the 15th century almost everyone in England possessed an inherited byname, i. e. a family name.

Family names thus derive from bynames, and, as will have been understood from the examples given earlier, these names have one of four origins: the personal name of a parent, the name of the place where a person lived ('at the hill', etc.) or from which he had come, the name of his occupation, or his nickname. I want now to look at the characteristics of each of these four groups.

In considering family names deriving from personal names, thus Alfred Cuthbertson, John Williamson, I want first to look briefly at personal names in themselves, not just as material for family names. The personal names in

the ancient literature of most of the various Indo-European languages (e. g. Sanskrit, Greek, Celtic, Germanic) show certain patterns. The majority of names consisted of a (semantically) two-element compound, often associating the child with a god, thus Sanskrit Devadatta 'god-given', Visnuputra 'son of Vishnu', or, as is often the case in Japan, expressing desirable qualities, thus Old German Hugubert (modern Hubert) 'mind-bright', Old English Cūthbeorht 'famous-bright'. Originally all such compounds were presumably meaningful in some way, but many of those in the ancient literature are nonsensical, e. g. Old English Wigfrith 'war-peace', Wulfstān 'wolf-stone', and it is clear that people eventually lost interest in the meaning of the compound and tended to put elements together on the basis of euphony or, as among the Anglo-Saxons, by taking one element from the name of the father and adding another element to it, thus Eadgār (Edgar) 'prosperity-spear', son of Eadmund (Edmund) 'prosperity-protector'. Single-element names also existed, and these either were one of the elements traditionally used in two-element names, or were formed from adjectives, such as Old English Brēme 'famous', or from the names of animals, thus Old English Eofof 'boar', Hengest 'stallion'. Just to mention a few more examples from Old English, all of which survive as modern personal names and, in one form or another, family names: Ælfræd (Alfred) 'elf-counsel', Eadweard (Edward) 'prosperity-guardian', Ecgbeorht (Egbert) 'sword-bright', Hereweald (Harold) 'army-power', Ōsweald (Oswald) 'god-power'.

After the Norman Conquest the common personal names of the ruling Normans became extremely popular among the English, so much so that by the end of the 13th century the great majority of names in documents are not of English origin, though the names of famous kings and Christian saints of the Anglo-Saxon period such as Alfred, Edmund, and Edward remained popular.

It is interesting that the ancestors of the Normans were, in part, Germanic people. Until the 5th and 6th centuries AD the population of northern France was largely of Celtic origin, although, because of Roman rule, their language was a descendant of vernacular Latin. In these centuries Frankish tribes from western Germany overran the region, and later conquered the whole of what is now France and gave their name to the country. Although they eventually adopted the local language they retained their Germanic naming patterns. Again, in the 10th century Vikings from Scandinavia invaded Normandy and came to rule it, and while they adopted French as their language, their names too remained Germanic, though phonologically French in form.

In England at the end of the 13th century about sixty per cent of men were called Henry, John, Richard, Robert, or William; all of these names were introduced by the Normans, and all of them except John are Germanic

names in a French form : Henry is from Old German Haimiric 'home-ruler', Richard from Ricohard 'ruler-hard', Robert from Hrodebert 'fame-bright', and William from Willihelm 'will-helmet'.

Christianity was introduced to the Anglo-Saxons at the end of the 6th century and the whole of the country had been converted about a century later, but the naming patterns of the Anglo-Saxons were little influenced by this new religion : the Church at this time did not compel people to give the name of a saint to a child at baptism. Among the Normans, however, biblical names and saints' names were quite popular, and in the 13th century such names as Adam, Daniel, John, Matthew, and Philip became frequent among the English. Saints' names, such as Agnes, Catherine, and Margaret, were particularly popular among women. The ultimate origin of most such names is Hebrew or Greek : John is from Hebrew Johanan 'Jehovah has favoured' and Philip from Greek Philíppos 'lover of horses'.

There were several ways in which a personal name might be made into a byname in this period. The simplest, though it is hardly evidenced before the Conquest, was merely to appose it to the person's given name : William Thomas. Another, which continued Anglo-Saxon usage, was to add the suffix -son (Old English -sunu), but increasingly omitting the possessive -(e)s (the modern -'s) : Adamson (earlier Adamesson), Haroldson, Johnson, Richardson, Robertson, Williamson. The suffix was usually added to the father's name, but sometimes to the mother's : a widow's son, for example, would come to be referred to by the mother's name, thus Alison (=Aliceson). Many personal names had hypocoristic forms, thus Dick from Richard, Harry from Henry, Jack from John, Tom from Thomas, and -son might be attached to these, giving Dickson (Dixon), Harrison, Jackson, Thom(p)son. Another way was to add just the possessive suffix -(e)s, meaning by ellipsis 'son or daughter or wife of so-and-so', though this pattern was very frequently used to indicate 'servant or worker or apprentice at the house of so-and-so'. Thus we have names like Andrews, Jones (based on John), Roberts, Williams. Names such as Parsons, Vicars (Vickers) indicate more clearly the meaning 'servant of', as such members of the clergy were supposed to be celibate (although exceptions were plentiful in the Middle Ages!). Women were likely to be identified by the personal name of their father with or without the suffix -(e)s, thus Alice Robert(s), until they married, when they would usually be identified by the husband's personal name or byname. As women were mainly in the home they were less likely than men to have bynames, but the above situation may, as suggested earlier, have had some influence on the development of hereditary bynames.

Family names derived from personal names form the biggest of the four groups in terms of the number of people that possess such names, but, with only a couple of thousand different members, they contain very much less variety than the second largest group, that based on local names, of which there are more than twenty thousand. Within this group there are in fact two types. The first indicated the place, natural or man-made, where, or near which, a person was living, thus Bridge, Hill, Wood. Originally such bynames were phrases containing the preposition *æt* followed by the dative case of the definite article and noun, thus Old English *æt thǣm wude* 'at the wood', and the preposition and article were reduced in Middle English to *atte*, thus *atte wode*; this *atte* was then either dropped, hence Wood, or, in some instances, fused with the following word, thus Attwood. A few other such names: Ash, Atthill, Green 'village green', Hay (Old English *hæg* 'enclosure'), Heath, Holt 'wood', Lee (also Leigh, and Attlee; Old English *lēah* 'clearing, pasture'), Low (also Law; Old English *hlāw* 'hill, burial mound'), Moore. In some cases the name ends in an *-s*, in origin the possessive suffix *-(e)s*, thus Bridges (also Briggs), Meadows, Oaks, Rivers.

The second type, very much the larger, indicated the place from which a man had come when he moved elsewhere, and these are place-names proper, mainly the names of hamlets and villages, much less often towns. In documents they are usually preceded by the French preposition *de* 'of' until about the end of the 14th century. The vast majority of these names are of Old English origin. The Celts lived in England before the Anglo-Saxons arrived, but the Anglo-Saxons usually did not occupy the same ground as the Celts, even if they drove them out, and built new villages. The Celts concentrated on keeping livestock and tended to live on hilly pastureland, while the Anglo-Saxons concentrated on growing crops and preferred to live in the lowlands and valleys, though they also kept cattle, sheep, and pigs. The names of many rivers (e. g. Avon, Severn, Thames) and hills are of Celtic origin, but habitation names are usually English. In the 9th century Danes invaded and settled in eastern and north-eastern England, and although their personal names did not have a great influence on subsequent English family names, they did give names to the villages they established and many of these later became family names.

It is understandable that it was the names of hamlets and villages rather than those of towns that produced family names. A place-name was only useful as a byname when a person moved to another place, and most of the movement was between villages or from villages into towns: even in the Middle Ages 'city life' seems to have attracted a lot of people, and there was less

movement out of the towns, though family names such as London do exist.

As I did with personal names, I want to look briefly at the characteristics of place-names themselves. One of the earliest types of Anglo-Saxon place-name is based on the name of the leader of a group of settlers followed by the plural suffix *-ingas*, meaning 'the dependants or followers of' the leader. Such names sometimes came to be attached to the place where the people settled, thus Hastings, Old English *Hæstingas* (personal name *Hæsta* 'violent'): Reading ([*'redɪŋ*], not [*'ri : dɪŋ*]), Old English *Rēadingas* (*Rēada* 'red'). Most of these names are in the south-east and east of England, where the earliest settlements took place.

A large group of place-names ends in *-ham* and another in *-ton*. Old English *hām* (which is the antecedent of the modern 'home') originally meant just a homestead, but came as a place-name element to refer to a group of homesteads, i. e. a hamlet or village. Examples are Birmingham, Old English *Beornmundingahām* 'the village of Beornmund's ('warrior-mind') people'; Waltham Old English *wealdhām* 'village beside woodland'. Old English *tūn* (the modern 'town') originally meant an enclosure, but came also eventually to refer to a group of homesteads. Examples are Eaton and Eton, Old English *ēatūn* 'village by a river'; Middleton and Milton, *middel tūn* 'middle village' (i. e. a village between two other settlements); Newton, *nēowa tūn* 'new village', one of the commonest English place-names.

When a village grew larger and the existing ploughland became insufficient, forest clearings used as meadows or pasture would be put to the plough and a new hamlet might be built nearby. The word for such clearings was *lēah*, and this would often be retained in the name of the new settlement, thus Bentley, Old English *beonetlēah* 'bent-grass meadow'; Calverley, *cælfleah* 'calf-pasture'. Other secondary settlements in or on the edge of woods would often retain the name of the wood: Bradshaw, *brād sceaga* 'broad copse'; Brockhurst, *brocchyrst* 'badger-wood'; Haywood, *hægwudu* 'enclosure-wood'.

Many place-names in eastern and north-eastern England end in *-by* and *-thorpe*. These elements were introduced by the Danes. *-bý*, like *-hām* and *-tūn*, meant a village. Examples are Grimsby, Old English *Grīmesbý* 'Grim's (Old Danish Grim 'fierce') village'; Whitby, Old English *hwītebý* 'white village'. Thorpe originally denoted a new settlement, usually a hamlet populated from a nearby village, of the kind mentioned in the previous paragraph. An example is Scunthorpe 'Skuma's village'.

Another type of settlement is shown by the element *-bury* or *-borough*, from Old English *-byrig*, *-burg*, which referred to a stronghold, quite a lot of which were built for people to defend themselves from the Celts, from

other Anglo-Saxons when two kingdoms were at war, or from the Danes, who also built their own forts. Examples are Canterbury, Old English Cant-waraburg 'the fort of the inhabitants of Kent'; Scarborough 'Skarthi's (Old Danish, 'hare-lipped') fort'.

After the Normans arrived they too built many castles, and English place-names ending in -castle, such as Newcastle, reflect this. Sometimes a French name would be given to the district around a castle or manor, and such names might stick as the names of subsequent townships. Most of them begin with beau- 'beautiful': Beamish, Old French beau mitz 'beautiful mansion'; Bewley, Old French beau lieu 'beautiful place'. Apart from this there was no significant French contribution to English place-names: the Normans merely imposed a foreign aristocracy on the native population, and the old place-names remained in use. Among family names, however, there are quite a few French place-names: some members of the Norman aristocracy already had hereditary names showing where the family held land, as mentioned earlier, and many other people, soldiers, merchants, and workers, who came over at the time of or after the Conquest used their place of origin as their byname. Examples are Beaumont, Beeton (from the place-name Béthune), Gascoigne, Manners (from the place-name Mesnières).

The number of place-names in England is enormous, but it is the names of the several thousand villages that have made the biggest contribution to English family names.

I want now to turn to family names based on occupations, which when used as bynames are often preceded by the French definite article *le* in medieval documents. The great majority of people in the Middle Ages were peasants, living in villages on the manor of a lord. In the lord's manor-house the head servant was known as the Butler or the steward, which usually appears as Stewart or Stuart as a family name. The man who looked after the private chambers of the lord was the Chamberlain, which appears also as Chambers as a family name. The person in charge of the provisions was the Spencer (Spenser). The lord would have military personnel on his estate, the knights, hence Knight; many of them were tenants who held land in return for military service. Records were kept by the Clark (who was usually a minor cleric). The manager of the lord's estate was the bailiff, which usually appears as Bailey. The person whose job it was to collect the rent for rented farmland was the Farmer (from a French word meaning a tax-collector). The chief officer of a village on the manor was the reeve, which usually appears as Reeves as a family name, probably referring to his servants. Two important men on

the manor were the Miller (also Millward 'mill-keeper') and the Baker (Baxter) : the peasants were not allowed to grind their own corn or to bake their own bread but had to pay to use the lord's mill and his oven. Other ubiquitous workers were the Smith, the Carpenter (or Sawyer), and of course the Brewer (Brewster), and with more pastoral occupations the cow-herd (Coward), the Fowler, who hunted wild birds, the Parker, who usually looked after the deer-park, the Shepherd (also, with his French name, Barker), and the Warner, who was the gamekeeper.

In the towns there were a great many industries, many of which have provided family names. Cattle were usually killed at the beginning of winter, and the meat was salted (the man who produced or sold the salt was the Salter) to last through the winter, and to make dishes palatable spices were necessary ; these, of which the most used were pepper and ginger, were prepared and sold by the Spicer. Food was cooked over charcoal, which was prepared and sold by the Collier. Wool was woven by the Webber (Webb, Webster, Weaver), fulled by the Fuller or Walker (from the practice of treading on the cloth in water), and dyed by the Dyer (Dexter). Leather footwear was made by the Chaucer, and gloves by the Glover. Metal was worked by the blacksmiths, goldsmiths, and silversmiths : almost any kind of metalworker was a Smith, which helps to account for the name's being the most frequent family name. Wheels were made by the Wheelwright, carts by the Cartwright, and wagons by the Wainwright ; Wright himself was usually a carpenter. A Potter referred not only to a maker of earthenware but also to those who made vessels of copper and brass. Candles were made and sold by the Chandler. A person who made things on a lathe was a Turner. Bows were made by the Bowyer and arrows by the Fletcher. The trader or merchant was the Chapman or Mercer, the latter usually dealing in expensive fabrics.

This selection has been mainly limited to family names that are now common, but there were many other occupations that have rarely survived as family names, such as Hafter, a maker of hafts for tools, or Kitter, a maker of buckets.

Finally, we should note that the article made or sold by a person was sometimes used by metonymy for the maker or dealer, thus Cape, Garlic, Hood, Salt.

Nicknames can be broadly divided into two categories : those based on physical characteristics and those on mental and moral characteristics. In the first category the most obvious examples are based on physical size, thus Grant (Old French, 'tall'), Long (meaning 'tall'), Little, Short, Small. Family names

based on fatness or thinness are for some reason uncommon, except for Grace (from Old French *gras* 'fat'). Such nicknames may sometimes have been used ironically to refer to a person quite the opposite of what the name suggests. The colour of the hair accounts for most instances of such names as Brown, Black (Blake), Blount (=blond), Gray (Grey), Russell (Old French, 'red'), and White, though most of these may also have referred to a person's complexion. Physical strength is reflected in Armstrong.

Most of the names in the second category are, understandably, complimentary: Bold, Gay, Hardy, Noble, Parfitt ('perfect'), Sharp, Smart. A person of a bright disposition might be compared to the weather, thus Fairweather, Merryweather. Uncomplimentary nicknames were less likely to survive as family names, though we still have Best (Old French, 'beast'), Pratt and Pretty (Old English noun *prætt*, adjective *prættig* 'cunning'), Savage, Unwin (Old English, 'unfriendly'), and some other much rarer names.

Some occupations gave rise to nicknames. Shakespeare is such a case, meaning 'brandish a spear', referring to a foot-soldier who carried a spear. Wagstaffe means 'brandish a staff', and this, together with Longstaffe, probably refers to the bailiff or the beadle, who carried a long staff tipped with an iron spike.

Sexual habits too might give rise to nicknames, though few have survived as family names, and those that have survived are rather rare. Letcher ('lecher') is obvious, and his habits were presumably shared by Shakelady, and probably by Stallion. Some remarkably obscene bynames appear in medieval documents, though they have not survived as family names: Godwin Clawecunte ('claw-cunt'), John Prikehard ('prick-hard'), John Fillecunte, Bele (=Isabel) Wydecunte.

In this section on nicknames I have deliberately chosen names most of which are both common and of obvious meaning in modern English, but, among the few hundred surviving as family names, there are many based on words that no longer exist: Crank (Middle English, 'high-spirited'), Crumb (Old English, 'bent'), Chafe (Old French *chauf* 'bald'), Fane (Old English *fægen* 'cheerful').

I want now to look briefly at Celtic family names, the second component of British family names. The Celts began to spread out from southern Germany from about 1000 BC over France, Spain, and Britain and Ireland. At about the time the Anglo-Saxons began to settle in England (the 5th and 6th centuries AD), they occupied modern England, Wales, and Ireland, and were beginning to migrate from northern Ireland to Scotland. The language and culture

of the Irish (and thus Scottish) Celts were somewhat different from those of the Celts in England and Wales.

Bynames among the Irish are not evidenced until the 10th century, and at this date a person's byname was usually a patronymic, formed by prefixing Mac- to the father's name or O- to the grandfather's name, thus MacMahon 'son of Mahon ('bear')', O'Connor 'grandson of Connor ('high will')'. Such bynames started to become hereditary in about the 15th century. Ireland was occupied by the English from the 12th century, and as a result a lot of English bynames came into use and Irish bynames were often given phonetic spellings and the O- dropped, thus O'Cobhthaigh was changed to Coffey. But the most typical Irish names begin with O-, and some of those that everyone in Britain is familiar with are O'Connell ('high-mighty'), O'Donnell (=Donald, 'world-mighty'), O'Haire ('angry'), O'Leary ('calf-keeper'), and O'Neill ('champion').

In Scotland old documentary evidence is scarce until the 15th century, by which date the clan system was very strong. Clan names usually began with Mac-, followed by the name of the supposed progenitor of the clan, and there are about fifty in all. Clan chiefs often forcibly adopted people into their clan in order to increase their power, so not everyone with a clan name belonged to the clan by blood. Typical clan names are Cameron ('hook-nose'), MacDonald, MacDougall ('dark stranger'), MacIntosh ('the chieftain'). In the southern part of Scotland, the Lowlands, English bynames were usual.

In Wales most bynames were patronymics, prefixed by ap 'son of': Evan (=John) ap Madog ('fortunate'). Such bynames did not become generally hereditary until the 17th and 18th centuries, when people tended to use the English pattern in -s and to anglicize the names, although many people already possessed English personal names, thus Davies (based on Davey, a pet form of David), Evans, containing the Welsh form of John, Jones, containing the English form, Roberts, Williams. These five are now the family names of a large proportion of the Welsh people, and as a result bynames are quite commonly used with the family name among the Welsh today, especially occupational names, e.g. Evans the Milk (i.e. the milkman), Evans the Box (referring to a coffin: the person is an undertaker). The ap sometimes fused with the following name, thus Bevan from ap Evan, Bowen from ap Owen ('well-born'), Price from ap Rhys ('ardour'), Pritchard from ap Richard.

This, then, is the origin of British family names. The English language has changed greatly since the Middle Ages, in grammar, syntax, and the spelling and pronunciation of words. The spelling of family names also usually changed when the name was, or contained, a common independent word, thus

Baker, which used to be spelt Bakere and pronounced [ˈba:kərə]. But when people dissociated the name from its meaning unpredictable changes might occur, even when the meaning was obvious, thus For(r)ester lost a syllable to give the variant forms Foster and Forster. Sometimes phonological change made a name look or sound like an ordinary word in the general vocabulary ; a good example is Low which, as mentioned earlier, usually has in origin quite the opposite meaning, coming from Old English hlāw 'hill'. Law too has nothing to do with the law but is a northern phonological development of the same Old English word, though it is also sometimes from a hypocoristic form of the personal name Laurence, as indeed is Low. Similarly, Lavender was originally a launderer (Old French lavendier), and Lemon was a 'love-man' (Old English lēofmann, reduced in Middle English to leman), i.e. a sweetheart, though the word was also used of a paramour. The meanings of words have changed also, thus Pretty originally meant cunning, as noted earlier, while Silly meant happy, from Old English sǣlig. And many names preserve words that are now archaic, e.g. Parr (Old English pearr 'enclosure'), Shaw (Old English sceaga 'copse'). As a result of all this, the original meaning of the majority of modern family names is not readily apparent.

Since the 15th century only a small number of new family names have been introduced into Britain by immigrants from various countries. The only points of interest concerning family names in modern times are perhaps the regional distribution of names, and the frequency of particular names. Even from before the Industrial Revolution, however, and particularly in the 20th century, there has been so much mobility in society that it is no longer very meaningful to talk about regional distribution. As far as frequency is concerned, there are some obstacles in the way of investigation. The only way to make a complete frequency count is to use the results of the national census, which started in 1801 and takes place every ten years. However, to protect privacy, the government makes public the detailed results of each census only after one hundred years, so the most recent results available now are those for 1881. In fact, in 1853 a frequency list of the most common family names in England and Wales was published, based on the results of the 1851 census, and this is the latest complete information available for these parts of Britain. Of course, it is possible to use present-day telephone directories and publicly available records of births, marriages, and deaths to produce estimates, but the figures derived from such sources are incomplete. I should like to give the 1853 list for reference ; it is not without value as more recent estimates do suggest that there have not been too many changes over the last hundred years.

England and Wales, 1853

1. Smith O	18. Walker O	35. James P
2. Jones P	19. Hughes P	36. King N
3. Williams P	20. Edwards P	37. Morgan P
4. Taylor O	21. Lewis P	38. Allen P
5. Davies P	22. White N	39. Moore P (L)
6. Brown N	23. Turner O	40. Parker O
7. Thomas P	24. Jackson P	41. Clarke (=27)
8. Evans P	25. Hill L	42. Cook O
9. Roberts P	26. Harris P	43. Price P
10. Johnson P	27. Clark O	44. Phillips P
11. Wilson P	28. Cooper O	45. Shaw L
12. Robinson P	29. Harrison P	46. Bennett P
13. Wright O	30. Ward O	47. Lee L
14. Wood L	31. Martin P	48. Watson P
15. Thompson P	32. Davis (=5)	49. Griffiths P
16. Hall L	33. Baker O	50. Carter O
17. Green L	34. Morris P	

P=personal (27 names) ; L=local (7) ; O=occupation (12) ; N=nickname (3)

Names not mentioned in the text and requiring comment are : 11. Wilson, based on Will, a pet form of William. 12. Robinson, Robin is a pet form of Robert. 16. Hall, for one who worked at or lived near the manor-house. 19. Hughes, based on Hugh, a name introduced by the Normans, from Old German Hugu 'mind'. 21. Lewis, also introduced by the Normans, French Louis from Clovis, Latinization of Old German Chlodovech 'famous battle', the name of the famous Merovingian king. 26. Harris, based on Harry, a pet form of Henry ; cf. 29. 28. Cooper, a maker of barrels and buckets. 30. Ward, a guard or watchman. 31. Martin, from a Latin personal name Martinus (connected with Mars, the god of war) introduced by the Normans, popular because the name of St Martin, the 4th-century Bishop of Tours. 34. Morris, =Maurice, from a Latin name Mauritius 'a Moor' introduced by the Normans, popular because the name of a famous 3rd-century martyr. 36. King, probably applied to a swaggerer. 37. Morgan, a Welsh personal name of uncertain meaning, though môr means 'sea'. 38. Allen, also Alan, a Celtic personal name of uncertain meaning introduced to the Normans from Brittany. 39. Moore, as a personal name, from Latin Maurus 'a Moor', the name of a 6th-century saint. 46. Bennett, a pet form of Benedict, from the Latin Benedictus 'blessed', introduced by the Normans, the name of the famous 6th-century saint who founded the

Benedictine Order. 48. Watson, based on Wat, a pet form of Walter, a name introduced by the Normans, from Old German Waldhar 'rule-folk'. 49. Griffith is from the Welsh personal name Gruffudd, of uncertain meaning. 50. Carter, a cart-driver, or a maker of carts like Cartwright.

Readers may be interested in the corresponding list for the United States, which is much more recent. It is noteworthy that, however much of a racial 'melting-pot' the United States may be, all but three of the names in this list (41, 44, 47) are of British origin. For ease of comparison, I have indicated the place in the list for England and Wales of those names occurring in that list. The seventeen names not in the list are marked with an asterisk, and annotated where necessary.

USA, 1939

1. Smith 1	18. Lewis 21	35. Fisher* O
2. Johnson 10	19. Allen 38	36. Bennett 46
3. Brown 6	20. Hall 16	37. Butler* O
4. Williams 3	21. Green 17	38. Foster* O
5. Miller* O	22. Robinson 12	39. Walker 18
6. Jones 2	23. Baker 33	40. James 35
7. Davis 32	24. King 36	41. ---
8. Anderson* P	25. Nelson* P	42. Jenkins* P
9. Wilson 11	26. Adams* P	43. Ellis* P
10. Taylor 4	27. Roberts 9	44. ---
11. Thomas 7	28. Phillips 44	45. Burke* L
12. Moore 39	29. Evans 8	46. Brooks* L
13. White 22	30. Turner 23	47. ---
14. Martin 31	31. Rogers* P	48. Elliott* P
15. Thompson 15	32. Edwards 20	49. Black* N
16. Jackson 24	33. Bell* P(O)	50. Nichols* P
17. Harris 26	34. Bailey* O	

8. Anderson, based on a pet form of the name Andrew, from the Greek name Andreas in the New Testament, meaning 'manly'. 25. Nelson, based on a form of Neal, an Irish name meaning 'champion'; cf. O'Neill in the text. 31. Rogers, Roger was introduced by the Normans, from Old German Hrodgar 'fame-spear'. 33. Bell, as a personal name, a pet form of Isabel, a French form of Elizabeth (which is from the Latin Elizabetha; the name is ultimately Hebrew); as an occupation name, probably the bellman, i.e. the town crier. 42. Jenkins, from a pet form of John. 43. Ellis, =Elias, an Old Testament

name. 45. Burke, probably from a place-name Burgh, Old English burg 'fort', see text. 46. Brooks, one who lived beside a brook. 48. Elliott, a pet form of Elias ; cf. 43. 50. Nichols, Nichol was a pet form of Nicholas, popular in the Middle Ages because of the famous 4th-century saint of that name.

Three questions at least are likely to remain in the reader's mind. One is whether the origin and development of family names in the rest of Europe run parallel with those in Britain. The brief answer to this is yes : although there are numerous differences of detail, the origin of family names in by-names, the four kinds of byname and the characteristics of each kind, and the period when bynames became hereditary, roughly the 12th to the 15th century, are much the same all over Europe. If I have succeeded in arousing the reader's interest in the subject, the second question will be whether there is not a handy dictionary of family names. There are very few dictionaries indeed in this field, but we are fortunate in having one that is handy, reliable, and easy to obtain, and which demands no philological knowledge of the user ; this is the Penguin Dictionary of Surnames, compiled by Basil Cottle (Penguin Books, 2nd ed., 1978), which explains more than eight thousand names. I hope it is not presumptuous to think that, considering what I said at the beginning of the paper, the third question will be about the meaning of the name Davenport. I mentioned earlier that it is a place-name in Cheshire. The element Daven- is from a Celtic word meaning trickle, and is the name of a river, now Dane ; -port is from the Latin portus, probably borrowed, along with a number of other Latin words, by the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons on the continent, and referring to a township (not, unlike the modern word, necessarily to a town with a harbour) : the name thus means town on the river Dane.