

The History and Development of English Surnames

by David Flint

Part 5 -- Surnames from Nicknames

History

Jutes, Angles and Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Norman Conquest 1066 by William, Duke of Normandy.

Development of hereditary surnames in England complete by about 1450.

Middle Ages (500-1500)

Middle English (1100-1500)

Categories of Surnames

- local place-names
- relationships
- occupation or office
- **nicknames**

Nicknames were extra names or additional names given to someone by another, usually alluding to a personal trait or characteristic for which that person was known. A nickname typically mimicked or exaggerated some personal quality or habit and frequently even contradicted it, such as calling a tall man "Shorty". One did not choose a nickname but was given it by others. Such names were often given in jest and applied only to a particular person. Nicknames were not surnames, at least in the original instance, but sometimes did endure as a family name or surname.

Appearance

- Young – Old
- Tall or Short: (Long > Lang, Laing for tall), Edward Longshanks; Short or Little: Little John
- Fat or Thin: thick and thynne > Broad (Broadman, Broadribb); or Small
- Hair color: red hair > Read, Reed, Reid; Rudd

Behavior

- Best runners: Swift, Speed, Lightfoot and Golightly
- Walking: Proudfoot, Steptoe, Trip, Trott, Trotter, Trotman
- Mind and character: loyalty, strength, common sense, cheerfulness
- Mental ability and character: Bold, Smart, Stern, Strong, Wise, Sage, Pratt
- Coward derived from 'cowherd'

Nature

- Bird names: Swan, Crow, Hawk, Sparrow
- Drake (male duck) or '*draca*' meaning dragon
- Hawk from OE 'hafoc': Hawke, Havoc, Havekin, Hawkin, Hawkes, Hawkins
- Examples of names from other animals: Hart, Harte, Stag, Buck, Wolf, Fox, Todd, Bull
- From wild boar > Wilber, Wilbur

England Surnames Derived from Nicknames - International Institute:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Surnames_Derived_from_Nicknames_-_International_Institute

England Male Nicknames - International Institute:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Male_Nicknames_-_International_Institute

England Female Nicknames - International Institute:
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For Dropbox Cloud link to English Surnames by Bardsley, use:
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/unry3xvk1k6nlbx7upfhz/Bardsley-English-Surnames-ebook-Project-Gutenberg.txt?rlkey=tpn978vlg4bhbimljig2mo897&st=sdo2jaj5&dl=0> for the .txt file format and
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dtri5hm4z9rc7xe02hg2/Bardsley-English-Surnames-ebook-Project-Gutenberg.pdf?rlkey=s3dz4ljcv3ed2bad3lyw9okyt&st=gcwqvw39&dl=0> for the PDF version.

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(To download PDF copy of A Dictionary of Old Trades, Titles and Occupations by Colin Waters:
<https://vdoc.pub/download/a-dictionary-of-old-trades-titles-and-occupations-3kk6p4v9p8a0>.)

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