

What's in a name?

Understanding our ancestors' monikers





When communities were small each person was identifiable by a single name, but as the population increased, it gradually became necessary to have more detail to distinguish individuals.

This led to names such as John the butcher, William the short, Henry from Sutton, Mary of the wood, Roger son of Richard.

Over time many of these new names became “corrupted” and their original meaning is now not easily seen.



Sources of British names

appearance

Long, Black, Swift, Peacock

occupation

trade

Fletcher, Smith, Wright, Brewer, Page

employer

Hickman, Kilpatrick, Williams

a location

generic feature

Grove, Moor, Wood, Hill, Marsh

specific point

Hampshire, Bedford, London, Windsor

relationships

matronym

Marriott, Ibbetson, Henry FitzEmpress

patronym

Petersen, Johnson, O'Neill, Ben Ezra, Price, Bevan

clan

Cameron, Stewart, McDonald

<http://blogs.ancestry.com.au/cm/there-are-7-types-of-english-surnames-which-one-is-yours/>



Origins of Dutch names

<i>de Boer</i>	the farmer
<i>Cornelissen</i>	son of Cornelius
<i>de Groot</i>	the big one / great
<i>Meijer</i>	bailiff
<i>van der Meer</i>	from the lake
<i>Visser</i>	fisher
<i>de Wit</i>	the blond
<i>van der Westhuizen</i>	from the houses located in the west



Origins of Italian names

<i>Della Valle</i>	of the valley
<i>Montagna</i>	mountain
<i>da Vinci</i>	from Vinci
<i>Bresciano</i>	from Brescia
<i>Fontana</i>	<i>fountain</i>
<i>Tagliabue</i>	<i>ox-cutter, butcher</i>
<i>Zappa</i>	<i>"hoe", farmer</i>
<i>Delle Fave</i>	<i>"of the beans", grocer</i>
<i>Farina</i>	<i>"flour", baker</i>
<i>Rossi</i>	<i>redhead</i>

