THE CHANGING PATTERN OF MALE FORENAMES IN MEDIEVAL LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND TO c.1350

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Recent interest in patterns of forenaming has arisen from their potential as cultural indicators in all historical periods. Particularly extreme changes occurred in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in England, illustrated here by reference to Leicestershire and Rutland, although the full extent and pace of change – in the same general direction throughout the country – varied both by region and by social group. Attention has unfortunately to be directed here only to the personal names of males, since it is impossible to accumulate sufficient data about females to make significant statements. The intention then is to concentrate on the names of the male peasantry. There were two main strands to the general trend, of which one was the gradual eclipse of ‘insular’ personal names by newly introduced ‘continental’ forenames during the twelfth century, and the other consisted of the increasing tendency to concentration in the active stock of ‘continental’ forenames.

‘Insular’ personal names comprised firstly those West Germanic (WG) personal names brought directly into England by the Saxons and so constituted the body of Old English (OE) personal names, and secondly Scandinavian names (OSc, comprising Old Danish and Old Norse forms), which also had their origin in West Germany, but which were introduced into England through Scandinavia. These latter, migratory names included not only name-forms which had not been introduced into England at the earlier time, but also similar ones which were distinguished from OE forms only by phonemic and dialectal changes.

Subsequently a variety of new name-forms was introduced in the late eleventh century, consisting predominantly of Continental-Germanic (C-G) ones which had migrated through north-west France and are consequently known as West Frankish, but including also Christian names in the restricted sense of Saints’ and Biblical names. Although not entirely absent from England before the Conquest, Christian names only gained an extensive foothold in the twelfth century and indeed did not really proliferate until the latter half. Additionally, a further set of Scandinavian name-forms entered England, which had previously migrated through north France and are in some cases only distinguishable from earlier Scandinavian forms in England by their phonology. Celtic names were a further subsidiary name-set, brought in this case by Breton overlords, and principally comprising Alan, Brian and Joel (the latter initially in its Middle Breton form, Judhael).
Leicestershire and Rutland were located within the area of the Five Boroughs, which encompassed Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, Lincoln and Stamford. In adjacent parts of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire (within the Northern Danelaw) Scandinavian personal names persisted through the twelfth century. The first part of this paper consequently examines the persistence and decline of insular personal names in Leicestershire and Rutland during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, from admittedly fragmentary evidence, whilst the second part is concerned with the subsequent concentration within the corpus of active forenames, with the circumstances of unusual forenames and with any differences between urban and rural naming patterns. The causes of some of these changes were predominantly cultural, but demographic variables were also closely involved, especially in the development of distinguishing bynames or second names.

**The displacement of insular personal names**

Evidence in these two counties for naming patterns during the twelfth century is sparse, but the earliest is within a generation of Domesday Book, and comes from the two surveys of the tenants of Burton Abbey at Appleby Magna c.1114-28. In the later Survey B many villeins still bore recognisably insular (OE) names without a qualifying byname, such as Alwin, Sewin, Lewin, Godric and Leveric, as well as OSc Toki, but some forms may have been either OE or C-G forms, as in the case of Almar, Alric, Ordric and Flabald. One other tenant held the personal name of Blancard, a distinctly Anglo-Norman nickname-forename. The *censarii* of Survey B, peasants who principally paid a money rent, had mainly insular names, but included a Ranulf (C-G) and the filii Alurici (sons of Aluric – but Aluric is ambiguous). Godwin (OE) *prepositus* (the reeve) held two and a half virgates, but was complemented by Algar (C-G) who held two bovates, whilst the *coseti* (cottagers) all bore C-G names (Walter, Gerard and ambiguously Aluric). In the earlier Survey A, however, only one molman, equivalent to *censarius*, bore a recognisably insular name (Godwin who held one and a half virgates), whilst six others held C-G ones (Algar, Frane, two Richards, Roger and Norbert). Within a generation of 1086, therefore, extensive changes were occurring amongst the naming patterns of male peasants, but not to the extent of any significant development of bynames, which may tend to suggest that the active stock was still sufficiently wide to avoid the need for bynames for identification and that processes of bynaming had not been transmitted this far down the social scale.

Further evidence is not forthcoming before the Inquest of Templars in 1185, which included some vills in Rutland, particularly Empingham. Enumerated there were Wlwiwt two bovates), Gode (one bovate), and Alured (another bovate), although other tenants were Odo, Simon, Richard, Pagan and Philip, that is five with C-G and Christian names compared with three with OE ones. At nearby Greetham, only the common OE forename Godwin survived.

By the middle of the thirteenth century (c.1225-58) insular forenames had been almost totally eclipsed. For example, the fourteen jurors at Lyddington (Rutland) for the survey of the manor of the bishop of Lincoln all bore C-G
names, twelve of whom had bynames whilst only two, who had unusual forenames within the community (Norman and Alexander) did not. The bishop’s cotarii (cottagers) at Caldecott included two named Alured ‘one without a byname and the other qualified as iuxta aquam (‘near the stream’), but the remaining seven bore C-G or Christian names. In the survey of Asfordby probably only Gamel (OSc) (with no byname) represented insular personal names, but earlier generations were reflected in the patronymic byname filius Atwini and the appositional or elided patronym of Richard Gamel. Equally, however, patronymic bynames attest earlier C-G forms, such as Hugh filius Ascelini who held one virgate and Reginald filius Terrici (a hypocoristic or pet-form of Theodoric from north-west France). Current holders of less usual C-G and other forenames without bynames included Humfrey, Colinus (hypocoristic or pet-form of Nicholas) and Silvester.

Further, but anecdotal, evidence is contained in some charters relating to villis in Leicestershire at the turn of the century. Nicholas filius Godwine was a former tenant in Thrussington in the late twelfth century, whilst Turkil (OSc) filius Hoviet held a toft and croft in Leire and Ralph filius Dunninghi (OE Dunning) a virgate in Cossington c.1200. At one of the Dalbys another Turkil held a messuage in the early thirteenth century and at Welby a carucate had been formerly held by Odo (C-G) filius Keteline (OSc). William filius Turkel held a virgate in Hatheron about the same time.

More quantitative data occur in the custumal of Rothley of c.1245, in which over 500 tenants were enumerated in about twelve villis within the soke of Rothley in north-east Leicestershire. Virtually all bore C-G or Christian forenames, with the exception of Oky, Wulys, Gamel, Godwin, Unwine, Hereward, Syrich, Hasclof, Osmund, Seward and Cole, but again previous generations were reflected in the patronymic bynames filius Edwymi, filius Brithwine and filius Edwardi, as well as the elided patronym of Walter Sueyn and the widow of Seamon. Four tenants with forenames which were unique in the community had no byname, of which two were insular (Oky and Hereward), perhaps reflecting their present unusualness.

This epistic evidence thus suggests that insular forenames were being eclipsed from a generation after Domesday Book and survived very imperfectly by the late twelfth century, even in this area which had been subjected to Scandinavian influence. The later (lack of) development of bynames from insular personal names confirms their paucity, since the only persistent ones were Orm, Gamel, Toky, Thurkil and, perhaps ambivalently, Sweyn, as well as the continuance of the family name of Orger (insular Odger) in Melton Mowbray from at least c.1245 through to the early fifteenth century.

The active stock of forenames

By the thirteenth century too the active body of forenames had become extremely concentrated. Whereas Forssner listed some 500 male C-G forenames (that is, excluding Christian names) mainly from occurrences in the twelfth century, the number in use had declined radically in these two counties by the late thirteenth century, as illustrated in Table 1. The wider context of the data
Table 1  Frequency of forenames in Leicestershire and Rutland in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place/area</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>1271</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibworth Harcourt</td>
<td>c.1280</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutland</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicestershire</td>
<td>1327</td>
<td>3871</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>66.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Population = male population in question, in some cases just taxable male population. Further values are: Leicester standard deviation 21.37, median 2, minimum 1, maximum 110, first quartile 1, third quartile 10; Kibworth Harcourt standard deviation 11.33, median 5, minimum 1, maximum 43, first quartile 2, third quartile 14; Rutland standard deviation 50.44, median 2, minimum 1, maximum 250, first quartile 1, third quartile 19; Leics. standard deviation 162.00, median 3, minimum 1, maximum 799, first quartile 1, third quartile 46. The data for Kibworth are taken from a tithing list, that is of all males aged over 12; those for Rutland and Leics. are from lay subsidies; those for Leicester from a tallage of burgesses. For Leicester compare the 149 females assessed between 1271 and 1318 who bore 27 different forenames.

for the lay subsidies has been discussed elsewhere. Although the lay subsidies are imperfect sources, since they were wealth-specific and thus probably excluded up to 66 per cent of heads of households, they do provide some indication of the level of concentration of forenames. Comparing frequency of forenames with mean taxation also produces a normal distribution, with frequently occurring forenames associated with average levels of taxation in the peak between the tails, whilst the two tails comprise at one extreme infrequent forenames associated with low levels of taxation and, in the other tail, infrequent forenames associated with higher levels of taxation. Infrequent forenames were thus associated with low wealth as well as with affluence. Some examples of infrequent forenames associated with lower levels of taxation within their communities in Rutland in 1296 are: a Gervase (without a byname) at Wardley (23.75d); Auncelm de Weston at Cottesmore (31.5d); Remund (without a byname) at Gretton (34d); Sampson Faber at Braunston (14.5d); Hamund (no byname) at Oakham (22.5d); Auered de Belmethorpe at Riall (13d); Aubrey (no byname) at Ketton (14.75d) and Eustace de Tykesouer at Empingham (24d). In these cases the levels of assessment should be compared with the mean level of 48.74d (standard deviation of 56.03).

Thus also a small number of taxpayers with unusual forenames were not attributed a byname for the purposes of identification in the lay subsidy in Rutland in 1296, although only a half dozen out of a taxable population of 1,630. Occasionally this phenomenon occurred in more localized circumstances, such as in court rolls, which were still formal written records and only intermittently betray colloquial naming processes. Such an instance is that of Sampson on the manor of Merton College at Barkby between c.1279 and 1300. It was more customary by that time, however, for bynames to be attributed even when the bearer had an exceptional forename, as in the cases of Gregory Brabason and Anselm Brabasoun who both held a virgate in Mowsley in 1279-80, although an additional, but ambivalent, influence here might have been the distinct and foreign nature of their byname.21
Table 2  Frequency of the most common forenames in each area/place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forename</th>
<th>Leicester n</th>
<th>Leicester %</th>
<th>Kibworth n</th>
<th>Kibworth %</th>
<th>Rutland n</th>
<th>Rutland %</th>
<th>Leics. n</th>
<th>Leics. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivo</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  

\(n = \text{number of bearers}; \% = \text{percentage of the entire 'population' in the source. Dates as Table 1.}\)

A few burgesses without bynames occurred in the tallages of the borough of Leicester between 1271 and 1318, such as Jakemyn, Huberd and Hernitus, although it is fairly conclusive that the first was the alien, Jakemyn of Liège.\(^{22}\) For the most part, however, the burgesses had bynames, some of which indeed, at least amongst the core burghal families, were becoming hereditary from the middle of the thirteenth century. Most burgesses accordingly bore common forenames; 643 male burgesses who contributed to the tallage in 1271 bore only 56 different forenames, of which the rank order is presented above. This general distribution mirrors that in the rural communities of the county, with the same predominant top forenames.

Amongst the unusual forenames were a few which did not seem to recur (as far as can be ascertained given the deficiency of the lay subsidy) in the surrounding rural communities; distinctive amongst these were Cirecoc, Curteys, Colin, Walrand, Gregory, Aco, Oda, Waudin and (possibly) Ingram in 1271, to which should be added from 1286 Jakemyn, Dode (possibly OE Dodda), Huberd, Hernytus and Ayllo and from 1307 Poney and (possibly) Abraham.\(^{23}\) Some indeed became transformed into bynames from personal names in the borough (Abram, Ace, Walrand, Ingram, Òde and Dode). Details of this transition, from patronym to appositional patronym, are occasionally evident, as the change from \textit{filius Aconis} to Ace, \textit{filius Milonis} to Mile, \textit{filius Gameli} to Gamel, and \textit{filius Nigelli} to the hypocoristic form Ne(e)l, whilst Dode as a byname occurred as both Dode and Dodesone. Curteys was also a byname in the borough, but may have derived from a nickname rather than from the forename.\(^{24}\)

Other bynames from personal names contributed to the stock of less usual names in the borough at an earlier time, such as Baudwine, Seman, Heutewyn, Alsi, Hemery, Herold, Utrid, Umfrey, Steyn, Geryn, Leuwys, Thebaud, Bertram, Mayhu, Illory and Merlyn. Russel may have a similar etymology, as Forssner noted the sporadic incidence of the forename Roscelinus, but might conceivably
have been a nickname-byname. Some of these bynames were derived from insular personal names of some generations earlier (Seman, Alsi, Herold, Utrid, Osemund, Steyn, and Thurstan), whilst Merlyn is entirely exotic. Many of the OSc forms might be expected, but Utrid (OE) is more usually associated with the north of England. Similarly, Seman, although in evidence in several regions including the south-west, had a wider incidence in East Anglia.

It is thus possible that some of these less usual forenames and bynames from personal names had been introduced into the borough by migration, some perhaps by longer-distance migration. One potential, but equivocal, method of ascertaining whether this was so, is to examine how many less usual forenames were combined with toponymic bynames. The problem with this method is that it is by no means clear that bearers of toponymic bynames were all at this time actual migrants rather than descendants of earlier migrants from whom they had inherited a surname. The bearers of a less usual forename and toponymic byname included Gregory de Walton (possibly Walton on the Wolds, Leics.), Walkelin de Monsorel (Mountsorrel, Leics.), James de Huncote (Leics.), Oda de Wikingston (one of the Wigstons, Leics.), Herbert de Swithelund (Swithland, Leics.), Poney de Lidynighton (Lyddington, Rutland), and Abraham de Euenton (Evington, now in Leicester). Less usual forenames are defined here as those which were held by only one or two burgesses in Leicester, but were not always exceptional in the wider stock of Middle English naming. Given the inferred origins of the toponymic bynames, it seems that a large proportion would have derived from the rural hinterland of the borough, which suggests that the lay subsidy, through its omission of a large proportion of heads of households, might have also excluded a small number of unusual forenames.

Conversely many of the less usual bynames may have been generated within the burghal community, a supposition which is tenuously based on the association of some of the names with other forms of byname (principally occupational). It cannot be shown conclusively that males bearing non-toponymic bynames were indigenous to the borough, but this method may be used as a general indicator. Given that 35.5 per cent of the male burgesses' tallaged in 1271 bore toponymic bynames, it might be reasonable to assume that those with other forms of bynames were endogamous (23.5 per cent bore occupational ones and 15.9 per cent nickname-bynames). The proportion of toponymic bynames was considerably higher than in the surrounding countryside. These assumed denizens included Ingram Carnifex, Cirecoc Curteys, Curteys Cordwanarius, Colin le Chaloner, Warin le Sclater, Walrand le border, Gregory Pistor, Ernald Molendinarius (alias de molendino), Waudin Crede, Aco cum barba, Bertram Caperun, Gregory Cocus, Colin ad fontem, Waryn Petyt, Dode le Carter, Thurstan Botilf and Nigel le Scherman.

The urban tallages finally provide some evidence of the beginning of the use of hypocoristic forms of forename and diminutive suffixes in forenames rather than (as is more usual in written records) only in bynames derived from personal names. Bate and Batecoc were not unusual forms, but Cirecoc, Colin (from Nicholas), Gilot (hypocoristic of Gilbert with diminutive suffix), Dike (Richard) and Wacke (documented as a hypocoristic of Walkelin in 1276) are
less well evidenced for the late thirteenth century. Whilst -coc (-cok) was a Middle English suffix, -ot was one of those diminutive suffixes of French extraction.\textsuperscript{31} Bynames from personal names also reflected these colloquialisms: Mile; Ne(e)l (Nigel); Beneyt (Benedict); and the common Nicole. Davy occurred in 1286 as a hypocoristic forename, but was more profuse as a forename (Dau) in the lay subsidy of Rutland in 1296.\textsuperscript{32}

Whilst the corpus of urban forenames had many similarities with that of the surrounding countryside, there were still differences at the margins. In both town and country, the active corpus of forenames had become heavily circumscribed by the late thirteenth century, to the exclusion of insular forms, and with a concentration of certain C-G and one particular Christian name. There is a difference in the sizes of the 'populations' examined: 1,630 taxpayers in Rutland, 3,871 in Leicestershire, but only 643 burgesses in Leicester. In all, the different stocks of forenames in active use (with some under-recording) were sixty-four, fifty-nine and fifty-six. At the margins, some unusual bynames seem to have been distinctive to the borough, but no certainty can be attached to this point.

NOTES


3. For qualitative assessments of female naming processes, C. Clark, 'Women's names in post-Conquest England: observations and speculations', Speculum, 53 (1978), 223-51; J.M. Bennett, Women in the medieval English countryside: gender and household at Bishopstoke before the plague, (Oxford, 1987), 69. Only the poll taxes of 1379-81 provide a sufficiently large dataset for quantitative analysis, which is being undertaken by Dr R.M. Smith.


Forssner found Blaundt only as a byname: Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 49-50.

For the wider context, Clark, "Women's personal names", 238.


The Queen's College, Oxford, MS 366, fos. 16r-17r and 19r.

For Ascelin and Terric, Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 38-9 and 231-3.

I.H. Jeayes (ed.), A descriptive catalogue of the charters and muniments...at Berkeley Castle, (Bristol, 1892), 17, 43, 61 and 64 (nos 32, 109, 175 and 184). Turkil seems to be an insular form; compare the Norman forms Turkel and Thorkel as in des Gautries, Noms de personnes Scandinaves, 163-5.

G.T. Clark, The customary of the manor and soke of Rothley in the county of Leicester', Archaeologia, 47 (1882), 89-130; a revised date is attributed here by reference to PRO C260/86, a contemporary dispute between lord (the Templars) and tenantry. Osmund is possibly ambiguous, as it is listed by des Gautries, Noms de personnes Scandinaves, 86-8, but its context would seem here to be insular. Des Gautries did not list Gamel, Astin, Oky (ON Aki), Orm, Hascole, and excluded Kolli or Kolr from Normandy, but included one Sven, Toki, Chetell, and commonly Thurstan: des Gautries, Noms de personnes Scandinaves, 118-23, 144-5, 148-9, 163-5, 312-13, 318, and 326-40.

For Odger, Bodleian Library MS. Wood empt. 7, fos. 4v-91r (Broksey cartulary relating in these leaves to acquisitions in Melton Mowbray); the personal name could be ON (but Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 197, citing examples from Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, suggests improbably C-G); it is more likely to be insular since it does not occur in des Gautries, Noms de personnes Scandinaves.


For Brabaso(u)n, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawl. MS.350, 44.

For Hubert (from Hubert) and Hermitus (aspirated form of Erneis), Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 82-3 and 156.

Aco occurred as a forename as in 1196 (Aco filius Simonis de Petra and Aco filius Ricardi de Vunche, both possibly foreigners) and occurred in 1258-71 (Aco cum barba); Curteys occurred as a forename in 1264 (Curteys Kepeges) and 1271 (Curteys Corduanarius). These data are taken from a dBase IV file of the records of the borough of Leicester (Department of English Local History file Lebor, comprising 11,500 data records, 1196-1510).

Aco and Ace may have been OFr forms of Azo: Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 40; for Oda, Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 194-5 and 198-9; for Aylloc (from Adelard), Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 8; and for Waudin (from NP Waldin), Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 240. For Dode, see M. Redin, Studies on uncompounded personal names in Old English, (Uppsala, 1919), s.v. Dodda.

Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 220-1. See also the Rocelinus admitted to the freedom in 1198, Records of the Borough of Leicester, 16.

For the incidence of Uchtred, C.M. Fraser (ed.), The Northumberland lay subsidy roll of 1296, (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, Record Series, 1, 1968), passim; G.W.S. Barrow, 'Northern English society in the early middle ages', Northern History, 4 (1969), 5.

B. Selten, The Anglo-Saxon heritage in Middle English personal names, (Lund, 1972), 28-9 and 170.

For distances of migration into Leicester inferred from toponymic bynames, P. McClure, 'Patterns of migration in the late middle ages: the evidence of English place-name surnames', Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 32 (1979), 167-82.

The term toponymic is generally preferred to the synonyms 'locative' and 'place-name' surname.

The proportions of toponymic bynames in Rutland in 1296 and Leics. in 1327 were respectively 18.9 per cent and 25 per cent.

Clark, 'Anthroponymy', 564. For Wacke, Bateson, Records of the Borough of Leicester, 138; for other hypocoristic forms of Walkelin, Forssner, Continental-Germanic personal names, 239.