

Adamthwaite ... Adam's clearing in the Eden Valley

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My Adamthwaite ONS began life (like many others) in an attempt to knock down a brick wall in my own family history. Along the way, I have tried to find out more about the early origins of the surname, which all point to a tiny farmstead hidden in the Howgill Fells – part of the Upper Eden Valley of the old County of Westmorland. This article aims to record what I have discovered on my journey so far about those early Adamthwaites, and also explores a sample of 30 of the earliest surnames found in Ravenstonedale and tracks their presence in the parish in a variety of records from 1379 to 1911.

Alfred Wainwright (1907-1991) fellwalker, guidebook author and illustrator, described Adamthwaite in 'Walks on the Howgill Fells'¹ thus:

"There are many attractively situated farmhouses in the side valleys of the Howgills, none more so than Adamthwaite, deep set amongst lovely trees and in scenery reminiscent of a Scottish glen. It is remote, unsuspected and rarely seen".



Adamthwaite Farm, and the Howgill Fells
(photo Paula Healey)

Today, Adamthwaite still nestles beside Wandale Beck with the Howgill Fells rising all around. It is located in the Fell End Angle of Ravenstonedale Parish in the old County of Westmorland, but the only access is via a two and a half mile track over the fells, which is frequently impassable in winter. The current Ordnance Survey map shows Adamthwaite farmhouse (which was rebuilt in 1684 by Thomas

Adamthwaite) as the only building at the site, however a map of 1770 shows four separate buildings clustered together. This explains information found amongst Ravenstonedale Manorial documents² from the 16th and 17th centuries, where indentures record the names of tenant farmers living in several different properties at Adamthwaite. The Wandale valley was also on an ancient route from Carlisle south to Sedburgh. So perhaps 500 years ago, with a small community of families living there and many passers-by, Adamthwaite did not feel quite as remote as it does today.

From the early indentures, details in Ravenstonedale parish records and Wills, it is apparent that many of the inhabitants living at Adamthwaite between 1568 and 1771 actually carried the surname Adamthwaite. Two typical baptism entries read:

11 Octobar 1585 Was bap Edmond Sonn to Willm Adamthwat of Adamthwat

3 Octobar 1586 Was bap Janatt the dawghter to myles ffothrgill of Adamthat and she was gottne in adulterry

There were also a number of families with other surnames living at Adamthwaite during this period – notably Fothergill, Taylor, Morland, Clemmison, Perkin, Fawcett, Chamberlain, Metcalf – and interestingly, from an examination of the Parish Registers, it is evident that a number of these other tenants had married Adamthwaite daughters shortly before their appearance as tenants at Adamthwaite. Was tenancy of land at Adamthwaite passed on to favoured sons-in-law as a form of dowry?

Meaning of the surname Adamthwaite

In 'Place Names of Westmorland'³ it is suggested that the prefix refers to a person 'Adam' and the suffix to 'pvait' (clearing). Writing in 1657, Camden⁴ stated that 'Thwait' was a word "only used in the North, in addition of Towns: some take it for a pasture from the Dutch 'hwoit'". Some two hundred years later, in 'Patronymica Britannia'⁵ M A Lower offered several meanings for the termination 'Thwaite' including 'land reclaimed from a wood or forest', 'rough marshy ground', 'a pasture', going on to say that "the prefix seems sometimes to refer to the name of the settler who effected the clearing, as in Adamthwaite, Simonthwaite, ...".

Of the 50+ surname dictionaries held at the Society of Genealogists' library, only Bardsley⁶ specifically defines the source of the surname Adamthwaite. He states that the surname is "*Local 'of Adamthwaite' (i.e. the clearing of Adam, the first settler probably in the 12th century) a small hamlet in Ravenstonedale, Westmorland*". David Hey⁷ discusses the regional element of many of the surnames that appear in the Westmorland Protestation Returns of 1641 that are "*derived from minor place-names with the Old Norse elements -thwaite, -beck or -gill*". Although Redmonds⁸ does not provide a meaning for the suffix 'thwaite' he does give a very helpful explanation as to how this Scandinavian element in place-names and surnames evolved into such a great variety of endings (e.g. -what, -fitt, -foot, -forth, or even -wood or -worth) due to a combination of the local pronunciation and the parish clerk's problems with spelling the consequent sound. Even today in Ravenstonedale, Adamthwaite is pronounced "Adamth't".

Despite the lack of guidance from modern experts, it seems safe to conclude that Adamthwaite is indeed a locational surname. Furthermore, my own distribution analysis of the surname since earliest records definitely points to the origin being Adamthwaite in Westmorland. The reference to woods in a location which is now largely bare fells might appear to be contradictory, but according to Burns and Nicholson⁹, the fells in this part of Westmorland were forested until "*long after the Conquest*", so it would be helpful to learn precisely when they were first cleared, as this might provide a clue as to when Adamthwaite (the place) took its name. Early maps show Mallerstang Forest very nearby, but the lack of accuracy means it is hard to tell how far the forest extended up the Wandle valley.

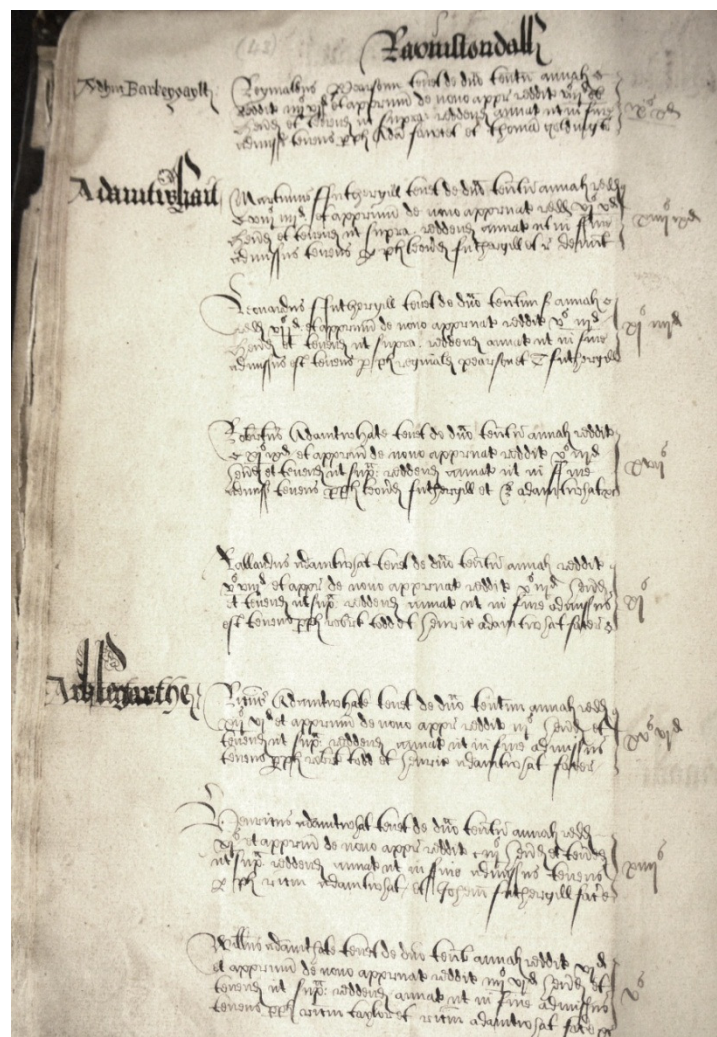
Earliest mentions of the surname

To date, the earliest definite use of Adamthwaite as a surname that I have discovered is the record of the ordination of **Roland Adamthwayte of Carlisle diocese** as a priest at New College Chapel, Oxford on 28 Feb 1461¹⁰. However, there is also a series of intriguing entries in the 'Pipe Roll of Cumberland and Westmorland'¹¹ from 1235 until 1247, which mention an **Adam Thwayt** paying fines to **Alessandri de Kirkeby Irloc** (in the earliest entries the name is written Adam Cayt or Kayet, evolving to Thwayt). Could this be the first use as a surname, or does the

name merely describe some Adam that lived in some other clearing? I have to accept that I shall probably never find the answer to that question.

The earliest parish records for Ravenstonedale date back to 1571, and it is clear that the Adamthwaites were well established in the parish by this time. Members of the family continued to appear amongst the ten most frequently recorded surnames in a variety of documents relating to Ravenstonedale for the next two centuries (see Table I).

Amongst the holdings of the Cumbria Archives there is a document from 1568 detailing the tenants of Lord Wharton¹², written following the Dissolution when the manor, which had previously been held by Watton Priory, was transferred first to the local church, then to the Wharton estates. This document provides details of the names of tenants as well as



A page from the 1568 document showing details for Adamthwaite and Artlegarth (reproduced with kind permission of the Trustees of the Lowther Estate)

the property they held, and confirms that Martin Futhergill, Leonard Futhergill, Robert Adamtwhat and Rolland Adamtwayt were all tenants holding properties at Adamthwaite; and Richard, Henry and William Adamtwhat were all tenants at Artlegarth – located along the track leading to Ravenstonedale Town. It seems that all holders of the surname were living at one or other of these two farms at this time. More research is needed to establish both the first mention of the hamlet Adamthwaite as well as the first use of the name as an inherited surname.

The 1379 Poll Tax

Writing about the 1379 Poll Tax Returns for the West Riding of Yorkshire, Rogers¹³ stated: *“There are strong indications from these individuals that, although the acquisition of inherited surnames was still incomplete, it was not a particularly recent innovation in Yorkshire at that time.”* My analysis of the Ravenstonedale Poll Tax Returns for 1379 seems to indicate that the situation just across the county border in Westmorland was at a similar stage.

I was disappointed to find that there did not appear to be any individuals appearing on the 1379 Poll Tax for Ravenstonedale or adjacent parishes¹⁴ (or across the county border in West Yorkshire) whose names could be interpreted as Adamthwaite, however there are some surnames from 1379 that do appear in later documents about Ravenstonedale (*see Table I*). There were 86 persons listed (sharing 60 names), although some of the entries were too damaged to be transcribed. The list includes the following Locative names –

- **de Morthwayt** – this farm is located close to Adamthwaite
- de Askfell – Ash Fell – another farm in Ravenstonedale named after a nearby hill
- de Hogill – presumably Howgill, the fell beyond the village
- **de Dent** – a nearby village across the border in West Yorkshire
- de Raysbek – a village near Ravenstonedale
- de Ravenstandale

there are a few Toponymic names –

- **del Grene** – though this could refer to an part of Ravenstonedale anciently called The Grene
- del More
- de Caldcotes

- Cowhous
- de Sandpool

a number of Occupational names –

- Oxhird, **Punder**, Palfreyman, Clerk, **Cook**, Brewster, **Tailleur**, Walker

just a few Nicknames –

- Kyngeson, **Pacock**, **Todd**, Squyer

and quite a lot derived from Personal names – including a number of women who had the suffix ‘mayden’–

- Ibbotson, Dimotson, Stevenson, Bryant, Walkerson, Macolmeson, Dobson, Sysson, Benson, Sanderson, Henryson, Atkynson, Jakmayden, Johnmayden, Henrymayden, Atkindoghter

The names in **bold** type were all continuously present in Ravenstonedale for the following four hundred years (*see Table I*).

Frequency analysis of the most common surnames in Ravenstonedale between 1379 and 1911

Through researching the Adamthwaites in Ravenstonedale I was aware that the same surnames cropped up repeatedly in all the sources I viewed; in fact, the Adamthwaites married many of them! So I was very interested to compare the frequency of the Adamthwaite surname alongside the other common surnames in Ravenstonedale across the range of historical records I was examining for this assignment. I discovered that between 1379 and 1777 there were a total of 310 surnames mentioned, though most appeared only a few times for a very short period. For the purposes of this article, I have included a table which shows the occurrences of the 30 surnames which appeared more than once in a 1541 list of tenants, which is reproduced in Reverend Nicholls’ book ‘The History and Traditions of Ravenstonedale, vol 1’¹⁵.

[see Table I]

The 30 surnames are listed in order of the number of individuals holding each surname in the 1541 list. The depth of shading on the table gives an indication of the incidence of each surname (*darker pink = 2% or higher incidence for each source; lighter pink 1% or higher*).

If you follow the shaded rows across the page from the 1541 column, you can follow the slow pace of

migration away from the dale. By 1911 although almost half of the surnames still appear, only around a third of the surnames fall into the 'most common' category, however in 1777 just over half the surnames are still evident, and in the second sample of marriages, only one surname is missing altogether, though many have slipped from the 'most common' category.

Other sources for data included on the Table are:

- List of Lord Wharton's tenants in 1568¹⁶
- Ravenstonedale marriages from 1578-1677 and 1678-177¹⁷
- Names of Jurors on the Court of Ravenstonedale in 1581 and 1667¹⁸ (included because, although it is a tiny sample, according to Nicholls, these individuals were selected to represent the main families living in the dale)
- list of Lord Wharton's tenants in 1592¹⁹
- 1641 Protestation Returns²⁰
- 1674 Hearth Tax²¹
- 1777 Window Tax²²

For comparison, the table also shows data for the sample of 30 surnames in the 1841 and 1911 censuses for Ravenstonedale²³. Frequency data for the sample of surnames, along with an indication of the regions of Great Britain where these names were found in 1998 was accessed at the Great Britain Family Names website²⁴. All percentages are based on the total number of individuals in each data source (shown in brackets in the table headings).

However, it should be remembered that most of the lists relate to named tenants, and the marriages relate to adults; there would have been considerably more individuals holding these surnames. The percentages are more comparable than the raw numbers, as they represent the position of each surname within the parish at each point in time.

The migration of the old established families out of the dale is already visible by the 18th century, but is most marked between the 1841 and 1911 census.

In the latter half of the 19th century, many Adamthwaites, along with a number of other long standing Ravenstonedale families, moved to nearby towns or further afield to the industrial areas of the North East or Lancashire. However, it would seem from the frequency distribution maps for 1998 on the Public Profiler website²⁵ that many of the surnames

from the 1541 sample are still most commonly found in the NW and NE of England. This is in line with Rogers'²⁶ findings that current distribution of many surnames can often provide pointers to their origins.

Now I am tempted to hunt through the 1851-1911 censuses for people 'born in Ravenstonedale' to discover where these families migrated (am I obsessive?)

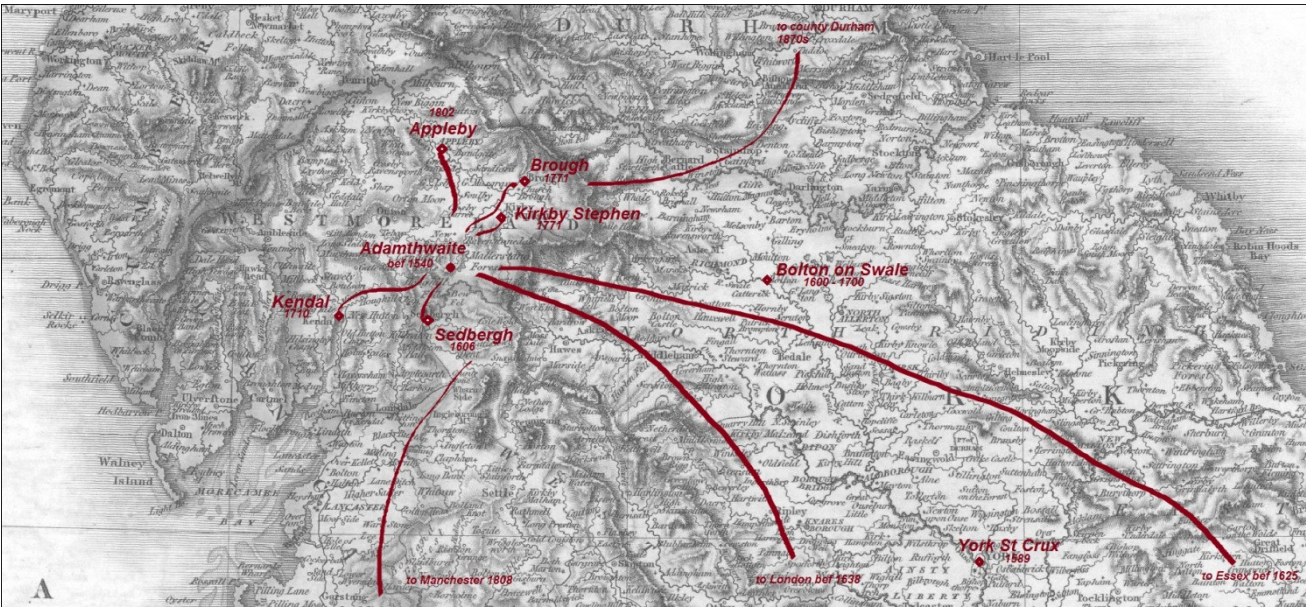
Re-running the data using the 30 surnames appearing most frequently in the second sample of marriage entries (1678-1777) only introduced one new surname to the 30 top names in the parish. Possibly this was partly as a result of a curious law agreed by the Court of Ravenstonedale, that any bachelor who married a lady from outside the parish should pay a fine of £20 (to be distributed among the poor) and if they refused, they were to be imprisoned for the first ten months of their marriage (Rev Nicholls²⁷).

The results of an autosomal DNA study amongst descendants of early Ravenstonedale inhabitants could provide some very interesting results!

Mapping the Adamthwaite surname

From my research, it seems that in the mid 16th century the earliest ADAMTHWAITEs were to be found in just two locations within Ravenstonedale parish and the majority of records remain in Ravenstonedale for the next 200 years. However, wills and parish registers reveal the following incidence within the British Isles:

- In York St Crux there were two baptisms in 1589; between 1600-1700 there was at least one family group around Bolton upon Swale, Yorkshire; and a few families also started to appear in the Sedbergh parish records in 1686 (though I believe they came from Ravenstonedale)
- In 1625 a John Adamthwaite, woollen draper, died in Maldon, Essex (from the family members named in his will I believe he also came from Ravenstonedale)
- In 1638 the first Adamthwaite record was found in London – at least three families appear in records over the next 75 years; their origin is unknown and no descendants seem to have survived beyond the 18th century



Approximate dates of early migrations of Adamthwaite families to local towns and further afield

- Not until the 1770s do we find any records of Adamthwaites in neighbouring Westmorland parishes (apart from occasional marriages), but around this time a number of families from various lines started to settle in Brough, Kirkby Stephen, Appleby, Kendal and in Bowes in Yorkshire
- In 1793 members of the Sedbergh line moved to London, followed ten years later by members of two Ravenstonedale lines arriving in London and Manchester
- In 1841, there were still about a third of all Adamthwaites living in Westmorland, but in Ravenstonedale there was just one servant girl left: even she had moved away by 1851). By 1911, there were just six Adamthwaite individuals living in the whole of Westmorland.

The map used to illustrate the early migration of families from Ravenstonedale is based on Pinkerton’s map of 1811²⁸

Frequency of the surname over time

Adamthwaite has always been a rare surname: I have found records of UK births/baptisms of only 1037 individuals between 1572 and 2004 and have been able to put 95% of individuals born between 1700 and 1925 into reconstructed family trees. There have never been as many as 200 individuals in any census:

Eng & Wales census:	Number of individuals located
1841	85
1851	96
1861	122
1871	139
1881	158
1891	181
1901	173
1911	183

For England and Wales, Public Profiler²⁹ estimates there were 116 Adamthwaites alive in 1998, and according to the ONS database³⁰, there were 132 people holding the surname in 2002. The findings for worldwide distribution according to Public Profiler³¹ look far less reliable, in particular as the known population in Australia is missing altogether.

Migration to the New World

The 1850s saw the first Adamthwaites leaving England for good and setting off for the gold fields of Australia and the prairies of north America. Most of those early adventurers found success in the New World and they produced large families, with the result that there are now probably more Adamthwaites living in Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand than there are in England. We have fairly good coverage of these families until the early 20th century, but little modern data. So this is my next target ... to discover more about the Adamthwaite descendants still living in the New World, and learn if they found their own Eden.

Some notes about the Adamthwaite ONS

The Adamthwaite ONS was registered with the Guild in 2007

UK records collected:

- All Adamthwaite entries on 1841-1911 Eng, Wales, Scotland, Ireland census collected and identified
- All Adamthwaite entries on GRO and GROS indexes collected and identified
- Parish Registers checked for all parishes where Adamthwaites are known to have lived
- Passenger records collected for all available online sources
- Will indexes checked online, at NA and relevant County Records Offices and copies obtained and transcribed of all early wills and many 19th and 20th C wills
- Manorial Records for Westmorland that mention Adamthwaite collected and transcribed; Chancery Records identified at NA
- Military records collected and identified

Overseas records collected:

- Available Canadian and USA Census entries collected
- Available Australian electoral rolls collected
- BMD records for Canada, USA, Australia and NZ collected
- Passenger records and land records for USA, Canada, Australia

All the above data, is held on Excel spreadsheets, which are all cross-indexed to the Births spreadsheet

Reconstructed trees: Nine Adamthwaite lines have been identified and colour coded and published as family tree descendency charts (produced using Legacy charting) on our website. All census, BMD, and other data which is published on the website is colour coded with the relevant Adamthwaite line

DNA: the Adamthwaite DNA Project was established at Family Tree DNA in 2009. To date only four individuals (from three different lines) have agreed to test, even though there are known to be living male Adamthwaites in three further lines.

Website: The Adamthwaite Archive

(www.adamthwaitearchive.org.uk) All the information I have collected, as well as that submitted by our 80+ members is available on the website, including all the spreadsheets (with appropriate cut off dates), family tree charts, photos and articles about our Adamthwaite ancestors and the history of the surname.

Our current project is to recreate the articles and photo galleries from the website in a printed book, with the data available on an accompanying CD. Copies of the publication will be lodged with the Guild and also the Society of Genealogists, as well as being available for purchase by our members.

Footnotes

¹ A Wainwright, Walks on the Howgill Fells (Frances Lincoln Ltd, 1972)

² Manorial Documents Register for Ravenstonedale at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr (accessed 20/6/2011)

³ A H Smith, ed, The Place Names of Westmorland, part II (English Place Name Society, 1963)

⁴ William Camden, Remains concerning Britain (London, 1657)

⁵ Mark Anthony Lower, Patronymica Britannia – a dictionary of family names of the United Kingdom (J R Smith, 1860)

⁶ Charles Waring Bardsley, Dictionary of English and Welsh surnames (Baltimore, 1967)

⁷ David Hey, Family Names and Family History (Hambledon & London, 2000)

⁸ George Redmonds, Surnames and Genealogy: a New Approach, p148 (FFHS, 2002)

⁹ Joseph Nicholson, Richard Burns, et al, The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland, vol I (London 1777)

¹⁰ Reg. Waynflete, Win., 1 pt ii – accessed at Lambeth Palace Library

¹¹ The Pipe Rolls of Cumberland and Westmorland 1222-1260, edited. Introduction by F H M Parker, vol 12, (Kendal 1905)

¹² 'Survey and Valuation of Wharton Manors' Earls of Lonsdale 1560-1580 (accessed at Cumbria Archives)

¹³ Colin D Rogers, The Surname Detective (Manchester, 1995)

¹⁴ Carolyn Fenwick, ed, The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381, vol III (Oxford University Press, 1998)

¹⁵ Rev W Nicholls, History & Traditions of Ravenstonedale, vol I (John Heywood, Manchester, 1877) also available online at www.archive.org

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- ¹⁶ Survey and Valuation of Wharton Manors, *ibid*
- ¹⁷ Rev R W Metcalf, Ravenstonedale Parish Registers 1571-1780 vols I & II, 1893 (Anguline Research Archives CD)
- ¹⁸ Rev W Nicholls, *ibid*
- ¹⁹ 'Indenture concerning Woods and Underwoods, between Philip Lord Wharton of the one Party and Anthony Pindar, William Cooke, George Green, John Taylor, William Adamthwaite, and others', 1592 (document viewed at Kendal Records Office and transcribed by Bob Adamthwaite)
- ²⁰ 'Westmorland Protestation Returns of 1641/2' from C&WAAS Transactions, xvii, 1971
- ²¹ Hearth Tax Westmorland 1674 (<http://www.edenlinks.co.uk/RECORDS/HT/BOL.HTM> accessed 8 jul 2011)
- ²² Window Tax Westmorland 1777
(http://edenlinks.rootsweb.ancestry.com/1gp/RECORDS/WIN_TAX_NW_R.HTM#ravensdale accessed 8 jul 2011)
- ²³ 1841 and 1911 census data for Ravenstonedale, extracted from Find My Past
- ²⁴ Great Britain Family Names (<http://gbnames.publicprofiler.org/> accessed 10 jul 2011)
- ²⁵ Geographical location maps for 1998 (<http://gbnames.publicprofiler.org> accessed 12 jul 2011)
- ²⁶ Colin D Rogers, *ibid*
- ²⁷ Rev W Nicholls, vol 1, *ibid*
- ²⁸ Migration map based on Composite map of England, John Pinkerton, 1811 (accessed at www.davidrumsey.com jul 2011)
- ²⁹ Public ProfilerGB (www.gbnames.publicprofiler.org) accessed 31 jul 2011
- ³⁰ Surnames of England and Wales (www.taliesin-arlein.net/names/search.php) accessed 31 Jul 2011
- ³¹ Public Profiler Worldnames (www.worldnames.publicprofiler.org) accessed 31 jul 2011