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At Sørensen's Request: the Formation and Development of Patronyms and Metronyms in Late Medieval Leicestershire and Rutland

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1. Sørensen's invitation

Sørensen has cogently confirmed that patronymic and metronymic bynames, compounded with the generic element -*son*, were characteristic of northern England. He further suggested that their predominance there resulted from the influence of Scandinavian settlement which obliquely reinstitutionalized the Old English suffix -*sunu*, since there were approximations between Scandinavian and English patronymic systems, although the former had a greater honorific and heroic significance. In the south, compounded patronyms and metronyms in the vernacular form, with -*son*, failed to persist or develop until the later middle ages, perhaps when they were reintroduced by migration, since there was no Scandinavian promotion in that region.[1] There, consequently, elided, appositional and genitival forms developed, sometimes, as in the English Surnames Survey at Leicester, categorized as bynames from personal names, but perhaps more truly being appositional patronyms or metronyms. Such forms in the south existed as either William (appositional) or Williams (genitival inflection).[2]

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[1] John Kousgård Sørensen, *Patronymics in Denmark and England*, Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture, 1982 (London, 1983).

[2] Cecily Clark, review of Richard McKinley, *The Surnames of Oxfordshire*, English Surnames Series, 3 (London, 1977), in *Nomina*, 3 (1979), 113–14.

In 1983, Sørensen had perforce to rely on what few detailed area studies had yet been produced, such as those by Richard McKinley and George Redmonds at Leicester, that is their research into Norfolk and Suffolk, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Oxfordshire.[3] Cautiously, therefore, Sørensen qualified his assertions by suggesting that '. . . more regional surveys are necessary before a clear picture can be gained of the geographical distribution of the -son-names through the centuries.'[4] In particular, he requested a detailed study of Lincolnshire.[5] With due regret for disappointing, since that study is not offered here, the next best is now placed on the table. Leicestershire and Rutland are seminally located for such research—within the region of East Midlands Middle English dialect, but not too far removed from Northern Middle English to prevent even some lexical terms from infiltrating.[6] Moreover, part of the counties—particularly the north and east of Leicestershire—had been subjected to considerable Scandinavian influence, reflected in the generic place-name elements -by and -thorp and the Grimston-hybrid forms. The two counties fell largely within the area of the Five Boroughs.[7]

The principal aspects of patronymic and metronymic developments in this investigation will comprise: the distribution of the forms; the chronology and processes of formation in the vernacular; the proportion of various taxable populations bearing these forms; and some continued instability of this form of byname by comparison with other forms. To avoid confusion, some terms of convenience are adopted here. 'Patronyms' and 'metronyms' refer to two forms: the Latinized form, such as John *filius Willelmi* and the vernacular form with the generic suffix -son. The former, Latinized forms, may have been transmuted in part into Middle English forms with -son, but they may equally have developed as other forms. These

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[3]   Sørensen, *Patronymics*, pp. 7 and 17–20.
[4]   Sørensen, *Patronymics*, p. 18; see also Cecily Clark, 'Onomastics', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, II, *1066–1476*, edited by Norman Blake (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 542–606 (at pp. 567–69).
[5]   Sørensen, *Patronymics*, p. 17.
[6]   A. McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and M. Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English*, 4 vols (Aberdeen, 1986), *passim*.
[7]   Kenneth Cameron, 'Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs', in *Place-Name Evidence for the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian Settlements*, edited by Kenneth Cameron (Nottingham, 1977), pp. 115–71.

other forms, which consist of appositional or inflected forms, such as William or Williams, are here designated bynames from personal names, but only as a term of convenience.

2. Patronyms and metronyms in rural Leicestershire and Rutland

The overall development of all these forms is presented in Table 1 (p. 58), but some clarification and circumspection must be attached to the figures as absolute values. The data are all drawn from tax returns which comprehended different levels of the population, and the implications of this problem will be expounded further below. Throughout the table, the figures for patronyms and metronyms comprise forms both in Latin and the vernacular, but only vernacular forms are indicated in column seven ('-son'). Thus, by way of clarification, in the Leicestershire lay subsidy of 1327 occurred 403 patronyms and thirteen metronyms; of this total of 416 only twelve contained the Middle English element -son, while the rest consisted of Latin or (a few) Anglo-Norman forms. Column seven thus denotes the number of vernacular forms occurring in columns three and five combined. It should also be emphasised that the figures denote numbers of individual taxpayers bearing these forms of bynames, not the number of different bynames of this type.

These figures can therefore be used to make some broad generalizations about the trend of developments in the later middle ages, but, unfortunately again, with some caveats, the principal of which concerns the geographical coverage of the poll tax of 1381 for part of Leicestershire. In fact, the extant returns cover only Gartree Hundred in the east and south east. This area was subjected to some Scandinavian influence, but less than the north and east, so that it is probable that patronyms and metronyms with -son would have been higher in that other area of the county. By contrast, the lay subsidy of 1524–5 for the same county excludes Sparkenhoe Hundred in the south-west, where appositional and genitival forms may have been more prominent.

Nevertheless, some conclusions can be elicited from the figures. First, vernacular forms with -son were still only very incipient in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Secondly, a large proportion of the Latinized forms must later have been translated into

Table 1. Proportions of taxpayers with patronyms, metronyms and bynames from personal names (elided or appositional patronyms or metronyms) in Leicestershire and Rutland in the late middle ages.

Date	Population (N)	Patronyms N	%	Metronyms N	%	-son N	Personal N	%
Leics								
1327	4,128	403	9.8	13	0.3	12	746	18.1
1381	2,476	106	4.3	17	0.7	87	466	18.8
1524	2,683	164	6.2	3	0.1	167	426	15.7
1525	3,924	179	4.6	6	0.2	185	691	17.8
Rutland								
1296	1,868	236	12.6	58	3.1	3	194	10.4
1377	917	39	4.3	6	0.7	6	115	12.5
1522	1,661	86	5.2	0	0	86	237	14.3
1524	1,401	89	6.4	0	0	89	201	14.4

Notes. 1. Needless to say, the datasets used here contain different levels of data and thus the values are only roughly comparable, showing a trend. 2. The data for Leicestershire in 1327 and 1524–5 are from the lay subsidies and similarly for Rutland for 1296 and 1524, but those for Rutland for 1522 derive from a musters roll. The data for 1377 and 1381 relate to heads of households in the poll taxes. The poll tax for 1381 for Leics comprises only Gartree Hundred and enumerates 2476 persons who are attributed bynames (dependants and servants without a byname are excluded here). The same exclusions obtain in the data from the Rutland poll tax. 3. The data for Leicestershire in 1524–5 are incomplete, significantly omitting the south-west of the county (especially the Hundred of Sparkenhoe), where a higher proportion of appositional or genitival forms might be expected. The next lay subsidy which includes Sparkenhoe (1544–5) is very defective (PRO E179/133/133). 4. Sources are indicated in the footnotes to this article, but comprise additionally: PRO E179/133/35 (poll tax for Leicestershire, 1381), E179/165/21 (poll tax for Rutland, 1377), E179/133/104-124 (lay subsidy for Leicestershire, 1524-5), E179/165/1 (lay subsidy for Rutland, 1296); Julian Cornwall, *Tudor Rutland: The County Community under Henry VIII* (Oakham: Rutland Record Series, 1, 1980) (Rutland in 1522 and 1524). 5. For comments on the poll taxes for Leicestershire, see Caroline Fenwick, 'The English poll taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1983), pp. 445–60.

bynames from personal names, not only forms with *-son*, since the Latinized forms in the earlier tax lists are a very much higher proportion of the taxable populations than the later vernacular forms with *-son*. The problem with this argument from the figures is that the proportion of bynames from personal names did not increase radically, so specific evidence is necessary to illustrate this argument, and some such data will be presented below. A further complication—the instability of patronymic and metronymic bynames—will also be elucidated below.

Returning to Sørensen's request, the figures in Table 1 allow some further contextualization of his own statements. Sørensen compared three counties in the later middle ages.[8] To these data will now be added some further precise data, but again from lay subsidies, for some illustrative counties other than Leicestershire and Rutland. In the taxation for Northumberland in 1296, 23% of taxpayers bore patronyms and 3% metronyms, in either Latinized or vernacular form.[9] The far north did indeed thus contain a substantially higher proportion of this form of byname. The figures for Leicestershire and Rutland are comparable with those for Staffordshire, situated in West Midlands dialect region, but bordering on NW Midlands Middle English dialect, and thus similarly situated to Leicestershire in relation to Northern Middle English and the northern onomastic areas. In the lay subsidy for Staffordshire in 1327, 7.8% of taxpayers (N = 360) bore patronyms and 1.2% (N = 57) metronyms (N of all taxpayers = 4600).[10] This regional belt in the Midlands was thus a transitional area between the high incidence in the north and the virtual absence of patronyms and metronyms in the south and west.

Lay subsidies, however, omitted a large proportion of the global population: those whose movable goods not required for subsistence fell below taxable capacity. The lay subsidies may have embraced perhaps only 30–40% of the actual population of heads of households.[11]

[8] Sørensen, *Patronymics*, pp. 17–20.
[9] *The Northumberland Lay Subsidy of 1296*, edited by Constance Fraser, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, Record Series, 1 (Newcastle, 1968).
[10] G. Wrottesley, 'The Exchequer Lay Subsidy Roll of A.D. 1327', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, 7 (1886), 195–255.
[11] James Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property 1290–1334: a Study in Medieval Financial Administration* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), pp. 81–85;

This problem may be important if, as has been inferred in some areas at least, patronyms and metronyms were more closely associated with unfree and lower social groups.[12] It is difficult to address this problem in Leicestershire and Rutland because of the difficulty of the sources, which by and large allow no clear perception of socio-legal status. Only inferences may be made. The custumal of Rothley, described further below, probably consisted mainly of customary tenants, in this case privileged villeins of ancient demesne status. The high proportion who bore patronyms and metronyms suggests that this form of byname may have had an association with this status, but a contributory cause is the early date of the survey, c. 1245. Customary tenants in the rental of Leicester Abbey in 1341, also further described below, held this form of byname too, but the data are not sufficient for proper quantitative analysis. Paradoxically, the rental of the Abbey's estates in 1477 does allow statistical analysis of this problem. By that date, there is no significant association of patronyms and metronyms with unfree status, but the lack of differentiation could be explained by confusion of and changes in socio-legal status in the later middle ages. Interestingly, however, there seems to have been a continuing association between free status and toponymic bynames. (See Tables 2 and 3 below.)

It is equally possible that the relationship between patronyms and metronyms and socio-legal status was always less important in the north and east midlands, where such forms of byname may have been both more extensive and not so socially-specific, but there may remain a potential margin of error in the data extracted from the lay subsidies.[13] In the lay subsidy of 1327 for Leicestershire, the mean level of taxation on those bearing patronyms was nearly 29d., on those bearing metronyms just under 40d., and on all taxpayers (N = 4128) just under 32¾d., with a large standard deviation in all cases; this does not support the general relationship of metronyms and exceptionally low status, at least in terms of economic position. In these circumstances, it is helpful to resort to other sources which, although

John Maddicott, 'The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294–1341', in *Landlords, Peasants and Politics in Medieval England*, edited by Trevor Aston (Cambridge, 1987), p. 294.
[12] McKinley, *Oxfordshire*, pp. 199–200.
[13] W. G. D. Fletcher, 'The Earliest Leicestershire Lay Subsidy Roll, 1327', *Associated Architectural Society Reports*, 19 (1888–89), 130–78 and 209–312.

also not comprehensive and which were furthermore static, may yet provide another perspective.

Survey-type documents encompass a wider population of heads of household, but still suffer from two difficulties. Their population is wider than that in lay subsidies, but still usually restricted to tenants and thus they often omit sub-tenants and the landless.[14] Secondly, they do not, at least for manors in Leicestershire, survive in good series and provide only a static snapshot. For Leicestershire, reasonably good survey-type documents survive for two estates. A custumal of c. 1245 for the soke of Rothley, held by the Templars, provides data from the *caput* and about a dozen appurtenant manors of varying size in the north-east of the county.[15] The so-called *Novum Rentale* of Leicester Abbey, compiled in the fifteenth century by William Charyte, a canon of the house, comprises the rental itself of 1477, but also incorporates an earlier one, called Geryn's rental, of 1341.[16] The Abbey's estates were dispersed throughout the county and, although some properties were rather disparate, included several substantial 'classical' manors, where manor and vill were co-terminous and there were large numbers of unfree as well as free tenants, as, for example, at Stoughton and Lockington.

The custumal of Rothley reveals the widespread use of patronyms in Latinized form, antedating, however, the evolution of the vernacular form in -*son*. Although it comprises 559 tenants, the bynames of only 465 can be confidently analyzed, since many tenants were known by their relationship as brother (*frater eius*) and co-parcener because of the custom of partible inheritance.[17] Of these 465, 33% (N = 155) bore patronyms or metronyms.

By 1341, the date of the earliest rental of the estates of Leicester Abbey, vernacular forms with -*son* had been introduced into written records, if they were not already in colloquial use. The raw data are

[14] Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Land, Tenure and Population in the Royal Manor of Havering, Essex, 1251–1352/3', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 33 (1980), 17–31.
[15] G. T. Clark, 'The Customary of the Manor and Soke of Rothley in the County of Leicester', *Archaeologia*, 47 (1882), 89–130; the date is obtained by comparison with Public Record Office, MS C260/86.
[16] Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. 625.
[17] Rosamund Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, 14 (1966), 77–95.

provided in Table 2 (p. 63). In this rental, a considerable proportion of patronyms and metronyms were written in the vernacular form with *-son*; fourteen of the twenty-seven tenants bearing this form of byname had Middle English *-son* (eight at Stoughton and four at Thurnby, both vills situated east of Leicester). By the rental of 1477, however, the proportion of patronyms had diminished considerably, as at Stoughton where only two tenants bore patronyms, both *Saundreson*. Demographic decline may have been a contributory cause, but the overall decline suggests other influences. A number of Latinized patronyms and metronyms may have become translated into bynames from personal names. On the other hand, a large proportion of the patronyms and metronyms in 1341 were already vernacular forms in *-son*, so it seems reasonable to suggest that it was the inherent instability of these forms in 1341 which engendered their decline, and this problem may be reflected also in the changing nature of the specific elements or protothemes over the late middle ages.

The corpus of the earliest occurring patronyms and metronyms can be compiled from the lay subsidies, survey-type documents, court rolls of specific manors, and the poll taxes. The earliest compounds, before *c.* 1350, contain a wider range of protothemes than in the later middle ages. About 63% of these earlier forms consisted of less usual personal names, that is those which did not belong to the ten most frequent forenames; this less usual corpus comprised *Batesone*, *Daukynsone*, *Hughesone*, *Iuesone*, *Juddeson*, *Kittesone*, *Matheusone* and *Tibbesone*. Incidentally, the earliest written hypocoristic forms of forenames occurred in these patronyms and metronyms, as in *Watteson*, *Mabbesone*, *Hobbesone* and others. In only a few patronyms was the element *-son* not compounded with a personal name, unambiguously in *le Reuesone* and *le Smythessone*, less unequivocally in *Kingessone* and *Wodardsone* alias *Wodatsone*, since the latter might have been either an office (woodward) or a very uncommon Continental Germanic personal name. At Owston, in the east of the county, some unusual forms persisted into the early fifteenth century, however, such as John *Cassotsone*, Robert *Colleson* and Richard *Ameson*. At Castle Donington, a declining borough, in the mid fifteenth century occurred William *Gybbonson*, whose surname incorporates a French hypocoristic and diminutive.[18]

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[18] Merton College, Oxford, MSS MM 6376–6406 and 6556–6573 (Kibworth

Table 2. Forms of byname held by the tenants of Leicester Abbey in 1341 and 1477.

Status	Rental of 1341				Rental of 1477			
	patr + metr		personal		patr + metr		personal	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unfree	27	22	25	21	11	4	21	8
Free	0	0	2	1	2	1	18	7
Cottagers	10	9	15	13	0	0	0	0
Total	37	15	42	17	13	5	39	15

Notes. N of all tenants: unfree in 1341 = 121 and in 1477 = 139; free in 1341 = 7 and in 1477 = 109; cottagers in 1341 = 114 and in 1477 = 26. Precise definition of the status of tenants of smallholdings in 1341 is hindered by inadequate description in the rental. In 1341, unfree comprises both *tenentes in villenagio* and *nativi*. In 1477, the Abbey had 338 tenants throughout the county, but the bynames of only 274 are analysed here since many tenants were of indeterminate status. Although the rental differentiated between *tenentes ad voluntatem* and *tenentes libere* (or *liberi*), confusion between personal status and the status of land was created by many customary tenants holding free land. For example, six of the twenty-one tenants at will in Lockington also held small parcels of free land.
Source: Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 625.

All these compounds with less common personal names were transient in their communities. Their ephemeral nature is epitomized by the metronymic byname Pelleson in Barkby. Petronilla de Thorp was mentioned in the court rolls for that manor between 1340 and 1348, twice by her full description, once as *Pelle de Thorp* and once

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Harcourt and Barkby); see also Cecily Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition. Kibworth Harcourt 1280–1700* (Cambridge, 1983); PRO SC2/183/87–88 and PRO DL 30/80/1090 (Owston and Castle Donington). For *Wodard*, see Thorvald Forssner, *Continental-Germanic Personal Names in England in Old and Middle English Times* (Uppsala, 1916), p. 237.

Table 3 Chi-square analysis of the relationship between bynames and status in the rental of Leicester Abbey in 1477.

	Observed count	Expected count
Unfree		
toponymic	22	31.39
topographical	9	8.41
patr/metr	11	7.29
nickname	38	36.99
personal	21	21.86
occupational	38	33.07
Free		
toponymic	34	24.61
topographical	6	6.59
patr/metr	2	5.71
nickname	28	29.01
occupational	21	25.93

Chi-square value = 12.602 with five degrees of freedom, significant at the 0.05 level.

simply by the hypocoristic form of her forename, *Pelle*. Her son, Richard, appeared between 1348 and 1353, having inherited her bovate in 1348:

> Radulphus [sic] Pellesone de Thorp venit in plena Curia et de licencia domini petit se admitteri ad tenenciam unius mesuagii et unius bouate terre cum pertinenciis post decessum Pelle matris sue et admissus est . . .[19]

This byname did not thereafter recur in the manor.

The implication of the data presented above is that patronyms and metronyms with the element *-son* did not occur in Leicestershire

[19] Merton College, MS MM 6571.

before the 1340s. This inference can be confirmed by evidence from the court rolls for two manors of Merton College, Oxford, at Barkby and Kibworth Harcourt. Both commence in the 1270s, but there is a gap in the early fourteenth century for Kibworth, although the series recommences fully from 1324. The vernacular forms in *-son* first appeared in written form in the Barkby rolls and rentals in the 1340s. The earliest references, occurring in 1341, referred to Henry *Daukynson* and John *Harrysone* alias *Henrison*, and were followed by Henry *Siwoteson* (1346), William *Amyssone* (1347), Henry *Auotesson* (1349), John *Iueson* (1349), William *Dyson* (1354), and Roger *Denoteson* (1359). A similar chronology is revealed in the rolls for Kibworth: Adam *Iuessone* (1338); John *Watteson(e)* (1338–44); John *Hughesone* (1343); Robert *Sibilesone* (1343); John *Heynesone* (1343–6); John *Iuesone* (1343–8); William *Wodardsone* alias *Wodatsone* (1344–6); Robert *Tibbesone* (1345); John *Jackesone* (1346); John *Youngrobynsone* (1346–8); Henry *Nicholesone* (1348); and William *Emmesone* (1348).

Some interesting characteristics emerge from prosopographical detail of the bearers of these bynames, since they were mainly, although not exclusively, drawn from the margins of their local societies. By and large, they did not belong to the core families within their communities. Their bynames were transient within the formal records of their communities, disappearing from the court rolls quite quickly after their initial appearance. By contrast, those patronymic bynames which both became established and belonged to core families were formed only later. The principal example at Barkby was Jonson and its variants. Henry *filius Johannis* continued to be known as such in the records from 1349 to 1381, although from 1371 he was also designated Henry *Jonson* (1371–99). This kinship group later comprised several other core tenants, such as Ivo *Johnson* alias *Jakson* (1420–44), Thomas *Jakson* (1450–78), John *Johnson* (1390–1437) and Robert *Jonson* alias *Jankynson* (1420–40). Also core, but less influential, were the Richardsons, whose *antecessor*, John *filius Ricardi*, was described in this form in the court rolls from 1346 to 1359 (18 references), although in four instances as John *Richardsone*. He was succeeded by William *Rychardson* (1391–1413). Stable patronyms thus seem to have been formed only later and then in association with core families. Patronyms and metronyms formed at an earlier time seem to

have related to marginal individuals, were transient and unstable, and had a wider and less common range of protothemes.

Additional data from other manors confirm the patterns described here. In Kibworth Beauchamp, adjacent to Harcourt, patronyms and metronyms seem to have occurred first in 1348–9 (John *Iuesson*, John *Moldesson*, Robert *Tymmeson*, and Isabella *filia Rogeri Maggeson*). In Breedon on the Hill, in the north–west of the county, Isolda *Hulleson* was involved in a case of trespass in c. 1339, at about the time when John *filius Roberti Watteson* was a *nativus* and *fugitivus* from the same manor.[20]

These processes were complicated by the development of Latinized patronyms and metronyms into bynames from personal names. For example, although there are isolated examples of *Sibilesone* in Kibworth, the byname from *filius Sibile* was almost consistently *Sibile*, pertaining to the core family there. The homonymous *Sibile* was a widow in the late thirteenth century. The same process can be perceived in north-east Leicestershire, where most Latin forms stabilized into vernacular forms with *-son*. Thus at Gaddesby *filius Alexandri* became *Saundreson*, and there too occurred *Hanson* (1366), *Stywardson* (1392–1412) and *Wilkynson* (1421). *Rogerson* (1399), *Perysson* (1399), and *Jankynson* (mid-fifteenth century) existed at nearby Wartnaby. At adjacent Frisby-on-the-Wreake, from the 1390s through into the fifteenth century, occurred *Hopkynson*, *Thomasson*, *Rowesone*, *Heyneson* and *Wilkokson*. By contrast Henry *filius Jordani*, who was involved in many charters relating to lands in Gaddesby in the late thirteenth century, was also known, as in 1275, as Henry *Jordan*, which byname persisted in Gaddesby through to the fifteenth century.[21] More evidence is available in the court rolls of Kibworth Harcourt, where, for example, *filius Alexandri* (1277–98) seems to have become *Saunder*, as *filius Reginaldi* (1289–98) became *Reynald*. There also an important kinship group, the Scolaces, succeeded *Scolasse* or *Scolastica*, who was a widow in the late thirteenth century. Her sons were known as Thomas *filius Scolace*, John *filius Scolacie*, and Hugh *filius Scolasse* or *Scolastisse* (1277–99), but the surname of the family became stabilized as *Scolace* alias *Scolas*. Similarly, at Barkby, the

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[20] PRO SC2/183/51–52 and 76.
[21] Bodleian Library, MS Wood empt., fols 107v–126v, 129v–131r, 137r, 146r–v and 170r–182v.

descendants of a Milicent assumed the surname *Milisent*.[22]

It has been suggested above that patronyms and metronyms were initially more unstable than other forms of byname. There is, in fact, evidence to suggest that some patronyms in Leicestershire still had a degree of instability even in the late middle ages. A clear example concerned the manumission of several *nativi* of one kinship group at Anstey in 1420. Those manumitted comprised William *Edson* and his sons who were named John *Wylson*, Thomas *Wylson*, Robert *Wilson*, Richard *Wilson* and William *Wilson*, reflecting the changes in patronymic forms over generations.

> Memorandum quod iij° die mensis Maij anno Regni regis Henrici quinti post conquestum anglie octauo venerunt ad curiam domini Abbatis Willelmus Edson de Ansty filius Johannis Sareson nuper de eadem Johannes Wylson senior filius predicti Willelmi Edson Thomas Wilson filius predicti Willelmi Robertus Wilson filius eiusdem Willelmi Johannes Wilson filius Willelmi Ricardus Wilson filius eiusdem Willelmi et Willelmus Wilson filius predicti Willelmi Edson de Ansty qui attachiati fuerunt per corpora sua causa natiuitatis Et postea in curia omnes predicti scilicet Willelmus Edson &c per Ricardum Rotheley Abbatem cum Assensu tocius conuentus manumissi in libertatem pro qua uero manumissione fecerunt finem cum dicto Abbate et conuentu pro C marcis.[23]

This case was undoubtedly exceptional, since most patronyms and metronyms had become fixed by this late date, but it reflects the potentially greater instability of patronyms and metronyms. It might be speculated that the latter—metronyms—were the most unstable, but no evidence is available for Leicestershire and Rutland to illustrate this point.

3. Patronyms and metronyms in *-son* in the borough of Leicester

The development of these forms of byname in the borough of Leicester represents some similarities with and some differences from the rural pattern.[24] Table 4 reveals the overall progress in the urban

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[22] Merton College MSS MM 6376–6406.
[23] Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 625, fol. 14r.
[24] Data file Leibor.dbf (dBase IV) in the Department of English Local History, University of Leicester, mainly extracted from *Records of the Borough of Leicester*, I, *1101–1327*, and II, *1327–1509*, edited by Mary Bateson (London, 1899–1901).

context, showing that these forms were exotic in 1318 and 1354, embracing less than 1% of burgesses who contributed to tallages. In previous taxations, between the loan of 1252–3 and the tallage of 1311, no such bynames had occurred. These earlier lists, with the numbers of burgesses assessed in parenthesis, comprise the loan of 1252–3 (93), which was obviously very selective, and the tallages of 1271 (685), 1286 (404), 1307 (187), and 1311 (242). By the subsidy of 1492, however, 5.1% of contributing burgesses bore patronyms or metronyms, increasing to 5.5% in that of 1497, and 7.5% in the brokage roll of 1505. The rental of Leicester Abbey in 1477, the *Novum Rentale*, comprised properties from which the abbey drew rents in parts of the borough, mainly St Leonard's parish and the area adjacent to the abbey. Of the tenants enumerated in the rental, 4.7% bore patronyms.

Forms in *-son* were thus unusual in the borough before the fifteenth century and seem to have been introduced into the urban *enceinte* much later. Nevertheless, entries to the gild merchant from the earliest time had included a large number of Latin patronymic descriptions of freemen because of the emphasis on inherited freedoms or patrimony (*habet sedem patris*), one of the methods of admission.

Table 4. The frequency of patronyms and metronyms in the borough of Leicester, 1318–1505.

Date	Document	'Population'	Patr. or metr.	
		N	N	%
1318	tallage	463	1	< 1
1354	tallage	482	2	< 1
1477	rental	193	9	4.7
1492	subsidy	276	14	5.1
1497	subsidy	181	10	5.5
1505	brokage	320	24	7.5

Notes. 'Population' relates to the number of those assessed or to tenants. Figures in column 4 relate to the number of bearers, and in column 5 indicate the number of beares as a percentage of the total 'population'. The rental of 1477 comprehended only part of the borough.

Such forms in Latin failed to materialise in the vernacular, which may suggest that they lacked dignity and were not considered to be commensurate with burghal status. Entries to the gild merchant allow a quite precise chronology of the introduction of surnames in *-son* into the borough for this selective social group which comprehended only part of the burghal population.[25] A few unusual entries occurred in the fourteenth century: Adam *Huggesone* in 1336; Adam *Sareson* in 1342; William *Pelson* of Groby (explicitly from outside) in 1363; and Thomas *Kyngson* in 1378. The real influx did not occur until the mid-fifteenth century: in 1466, Thomas *Jacson*, William *Colynson* and William *Gybson* were admitted. In subsequent years, new freemen with this form of surname were recorded as follows: 1467 (1); 1474 (4); 1475 (2); 1476 (1); 1480 (1); 1481 (1); 1482 (1); 1483 (2); 1488 (1); 1490 (2); 1491 (3); 1492 (1); 1496 (3); 1499 (3); 1500 (1); 1501 (1); 1503 (4); 1505 (1); 1508 (10) and 1509 (1). Surnames in *-son* thus gained a foothold in the borough much later than in the rural areas of the north-east and east of the county and, equally, they seem to have been exogenous rather than endogenous forms. In support of the latter notion, *Pelson* was evidently introduced from Groby, Oliver *Chobeson* was a denizen of Melton when admitted to the gild merchant in 1505, Walter *Dyatson* was a clerk and perhaps from outside the borough, and so also was Mr Walter *Gibson*.

As in the county, however, the earliest forms were more exotic and transient, as in the unusual forms *Huggesone*, *Sareson*, and *Pelson*, which occurred in the admissions to the gild merchant in 1336, 1342 and 1363, and *Leveson* in the tallage of 1354. Some less usual forms also occurred in the late fifteenth century, such as *Tys(s)on* (1452 and 1475), *Sybson* (1477), *Goulson* or *Gouldeson* from 1477 onwards, *Serleson* (1482), *Dyatson* or *Diotson* in the 1490s, *Hampson* also in the 1490s, *Genyson* (1497), and *Lawson* (1505), but the corpus predominantly comprised the very common names *Dawson*, *Jacson*, *Jonson*, *Tomson*, *Wilson*, *Robynson*, and *Rychardeson*.

By the late fifteenth century, these forms and their bearers had become accepted within the borough, reflected in office-holding. John

[25] M. Kowaleski, 'The Commercial Dominance of a Medieval Provincial Oligarchy: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century', in *The Medieval Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1200–1540*, edited by Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser (London, 1990), p. 186.

Gouldson or *Goulson*, for example, was one of the chamberlains in 1477, an auditor of the accounts of the south quarter and swinemarket in 1481 and 1489, and meat or fish taster in various years between 1478 and 1492. Mr William *Gibson*, who entered the gild merchant in 1466 and was then described as a *magister*, is another example. In the subsidy of 1492, he resided in the south quarter and contributed 32*d.*, described there as a notary. In the subsidy of 1492, he contributed 16*d.* for land and 10*s.* 8*d.* for goods, whilst he was assessed in 1505 for 4*d.* and 20*d.* respectively. He was elected mayor in 1492 and 1501, and was one of the auditors of the accounts for the south quarter in years between 1491 and 1507 (nine years). Less conspicuously, Hugh Tomson (occasionally *Tomkyngson*, *Tomkynson* or *Thomkynson*) acted as chamberlain in 1493 and 1507, auditor for accounts of the north quarter in 1495, 1497 and 1503, and for the east quarter in 1509, as a leather tester in 1487–1505 (six years), held a tenement in the parish of St Margaret in 1477, and had entered the gild merchant in 1474. This prosopography suggests that surnames in -*son* were no longer alien to the urban community.

4. Conclusion

Leicestershire and Rutland were situated on the boundary of the area of stronger Scandinavian influence. The border nature of these counties is reflected in the translation of Latin patronyms and metronyms into vernacular forms in the later middle ages. Forms with -*son* were reinstitutionalized through Scandinavian influence in north and east Leicestershire, but appositional and genitival forms were even there just as important. Patronyms and metronyms with the suffix -*son* entered into the formal written record at the local level, that is, in court rolls and survey-type documents, in the early fourteenth century, commonly in the 1340s, but the earliest forms seem to have been inherently unstable and associated with marginal social groups. The later formations were stable, although an element of instability persisted in these forms of bynames even into the later middle ages.

The Smalls, Hats and Barrels:
Navigational and Toponymic Hazards

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The earliest surviving manuscript charts which include reasonably legible inscriptions around the more southerly coastlines of the British Isles are by Italian or Majorcan/Catalan cartographers of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[1] The earliest surviving manuscript sailing directions including the same area are in Low German,[2] Italian,[3] French,[4] Portuguese[5] and English.[6] They date from the fifteenth century, but undoubtedly contain some matter copied,

[1] Tony Campbell, 'Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500', in *The History of Cartography*, edited by J. B.Harley and David Woodward (Chicago, 1987), I, 371–463, especially pp. 449–56.
[2] *Das Seebuch*, edited by Karl Koppmann (Bremen 1876). (Contains a place-name glossary).
[3] *Die italienischen Portolane des Mittelalters . . .*, edited by Konrad Kretschmer (Berlin, 1909, reprinted Hildesheim, 1962). (Contains a place-name glossary).
[4] *The Rutters of the Sea: the Sailing Directions of Pierre Garcie*, edited by D. W. Waters (New Haven and London, 1967). (Contains a place-name glossary.) The individual works reprinted are separately paginated in addition to Waters' overall pagination.
[5] *Livro de marinharia*, edited by J. I. de Brito Rebello (Lisbon, 1903).
[6] *Sailing directions for the circumnavigation of England*, British Library, MS Lansdowne 285, fols 136–140; published in Waters, 187–195; also, edited by James Gairdner, with a place-name glossary by E. Delmar Morgan, in Robert Hues, *Tractatus de Globis (1592)*, Hakluyt Society Series I, vol. 79 (London, 1889) (separately paginated, pp. 11–37).