

**The English surname detective**

**Recent encounters with phantoms, doppelgängers, shape changers,  
impostors and victims of mistaken identity**

Peter McClure  
Institute for Name-Studies  
University of Nottingham

***The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and  
Ireland***

**1st edn = FaNBI 1  
(45,000+ surnames)**

Eds Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates & Peter McClure  
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council  
2010 - 2014

**2nd edn forthcoming = FaNBI 2  
(about 60,000 surnames)**

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council  
2014 - 2016

George Redmonds

*Surnames and Genealogy: a New Approach*

Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society,  
1997

+++

P. H. Reaney

*A Dictionary of British Surnames*

London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958

> 3rd edn with R. M. Wilson

*A Dictionary of English Surnames*

London: Routledge, 1991

**Phantoms and Doppelgängers**



Steve Archer, *The British 19<sup>th</sup> Century Surname Atlas*, version 1.20 (2003-2015)

### **IGI**

**= International Genealogical Index**

compiled by

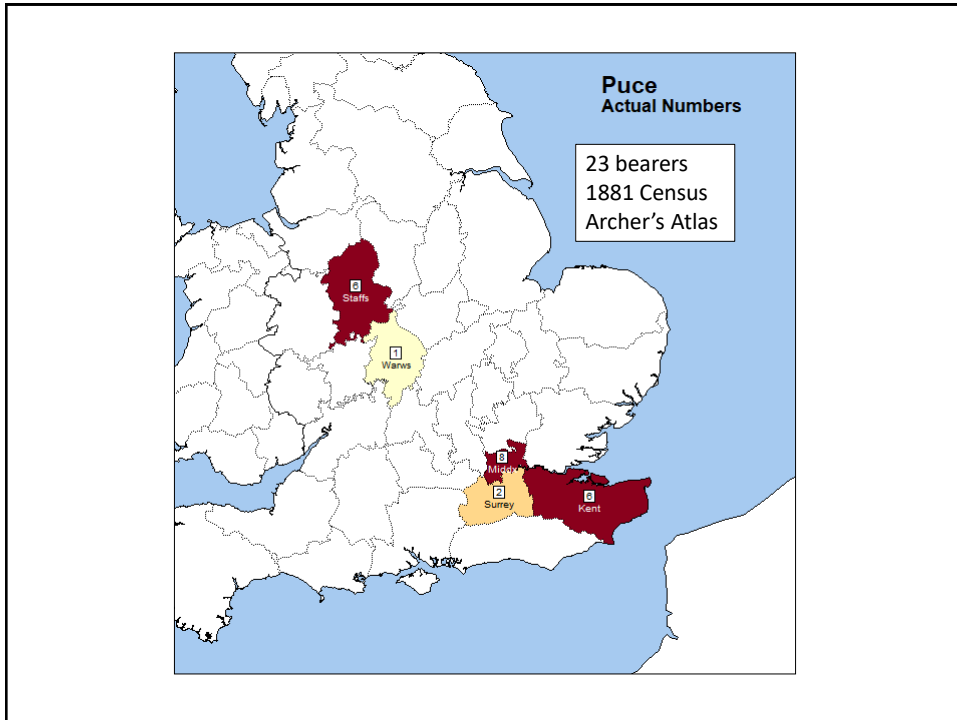
Church of the Latter Day Saints (Salt Lake City)

**specifically the Community Indexed IGI**

(Vital and church records from the early 1500s to 1885)

accessible at

**<https://www.familysearch.org/search/record>**



**International Genealogical Index**  
(Community indexed IGI)  
[www.familysearch.org/search/record](http://www.familysearch.org/search/record)

**Deceased Ancestor's Name**

First Names: -

Last Names: **Puce**

Country : **England**

State or Province (county): -

Birth year:

**1500-**

**1600-**

**1700-**

**1800-**

***Puce* in IGI, 1500-**

IGI's algorithms give variant spellings:

Agnes **Puce**, female, christening, 2 Feb 1541  
Hampshire Parish Registers

John **Pews**, male, christening, 06 Oct 1588  
Wickhambreux, Kent

Elizabeth **Pewes**, 1569, Katheryn Pew, 1624 (Chester,  
**Cheshire**)

Darkis **Puse**, female, 03 Aug 1597  
St Andrew Holborn, London

***Puce***

**IGI evidence 1600 - 1800**

Dauid **Pewes**, 1643 (Southwark, **Surrey**)

Edward **Pewys**, 1682 (Rochford, **Worcs**)

Sara **Puce**, 1707 (Shrewsbury, **Shrops**)

Ann **Pughes**, 1791 in IGI (Liverpool, **Lancs**)

***Puce* in 1881 Census:**

Oswald ***Puce*** and family (Hanley, **Staffs**)

John ***Puce*** and family (Tipton, **Staffs**)

Emily ***Puce*** and family (Rugby, **Warwicks**)

William ***Puce*** and family (Pancras, **Middx**)

Edward ***Puce*** and family (Woolwich, **Kent**)

Laura ***Puce*** (Kingston on Thames, **Surrey**)

Oswald Puce	Head	Mar	50	
Hannah	Wife	Mar		42
Fanny	Daughter	Unm		17
Gertrude	Daughter			3

**1881 Census image: 25 & 27 Derby St, Hanley, Staffs**

Oswald 'Puce' is a beer seller, aged 50, born in Hanley.  
 Wife Hannah, born in Alton, Staffs.  
 Note Fanny, his 17 year-old daughter and Gertrude his 3 year-old daughter.

Oswald Price	Head	Mar	37	
Mary do	Wife	do		37
William do	Son	Widw	16	
Georgina do	Daughter		7	
Fanny do	Daughter			7

**1871 Census image: 25 Derby St, Hanley, Staffs**

Oswald Price, potter's gilder, aged 37, born in Hanley.

Different wife Mary, but same daughter Fanny, aged 7

Hannah Price	Head	Widow		<del>52</del>
Gertrude do	daughter			<del>14</del>

**1891 Census image: 82 Richmond St, Penkhull, Staffs**

Hannah Price, widow, aged 52, born in Alton, Staffs.

Daughter Gertrude aged 14

### Enumerators' Copying errors in 1881 Census

Emily **Puce**, 21, born in Tamworth, **Warwicks**, 1881 Census  
 = Emily **Pace**, 11, born in Tamworth, **Warwicks**, 1871 Census

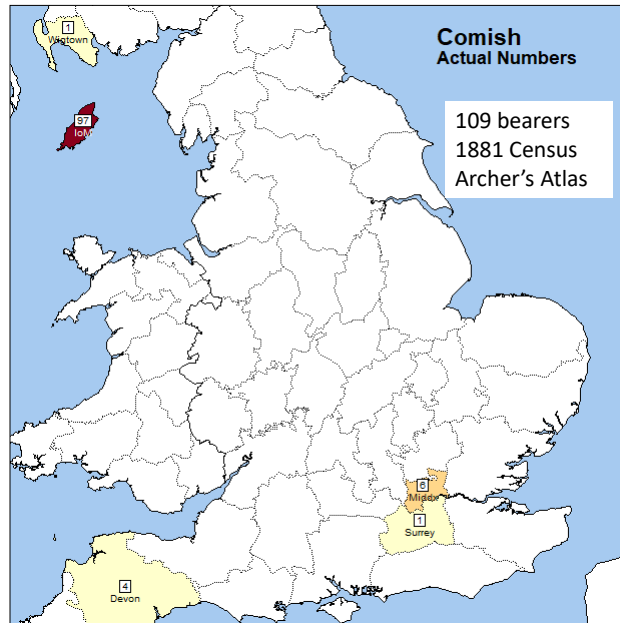
John **Puce**, 2, born in Cradley Heath, **Staffs**, 1881 Census  
 = John M. **Price**, 12, born in Cradley Heath, **Staffs**, 1891 Census

William **Puce**, 35, telegraph [...] maker, born in Marylebone, **Middx**; wife Charlotte, 1881 Census  
 = William **Pace**, 25, clock maker, same birthplace, same wife, 1871 Census

Edward **Puce**, 46, born in Oldham, Lancs, barrack labourer, living at 40 Samuel St, Woolwich, **Kent**; wife Emily (45), son Edward (5), 1881 Census  
 = Edward **Price**, 57, born in Ireland, general labourer, living at 111, Samuel St. Woolwich, **Kent**; same wife (57) and son (15), 1891 Census

### Ancestry transcription error in 1881 Census

Laura **Puce**, 21, born in Wood Green (Middx) [for **Lousia Puce** or **Price**], 1881 Census  
 = Louisa **Price**, 11, born in Wood Green (Middx), 1871 Census





William B. Cornish	head	Mar	30		Farmer
Henrietta B. do	Wife	do		31	
William Lee Cornish	Son		3		
Annie Anne do	Daughter			2	

## 1881 Census

William B. Cornish or Cornish, farmer, aged 30,  
born and living in CREDITON, DEVON,  
Wife Henrietta  
William Lee Cornish 'son' aged 3

William B. Cornish	Head	c/b	41		Farmer
Henrietta B. do	Wife	c/b		41	
Edith M. do	Daughter			6	Scholar
William Lee	Nephew				

## 1891 Census

William B. Cornish, farmer, aged 41  
born and living in CREDITON, DEVON  
Wife Henrietta  
William Lee 'nephew'

James Comish	Head	<del>son</del>	<del>41</del>		Dyer
Maria	do	wife	do	29	
Emily	do	daugh	-	6	Scholar
Maria	do	daugh	-	3	do
John	do	son	-	2	do
Elizabeth	do	daugh	-	3/10mo	

## 1881 Census

James Comish, aged 41, born in Brentford,  
living in Isleworth, Middx. Family of 6

James Cornish	Head	M	51		Dyer
Maria	do	Wife	M	41	
Emily	do	daugh	S	15	
Maria	do	daugh		13	
John	do	son		12	
James	do	son		8	

## 1891 Census

James Cornish, aged 51, born in Brentford,  
living in Isleworth, Middx. Family of 6

NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of	
			Males	Females
Alice Cornish	Serv	Unm		19

1881 Census  
 Alice Cornish (?), aged 19,  
 born in Hanworth, Middx

Henry Cornish	Head	Marr	57
Emma	Wife	Marr	36
William H. Jr	Son	<del>Marr</del>	<del>18</del>
Ellen J. De	Daughter	<del>Unm</del>	<del>13</del>
Charlotta De	Daughter	<del>Unm</del>	<del>11</del>
Alice	Daughter	<del>Unm</del>	<del>8</del>
Lydia J. De	Daughter	<del>Unm</del>	<del>2</del>
Ann L. De	Daughter	<del>Unm</del>	<del>2 1/2</del>

1871 Census  
 Alice, daughter of Henry Cornish, aged 8,  
 born in Hanworth, Middx

**IGI in Devon and Cornwall  
COMISH or CORNISH?**

Compare

*Catherine Comish*, 1738 in IGI (Paignton, Devon)

with

*Richard Cornish*, 1560, *Geo Cornish*, 1752 in IGI (Paignton, Devon)

*John Comish*, 1835 in IGI (Quethiock, Cornwall)

with

*Henrici Cornish*, 1589, *Mary Ann Cornish*, 1814 in IGI (Quethiock, Cornwall)

**Shape-changers and Imposters**

### Warning bells should ring if

- There is no evidence of the supposed etymological form of the surname in medieval records
- There is no evidence of the supposed etymon in Middle English or Anglo-Norman (or Old French)
- The sense or form of the etymon does not conform to a usual pattern of surname origin
- The modern surname cluster is far from the location of relevant medieval surname data
- There is no chain of evidence to link the modern surname with its supposed medieval antecedents

**None of these is proof that the modern name has a misleading appearance, but they should put us on the alert**

### Some common forms of linguistic variation that produce onomastic disguises

**Morphological substitutions:** *Westwood > Westward*

*Tattershall (Lincs) > Tattershaw, Tattersley, Tattersdale, Tattersfield, Tatterson*

**Phonetic changes:**

- **Voicing and unvoicing of consonants:** *Capel > Cable; Bradley > Pratley*
- **Assimilation/dissimilation:** *Carlisle > Carlin; Topsham > Topson; Hanson > Hansom*
- **Metathesis:** *(Absalom >) Absalon > Asplin*
- **Loss of consonants:** *Halford > Alford; Prentice > Prenty; Beverage > Berridge*
- **Addition of inorganic consonants and vowels:** *Alford > Halford*  
*Prees > Priest*  
*Night(in)gale > Nightscales*  
*Pierpoint > Spearpoint*  
*Asplin > Aspland > Ashplant*  
*Carlin > Caroline*
- **Simplification of consonant clusters:** *Sibston > Sibson*

***Pseudo-locative names***

***Pseudo-relationship names***

***Pseudo-occupational names***

***Pseudo-nicknames***

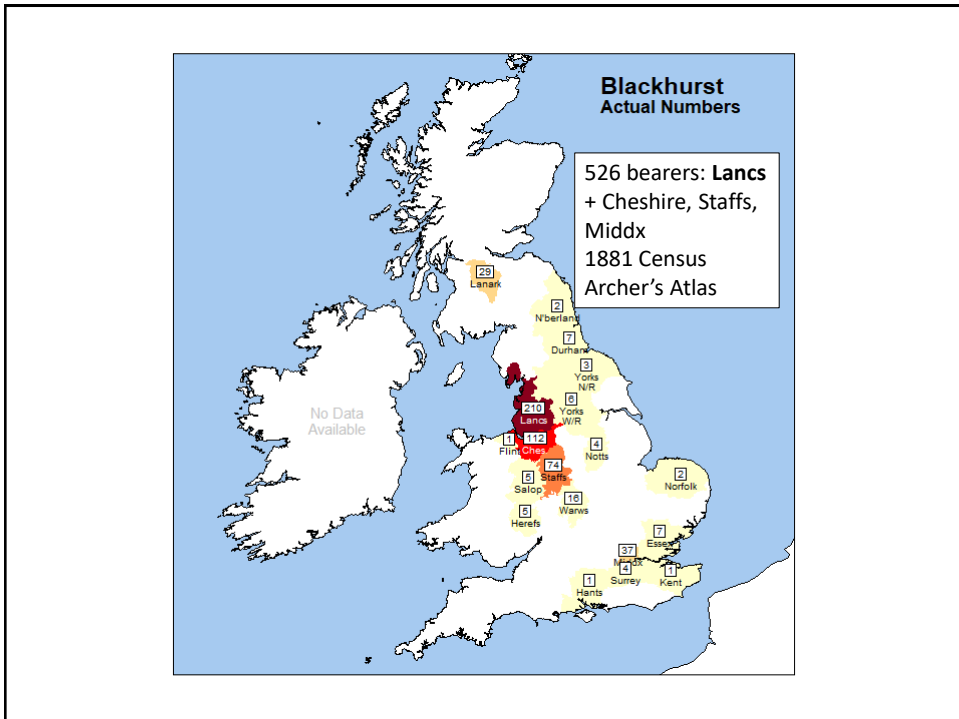
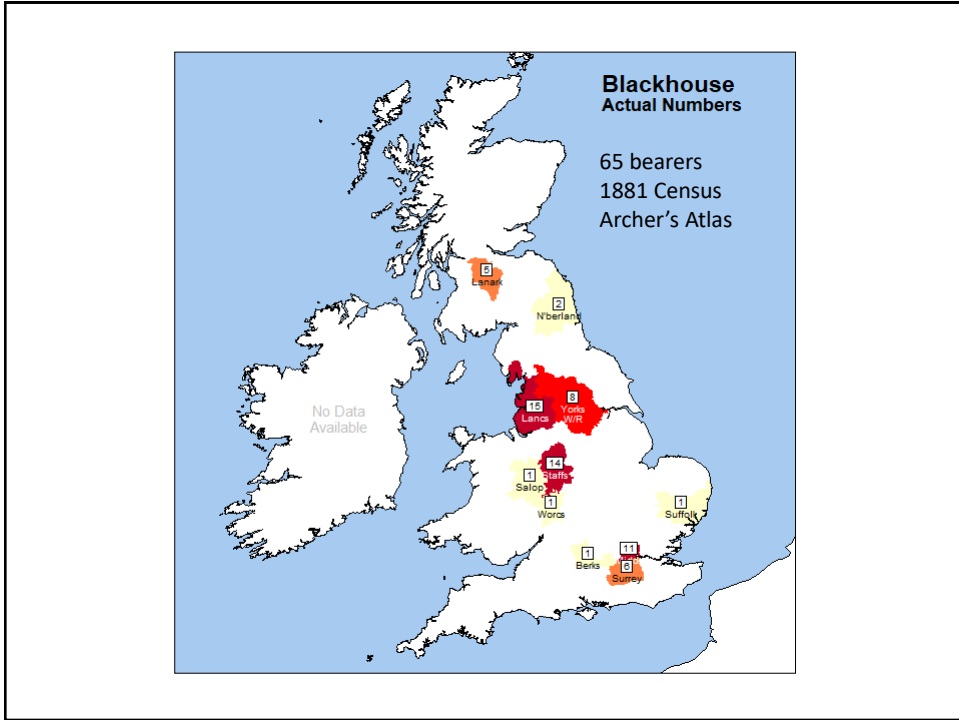
***Pseudo-locative names***

***Topographic and toponymic***

**Blackhouse**

**Epsom**

**Walchester**



### Blackhurst and Blackhouse in IGI in date order

**Middx:** Roger *Blackhurst*, 1628, Edward *Blackhouse*, **1698** (Stepney)

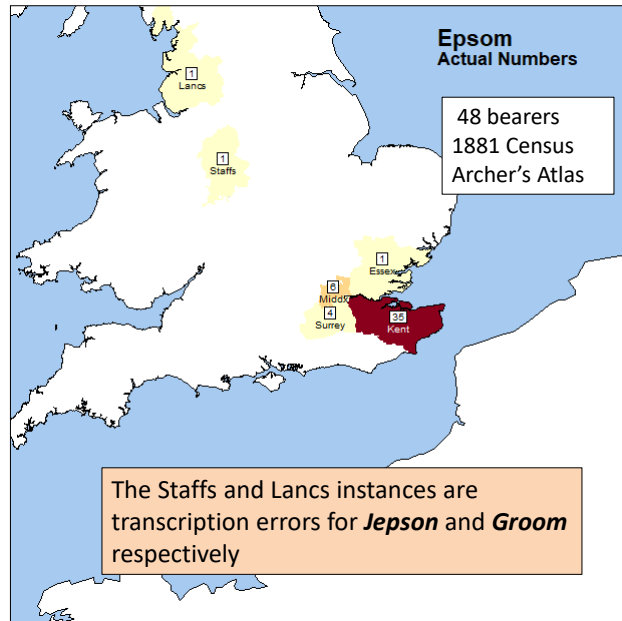
**Staffs:** Henry *Blackhurst*, 1632, William *Blackhouse*, **1717** (Madeley)  
Thos *Blackhurst*, 1775, Thos *Blakehouse*, **1777** (Audley)

**Cheshire:** Thomas *Blackhurst*, 1669, John *Blackhouse*, **1748** (Nantwich)

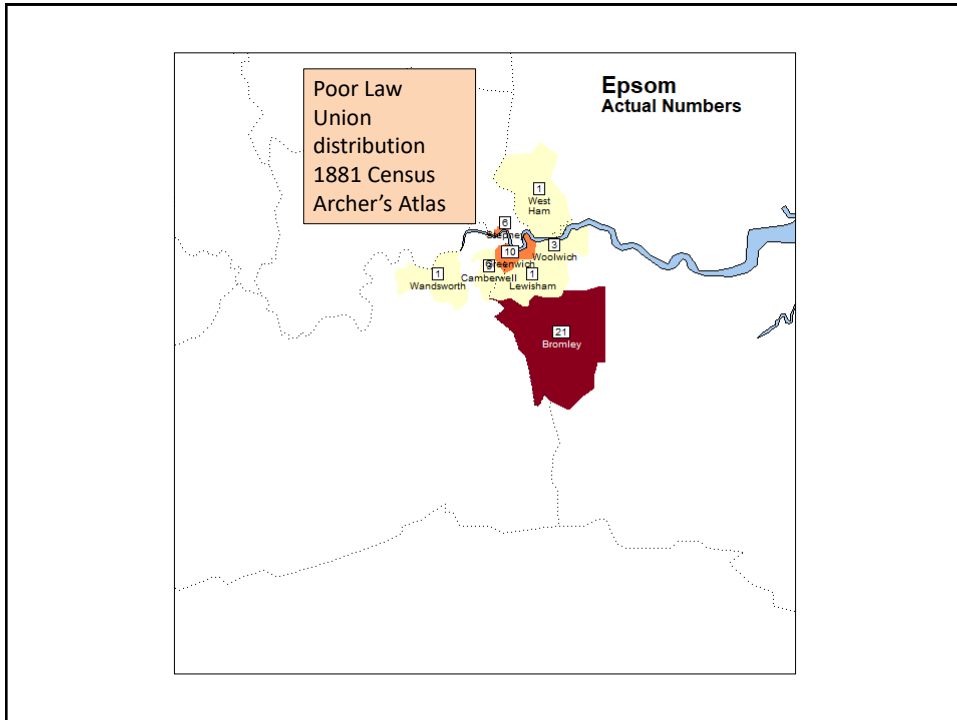
**Lancs:** Margaret *Blackhurst*, 1771, Ann *Blackhouse*, **1790** (Melling by Maghull)

**WR Yorks:** Elisabeth *Blackhurst*, 1787, John *Blackhouse*, **1830** (Rothwell)

The surname **Blackhurst** is mainly from Blackhurst in Baddiley (Cheshire)







## Epsom

The earliest known bearer in IGI is Elizabeth ***Epsom***, 1706 (St Dunstan, Stepney, Middx)

What pattern of phonetic variation might be at work here?

Compare *Topsham* > *Topson*,  
*Hanson* > *Hansom*?

### Epsom < Empson?

Assimilation and dissimilation influenced by the  
Surrey place-name?

#### IGI: St Dunstan parish, Stepney (Middx)

Joseph *Empson*, 1666

Joseph *Empson*, 1697

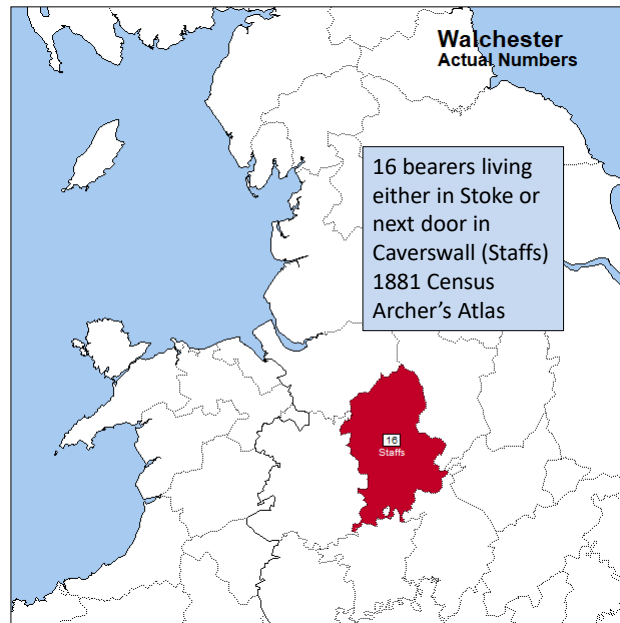
Elizabeth *Epsom*, 1706

No information that they were relatives

#### IGI: Throapham (WR Yorks)

Mary *Epsom*, 1693

Wm *Empson*, 1737



## Origin of surname Walchester

Edgar Tooth, *The Distinctive Surnames of North Staffordshire*, 4 vols (Leek: Churnet Valley Books, 2000–2010), I, 164:

'Bury Bank near Darlaston was also known as "Wulf(e)cestre" during the Middle Ages....It would... explain the hitherto perplexing surname Walchester.'

Tooth's explanation is adopted by David Horowitz, *The Place-Names of Staffordshire* (Brewood: David Horowitz, 2005), p. 165, at Bury Bank:

'One survival from the legendary place-name *Wulferecester* is the Staffordshire surname Walchester.'



Bury Bank, pre-historic fort  
*Wulf(e)cestre* (12thc.), *Wlferecestria* (13thc.)  
*Le Buri* (12thc.)  
*Wulferecester*, now *Bury Bank* (1798)

**Tooth's derivation of Walchester from *Wulferecester* is interesting but problematic:**

- The hillfort was not an inhabited place in the post-Conquest period
- No evidence that any reflex of *Wulferecester* survived into the modern era except in antiquarian usage
- No evidence of a **medieval** surname that could plausibly derive from *Wulferecester*
- **The earliest evidence for the surname *Walchester* is 1851**

**Earliest evidence for the surname *Walchester***

**Censuses**

1841: absent

1851: John ***Walchester***, a potter's oven man, and his younger brother William

Both live in the place where they were born, **Normacot** in Stone, five miles from Bury Bank

1861: absent

1871: John ***Walchester***, potter's fireman, living in **Normacot**

**IGI**

William ***Walchester***, 1875, John ***Walchester***, 1879, Edwin ***Walchester***, 1893

all resident in Longton, Staffs, a mile from Normacot

John Wallchester, 1871 Census  
[Potter's] Fireman, aged 45, born in Normacot

John Wallchester	Head	Mar	45	"	Fireman
Sarah	Wife	Mar	44		
Ellen	Daughter	Unm	20		Burnisher
John	Son	Unm	18		Wagoner
Joseph	Son	Unm	16		Crossman
Emma	Daughter	Unm	15		Bot Printer
James	Son		12		Packer Assistant
Elizabeth	Daughter		10		Burnisher
Lydia	Daughter		8		Scholar
Edwin	Son		6		do
William H	Son		4		do
Sarah A	Daughter		1		

Wife Sarah, daughter Ellen, sons John and Joseph,  
daughter Emma, son James.

= John Worcester, 1861 Census  
aged 35, Potters Oven man, born in Normacot

John Worcester	Head	Mar	35		Potters Oven man
Sarah do	Wife	Mar	31		
Jane Coarthen	Niece		11		Potters Burnisher
Ellen Worcester	Daughter		10		Potters Burnisher
John do	Son		7		Scholar
Joseph do	Son		6		Scholar
Emma do	Daughter		4		Scholar
James do	Son		2		Scholar

Wife Sarah, daughter Ellen, sons John and Joseph,  
daughter Emma, son James.

John *Walchester*, 1851 Census  
Potter Oven Man, aged 24, born in Normacot in  
Stone, + brother W[illiam] (11)

John <i>Walchester</i>	Head	Mar	24	Potter Oven Man
L. J.	Wife	Mar	25	
M. J.	Boys	X	11	Potter

John *Worcester*, 1841 Census  
Potter Ap[prentice?], aged 15, born in Staffs, + brother William (1)

1	Ellen <i>Worcester</i>	35	Washerwoman
	John "	15	Potter Ap
	Elizabeth "	10	Washer
	Isamat	8	
	William "	1	

### Variation between *Worcester* and *Walchester*

#### IGI

John *Worcester*, baptised 1825, William *Walchester*, 1875 (Longton, Staffs)

William *Worcester*, baptised 1840, Jack *Walchester*, 1897 (Lane End and Longton, Staffs).

*Worcester* was presumably still sometimes pronounced in the 19th century as a trisyllable, with *-chester* as a variant of *-cester*.

*Worcester* = *Worcester*, 13th cent. onwards in TNA Discovery

Jemima *Worcester*, 1725, William *Worcester*, 1793 (St Michael's, Coventry, Warwicks)

John *Worcester*, 1779, John *Worcester*, 1803 (Warmfield, WR Yorks)

Joseph *Worcester*, 1788, Wm *Worcester*, 1793 (Crofton, WR Yorks)

***Pseudo-relationship names***

**Elisha**

**Oscar**

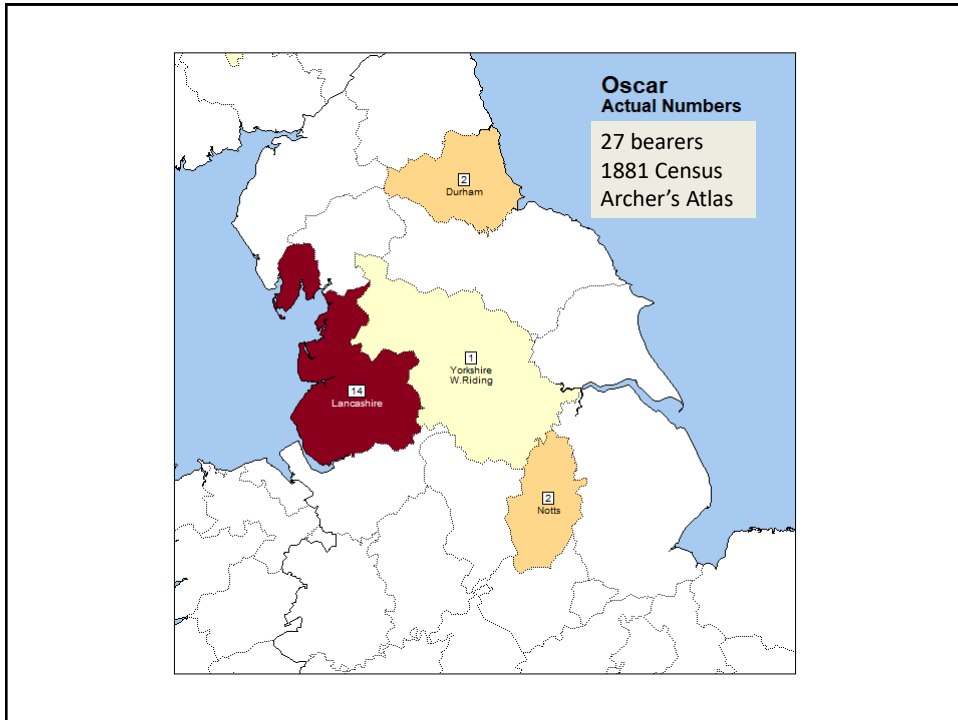
***Elisha***

Pronounced /'ɛɪʃə/

Elisabetha ***Elisha***, 1705, William ***Ellershaw***, 1751 (Clapham, WR Yorks)

Henricus ***Ellershaw***, 1713, Christopher ***Elishah***, 1737 (Melling by Maghull, Lancs)

***Ellershaw*** is from Ellershaw in Bentham (WR Yorks), on the border with Lancashire, 4½ miles from Clapham



## Oscar

Martha **Oscar**, born in Salford, living in Crumpsall (Lancs), 1881 Census  
= Martha **Hosker**, 1871 Census

**Hosker** is probably a locative surname from Hoscar Moss (*olim Horsecarr*) in Ormskirk (Lancs), first recorded as:

... **de Horsecarr**, 1340, ... **de Horscar**, 1366 (Ekwall, PNs of Lancs, 123)  
Johannes **de Horschar**, 1381 in Poll Tax (Kirkby, Lancs)

**Thurstan Hoscar**, a husbandman of Rufford (Lancs) in 1810, IGI

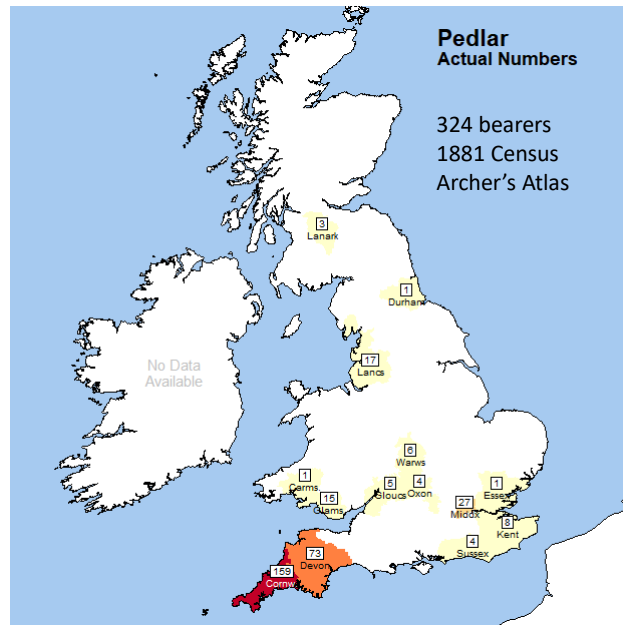
Thurstan **Oscar**, 1841 Census, born in Longton (Lancs)  
= Thurstan **Hosker**, 1851 Census

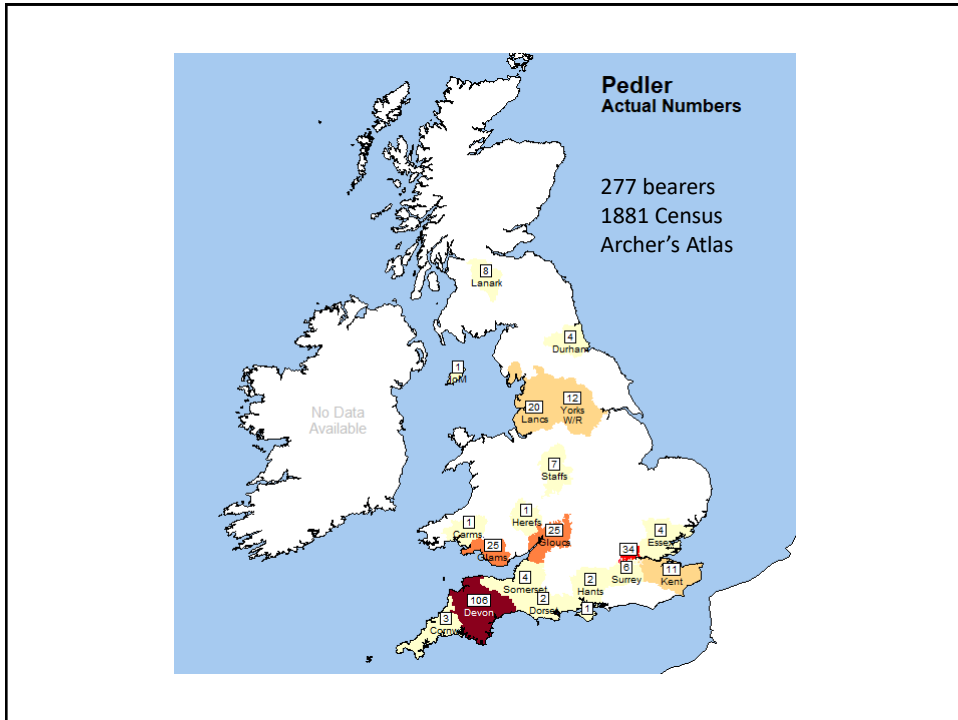
His grandson is Thurston **Hosker** of Longton, 1871 and 1881 Censuses.



***Pseudo-occupational names***

***Pedlar alias Pedler***





### Pedlar, Pedler

Reaney & Wilson and *FaNB1* 1:

occupational name from ME *ped(e)lare*, *ped(e)lere*  
'pedlar, hawker':

William *Le Pedelare* , 1307 (Worcs)

*Ralph le Pedeler*, 1332 (Warwicks)

**AN *pé de lev(e)re* 'hare foot'**

William *Pe de levre*, 1242 in Book of Fees (Somerset)

Roger *Pedeleure*, 1332 in Subsidy Rolls (Clawton, Devon)

Middle English romance dated c.1330 in MED :  
Harold Harefoot, king of the Anglo-Saxons  
*was cleped Harefot for he was urnare god*  
(‘because he was a good runner’)

With loss of –v- between vowels AN *Pedelevere* > ME *Pedelere*?

Roger *Pedeleure*, 1332 in Subsidy Rolls (Clawton, Devon)

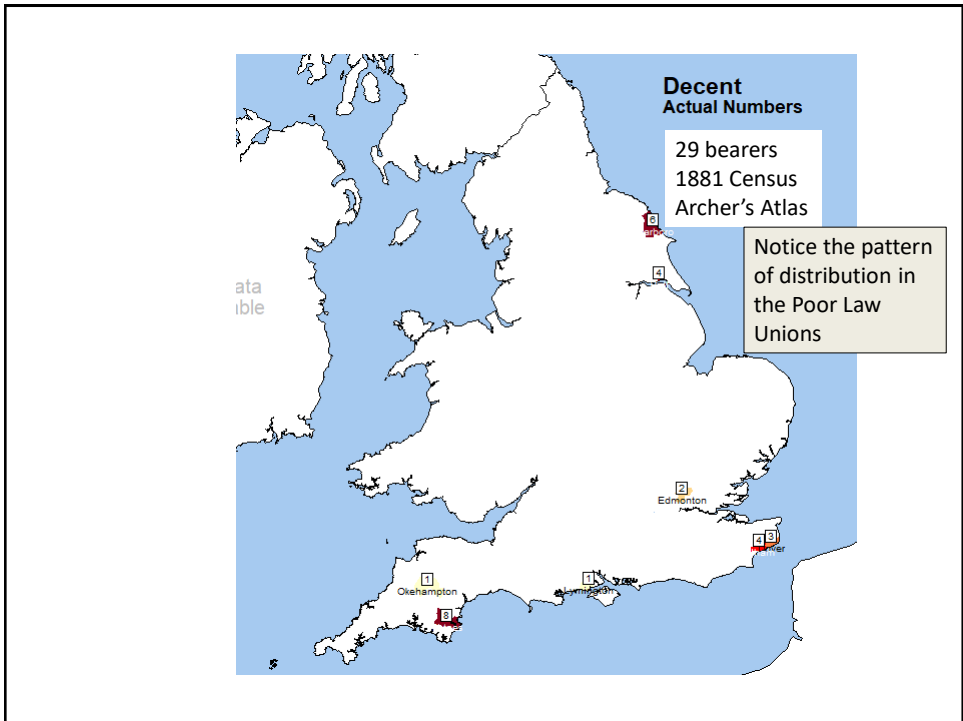
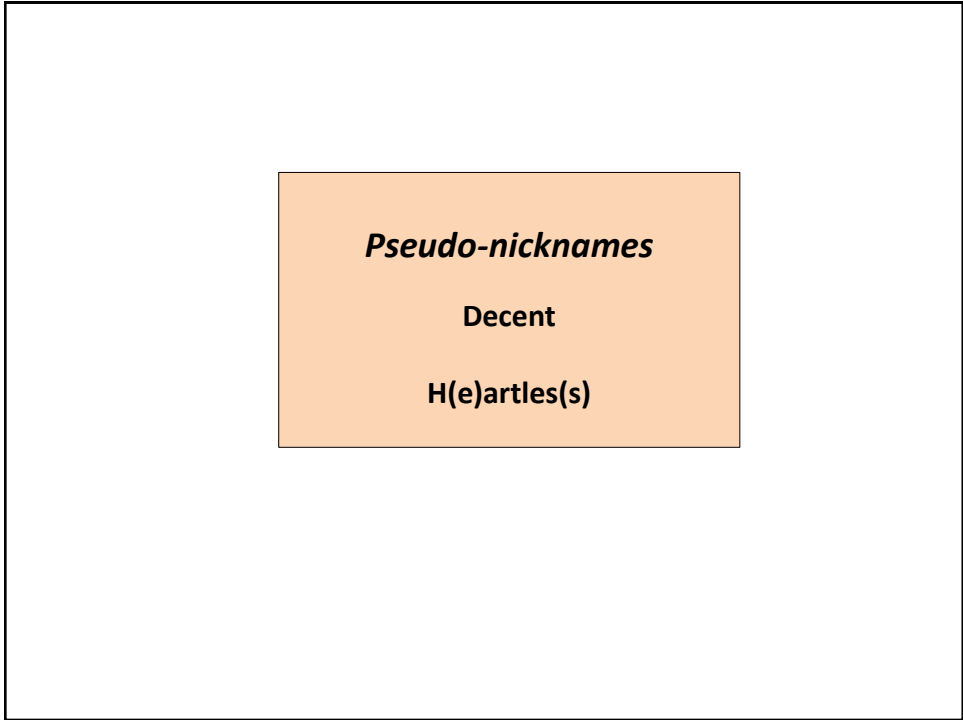
John *Pedler*, 1524 in *Subsidy Rolls* (Kigbeare in Okehampton, Devon)

Richard *Pedler*, 1626 in *IGI* (Okehampton, Devon)

Jane *Pedlar*, 1629 in *IGI* (Luxulyan, Cornwall)

Marie *Pedlar*, 1651 in *IGI* (Crediton, Devon)

Richard *Pedlar*, 1761 in *IGI* (Clawton, Devon)



Remove the final [t] of **Decent** and you get /di:sən/ spelled  
**Deason**

Peter *Deason*, 1686 in IGI (Topsham, Devon)

John *Deason*, 1705 in IGI (Brixham, Devon)

Peter *Decent*, 1750 in IGI (Brixham, Devon)

>>

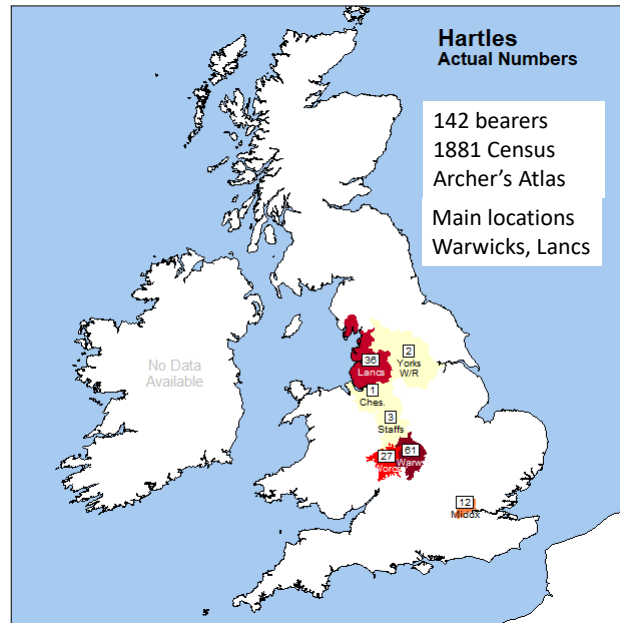
Peter *Decent*, 1817 in IGI (Dover, Kent)

Anne *Decent*, 1838 in IGI (Ramsgate, Kent)

George Walker *Decent*, 1849 in IGI (Kingston upon Hull, ER Yorks)

William H. *Decent*, mariner, born in Dover, living in Scarborough (NR Yorks),  
1851 Census

*Deason* is from Middle English *Deyeson* 'son of the dairyman/woman'





### Hartless or Hartles

*FaNB* 1:

Nickname from ME *hertelēs* (OE *heortlēas*) 'cowardly, half-hearted'.

BUT no evidence for the surname in any spelling before the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

**Cheshire:** Nicholas *Herteleyes*, 1575 in *IGI* (Prestbury); John *Hartless*, 1713 in *IGI* (Rostherne)

**Lancs:** Christopher *Hartleis*, 1576 in *IGI* (Leigh); Elline *Hartles*, 1586 in *IGI* (Manchester)

**Staffs:** Joseph *Hartles*, 1710 in *IGI* (Dudley)

### ***Hartle(i)s in variation with Hartley, Hartle and ?Harthill***

#### **Lancs, in variation with Hartley:**

Christopher Hartleis, 1576, George Hartley, 1628 in IGI (Leigh)  
Elline Hartles, 1586, Margret Hartlie, 1596 in IGI (Manchester)

#### **Cheshire, in variation with Hartley and Hartle :**

Nicholas Herteleyes, 1575, William Hartley, 1605 in IGI (Prestbury)  
Hughe Heartless, 1623, George Hartles, 1634, Robtus Hartley, 1639 in IGI  
(Macclesfield)  
John Hartle, 1654, William Hartly, 1706, Thomas Heartliss, 1750 in IGI (Ashton on  
Mersey)  
Elizabeth Hartley, 1700, Edward Hartless, 1707 in IGI (Sandbach)

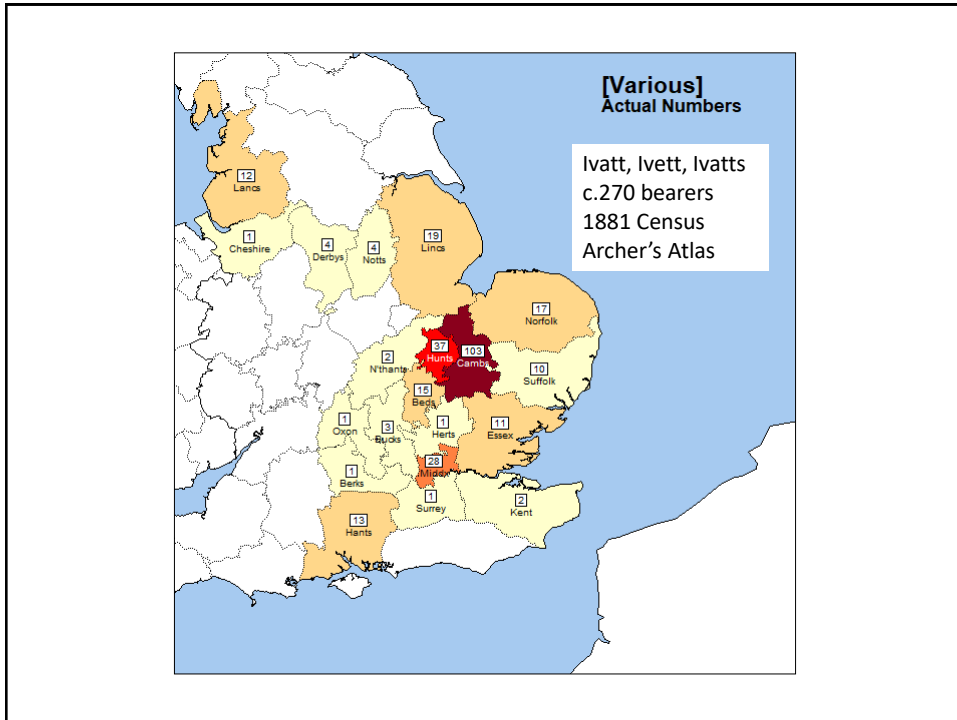
#### **Staffs, in variation with Hartley, Hartell and Harthill:**

John Hartley, 1643, Joseph Hartles, 1710 in IGI (Dudley)  
Dorothy Hartless, 1784 = Dorothy Hartley, 1797 in *N Staffs Surnames* (Weeford)  
Ellen Hartell, 1566, Robert Harthill, 1665, Wm. Hartley, 1746, Edwd Heartless,  
1786 in IGI (Tamworth)

### ***Victims of mistaken identity***

***Ivatt***

***Pewtress***



### Ivatt, Ivett, Ivatts

Concentrated in Cambs

John *Ivett*, 1585 in IGI (Dry Drayton)

William *Ivatt*, 1599, Mary *Ivett*, 1648 in IGI (Cottenham)

Manasses *Ivet*, 1613 in IGI (Haddenham)

John *Ivitt*, 1618 in IGI (Hinxtton)

John *Ivatt*, 1653 in IGI (Sutton)



### Etymology of Ivatt, Ivett

Reaney and Wilson and *FaNB1* 1:

“relationship name from a pet form of the Old French personal name *Iva*, feminine form of *Ivo*.” (i.e. *Ivet* or *Ivot*)

BUT

- No evidence for an OF or ME *Ivet(te)* or *Ivot*
- The early name forms cited are probably editorial transliterations of *Juet(ta)* (modern **Jowett** and **Jewett**)
  - < AN *Juet* (OF French pronunciation of *Judith*)
  - or < AN *Juet*, *Juot*, pet forms of *Judith* or more commonly *Julian(a)*
  - i.e. *Ju-* or *Juw-* + OF suffixes *-et* or *-ot*

### *Ivett/Ivatt* as variants of *Evett/Evatt*

< ME *Evot*, diminutive of *Eve*

George **Ivett** *alias* George **Evatte**, 1591-6 in TNA (Middx).

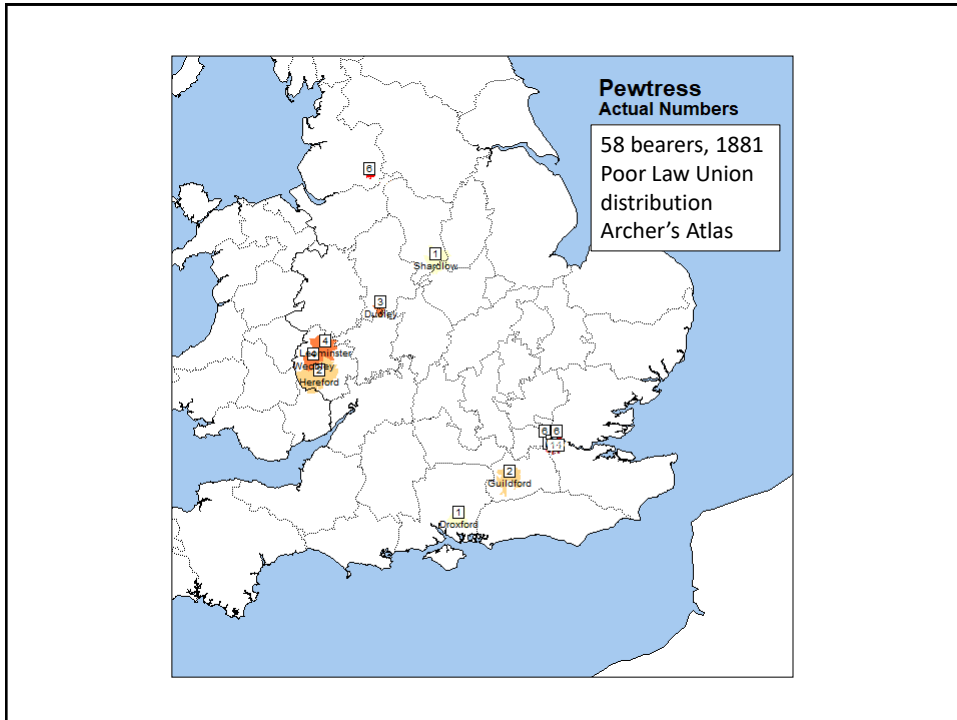
James **Ivatt**, 1595, Elizabeth **Evatt**, 1625 in IGI (Saint Botolph without Aldgate, London)

Mrs. **Hivets** and the Rev. Mr. **Hivetts** (otherwise known as **Evetts**), 1775, 1783 in Notts Archives (Strelley, Notts)

John **Evetts**, 1705, John **Ivatts**, 1730 in IGI (Aylesbury, Bucks).

Cf. William **Euote**, 1295 in Barnwell Memorandum Book (Cambs)

Margaret **Ivett**, 1549 in IGI (Thorley, Herts); cf. Margery **Evett**, 1567 in IGI (Cheshunt, Herts)



## Pewtress

Reaney & Wilson and *FaNB1* 1:

variant of **Pewter**  
metonymic for ME *peutrer*, AN *peautrer*  
'maker of pewter vessels'

*IGI* data for Castlemorton (Worcs):

John **Pewtresse**, 1613, Wm **Pewtras**, 1592, Wm **Pewdras**, 1574

*IGI* data for three Herefordshire parishes:

Anna **Peutres**, 1669, Anna **Poydresse**, 1630 (Bromyard)

Joane **Poidras**, 1647, Richard **Peutras**, 1640 (Much Marcle)

John **Poydras**, 1429; John **Peydras**, 1451; John **Poydras**, 1527 (Fownhope)

TNA data for London

John **Poudras**, clerk of London (1392-3), identical with John **Poydras** (1396-7)

Anglo-Norman *Peudras, Peidras, Poidras* and *Poudras*  
 < Old French *peu, pei, poi, pou + dras* 'few clothes'

Litotes for 'naked'

In the Chester play of the crucifixion  
 (late 16th- and early 17-century texts of late medieval origin)  
 it is a mocking nickname, spelled *Pewdreas, Pewdras, Pewderas*, and  
*Poydrace* in different texts, for the naked Jesus.

## The Chester play of the Crucifixion

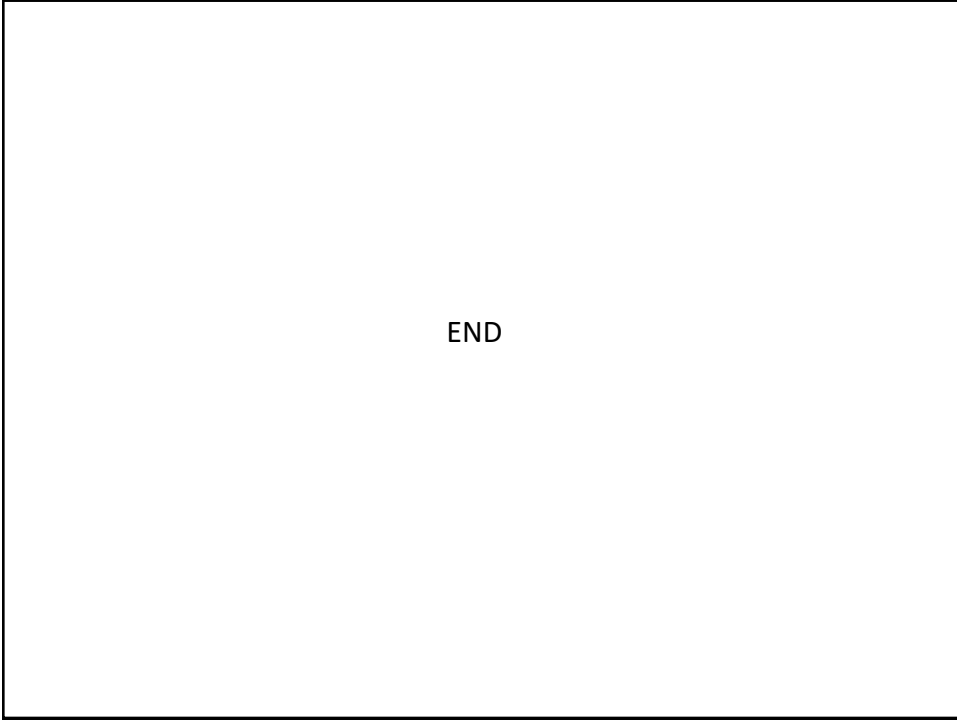
Cayphas:

Men, for cockes face!  
Howe longe shall Pewdreas  
Stande nacked in that place?  
Goe nayle hym to the tree.

T. Wright (ed.), *The Chester Plays*, 2 vols (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1843), II, 57.



Christ being nailed to the cross,  
Gerard David, painted c.1500  
(National Gallery, London)



END