

Further thoughts on Surnames in Somerset Place-Names

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Somerset has not yet been surveyed by the English Place-Name Society.

Surrounding counties (Gloucs, Wilts, Dorset and Devon) have been surveyed. They share SW England's characteristics of repetitive name stock (Compton, Norton, Newton etc) needing to be distinguished by manorial affixes.

Somerset has about 130 'major' names with Anglo-Norman or Middle English surnames or bynames attached: e.g. Shepton Mallet



There are 10 major 'Norton' names in Somerset. This one is north-west of Taunton. It was owned by the Bouchiers, Lords Fitzwarin, from the mid 15th century. It was called Norton Veel until 1663, but also Norton Fitzwarren from c1560 onwards.

The dragon on the sign refers to a legendary dragon living in the nearby hill (Norton Camp), which laid waste to crops and population, and was said to have been killed by 'Fulke Fitzwarine' in the 13th century. This tale, involving a local hero slaying a dragon, is a common type of folkloric foundation legend.

Norton Camp

*“When Taunton was a
furzey down
Norton was a
market town”*

Bronze and Iron Age hillfort; some Romano-British evidence of occupation.

digitaldigging.net



Sixteenth century rood screen at All Saints, Norton Fitzwarren, showing the mythical dragon. It was installed at around the same time as the Fitzwarren name became permanent, perhaps reflecting a growing sense of local identity. At any rate this dragon was later associated with 'Fulke Fitzwarin', the dragon-slayer.



From considering a 'Norton' to a 'Newton'

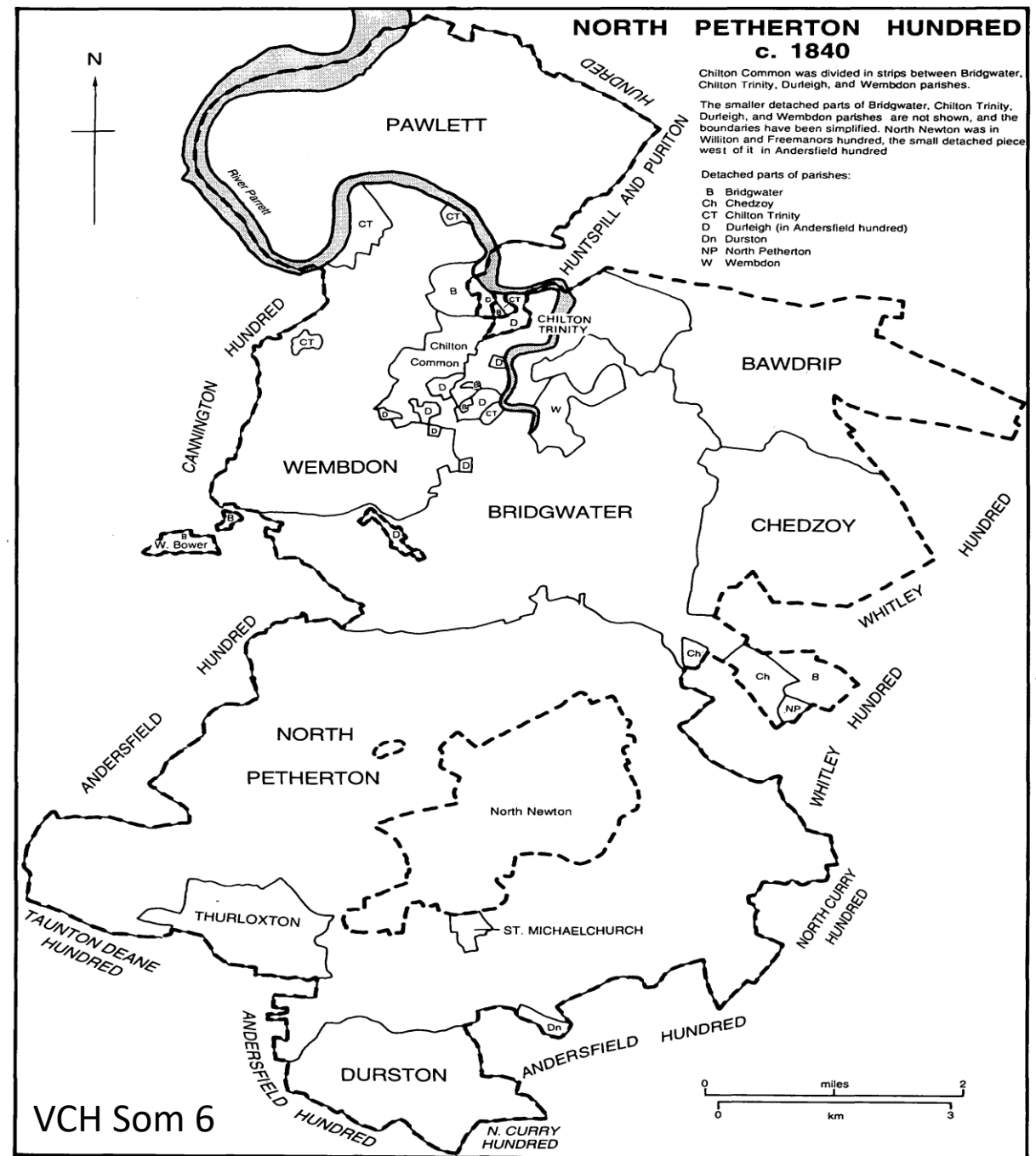
North Newton in North Petherton

Five estates of *Newetune* in 1086

later known as

Newton Chantry, Comitis, Forester, Mansell, Placey, Regis, Wroth and Tucker Newton

“West Newton manor in the south of North Newton represents Newton Comitis later Newton Hawys...” (Bush)



The Alfred Jewel – found in Newton Park, North Petherton, in 1693

(ashmolean.org)



EPNS Survey Vol III (1926) – p291. The practice of highlighting ‘double-barrelled’ names has continued until quite recently. The latest surveys, for Leicestershire and Dorset, contain more detailed analyses.

FEUDAL NAMES

(a) *Bedfordshire*. Aspley Guise, Eaton Bray, Cockayne Hatley, Higham Gobion, Houghton Conquest, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard (?), Marston Moretaine, Milton Bryant, Milton Ernest, Westoning.

(b) *Huntingdonshire*. Abbot's and King's Ripton, Orton Longueville and Waterville, Offord Cluny and Darcy, Sawtry St Judith.

Some Anglo-Norman family names from place-names in Northern France and their appearance in Somerset

Possible origins in France

First known date of family at specific place

First known use of surname with specific place-name

Beauchamps [Manche, Somme etc]

John de Bello Campo c1284

Norton Beauchamp 1484 (+ Hatch, Shepton...)

Cantelou(p) [Seine Maritime, Calvados, etc]

Walton de Cantelu 1201

Chilton Cantelo 1361

Champfleury [Aube, Marne]

Thomas de Campo-Florida 1212

Hewish Champflower 1274

Courcy [Calvados]

William de Curci 1110x35

Stogursey before 1189

Courtenay [Loiret, Isere]

John de Courtenay 1274

Wootton Courtney 1406

Dinan [Brittany]

Oliver de Dinant 1205

Buckland Dinham 1329 (+ Corton Denham)

Gournay-en-Brai [Seine-Maritime]

Nigel [of Gournai] 1086

Barrow Gurney 1277 (+ Farrington...)

Hauteville [Manche etc]

Stephanus de Altevill' pre 1250

Norton Hawkfield 1271

Manneville [Seine-Maritime]

William de Mandeville pre 1243

Keinton Mandeville 1280

Malesherbes [Loiret]

Robert Malherbe 1228

Cricket Malherbie 1280

Plouquenet [Brittany]

Alan de Plugenet 1268

Haselbare Ploukenet 1431

St-Lo [Manche]

Roger de Sancto Laudo 1122

Newton St Loe 1348

St Maur [Manche, Oise, Seine etc]

Kingeston Milonis de Sancto Mauro 1196 (Kingston Seymour)

Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016

The FaNUK project was based at UWE, Bristol, and in 2013 I spoke on the topic of surnames in Somerset place-names at a SNSBI day there. In my analysis I found that AN or NFr surnames and bynames formed over half the names in Somerset with manorial affixes. The rest arose from ME bynames and occupational names, with a smaller number utilizing surnames from English place-names.

Access to FaNUK and then FaNBI databases helped me to clarify my Somerset place-name entries and to comment (occasionally) on their Somerset-based surname queries. Once the ODFNBI was published, I checked my entries again, and was also invited for my thoughts on a few specific queries. Any new information accepted is now held on the draft database in preparation for ODFNBI 2nd ed.

Here I can only give a few examples: the surname Kidner which I suggested came from a disused place-name Kitnor; the lost minor name *Grobham* in Enmore which seems to give rise to the surname Grabham .

Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland

- **Kidner**
- • **Current frequencies:** GB 438, Ireland 0
- • **GB frequency 1881:** 253
- • **Main GB location 1881:** Somerset
- English: nickname, [apparently from Middle English *kid\(e\)ner* ‘kidney’](#); but, if so, then the sense is obscure.
- **Early bearers:**
- Richard Kidner, 1563 in [IGI](#) (North Petherton, Somerset);
Thomas Kydnere, 1579 in [IGI](#) (Hillmorton, Warwicks);
Richard Kidner, 1639 in [PROB 11](#) (Spaxton, Somerset).

'Kitnor' : earlier name of Culbone SS 8448

Chetenore 1086, Kytenore (p) 1264-5 FA 'kite ridge' OE cyta, gen.sing. -an + OE ora

Kitnor Heath SS 8739 today lies south of the River Quarme and may have belonged to Quarme Kitnor (probably North Quarme, but there were also *Q. Frome, Monceaux, Pycot, Sybille ...*)

Quarum-Kitnor [or Beggar-Quarme] was held by William de Kytenore of Kitenor in 1298 (Collinson 1791)

Quarme Kidner 13th – 14th (SRO)

Quarme was *Coarme* DB, now Little Quarme, N and S Quarme, Quarme Hill, Wood R Quarme (thus 1725) possibly from OE ***cwearma** 'a place in a river that is silted up', hence a back formation from the settlement name (Ekwall *English river-names* 1928).

Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland

- **Grabham**
- • **Current frequencies:** GB 613, Ireland 0
- • **GB frequency 1881:** 373
- • **Main GB location 1881:** Somerset and Devon; also Durham
- English: locative name [from a lost or unidentified place called *Grobham*](#) , apparently in [Somerset](#).
- **Early bearers:**
- Geoffrey de Grobbehame, 1318 in [Patent Rolls](#) (Dunwear, Somerset); Walterus Grobham, 1377 in [Poll Tax](#) (Goathurst, Somerset); Richard Grobham, 1425–6 in [Feet of Fines](#) (Combe Florey, Somerset); John Grobham, drover, 1439 in [Patent Rolls](#) (Somerset); John Grobehame, 1507 in [Feet of Fines](#) (Enmore, Somerset); Margerie Grobham, 1572 in [Parish Registers](#) (Cheddon Fitzpaine, Somerset); John Grabham, 1629 in [IGI](#) (North Petherton, Somerset); Richard Grabham, 1638 in [PROB 11](#) (Cossington, Somerset); John Grobham, 1669 in [IGI](#) (Chard, Somerset).

‘Grobham’ (in Enmore)

‘the [medieval hamlet of Grobham](#), east of Enmore village, is indicated only by the field names *Grabhambury*’

Cf. Richard *Grobham* of Barford in Enmore 1395

(*Victoria County History of Somerset* Vol 6)

ODFNBI has Geoffrey de *Grobbeham*, of Dunwear, Som, 1318 Pat, as the first early bearer of the surname

[Uncertain derivation](#): ME **grubbe** (OE ***grybban**) ‘to dig superficially, to clear ground’; or pers.n. ****Grobba**; or ME nickname **grob(be)**, **grub(be)** ‘short person’ + **hamm** ‘enclosure, water meadow’?

(and surname Grobham + **burh**, dat.sing. **byrig** ‘manor’)

More grappling with minor names in G....

Garnival's Week (Milverton)

Wyke held by Henry de *Gernevil* n.d., *Gravilswike*, *Garnyveleswyke* c1540. ODFNBI suggests NFr surname perhaps from Grainville-la-Teinturiere (Seine-Maritime). Cf. John son of Henry de *Gervile* 1331-2 (but also perhaps Gilbert de *Germunvill* 1235-6) SANHS 141-2 1998.

Gasper (Stourton, now Wilts – so I can probably ignore it for Somerset)

Gayspore 1280 Ass. (PNWilts) ? + **spora** 'hill spur'; but ODFNBI suggests ME nickname 'bright spur' – so is this a truncated manorial name – or a place-name?

(King's) Gatchell, Gatchell Fm, Green (Trull)

ODFNBI derives surname Getchell, Gatchell from this place. Unknown meaning? Earliest bearer 1576 Warws. I find Thomas *Gatchell* leaving his farm in Trull to his son in 1720 (SRO). There was a Somerset dialect word **gatchel** [pron. gyaatchyul] meaning 'the mouth' (Williams, 1873, Elworthy, 1886).

Gerbestone (West Buckland)

Gerbardstone 1277. ME pers.n. *Gerbert* + **tun**, in this case a manor belonging to 'Sir Gerbert of Wellington' c1234 (various local histories); cf. [Jurston](#) Farm and Lane, Wellington.

A few other Somerset place-names which gave rise to surnames

Chedzoy > [CHEDZEY](#), [CHIDSEY](#), [CHIDGEY](#), [CHEDGEY](#), [TUDGAY](#), [TUDGEY](#), [TUDGEY](#)

Clavelshay (in N Petherton) *Clawsey* 1675, *Classey* 1735 > **Classey**, **Clawsey** (perhaps for ODFNBI 2nd ed)

Dummett, Dommatt, Dummitt ODFNBI states 'lost or as yet unidentified': seems likely to come from **Dommatt** (in Buckland St Mary) *Duun Meten* 762 (early 14th), *Domett* 1298-9 .

Gatcombe ODFNBI states 'locative name from Gatcombe, IoW'. Could possibly also arise from **Gatcombe** (in Long Ashton) *Gatecombe* 1254, William de *Gatecumbe* 1279 Ass(Som).

Capener according to ODFNBI is 'from Capenor, Nutfield, Surrey', Richard *Capenore* 1332 SR. [The name is also found in Sussex at this time.]

However, for **Capenor** (in Portishead), I have *Capenore* (p) 1228 Ch, *Capenor* 1336 ('steep and rocky hill between Capenor and the church' (1863) on the side of Portishead Hill overlooking the Severn). If ***cape** 'look-out' and **ora** 'brink or edge of hill', 'flat-topped hill' then cf. other coastal names in Somerset (Blacknore, Kitnor, Yearnor).

