

Welsh Names and Place Names

By the Editor

Any researcher who has studied Welsh family lines eventually recognizes family names, or surnames, usually are male given names. A few examples will suffice: Andrews, David, Davies, David, Evan(s), Edwards, Ellis, George, Griffith, Harrison, Harris, Harry, Hugh(es), Humphrey, James, Jenkins, John(s), Jones, Lewis, Llewellyn, Lloyd, Meredith, Miles(Myles), Morgan, Morris, Morton, Norris, Owen(s), Parry, Powell, Prees(Prys, Price), Pugh, Rees(Rhys, Reese, Reece), Richard(s), Robert(s), Russell, Samuel(s), Thomas, Vaughn, William(s), and Wynne.

The Welsh have used a naming scheme which is a patronymic system. Let us say a boy named Robert grows to manhood and sires a son who is given the name William. The Welsh would identify the son as William *ap* (or *ab*) Robert, meaning William, the son of Robert. In time a grandson would be born and his name would be, say, Thomas. This child would be known as Thomas *ap* William *ap* Robert. *Ap* is derived from the Old Welsh, *map* (son) which is cognate to the Gaelic, *Mac* (son). Modern Welsh used the form, *mab*. In time the "m" was dropped, resulting in *ap* or *ab*. The Irish O', the English -son, and the Norman Fitz all serve the same purpose: "son of." (Among royalty, Fitz usually means an illegitimate son.)

When a mother was included in a line of Welsh descent, her daughter was indicated by the prefix *ferch* or *verch* as in Mererid ferch Iorwerth (Margaret, daughter of Edward).

A good map of Britain will reveal Wales to be located in the western extremity of the United Kingdom. After the Romans left England the land was invaded by Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Danes. In 1066 William led the Norman invasion. While Britain was undergoing these invasions the Welsh remained pretty much by themselves, resisting the cultural influences of the invaders for centuries. By the twelfth century the Welsh upper class began using surnames. This occurred gradually, and often took the form of dropping the *ap* or *ab*. David *ap* Lloyd became David Lloyd. There was little consistency, however, and David *ap* Lloyd just as easily could have become Lloyd David. The mother's name or her father's name frequently were used. What may have appeared expedient to the old Welsh folk has become the modern genealogist's nightmare of confusion.

If the *ap* or *ab* was not dropped entirely, a common practice was to drop only the *a* and add the *p* or *b* to the surname. Griffith *ab* Owen would become Griffith Bowen. If you have heard Welsh being spoken you can realize the difficulty in enunciating the H sound following the consonant P, as in Rhys *ap* Hugh. The result: Rhys Pugh! Another example: William *ap* Rhys(Rees) could become William Prees(Price).

As with many nations that embarked on urging its people to take surnames, localities, descriptions and occupations were used. John the blacksmith would become Johann Schmidt in a German land, but in Wales he might become John (or Iwan or Siôn ir Ioan) Gof.

Personal Names

<i>English</i>	<i>Welsh</i>
Andrew	Andreas
Victoria	Buddug
Kate,Catharine	Cadi,Catrin
David	Dafydd,Dewi
Helen,Ellen	Elen
Vaughn	Fychan
Griffith	Gruffudd,Gruffydd
Walter	Gwallter
William	Gwilym
Harry,Henry	Harri

Hugh	Hu,Huw
James	Iago
Evan	Ieuan
John	Ioan,Iwan,Siôn
Luke	Luc,Lug
Lloyd	Llwyd
Mary	Mari,Mair
Molly	Mali
Mark	Marc
Margaret	Marged,Margred,Mererid
Morris	Meurig
Michael	Mihangel
Magdalene	Modlen
Owen	Owain
Patrick	Padrig
Peter	Pedr,Bedr
Price,Preece	Prys
Pugh	Puw
Richard	Rhisiart
Jane	Siân
Charles	Siarl
George	Siôr
Stephen	Steffan
Timothy	Timotheus
Thomas	Tomos

Place Names

Lancaster County has three townships with Welsh names: Caernarvon, Brecknock and Lampeter.

Caernarvon is a shire (county) and county seat in North Wales. It also is a seaport. The chief products of the county are slate, coal, copper ore, iron products, textiles and chemicals. Its name is derived from the Welsh *Caer* (wall, castle,city) and *Narvon* or *Narfon*. Caernarvon now is in the county of Gwynedd.

Brecknock is a shire and county seat northwest of Cardiff, Wales. It is known also as Brecon (*Aberhonddu*). It is located at the mouth (*Aber*) of the river *Honddu*. Brecknock is an agricultural area in South Wales. Now Brecon is included in the counties of Gwent and Powys.

Lampeter (or Llanbedr) is a town along the Teifi River on the border between Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire. Its Welsh name means Peter's Church.

Bangor Church in Churchtown, Caernarvon Township, is derived from another Welsh place name.

Although Penryn has been said to be a Welsh name, it is Cornish—which isn't very far from Wales—and it is a fairly modern affectation, the village being named Unionville and Mount Alto at various times in the nineteenth century. In a neat switch the smaller village of Elm—not quite a mile down the road—had been known in the nineteenth century variously as Pennville, Penn Post Office, and Elstow.

Pronunciation

There isn't a "v" in the Welsh alphabet so the English use "f" to approximate the missing sound.

The male name, Ralph, is pronounced "Rayff."

CH=as in the German Bach or Scottish loch.

DD=as the "th" in "this," "breathe."

F =as English "V."

FF =as English "F."

G =always hard, as "go."

LL =position tongue to say "ell," then breath it without voice.

PH=as English "F."

TH=as English "th" in "thin," "thick."