

## Family Names of the United Kingdom

FaNUK is an ongoing research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and based at the Bristol Centre for Linguistics at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol. The project began in 2010, using new methods and sources to build on the work produced by previous scholars (for a detailed account of the FaNUK methodology, see Hanks, Coates and McClure (2012)). At the time of writing, the research carried out during the project's first phase (FaNUK 1; 2010–14) is due to be published in November 2016, both in print and online, as *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (FaNBI). Further research, with additional aims, has continued since 2014 (FaNUK 2).

The current core project team based at UWE consists of Richard Coates (Principal Investigator), Patrick Hanks (Lead Researcher and Editor-in-Chief), Paul Cullen (Research Fellow), Harry Parkin (Research Associate), Kate Hardcastle (Editorial Research Associate), and Deborah Cole (Project Coordinator), with Simon Draper and Duncan Probert having worked on the project as Research Associates in the past. FaNUK is, however, a collaborative effort, also drawing on the expertise of a number of consultants, including Peter McClure as Chief Etymologist, Kay Muhr, Liam Ó hAisibéil, Simon Taylor, Thomas Clancy, Prys Morgan and Oliver Padel, with management of the research database provided by the Faculty of Informatics at Masaryk University, Brno, in the Czech Republic.

### FANUK I

The first phase of the FaNUK project lasted four years, from April 2010 to March 2014. The original proposal submitted to the AHRC sought funding in order 'to take significant steps towards reliable explanations of all the current family names of the United Kingdom', and to enter these explanations into a database. It was stated that each entry in the database 'will embody the best achievable account of their geographical and linguistic origins, history, and demography derivable from a wide range

of medieval and early-modern documents and electronic resources'. Part of the justification for carrying out this research was as follows:

[Family name] research has progressed slowly for some decades. Its present state compares unfavourably with (a) allied areas such as place-names, and (b) current work in other European countries. Many [family names] have never been satisfactorily explained, others wrongly or by guesswork. Some plausible explanations previously suggested are incompatible with facts now known about the name's history and geographical distribution.

One of the more recent, and widely consulted, dictionaries of British surnames is Reaney's *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (1958; 3rd edn Reaney and Wilson 1991). While this is an impressive work, it contains a number of errors and presentational problems: many explanations are known to be incorrect, often as a result of a failure to consider a family name's geographical distribution, even though Guppy (1890) had already shown that a surname's distribution is often linked to its place of origin. Some of the explanations offered include specialist terminology and cryptic abbreviations, which can make them difficult for lay people to understand. A number of family names in the dictionary are extinct, and so their explanations are unlikely to be of interest to most readers. In some ways, therefore, the dictionary is really a dictionary of medieval bynames. In addition, if Reaney could not explain the origin of a name, he would often omit it from the dictionary.

Reaney is not the only one to have constructed a family name dictionary in this way. These faults, and others, have been repeated in many works, and Reaney's dictionary is given only as a well-known example. FaNUK 1's aim was to create a database of explanations of British and Irish family names eliminating as far as possible the known errors made by previous scholars. It would also include many more names than other such dictionaries, consider geographical distribution and local history in more detail, make use of newer sources, including many now available in electronic form, and provide a greater amount of additional information. All of this has led to the creation of the most comprehensive and reliable British and Irish family name resource.

*FaNBI*

The *FaNBI* dictionary is different from previous family name dictionaries in a number of ways, perhaps most notably in the number of names included. It contains 45,602 entries, made up of almost all family names that had more than 100 bearers in 2011, as well as some rarer names of historical and linguistic interest. As a result of setting a frequency threshold for the inclusion of a family name, rather than devising more arbitrary selection criteria, the *FaNBI* dictionary contains family names which originated in many different countries around the world, reflecting the multicultural society of Britain and Ireland.

About 20,000 of *FaNBI*'s entries are classified as 'main entries', and over 25,000 are variants of these. A main entry is usually where etymological explanations, examples of early bearers, and further relevant information are provided; variant entries are usually simple cross-references which point the reader to a relevant main entry or main entries, though variants can also include detailed explanations if required, particularly to explain an unusual spelling change. Generally, the family name form chosen as the main entry is the most frequent modern form within a cluster of names which share the same etymological origin, although in some cases preference has been given to an etymologically more transparent form to allow the least confusing account of the relations among the variant spellings. Variant forms are listed under the main entry, and, where possible, are arranged in an order suggestive of the processes that have affected the development of the various spellings.

In every entry, whether a main entry or variant, the frequency of that particular spelling of the name in 1881 and 2011 is given. Irish frequency data is also provided for some entries, especially those of Irish origin and names of English, Welsh, and Scottish origin that have become established in Ireland.

Geographical information is also given for almost every entry. If a family name was current in 1881, the dictionary entry gives its main location in Britain at that date, based on Steve Archer's *British Nineteenth Century Surname Atlas* (2011), published by its creator on CD-ROM. The intention is not to give a full description of where the

name occurred at that date but only to indicate in which counties or regions the name was most common. The main location of a name can be an important starting point in tracing its origin, and so this information is provided not just to point genealogists in the right direction for further research, but sometimes also as justification for etymological explanations. This distributional information has been important in helping to correct a number of mistakes made in previous dictionaries, and discrepancies between the likely place of origin of, for example, a locative surname and its distribution in 1881 can be a helpful pointer to otherwise unknown patterns of migration within the islands.

The main section of each dictionary entry is its explanation or explanations: many family names have more than one origin. Each explanation is introduced by an indication of the social group (by language, culture, or religious affiliation) within which the name apparently originated or mainly developed (e.g. Norman, English, Irish, Huguenot, Jewish, Muslim, etc.), often followed by a categorisation of the name by type (e.g. locative name, occupational name, nickname, relationship name, status name). The next part of the explanation is the etymology, and every effort has been made to give a clear sense of what the name may have meant originally, together with an etymological form in the language in which the name was coined. Unfortunately, certainty is not always possible, and a number of explanations are offered as probable or possible, rather than certain. In some cases, no reasonable etymological explanation can be offered, and a name is left unexplained with an explicit note to that effect. Such entries have not been omitted from the dictionary, as they have been from previous works. FaNUK policy has been to include them, so that their frequency, distribution, and any other relevant information can still be viewed, even if a satisfactory explanation cannot be offered. However, in the vast majority of entries, an etymological explanation is given.

The ability to do this is, in part, due to the considerable amount of early bearer evidence that has been available to the FaNUK team. Etymologies have to be based on the earliest known spellings of a name, and linking these early spellings with modern family names must be

based on a coherent historical sequence of linguistic evidence and plausible geographical relationships; only in this way can we convincingly establish the shared origins of main entries and their variants. These early spellings, sequences of linguistic evidence, and geographical relationships, are all provided by early bearer evidence, and so the *FaNBI* dictionary presents this evidence wherever possible, as justification for a family name's etymological explanation. This is not a new approach: to a limited extent it was employed, for example, by Reaney (1958), but the FaNUK team has had access to a vastly greater number of record collections, often in electronic form, some of which had never been used for this purpose before (such as the Patent Rolls and Feet of Fines), allowing more names to be satisfactorily explained.

Two sources that have been particularly useful are the fourteenth-century poll tax (PT) returns and the International Genealogical Index (IGI), a collection of church and other official registers, transcribed and indexed by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church, Mormons) and the Federation of Family History Societies. Some portion of the data is available through the Family Search website, at <familysearch.org>. The PT returns have been transcribed relatively recently, by Carolyn C. Fenwick (1998–2005), and she kindly made her work available to the FaNUK project in database form. This gave the team access to a source of medieval bearers which had never before been available in an easily searchable form. Many of the medieval surnames in the PT returns are etymologically transparent Middle English forms, and so provided new data for the investigation of family name etymologies. The PT returns are of particular importance because they reflect the only survey of the time which sought to tax all social classes. It is well known that certain types of surnames are socially stratified, and so other documents do not guarantee a truly representative sample of medieval family names. The PT returns, therefore, include a number of medieval names for which there is little evidence in other records.

The IGI data has been perhaps the most important source of post-medieval bearers available to the FaNUK team. Post-medieval data gives crucial evidence of surname development, allowing medieval forms to be

reliably linked to their modern equivalents, and is therefore vital for a project which aims to explain the origins of modern family names found in Britain and Ireland. The IGI data has been treated with caution by the FaNUK team. In its original form, it included many records of doubtful reliability, some of which were submitted on the basis of family lore by users of the Family Search site, rather than having been transcribed from parish registers, and others that were incorrectly transcribed.<sup>1</sup> In the early stages of the FaNUK project, the team carried out a validation exercise, omitting all user-submitted data, while also discarding any data that appeared to be erroneous. Obvious transcription errors, such as ‘Flowmarket’ for ‘Stowmarket’, were silently corrected. As a result, the team has had access to a database containing over forty-eight million records of events such as christenings, marriages, and burials from parish records and nonconformist circuit records, the majority of which are demonstrably reliable. Nevertheless, it is possible that some errors survived the validation exercise. For this reason, *FaNBI* explanations are never based on a single IGI bearer, but the large body of IGI data is considered, with some pertinent examples presented as support for linguistically and geographically probable explanations.

Many *FaNBI* dictionary entries also include additional information which is not integral to explaining the etymological origin of name, but which may be of further historical, genealogical or linguistic interest. With all of these complementary pieces of information brought together, *FaNBI* has some of the most thoroughly researched surname explanations available in dictionary form. The entries contain a great deal of information, likely to be interest to many different groups of researchers (historians, linguistics, genealogists, demographers, etc.), presented in an

<sup>1</sup> This IGI dataset has been superseded on the Family Search website by the IGI Historical Records Collection, which includes only data extracted from official records; this source has also provided early bearers for the later stages of editing *FaNBI* and for FaNUK 2.

accessible format, as shown in the entry for *Langrish*:

### Langrish

Frequencies: GB 1881: 324, GB 1997: 374, GB 2011: 373, Ireland 1997: 5, Ireland 2008: 0.

main GB location, 1881: Hants, Sussex, and Surrey

main Irish location, 1847–64:

Variants: Langrishe, Langridge.

language/culture: English

**Locative name:** from Langrish in East Meon (Hants).

*Early Bearers:* Robert *de Langerisce*, 1199 in Pleas (Hants); Ralph *de Langris*, 1222 in Henry III Building Accounts; Hugone *Langrisch'*, 1332 in Subsidy Rolls (Sturminster Marshall, Dorset); Elizabeth *Langerissh*, 1383 in Patent Rolls (Hants); Anthony *Langrish*, 1560 in IGI (East Meon, Hants); Anne *Langrishe*, 1574 in IGI (Rogate, Surrey); Henrye *Langrish*, 1581 in IGI (Mid Lavant, Sussex); Nicholas *Langrishe*, 1586 in Subsidy Rolls (East Meon, Hants).

Other info: Reaney's suggestion that the surname may occasionally be a nickname from a derivative of Old French *languer* 'lassitude, inertia' (compare Robert *le Langerus*, 1200 in Curia Regis Rolls) is unnecessary given the tellingly restricted distribution in 1881 (east Hants, west Sussex and west Surrey) and the consistency of the spellings in forms of *-ish*.

This example is taken from the FaNUK database, rather than the printed dictionary, but all of the information shown will be presented in the dictionary in some form. The entry begins with the headform, followed by frequency information. Next is a summary of the name's main location in 1881, and the Irish location for 1847–64 is blank in this particular case because, as can be seen from the Irish frequency information, the name does not have a significant Irish presence. After the locational information is a list of variants which the research team believes share an etymological origin with the headform. Following this is the main explanation of the family name, beginning with the 'language/culture' label, which indicates the social group within which the name originated. This is followed by the family name type, telling us that this particular name is locative, before a description of its derivation.

The group of early bearers serves a number of purposes; the earliest bearers show that the name existed during the period when surnames were typically formed; the sequence of bearers over a number of centuries shows that the name did not die out; and the locations of the bearers reflect the distribution of the name today. In this case, further

### Clutterbuck

Frequencies: GB 1881: 1027, GB 1997: 1130, GB 2011: 1165, Ireland 1997: 19, Ireland 2008: 22.

main GB location, 1881: Gloucs; also Middx

main Irish location, 1847–64: Galway

language/culture: Dutch

**Nickname:** from *kloterboeck*, a lexical variant of Early Modern Dutch *kladdeboek* (Modern *kladboek*) ‘merchant’s rough account book’ first recorded in 1588 in the *Etymologicum Teutonicae Linguae* by Kilian (C. van Kiel). However the lexical item must be older than that, for the surname is recorded in England 164 years previously.

*Early Bearers:* Thomas *Cloterbuk*, 1423–4 in *Gloucs Ministers' Accounts* (Berkeley, Gloucs); Robert *Cloterboke*, prior of Saint Margaret's Hospital, Gloucester, 1485 in *Clutterbuck Collections*; Michael *Cloterbuck*, 1560 in *Patent Rolls* (Cheshire); Annes *Cluterbooke*, 1596 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Kings Stanley, Gloucs); Toby *Clutterbuck*, 1608 in *Oriel College Records*; Samuel *Clutterbook*, 1662 in *Hearth Tax* (Essex); Richard *Cluterbuck*, 1678 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Eastington and Alkerton, Gloucs); Freame *Clutterbuck*, 1707 in *Deputy Keeper's Report*; Nathaniel *Clutterbuck*, 1708 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Eastington and Alkerton, Gloucs); Richard *Clutterbooke*, 1715, Thomas *Clotterbook*, 1752 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Kings Stanley, Gloucs); Daniel *Cluterbuck*, 1720 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Rockhampton, Gloucs); Peter *Cluterbuck*, 1749 in *I<sub>G</sub>I* (Wotton under Edge, Gloucs).

Other info: ‘The Clutterbucks ... originally of Dutch origin, had fled from Holland in the sixteenth century’, according to H. P. R. Finberg (1957), *Gloucestershire Studies*, Leicester: Leicester University Press. They evidently arrived earlier, and were well-known cloth merchants in the Stroud area.

References: The Gloucs Ministers' Accounts are cited by M. E. N. Witchell and C. R. Hudleston (1894) (eds.), *An Account of the Principal Branches of the Family of Clutterbuck*, Gloucester; R. H. Clutterbuck (1894), *Collections Relating to the Family of Clutterbuck* (privately published).

information has been given to refute an etymological explanation offered by Reaney, which seems unlikely for distributional reasons.

While the family name *Langrish* has been explained accurately in previous dictionaries, *FaNBI* includes a number of surnames which have not been satisfactorily explained before. See, for example, the entry for the name *Clutterbuck*. Reaney offered no etymological explanation, only citing Finberg's (1957) statement that the Clutterbucks had fled from Holland in the sixteenth century. The *FaNBI* entry proves this is incorrect, or at best only partially correct, giving early bearer examples from the fifteenth century, while also providing an etymological explanation. Works consulted when researching this name are also given at the foot of the entry.

As mentioned, family names have been selected for the *FaNBI* dictionary based on frequency criteria, and so there are a number of explanations for names of recent immigrants. Early bearers tend not to be supplied, as the names have often only been present in Britain and Ireland for a short amount of time and tend to be found in 'officialized' invariant forms representing spellings current in the source country, but the entries have been well researched by expert consultants. See, for example, the entries for the Afghan surname *Chishti* and the Nigerian surname *Abiola*.

### **Chishti**

Frequencies: GB 1881: 0, GB 1997: 203, GB 2011: 230, Ireland 1997: 0, Ireland 2008: 0.

main GB location, 1881: -

main Irish location, 1847-64:

language/culture: Afghan (Muslim)

from Chisht, a small town near Herat, Afghanistan.

Other info: The Chishtī order is a mystic Sufi religious order of Islam, which was founded in this town.

**Abiola**

Frequencies: GB 1881: 0, GB 1997: 293, GB 2011: 261, Ireland 1997: 2, Ireland 2008: 0.

main GB location, 1881: -

main Irish location, 1847-64:

language/culture: Nigerian (Yoruba)

**Relationship name:** from the personal name *Abíọlá* (Yoruba *a-bí ọlá* '(child) born into wealth or nobility').

Names of recent immigrants have rarely appeared in previous works, making *FaNBI* one of the most comprehensive dictionaries of its kind.

## FANUK 2

Work on FaNUK 2 began in April 2014, and is due to finish at the end of 2016. This phase of the project adds to the work already completed for FaNUK 1, enhancing the database in three key ways: (1) the frequency threshold for inclusion has been lowered from 100 bearers in 2011 to 20 bearers, adding about 15,000 family names to the database (giving a total of over 60,000), none of which have ever been satisfactorily explained; entirely new research has therefore been required in order to provide etymological explanations for these names; (2) the origins of the place-names that have given rise to family names are being systematically but succinctly explained; (3) the origins of the ancient personal names that have given rise to family names of relationship are being systematically explained. For example, whereas the FaNUK 1 entry for *Robert* explains that the family name is from the Middle English personal name *Robert*, itself from Old French *Robert*, *Rodbert*, from Continental Germanic *Ro(d)bert*, the FaNUK 2 entry goes on to explain the Germanic etymons. As well as these three key changes for FaNUK 2, a considerable number of difficult names which eluded explanation during FaNUK 1 are being revisited.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For a group of examples, see Peter McClure's essay above, pp. 33–69.

One of the most significant challenges of the FaNUK 2 project has been in the research of low-frequency family names. For FaNUK 1, most of the names were frequent enough that they were well evidenced in many historical record collections. However, some of the new names in FaNUK 2, particularly those with frequencies at the lower end of the scale, are much more difficult to find in representative numbers. Others are difficult to explain because they are spelling variants of established names which have arisen due to some linguistically unexpected changes. To help to explain these low-frequency names, a methodology that pays greater attention to geography and local context has been developed over the course of the project, establishing links between different surname forms through evidence of their long-term presence in the same parishes and areas. Having refined this methodology, we believe that there is potential for its use on a project which seeks to explain chronologically established names of even lower frequencies, eventually providing etymologies for almost every family name in Britain and Ireland, no matter how rare. Here, two problems have to be taken into account. Firstly, in records of names of very low frequencies, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between genuine variants and transcription errors. Here, a judgment has to be made case by case. Secondly, and much more importantly, at very low frequencies, an increasingly large number of recent immigrant names are found. FaNUK makes a distinction between 'Recent Immigrant (RI) names', most bearers of which are descended from people who arrived in Britain in the twentieth century, and 'Established names', which, though rare, have been steadily present in Britain in nineteenth- and twentieth-century censuses. A third problem is that of surname death and emigration: some rare surnames die out or are found only outside their country of origin. All of these are topics for possible future research, going way beyond the present remit of FaNUK.

Reliance on distributional information is not always a safe approach for low-frequency family names. If a name has been borne by only one or two families, and these families migrated to a different location, its distribution would give no clue as to its origin. Therefore, it has also been important, wherever possible, for the team to be aware of migration

patterns and to study recent records for possible evidence of family relocation. See, for example, the low-frequency name *Tellick*:

### **Tellick**

Frequencies: GB 1881: 38, GB 1997: 10, GB 2011: 15, Ireland 1997: 0, Ireland 2008: 0.

main GB location, 1881: Sussex

main Irish location, 1847-64:

language/culture: English

late variant of **Tallack**. The name appears to have been brought to Sussex from Cornwall in the 19th century; Philip *Tellick*, recorded in Broadwater (Sussex) in Census 1851, was born in Penzance (Cornwall), and George *Tellick*, recorded in Broadwater (Sussex) in Census 1851, was born in Lambourn (Cornwall).

*Early Bearers*: John *Tallick*, 1800, Nich. *Tellick*, 1812 in I.G.I (Feock, Cornwall); Philip *Tellick*, 1836 in I.G.I (Broadwater, Sussex); George *Tellick*, 1846 in I.G.I (Broadwater, Sussex).

In 1881, it was concentrated in Sussex, especially in the parish of Broadwater. Research showed that there was no clear south-eastern origin for the name, but following a study of the 1851 census, in which some bearers of *Tellick* were recorded as having been born in Cornwall, a Cornish origin appeared to be a possibility. This led to comparison of *Tellick* with similar Cornish names, eventually finding a link with *Tallick*, which is clearly a rare variant of the Cornish family name *Tallack* (itself from the Middle Cornish nickname \**Talek* ‘foreheaded (one)’, ‘with a (remarkable) forehead’). This kind of research has been required for many names in FaNUK 2, leading to some surprising conclusions which may appear unlikely, but show that family names have been remarkably variable and mobile, not only in previous centuries, but also in more recent years.

As mentioned, one of the main aims of FaNUK 2 has been to explain the origins of place-names that have given rise to family names, thus giving the reader additional information and a deeper understanding of the history of locative names. This has meant that a number of FaNUK 1

entries have been rewritten, to include place-name etymologies and a small selection of early place-name forms to support these etymologies. Compare the FaNUK 2 entry for *Langrish* with its FaNUK 1 entry (given above):

### Langrish

Frequencies: GB 1881: 324, GB 1997: 374, GB 2011: 373, Ireland 1997: 5, Ireland 2008: 0.

main GB location, 1881: Hants, Sussex, and Surrey

main Irish location, 1847-64:

Variants: Langrishe, Langridge.

language/culture: English

**Locative name:** from Langrish in East Meon (Hants), which is recorded as *Langerishe* in 1236. The place-name derives from Old English *lang* 'long' + *risc* 'rush, rush bed'.

*Early Bearers:* Robert *de Langerisce*, 1199 in Pleas (Hants); Ralph *de Langris*, 1222 in Henry III Building Accounts; Hugone *Langrisch'*, 1332 in Subsidy Rolls (Sturminster Marshall, Dorset); Elizabeth *Langerissh*, 1383 in Patent Rolls (Hants); Anthony *Langrish*, 1560 in IGI (East Meon, Hants); Anne *Langrishe*, 1574 in IGI (Rogate, Surrey); Henrye *Langrish*, 1581 in IGI (Mid Lavant, Sussex); Nicholas *Langrishe*, 1586 in Subsidy Rolls (East Meon, Hants).

Other info: Reaney's suggestion that the surname may occasionally be a nickname from a derivative of Old French *langeuer* 'lassitude, inertia' (compare Robert *le Langerus*, 1200 in Curia Regis Rolls) is unnecessary given the tellingly restricted distribution in 1881 (east Hants, west Sussex and west Surrey) and the consistency of the spellings in forms of *-ish*.

References: Hampshire Place-Names, p. 106.

Rather than simply stating the place-name from which the family name is derived (as is the case in the FaNUK 1 example), an etymologically representative medieval place-name form is given, and the elements which make up the place-name are also provided. There are some place-names mentioned in FaNUK 2 which will remain unexplained, especially any non-UK place-names from areas for which detailed toponymic surveys are not widely available, but in the majority

of cases the origins of place-names are given.

Similarly, in FaNUK 2 given-name etymologies are provided for family names of relationship. As mentioned, FaNUK 1 entries for family names derived from given-names do not systematically explain the origin of the words from which the given-name ultimately derives. In FaNUK 2, the origin of such antecedent personal names are explained. Compare the following parts of the FaNUK 1 and FaNUK 2 explanations for the surname *Herbert*:

### **Herbert (FaNUK 1)**

**Relationship name:** from the Old French and Middle English personal name *Herbert* (Continental Germanic *Hariberct*, *Her(e)bert*).

### **Herbert (FaNUK 2)**

**Relationship name:** from the Old French and Middle English personal name *Herbert* (Continental Germanic *Hariberct*, *Her(e)bert*, from *\*hari-*, *\*heri-* 'army' + *\*berht-* 'bright')

The additional information is concise and clear, enhancing FaNUK 1 by giving readers an understanding of the origins of the personal names that gave rise to relationship names.

It is envisaged that the research and editing carried out for FaNUK 2 will be made available in dictionary form in due course, providing an even more comprehensive, useful, and well-researched resource on the family names of Britain and Ireland.

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