

Naming Patterns

Sometimes, we can find a potential ancestor but are not quite sure whether to claim them or not as our own. It may be that a surname was prevalent in a village or that it was a fairly common name. Then, it can seem as though trying to sort out who was who becomes like trying to knit fog.

One helpful thing to assist could be referring to naming patterns. Between the years of 1700 and 1875, in order to honour previous generations, children were often – but not always – named after their grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Below, you will see the traditional naming patterns that were in existence during those years.

England and Wales

First son was named after his father's father.

Second son was named after his mother's father.

Third son was named after his father.

Fourth son was named after his father's oldest brother.

Fifth son was named after his father's 2nd oldest brother or mother's oldest brother.

First daughter was named after her mother's mother.

Second daughter was named after her father's mother.

Third daughter was named after her mother.

Fourth daughter was named after her mother's oldest sister.

Fifth daughter is named after her mother's 2nd oldest sister or father's oldest sister.

Scotland

First son was named after his father's father

Second son was named after his mother's father

Third son was named after his father

First daughter was named after her mother's mother

Second daughter was named after her father's mother

Third daughter was named after her mother

Other daughters were named after other family members

Ireland

First son was named after his father's father

Second son was named after his mother's father

Third son was named after his father

Fourth son was named after his father's oldest brother

Fifth son was named after his mother's oldest brother

First daughter was named after her mother's mother (or father's mother)

Second daughter was named after her father's mother (or mother's mother)

Third daughter was named after her mother

Fourth daughter was named after her mother's oldest sister

Fifth daughter was named after her father's oldest sister

Over the years, the introduction of a middle name started to become popular, often to differentiate between members of the same family with the same first name, such as father and son. You will frequently find that it is the mother's maiden name that was used – sometimes for each of the children in a family!

Now, this is great if the family was straightforward, but as we know, not many were! If a mother was not married to the father of the child, it also became widely accepted to use the father's surname as the middle name of the child. John Webb Mascall was so named and was the illegitimate son of Sarah Mascall and William Webb. This helped Sarah to claim support from the local Poor Law Union.

If you come across an unusual name in your family, it might be worth investigating what else was happening at the time. Check to see how many children were named 'Alma' for instance, around the time of the Crimean War. Also, the child may have been named after very good friends of the family – or even the Godparents of the child as in the case of William Schwenck Gilbert, of Gilbert and Sullivan fame.

You may also well find that more than one child in the family was given the same name. This became a common practice when child mortality rates were high and the first child so named died. Therefore, it is always wise to see if you can find a death or burial record for that first child.

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If you have found someone who you think is yours but would like a second – or third! – opinion, one easy way to check with like-minded people is to ask the members of Genealogy Specialists. Register for FREE at <http://www.genealogy-specialists.com/> and post details of your ancestor. The members will happily offer suggestions!

If you would like to find out more about names, including surnames, listed below are some products that will certainly help you along your way and all of them are available from [www.parishchest.com](http://www.parishchest.com). Just pop the reference number in the website search box to see the details.

- English Surnames 1843 Ref: ARB-1373
- English Surnames Their Sources & Significations 1875 Ref: ARB-0506
- Genealogy and Surnames 1865 Ref: ARB-0955
- Surnames and their origins Ref: NWA-OHM24
- Surnames of the United Kingdom Ref: UKP-HAR-247