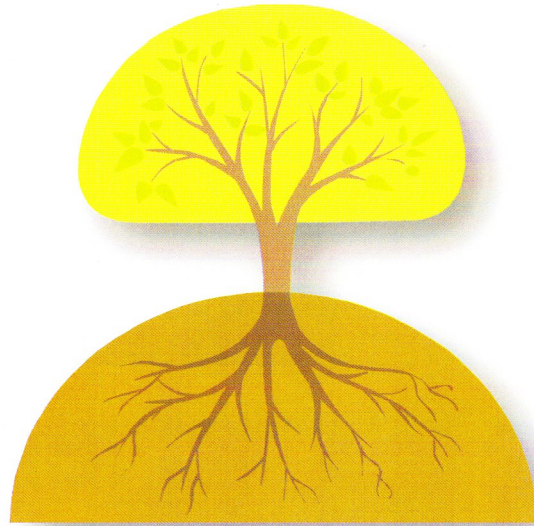


Roots & Branches



The Official Journal



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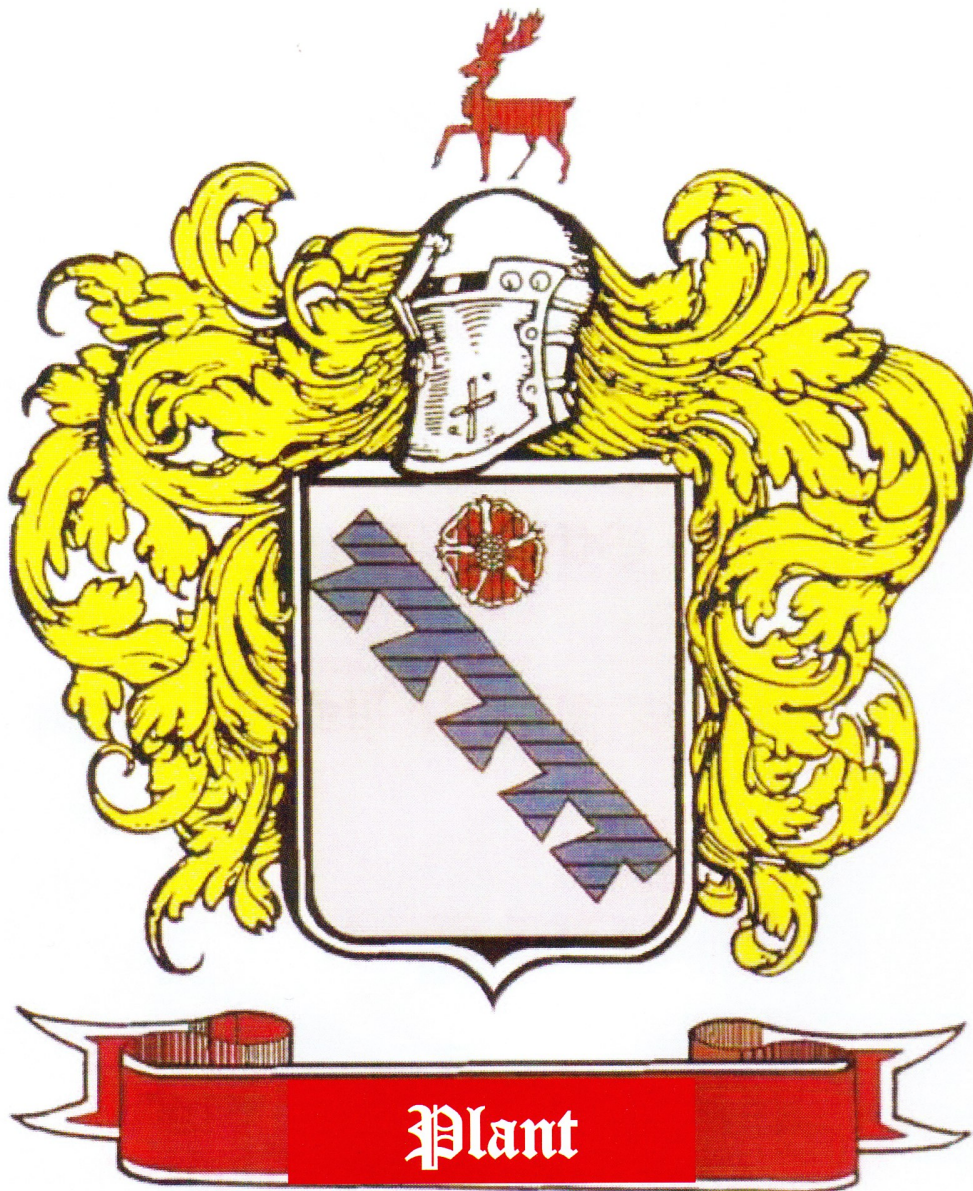
PLANT

Family History Society



December 2011

Series 2 / Issue 4



THE PLANT COAT OF ARMS HEREBY ILLUSTRATED IS OFFICIALLY DOCUMENTED IN *BURKE'S GENERAL ARMORY*. THE ORIGINAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ARMS (SHIELD) IS AS FOLLOWS:

"AR. A LABEL IN BEND AZ. IN CHIEF A ROSE GU."
WHEN TRANSLATED THE BLAZON ALSO DESCRIBES THE ORIGINAL COLORS OF THE PLANT ARMS AS:

"SILVER: A BLUE LABEL PLACED DIAGONALLY IN UPPER THIRD A RED ROSE."
ABOVE THE SHIELD AND HELMET IS THE CREST WHICH IS DESCRIBED AS:
"A RED STAG WALKING."

ARMS: ARGENT, A LABEL IN BOND AZURE, IN CHIEF A ROSE GULES

CREST: A STAG, TRIPPANT GULES

MOTTO: NUNQUAM NON PARARUS - NEVER UNPREPARED

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Chairman's Chat

Hello everyone, well, here we are again the end of another year, hope it went as well as mine.

The Family History Fair in February (**Plantiques Road show**) was well attended and resulted in 2 new members, Photos can be found on our news website at: www.spanglefish.co.uk/plantfamily

The Next Family History Fair and (**Road show**) will be on the 18th of February 2012, maybe I will see some of you there.

The week long display at the Halton British Legion was very quiet until the weekend, when it all took off, and all were very busy. We have been asked to do another show next year to commemorate the Queens Diamond Jubilee.

The highlight of my year was a telephone call from a **Diane Turner** claiming to be my second cousin, we found that we both have the same Great Grandparents, **Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Plant**, **Elizabeth** being the daughter of **Samuel Plant and Sarah Hulse**, she sent me photo's and pedigree charts, which took me two generations further back and confirmed a family myth about an **Earl of Airlie**. **Samuel Johnsons** Mother was **Hannah Johnson** who worked for the Earl when he was working at Mobberley in Cheshire, and the Earl got her into trouble and was sacked by the Countess. I visited Diane, who lives at Buckley the other side of Chester, not so far away, and swapped photo's and memorabilia, and of course we welcome her to the Plant society.

In October I attended the Family History Society of Cheshire, AGM only to find another cousin sat waiting for my arrival, I hadn't seen her for 20 years or more, we both started the Stretch Ancestral Research Society 25 years ago, which is still going to this day with members all over the world.

And now for a Plea!

Enclosed with this edition is the renewal form for 2012, **please please return** it to me **ASAP** as it costs more to send out reminders.

Overseas members can send their subscriptions via the coordinators of their own country, in their own monetary units

As ever I wish to Thank Dr John Plant and Dr Richard Plant for their articles for the R&B, and all who submitted articles, also I would like to thank Linda Wheeler, and Sian Plant, our coordinators, who do a great job. I was saddened to learn that our Australia coordinator Bill Plant has had to retire from the position, thanks Bill for all you have done for us, we wish you well.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support, and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a **Plantastic** New Year

Society Members

No	Title	Name	Address
HLP	Mr.	W. Keith Plant	Redacted
HLW	Dr.	John S. Plant	
Chair 1	Mr.	Peter Johnson	
2	Mrs.	Katherine Compagno	
3	Mr.	Michael Plant	
5	Mrs.	Judith Wilkinson	
6	Mr.	Anthony David Plant	
8	Mrs.	Jennifer Plant	
9	Mr.	Kenneth T. Plant	
11	Mr.	Ron Plant	
12	Mr.	William Turner Plant	
13	Mr.	Michael J. Plant	
14	Mr.	Colin H. Plant	
15	Miss.	Tessa Pilsbury	
16	Mr.	Earl J. Davis	
17	Mrs.	Frances Upson	
18	Mr.	Peter R. Plant	
19	Mr.	John E. Ransley	
20	Mr.	David Capes	
21	Mr.	David Plant	
USC 22	Mrs.	Linda Wheeler	
23	Mrs.	Dorian G. Greenbaum	
24	Mr.	Philip Plant	
25	Mrs.	M. J. Plant	
26	Mrs.	Doris Howorth	
27	Ms.	Alice D. Mercer	
28	Mrs.	Olivia S. Masters	

Members (Continued)

No	Name	Address
29	Mr. Patrick Pearson	Redacted
GMC30	Mrs. Sian Plant	
31	Mrs Estella Nobles	
32	Mrs. Margaret Lake	
34	Mr. Frederick E. Plant	
36	Mrs. Frances Plant	
DDNAC/37	Mr. Richard E. Plant	
38	Mr. William (Bill) Plant	
39	Mr. Michael Perkins	
40	Mrs. Brenda Plant	
42	Mrs. Linda Plant Wagoner	
43	Mr. Michael Plant	
44	Mr. Alan Plant	
46	Mr. John R. Plant	
48	Mrs E.J. Plant	
50	Mr Bill Lowe	
51	Mr. Walter F. Plant	
52	Ms Sylvia Trumble	
53	Mrs. A. Dowell	
54	Mrs Hazel Morgan	
55	Mrs. Deanna Richards	
56	Ms. Aloa Dereta	
57	Col Mike Walker	
58	Mrs Janet Padrazolla	
58a	Mrs Christine Robinson	
60	Mr. Frank Robinson	

Members (Continued)

No	Title	Name	Address
61	Mrs.	Heather Plant	Redacted
62	Mrs.	Marie Pincus	
64	Mr.	James W. Plant	
65	Mr.	John Plant	
66	Mr.	Chris Plant	
67	Mr.	Graeme R. Plant	
68	Ms.	Tiffany Mechkaroff	
69	Ms	Lois Smythe	
70	Ms	Sue Platt	
71	Ms	Penny Clarke	
72	Mrs	Felicity Jones	
73	Mr.	Malcolm Revell	
#74	Mrs	Diane Turner	

HLP Hon. Life President
HLW Hon Life Webmaster & DNA Coordinator
DDNAC Deputy DNA Coordinator
GMC Guild Marriage Coordinator
AC Australia Coordinator (Position Vacant)
USC United States Coordinator
New Member
***** Change of Address or Email
" Re-Joined

Members Interests

No	Title	Name	Interest
	Mr.	W. Keith Plant	General
	Dr.	John S. Plant	19c Sheffield Yorks / e19c Clowne Derbyshire
1	Mr	Peter Johnson	L 19c Mid Cheshire/
2	Ms	Katherine Compagno	19c West Bromwich + Walsall Staffs/ L18c + e19c Brierly Hill/ 18c Old Swinford
3	Mr	Michael Plant	18c & 19c South Yorks / North Derbys (m.plant@hotmail.co.uk)
5	Mrs	Judith Wilkinson	18 + 19c Dudley, Tipton, Halesowen, Rowley Regis, Brierly Hill, Langley, Cradley West Bromwich
6	Mr	Anthony D. Plant	Pre 19c Clowne Derby/19c Doncaster Yorks/19c Notts/ 19c Cheltenham Glos
8	Mrs	Jennifer Plant	18c + 19c 'Black Country'
9	Mr	Kenneth T. Plant	18c + 19c South East, Leicestershire + Rutland Border
12	Mr	William T. Plant	18c + e19c North Staffordshire
11	Mr	Ron Plant	L 19c Dudley S Staffs
13	Mr	Michael J. Plant	e19c Shropshire/e19c Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire
14	Mr	Colin Plant	William Plant 17c/early 19c Hundleigh, Lincs/ L18c + E19c Hundleby Lincs.
15	Miss	Tessa Pilsbury	18c + 19c Congleton, Cheshire/ 18 + 19c Horton + Leek, Staffs
16	Mr	Earl J. Davis	Cheadle Staffs
17	Mrs	Frances Upson	19c Burton on Trent + Croxton + Great Haywood, Staffs
18	Mr	Peter R. Plant	E19c Tittesworth + Ipstones, Staffs
19	Mr	John E. Ransley	18c + 19c Staffs
20	Mr.	David Capes	18c + 19c Harthill + South Auston + Rotherham Yorks.
21	Mr.	David Plant	19c Billingham, Deepfields, Penkrigde, Staffs
22	Mrs.	Linda S. Wheeler	Pre 1700 Staffs/Cheshire/John Plant (Emigrant) from UK to US
23	Mrs.	Dorian G. Greenbaum	18c + 19c Dudley ' Kingswinford / Brierley Hill.
24	Mr.	Philip Plant	As for member 25 Plus North Wiltshire
25	Mrs.	M.J. Plant	Any period / Market Harborough, Little Bowden, Great Bowden, Foxton Leics/ Sutton St Edmund/Halbeach Lincs/ Brighton Sussex / Haverhill Suffolk / Battersea London.
26	Mrs.	Doris Howarth	18c + 19c Frodsham / Great Budworth (Plants & Whitby's) + 18c & 19c Manchester

Members Interests (Continued)

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 27 | Ms. Alice D. Mercer | 19c Leicester/L19c Nottingham |
| 28 | Mrs. Olivia S. Masters | 18c Shropshire |
| 29 | Mr Patrick Pearson | Any Period Stockport Cheshire |
| 30 | Mrs Sian Plant | e 19c Denton Lancs / 19c Leicester / 20c Rounds Northants |
| 31 | Mrs. Estella Nobles | Any Period Fenton + Cheadle + Longton Staffs. |
| 32 | Mrs. Margaret Lake | m 18c Suffolk |
| 34 | Mr. Frederick E. Plant | 20c Lower Broughton, Salford, Lancs |
| 36 | Mrs. Frances Plant | 19c Leek Staffs. |
| 37 | Prof. Richard E. Plant | 19c Birmingham (Edward Plant bn circa 1787) |
| 38 | Mr. William (Bill) Plant | 19c South Lincolnshire |
| 39 | Mr. Mike Perkins | All Periods, Black Country. |
| 40 | Mrs. Brenda Plant | 18 + 19c Dudley, Tipton, Halesowen, Rowley Regis, Brierley Hill
Langley, Cradley, West Bromwich |
| 42 | Mrs. Linda Plant Wagoner | Any Period USA / Immigrants from UK to USA |
| 43 | Mr. Michael Plant | General |
| 44 | Mr. Alan Plant | General Staffordshire |
| 46 | Mr. J.R. (Ron) Plant | Pre 1900 Stoke-on-Trent / Pottery Plants, Longton, Lane End Caverswell |
| 48 | Mrs. E.J. Plant | Steel Toymakers in Wolverhampton 17thc to 19thc |
| 51 | Mr. Walter F. Plant | Lincolnshire Sibsey & Old Leake Allotments |
| 52 | Ms. Sylvia Trumble | 18c & e19c Stafford Staffs / 19c Whitchurch Shropshire |
| 53 | Mrs. A. Dowell | 18c + 19c Desford + Newbold Verdon, Leics. |
| 54 | Mrs Hazel Morgan | 19c Meerbrook, Grindon, Staffs / Ashbourne Derby. |
| 55 | Mrs. Deanne Richards | 19c Eckington Derbyshire / Sheffield (Brightside) |
| 56 | Ms. Aloa Derita | Any Period pre 1860 Leek Staffs / m 19c Sheffield Yorkshire. |
| 57 | Col. Mike Walker | 19c +20c Longton Staffs (Samuel Lucas Plant + Frederick Sutton Plant)
RH & SL Plant & Co |
| 58 | Mrs. Janet Padrazolla And
Mrs. Christine Robinson | 19 + 19c Piddington, Oxford / 18 + 19c Crendon, Bucks |
| 60 | Mr. Frank Robinson | State of Maine USA |

Members Interests (Continued)

61	Mrs.	Heather Plant	Pre 1850 Herts (Hertford, Stapleford & Saccabe)
62	Mrs.	Marie Pincus	Kingswinford, Brierley Hill, & Dudley
64	Mr.	Jim Plant	Awaiting Update
66	Mr.	Chris Plant	Pre 1720 Leek Post 1720 Cheadle Staffs
67	Mr.	Graeme R. Plant	Lincilnshire
68	Ms.	Tiffany Mechkaroff	16c to 19c Lincolnshire
69	Ms.	Lois Smythe	General
70	Ms	Sue Platt	General
71	Ms	Penny Clarke	Awaiting Update
72	Mr	Felicity Jones	18c North Staffordshire
73	Mr	Malcolm Revell	18+19c Burslem + Longton + Stoke-on-Trent Staffs
74	Mrs	Diane Turner	19th c Mid Cheshire

Plant origins: old ideas; newly uncovered evidence

Dr John S Plant

Oct 2011

Abstract

This is a brief review of some old ideas for the origins of the Plant surname, and a description of three fresh finds of medieval evidence. The received wisdom is that the Plant by-name means a 'gardener'. For some years, I have been proposing a different meaning 'offspring' or 'children' for the ongoing surname. The latest evidence has given some substance to a third possibility, that the name initially meant 'from la Planta'. It is not inconceivable that all three meanings played a role.

A recent book works on an assumption that English surnames typically formed from by-names around 1350. The evidence so far, for Plants in their so-called English 'main homeland', around Dieulacres Abbey, is not incompatible with that. However, there is now clear evidence that the Plante name was hereditary in Lincolnshire, apparently for three generations, by 1279. Going appreciably further, the noble name Planta was evidently hereditary in the Alps by 1139.

Still, it has to be noted that one early Plant, away from the main Plant homeland, was a gardener in 1379. That does not mean that the 'gardener hypothesis' is convincing as the full story. It neglects, for example, that there were earlier Plants with very different occupations. For an early piece of the story, there is a growing body of evidence for a form *de la Planta* of the name developing into *Plant* with at least one Plante travelling from the Alps to London in 1350. This forms a tentative third possibility, beyond the 'gardener' and 'offspring' hypotheses, awaiting further investigation.

Some introductory comments

In the past few months, three new records for the early Plants in England have come to light: two from The Original Record;¹ and, one in a newly published book.² Each has its own significance.

Usually, my new finds of early records add little to the general picture; but, in August, I found and purchased two particular snippets that were more informative than usual. Also, the new book describes an early Plant record which I had looked for but not located.³

Two newly-found medieval records

The first new piece of evidence indicates that the Plante name was hereditary in Lincolnshire by 1279 and indicates that it had been inherited from two generations earlier. Isolated by-names are not generally taken to be a sound basis for interpreting the source of a subsequent

¹<http://www.theoriginalrecord.com/>

²George Redmonds, Turi King, and David Hey, *Surnames, DNA, & Family History*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

³I was, in fact, already vaguely aware that such a record might exist but I had failed to locate it in my searches of the scores of thousands of unindexed records in C.C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* (Oxford, 3 Parts, 1998, 2001, and 2005).

surname; evidence that the name was inherited is desired. Now we have early evidence of that in Lincolnshire. Together with the DNA evidence, this makes it more credible, though not proven, that records for early instances of the Plant name might represent the origins of the hereditary Plant surname. It is not yet clear whether the early Lincolnshire origin was related to either the later main Plant family in Cheshire or the earlier noble Planta family in the Alps.

In 1999, in Issue 18 of *Roots and Branches* (series 1), I described a possible background context to the Plant name in England. This is the earldom of Chester and Lincoln, two locations where the Plant surname is later found. I have mentioned that little since, largely because this was around a century before any evidence I then had for Plants in either Cheshire or Lincolnshire. It is now clear that the Plant name was hereditary in Lincolnshire nearer those times.

It was in 2003, in Issue 27, that I first wrote about the Planta family of the Swiss Alps. I mentioned them again just briefly in a scholarly article about the Plantagenet name;⁴ but, largely disregarded them for Plant surname purposes, not only because they were illustrious, but because they were so remote from England.

The second snippet of new evidence shows that an early Plante travelled from the French Alps to London in 1350. Moreover, I already had records for the name *de la Planta* alias *de Plant'* in Anjou in 1202, *de la Plaunt* and *Plaunt* in Rouen in 1273, and *de Plantes* in Huntingdonshire in 1282.

A beckoning interpretation of *de la Planta* is that it means simply 'from la Planta', meaning quite possibly a place in the Alps. This might be associated with the noble Planta family whose seat was in the Engadine in the Swiss Alps. The name Engadine, often spelled Engadin, applies to a wide region whose heart is in an Alpine valley. Its meaning is 'garden of the River Inn (or En in Romansh)'. Hence, 'de la Planta' might be glossed to mean 'from the River Inn source or garden', though it is not quite that straightforward, as I outline next.

The *de la Planta* hypothesis

As early as 46AD, a friend and advisor Julius Planta of the Roman Emperor was to be found at Trento, which is about 60 miles from the Engadin.

Pursuing a contention that the Alps was the first source of the name, we might consider that the Plant name developed in France and then England from an initial meaning 'from the La Planta location'. It is a relatively short leap of the imagination that this could become 'from the shoot' (Latin) or 'from the vegetable soul as the first principal of life' (Aquinas); and, in the case of the name *de Plantes* in Huntingdonshire in England, 'from the seeds and three souls of man' which takes account of the contemporary philosophy of Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. This does not, of course, necessarily mean that the main English Plant family was genetically related to the noble Planta family of the Alps.

A note of caution needs to be sounded. In Romansh, *planta* means *plant*, though the spelling has been *plauta* in Engadine dialect. One might conflate *planta* with a plain, where plants grow amidst mountains, perhaps also relatable to the 'sole of foot' meaning of the Latin word *planta* as applied to the foot of a mountain. If that is correct, we might expect that there could have been a few different places so-named. It could explain why the 1475 Battle of La Planta (also sometimes called Battle on the Planta)⁵ was evidently near

⁴John S Plant (2007) *The Tardy Adoption of the Plantagenet Surname*, *Nomina*, Vol 30, pp 57-84, Appendix C. – <http://cogprints.org/5986/>

⁵This might have been influenced by a Spanish meaning 'level' or 'floor' of *planta*.

Sion, about 130 miles to the west of Engadine, in a different Canton of the Alps. In short, we can not be sure that 'la Planta' meant the 'garden' source of specifically the River Inn into Austria.

Another weakness of the 'la Planta' hypothesis is, of course, the large distances involved. The recent DNA evidence is that the English Plants are largely a populous single family and surprisingly widespread. It is not established, however, that this far-reaching genetic identity extended as far as the Engadine.

A new book

On a more local English front, I thought that I was beginning to lay the gardener hypothesis to rest; but, in the past few weeks, I bought a newly-published book and found that it highlights support for the 'gardener' meaning of Plant as a by-name, though this is not carried over to the surname. The book notes that one early English Plant was a gardener. I have been in touch with the book's authors and have identified the particular author of this part of the book. At least, we agree that we are writing in two different contexts: he about a particular aspect of English by-names and I about Plant name records. I outline this further in a brief section below, concerning my response to the relevant snippet in that book.

Some discussion of the three hypotheses

One of the authors, David Hey, of this new book is Emeritus Professor of Local and Family History at Sheffield University, where the linguist Prof R.M. Wilson had assisted Reaney who proposed the 'gardener hypothesis' for Plant. Prof Hey and another of the authors, George Redmonds, have spent much of their lifetime studies concentrating on Sheffield's county of Yorkshire, where Dr Redmonds now highlights the evidence for a gardener called Plant. The third author, Turi King, has recently been involved in DNA testing English surnames, such as in connection with a small Viking settlement in the Wirral to the north of Chester.

The main interests of these authors lay within the tradition of the Viking Danelaw which controlled the north and east of England in the ninth century. The main Plant homeland lies just outside this area. Elsewhere, the book concedes that Welsh meanings might be more relevant in the West Midlands of England. I have previously mentioned the fourteenth-century epic poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* – this relates to a contest of French culture invading Celtic traditions; and, the Green Knight's Chapel, of the poem, has been taken to be near Leek in the main Plant homeland.⁶

Celtic tradition, relatable to the Plant and Green Knight homeland, favours the 'clan' or 'children' hypothesis for Plant though this might seem alien to some. Familiarity with Welsh was needed in the Marcher lordships⁷ and 'children' is the literal translation of *plant* in Welsh, whereas 'gardener' is rather an obscure metonymic possibility for an English meaning of the Plant name. In 1379 Yorkshire, where the Plant gardener is found, 24% of names were occupational and only 13% were names of family relationship, whereas the balance was more equal in Staffordshire in 1327, nearer the main Plant homeland, with 18% and 17% in these two categories.⁸ In both places, the number of names representing a place of origin was 29% or 30% which might be relevant to a third possibility.

⁶<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2000/sep/30/travelbooks.unitedkingdom>

⁷Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 145.

⁸R.A. McKinley, *A History of British Surnames* (London and New York, 1990), p. 23.

In a sense, introducing a third possibility complicates the unresolved argument: ‘offspring’ or ‘gardener’. The further possibility is interesting, however, in so far as it brings together a few other hints about the name. Apart from the best-selling fiction *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, with its strong French influence, English writers have mostly neglected a possible French origin to the Plant name. The numbers arriving in England from Savoy, which is now in the French Alps, might not have been many; but, the contemporary Savoyard influence in England forms an interesting possible context.⁹

A third way of formulating the story

The medieval Plant records suggest that the early English Plants contained in their number some high status peasants or, perhaps instead, some from the lesser branches of a noble family on a path of downwards social standing. There was for example a bailiff, at that time quite a high ranking official; and, a priest, evidently part of the Church aristocracy. Also, in the main Plant homeland, there was a fighting man supporting the Abbot of Dieulacres – for that time, this suggests quite a high status role.

If we venture to consider the possibility that these early Plants could have been from a high status family, there is an immediate point that just such a family, called *Planta*, was based in the Alps. Their nobility is not inconsistent with the considerable mobility that was involved in the Savoyard migration.

I have been noting for a while some apparent proximities of early English Plants with Warenne lands. It is an old tradition that there was a connection of the Plant name to the Plantagenets; and, the Warennes were descendants of the eponymous Geoffrey *Plante Genest*. However, if noble associations existed at all for the Plants, they might better be considered in the times of the first known evidence for the Plant(e) name in England, when the Queen’s uncle was the influential Peter of Savoy. That would neglect that the by-name *Plente* is found in England before then and it is unclear whether there were any early confusions between the names *Plente* and *Plante*.

Though Plant proximities to the Warennes could just be coincidence, the number of such coincidences is a few. On this admittedly insecure basis, one consistent possibility is that the Plant name might have arrived in England with the Savoyard influence, which centred on Peter of Savoy. He was the guardian of Warenne lands immediately before the times of the first known English Plants and this could have carried over to ongoing proximities of the name to Warenne lands.

Where would that leave the Plant gardener in Hull? The authors of the newly published book mention a possibility that peasants of lower status could have mimicked their overlords’ names. It may just be coincidence that the Warennes had a presence in Yorkshire: it is not clear that this brought word of an Alpine noble family called *Planta* to this region. There might have been more influence from the *Plante Genest* nickname of the progenitor of the English kings, though there is hardly any early evidence that the *Plantagenet* name was then in use. The newly published book also mentions the possibility of a cleric or minister mischievously changing the name he recorded – the name *Plente* is found early in Yorkshire and a cleric might have changed this to *Plant* for a gardener.

⁹“For young and ambitious Savoyards, both laymen and clerics, England must have seemed like the Promised Land. Offices, good marriages, lands, and influence were there almost for the asking. No fewer than 170 members of the Savoyard connection have been identified in England, two-thirds of them clerics.” Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 93.

More generally, for considering the Plant name's development, much depends on which medieval instances of the name were just a passing fancy and which, if any, were inherited from, or inspired by, an early name-bearing family. It is now apparent that there was an early family, in south Lincolnshire, bearing the Plante name, as well as the more distant noble Planta family.

The limited evidence for the third way

Despite the available DNA evidence, it can not simply be assumed that all medieval Plants were related. Also, it cannot be ignored that, in name studies, tradition is hard to dislodge and the current such tradition is that, for at least one early Plant, his name meant a gardener.

There is perhaps an interesting challenge for further DNA research. There appear to be very few alive with the name 'de la Planta' around Sion, though there are several more with the equivalent name 'Von Planta' around Engadine. The challenge is to persuade individual men near Engadine, with the Planta and Von Planta surnames, to be Y-DNA tested.

It is no longer entirely devoid of support that there was a connection between the Alps and England. In 1350, Henry Plante evidently travelled from Risoul in the French Alps to London. Risoul is not especially near Sion or the Engadine. Nor are the medieval name forms 'de la Planta', 'de la Plaunt' and 'de Plantes' found short distances apart. However, these 'de la Pla...' names are found for a significant landholder and two medieval merchants, all of whom could credibly have been adequately mobile. An overview of the distances involved is indicated in Figure 1 of the next article in this Journal.

Published books

To review the story of opinions for the Plant name, the following provides a summary of the historically published theories. I then set these against the growing documentary evidence for early occurrences of the name.

In particular, in the nineteenth century, there was much discussion of the 'Plantagenet hypothesis'. This is exemplified by the first two books listed below. More recently, the published view has fixed on the 'gardener hypothesis'.

There have been some diversions from this overall trend. A century-old book mentioned an 'offspring' hypothesis for Plant and that the *de la Plaunt* form of the name meant 'from a French plantation'. One recent Surname Dictionary¹⁰ stuck with the half-century-old 'gardener hypothesis' though it also noted the existence of the 'Cheshire Plant family' as well as a different possible meaning for Plant, 'a tender or delicate individual'. The latter is at least more sensitive than a modern Dutch meaning of the word *plant*, which is a mentally-retarded 'vegetable' or 'cabbage'.

An 1860 Surname Dictionary

Mark Antony Lower (1860) in his *A Dictionary of the Family Names of the United Kingdom* lists under the entry for Plant:

A family in humble circumstances at Kettering, bear the ancient royal name of Plantagenet, though now it is commonly corrupted to Plant. See a late number of the "Leicester Mercury."

¹⁰P. Hanks and F. Hodges, *A Dictionary of Surnames* (Oxford and New York, 1988), p. 423.

An 1862 Book

On page 149 of his book *A History of the Ancient Parish of Leek*, John Sleight (1862) records for example that an old deed from John, abbot and monk of Dieulacres, gave leave to Richard Plant of Stonycliffe to make an enclosure (clausuram) near a place called Lingrene, in the time of Henry VI. On page 33, Sleight notes further that a deed of John Plant of Stonycliffe carried a seal that was the Virgin with Christ in her arms, in an arch. Sleight adds the footnote to the name of John Plant 'This name is supposed to be corrupted from *Plantagenet*'.

An 1890 Book

On page 363 of the 1968 edition of the *Homes of Family Names in Great Britain*, Henry Brougham Guppy (1890) remarks:-

'The PLANTS are very numerous in the Eccleshall district (Staffordshire). The name of Plente occurred in the 13th century in Hunts and Oxfordshire. There are also now a few representatives of the name Plant in Suffolk and Shropshire.'

On page 536, he attributes 0.014% of the general population in Shropshire to the Plant name, 0.060% in Staffordshire and 0.016% in Suffolk.

A 1916 Book

On page 185 of the book *Surnames*, Ernest Weekly (1916) remarks:-

Plant itself is generally local [John de la Plaunt, of Rouen, *Pat.R.*], from OF. *plante*, enclosure, plantation, but its occurrence in the Rolls without *de* [Robert Plante, *Hund.R.*] suggests that it was also a nickname, from ME. *plant* used in a variety of senses, sprig, cudgel, young offspring (see *NED.*).

On page 268, he adds:-

Planterose [John Planterose, *Hund. R.*] and *Pluckrose* [Alan Pluckrose, *ib*] still exist and have plenty of medieval support; cf. Simon Schakerose (*Pat.R.*), Peter Porterose (*ib.*), Andrew Plantefene (*Leic. Bor. Rec.*), and Elyas Plante-folye (*Fine R.*). *Pluckerose* has a parallel in *Cullpepper* [Thomas Cullepeper or Colepepyr, *Pat. R.*] with which cf. Richard Cullebene (*Hund.R.*).

A 1958 Surname Dictionary

On page 276 of the 1976 edition of *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, P.H.Reaney (1958) lists:-

Plant, Plante: William Plante 1262 *For* (Ess), 1279 RH (C); William Plauntes 1275 RH (Nf). Metonymic for a gardener or planter of various plants. cf. Henry *le Plaunter* 1281 Rams (Hu), Ralph *Plantebene* 1199 P (Nf) 'beans' and PLANTEROSE.

Planterose: Robert, Alice *Planterose* 1221 AssWa, 1272 RamsCt (C). 'Rose-grower.'

A comment on a 2011 book

On page 30 of the book *Surnames, DNA, & Family History* by Redmonds, King and Hey, George Redmonds writes:-

One further aspect of by-names that has received little attention is the direct link between occupations and nicknames. ... but occasionally the context supports the inference. For example, Reaney's explanation of Plant as a by-name for a gardener received little support from John Plant in his recent article¹¹ on the surname and yet 'William Plant, gardiner' was a Hull taxpayer in 1379.

My response to this is as follows. For the purpose of a fuller consideration of the Plant name, it is important to note that this only considers one selected hypothesis and one selected instance of the name which is away from the Plants' main homeland. There are other records for Plant by-names, some earlier, which do not support the gardener hypothesis, such as:

merchant (Geoffrey Plaunt in 1273); once bailiff of Marsfelde (Robert Plonte in ca.1280); priest (Henry Plante in 1350); draperie (Will. Plante in 1376); agricole (Johannes Plante in 1381); and, chaplain (William Plonte in 1386).

Arguing that they all *might be* compatible with the 'gardener' hypothesis is not enough - they are all compatible with the 'offspring' hypothesis for example. Moreover, there are earlier 'de la Planta' forms of the name, with traces of this in the name's subsequent development into Plant. Even these seem more compatible with a 'from the shoot' (offspring) meaning, when evidence for the contemporary philosophy is taken into account. It may be just a coincidence, an independent instance, or a local reinterpretation of the name, that one early Plant was a gardener.

A more comprehensive view is that the name originally meant 'from the Planta' region of the Alps. This is supported by the 1350 record for the London priest, who was from Risole, evidently Risoul in the French Alps. The name then might have morphed or arisen independently for a gardener near Hull and to mean clan or children near Wales.

An extended view of such a name's possible meanings

Reference: Dr John S. Plant (2001) *Roots and Branches*, Issue Number 21, etc.

Reaney's original argument for the 'gardener' hypothesis was partial, being based on a couple of selected 'Plant-like' names: Plantebene and Planterose. A fuller set of possible interpretations of such names is as follows:-

Plant(a/e)genet *de facto* establisher lord, or a horse borne establisher, or (from the) plant-horse genera, or perhaps an implanter of ingenuity, or more usually the meaning is said to be 'sprig of broom', which is a hairy shoot (cf. the earlier name Plantapilosa)

Plantebene hallowed establisher offshoot, or a pleasant establisher child, or a favour of the plant soul, or a petitioner of prayer to the Virgin Mary, or an implanter of little or nothing, or an implanter of (human) seed, or a gardener

¹¹<http://cogprints.org/5985> - Plant J.S., 2005, *Modern Methods and a Controversial Surname*, *Nomina* 28: 115-33.

Plantefolie wickedness offshoot, or foolishness or sinfulness establisher child, or an implanter of contrition of crime, or an implanter of wickedness, or perhaps a foot fuller or a foal borne establisher

Plente abundant or generous or fertile, or Nature's plenty, or an impartor of plenarity of the plant soul, or a variant spelling of Plante or Palente

Palente from the palace or palatine with associated rights

Planterose courtly establisher child, or an implanter of pride or praise, or an infuser of the virtue of the Virgin Mary, or a surveyor, or an establisher of land rights or order, or a gardener, or an aroused shoot, or a resurrected or ascended or elevated or augmented plant soul, or an implanter of females

Plantyn or Plante Nature's child, or an implanter of the augmentative or generative powers of the plant soul, or an impartor of virtue or gallantry, or an offshoot or offspring, or the Welsh meaning children

le Plaunter establisher, or infuser, or planter

de la Planta or de la Plaunt of the plant soul, or from the first principal of life, or from the shoot, or offshoot or offspring, or from an Alpine region of La Planta

Plantefene eager implanter, or happy child, or perhaps a shoot or spear lunger

Though these interpretations include some occupational meanings that are easy to understand in our modern world, these mundane allusions vary widely from a gardener, to a foot fuller, to a surveyor, to a spear lunger and they provide little or no consistent meaning for the name Plant. On the the other hand, an understanding of the medieval *plant soul* leads to a more consistent set of meanings whereby the name Plant can be interpreted as an *offspring with implantation of soul that is virtuous or informed by the Lord*, in keeping with the religious offices of some early Plants. In particular, in the main Plant homeland, near Wales, the Welsh meaning 'children' is pertinent and the Plant surname may well have originated in this 'main homeland' though, for early records such as de la Planta, which may or may not be genetically related to the main Plant family, there is also a possible locative interpretation 'from the Planta' region.

Some early 'Plant like' name records

Reference: Dr John S. Plant (1999) Roots and Branches, Issues Number 17 and 18, etc.

Early records for 'Plant like' names can be grouped into possible antecedents of the Pallant, Plenty and Plant surnames though there are, in principle, possible early inter-connections. For example, Palente may have been confused with Plente, which can be confused with Plante. There are also indications of early developments between such forms as de la Planta, de Plant', de la Plaunt, Plaunt, Plonte, de Plantes, Plante, and Plant.

Plant

1202 Geoffrey Plante Genest's grandson, king John, captured his nephew Arthur of Brittany at Mirebeau in the Anjou-Poitou Marches on 1st August; and, a few weeks later, Emeric **de la Planta** alias **de Plant'** was dispossessed of lands there, both in Chinon and 14 miles away in Loud[un]. Normandy Rolls.

- 1244 Bishop Vokart (of Chur) appointed Andreas **Planta** von Z(ouz), the Chancellor of Upper Engadine and so confirmed the hegemony of the Planta family in the Zouz (Zutz or Suoz) neighbourhood lasting until 1798.
- 1262 **Plaunte** William, Essex, Forest Pleas
- 1273 **de la Plaunt** and **Plaunt**, 3 Rouen merchants, Patent Rolls
- 1275 **Plauntes** William, Norfolk, Rotuli Hundrederum
- 1279 **Plante** William, Cambridge, Rotuli Hundrederum
- 1279 At Burgh in Lincolnshire, 'assize of mort dancestor arraigned by Alan son of Hugh **Plante** against John son of John **Plante**, touching land in.' Newly transcribed Patent Rolls
- ca.1280-1303 Robert **Plonte**, of Saltford, once bailiff of Marsfelde [Bath BC 151/4/14, 151/4/15]
- 1282 **de Plantes** Henry, appeal in Huntingdonshire, Patent Rolls
- 1301 **Plant** Richard, rights to coal, Ewelowe near Chester, Flint [Pipe Rolls Cheshire in LCRS 92, 205]
- 1303 Johannes **Plonte** [S.L.Thrupp and H.B.Johnson (1964) *The earliest Canterbury freeman's rolls 1298-1363* in Kent Records (Ashford, 1912-) Kent Archaeological Society 18, 181]
- 1328 Thomas **Plonte** and Robert his son [Bath BC 151/3/55]
- 1329 Robert **Plonte** son of Walter **Plonte** [Bath BC 151/2/46, 151/2/47]
- 1340 Robert son of Thomas **Plonte** [Bath BC 151/3/56]
- 1340-49 Robert **Plonte** [Bath BC 151/2/27, 151/2/28, 151/2/48, 151/2/25, 151/6/70, 151/5/90]
- 1344 **Plant** John, son of Alan, of Burgh Marsh co. Lincoln, Patent Rolls
- 1349 mention of tenement of John **Plonte** [Bath BC 151/2/42]
- 1350 cottage of William **Plante**. Deed dated 2 Oct 1350 at Haughley in Suffolk
- 1350 Henry **Plante** of Risole, priest of the diocese of London. Clergy, the religious and the faithful in Britain and Ireland
- 1352 **Plant** James, and others carried away goods at Welles, Warham and Styvekey co. Norfolk, Patent Rolls
- ca.1360 mention of land of Walter **Plonte** [Bath BC 151/2/38]
- between ?1349-96 Honde **Plonte**, resident of Lyme, east Cheshire, Macclesfield Court Rolls
- 1376 Will. **Plante**, draperie, Leicester Borough Archives
- 1379 William **Plant**, gardiner, taxpayer, Hull, East Riding Yorks¹²
- 1379 John and Richard **Plont**, sued, trespassing herds of cows at Quarford, north Staffordshire¹³
- 1381 Johannes **Plante**, agricole, Great Finsborough, Suffolk, Poll Tax returns
- 1381 wife of Walterus **Plante** amongst family servants at Pentlow, Essex, Poll Tax returns
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- ¹²G. Redmonds, T. King, and D. Hey (2011) *Surnames, DNA & Family History*, Oxford University Press, p.30.
- ¹³E. Tooth (2002) *The Distinctive Surnames of North Staffordshire*, vol. 2, Surnames Derived from Occupations, Trades, Position and Rank, Leek: Churnet Valley Books, p.182.

- 1381 Thomas **Plonte** surrendered himself at Stafford to the complaint by the widow of John de Warton that he had abetted other Leek men in her husband's murder. Thomas was released on finding security for good behaviour. [R+B,2,7].¹⁴ Historical context. A royal commission in 1379 had noted that the Abbot of Dieulacres, in order to control the area, had used armed men, 'to do all the mischief they can to the people in the county of Stafford and that they have lain in wait for them, assaulted, maimed, and killed some, and driven others from place to place...' In 1380 the abbot himself was arrested and imprisoned following the incident during which John de Wharton had been beheaded by men on the abbot's orders. Tellingly, the abbot was soon pardoned and released.
- 1383-84 Ranulph **Plont** (father of John **Plont** snr and grandfather of William **Plont** and John **Plont** jnr), leasing land at Rainow, east Cheshire. Macclesfield Court Rolls
- 1386 **Plonte** William, chaplain (land of prior and convent of Bath), rent in Olveston. Patent Rolls
- 1394 **Plaint** John, aged 60 years or more, witness at Lincoln to proof of age of John of Gaunt's mistress's husband's son - John **Plaint** had been servant to Master Thomas de Sutton, Calendar of Inquisitions
- 1395 John **Plonte** witnessed a conveyance of John de Grenley of land in Leek to Thomas Payge [R+B,2,7]
- 1401 witness John **Plonte** the Younger of Overton. Staffordshire Historical Collections 1928 41, Ancient Deeds Preserved at the Wodehouse, Wombourne 76 2/65
- 1406 Edward **Plont** gained from the Abbot of Dieulacres Abbey, near Leek in north Staffordshire, a lease for 39 years of two mess' one croft called Calwoheye de Roche Graunge [R+B,2,7]

Pallant

- 1285 **ate Palente** John, Sussex, Assize Rolls
- 1296 **de Palenta** John, Sussex, Subsidy Rolls
- 1343 **Plente** John, messuage of land, vicar of the cathedral church of Chichester, Sussex, Patent Rolls

Plenty

- 1219 Radulphus **Plente** (Oxon) *Et in operatione castri de Oxon' infra idem castrum xxij li. et iij s. et iij d. per breve R. et per visum Petri de Haliwell' et Radulfi Plente. Et in reparatione domorum R. extra villam lxx s. per breve R. et per visum eorundem.* [3 Henry III Pipe Rolls]
- 1219 William **Plente** (Kent) *Et de dim. m. de Willelmo Plente pro panno vendito contra assisam.* [3 Henry III Pipe Rolls]
- 1230 Simon **Plente** (York) *Et de dim. m. de Willelmo filio Ailredi et Simone Plente pro eodem.* (By reference back to the preceding records *eodem* equates to *dissaisina*.) [14 Henry III Pipe Rolls]
- 1230-1 Radulphus **Plente** [*A cartulary of the Hospitals of St John the Baptist*, ed H.E.Slater (1914) in Oxford Historical Society Publications 68, 202]
- 1272 Symon **Plente** [Feet Fines Oxf. in Oxfordshire Record Society: Record Series, Oxford, 1919-, 12, 200]
- 1272-84 William **Plente** (and then his widow Gerbergia) of Ormesby (Norfolk) – charter for piece of land at Hemesby [Norwich Cathedral Charters]

¹⁴W.K. Plant (1991) *Early Staffordshire Plants*, Roots and Branches, Series 1, Issue 2, page 7.

- 1307-26 Matillide **Plente**, Bosham. [Register of Bishop Walter de Stapeldon of Exeter, concerning Clerks and Clergy of Cornwall and Devon, 1307-26, p 56]
- 1342 **Plente** Walter, Exeter co. Devon, Patent Rolls
- 1343 **Plente** John, message of land, vicar of the cathedral church of Chichester, Patent Rolls
- 1343 **Plente** John, witness at Theydene Boys on release of claim to lands in Theden Boys, Close Rolls
- 1345, 1346 acolite Walter **Plente** [Register of Bishop John de Trillek of Hereford, Clerks and Clergy of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire, pp. 419, 431]
- 1348 At Prestbury, Walter, son of William **Plente** of Bishop's Castle [Register of Bishop John de Trillek of Hereford, p. 399]
- 1349 sub-deacon Walter son of John **Plente**; deacon Walter **Plente** [Register of Bishop John de Trillek of Hereford, pp. 486, 491]
- 1350 presbiter Walter **Plente** de Castro episc., ad ti. domus de Sandone [Register of Bishop John de Trillek of Hereford, p. 543]
- 1364 **Plente** Roger of Exeter, license to take 20 packs of large cloth of divers colours from port of Exeter to Gascony, Spain, and other parts beyond seas; and to return with wine and other merchandise to the ports of London, Suthampton, Sandwich or Exeter, Patent Rolls
- 1364 **Plente** Roger, right to be collector of customs at Exeter, Fine Rolls
- 1364 **Plente** Roger, searcher of gold and silver exported without license in the county of Devon, assault on, Patent Rolls
- 1365 **Plente** Roger, merchant of Exeter, his ship 'le Ceorge' of Exmouth, Patent Rolls
- 1367 **Plente** Roger, king's minister in Devon, Patent Rolls
- 1368 **Plente** Roger, collector of customs in port of Exeter, Patent Rolls
- 1386 **Plente** Reynold, rights to yearly rent had been granted by William Botreaux, knight, the elder, Inquisition at Launceston Cornwall
- 1394 **Pleyntif** Richard, Somerset, Patent Rolls

Other

- 1164 Geoffrey **Plante Genest**'s illegitimate son, Hamelyn, from Anjou, married Isabel de Warenne and inherited the earldom of Surrey with traditional lands in Norfolk etc. Hamelyn's offspring may have retained some association with the culture of the 'de la Planta' name, found in their ancestral home of Anjou, though surviving primary evidence for the early use of the Plant(a/e)genet name is sparse.
- 1188-99 **Plan'** Roger de, Chester's Charters
- 1199 Radulphus **Plantebene** (Norfolk) [1 John Pipe Rolls]
- 1200 Radulphus **Planteben'** (Norfolk and Suffolk) [2 John Pipe Rolls]
- 1209 **Plantefolie** Gilbert, Leic', Curia Regis
- 1210 **Plantefene** Andrew, Inhabitants of Leicester (1103-1327).
- 1214 **Planet'** Susan de, Jelding' Kent, Curia Regis
- 1220 **Plantan'** William, Suff', Curia Regis
- 1221 **Planetis** Ralph de, Kent, Curia Regis

- 1226 **Plantefolie** John, Somerset, Curia Regis
- 1230 **Planterose** Robert, Warr' Wigorn', Curia Regis
- 1254 **Plantin** Roger, serjent of E. of Norfolk, Close Rolls
- 1258 **Plantyn** Roger, butler of E. of Norfolk, Close Rolls
- 1258 **Plantyn** Roger, lands in Norfolk, Patent Rolls
- 1263 **Plauntefolie** Maud, Weston', Close Rolls
- 1266 **Plauntegenet** Galfrido, serjent at arms, Wodestock, Close Rolls
- 1267 Ph'us filius Elye **Plauntefolye**, Nottingham. Fine Rolls
- 1268 **Planteng'** Roger, Guldeford' Norff', Close Rolls
- 1270 **Plantefolie** Adam, Welle Fanerwal' (co. York), Close Rolls
- 1285 **Plauntain** Henry, Patent Rolls
- 1310 Johannes **Planterose** [*Two Bedfordshire subsidy listings* ed S.H.A.Hervey (1925) Suffolk Green Books 18. 87]
- 1341 **le Plaunter** Henry, Cambridge-Huntingdon border dispute, Patent Rolls

Some Alpine context and a background of the earldom of Chester and Lincoln

It is misleading to place too much emphasis on any one isolated record for the medieval Plant name. However, the following is an attempt to outline *some* of the general context for *some* of the available records.

There are some indications of a French, or still earlier Alpine, context to the name. In the Swiss Alps, Zuoz was the site of the Stammhaus, or original castle of the family of Planta, who as far back as 1139, in the times of Geffrey Plante Genest (1113-51), held the Engadine in feof. An early known Plant record, in 1202, in Anjou in western France, can be related to the feuding of Arthur of Brittany and his uncle King John, grandson of Count Geffrey Plante Genest (Plantagenet) of Anjou. It is unclear whether the early Plant records in Angevin France, in 1202 and 1273, were directly related to the noble Planta family, whose hegemony in the Upper Engadine is confirmed in the 1244 record listed above. Also in the Alps, Verbier Castle was probably built in the twelfth century and belonged to the Duchy of Savoy though it was reputedly largely destroyed in the Battle of La Planta in 1475.

In England, a Savoyard influence became important in the mid thirteenth century after the 1236 marriage of King John's son, Henry III, to Eleanor of Provence whose uncle, Peter of Savoy, had been granted lands in England by 1240. Peter was appointed guardian of Warenne lands, for example, including the Manor of Boston in south Lincolnshire and the Honour of Lewes in Sussex. These two places coincide with two early instances of the Plant name in England – in 1279, the Plante name was hereditary, apparently for three generations, at Burgh near Boston; and, around 1280, a Plonte is described as 'once bailif of Marsfelde', which could be the one near Lewes. Alpine Savoyard origins might also be associated with the 1301 record of the industrious Richard Plant in Flintshire, who might be set in the context of a Savoyard master mason who, in 1280-82, oversaw, on behalf of Henry III's son, King Edward I, the building of Flint Castle across the river Dee from Chester; this castle was partly rebuilt after a Welsh attack in 1294. Later, the 1350 mention of the London priest Henry Plante of Risole evidently refers to Risoul in the French Alps.

There might also have been associations of the Plant name with traditions ensuing from the earlier English earldom of Chester and Lincoln. As already indicated, the earliest known

evidence that the Plant name was hereditary in England is the listed 1279 Plante record for Burgh in Lincolnshire, which suggests that the Plante name had been hereditary for one or two generations previously. A 1344 Plant record for Burgh Marsh indicates that the family was still there some time later. Burgh-le-marsh in Lincolnshire is about 16 miles from Boston and 9 miles from Bolingbroke Castle which had been built by Randulf de Blundeville, earl of Chester, and earl of Lincoln from 1217, who also held Huntingdon, which is the location of the de Plantes listed record dated 1282. In 1189, Ranulph had married Countess Constance of Brittany, the widowed daughter-in-law of Geffrey Plante Genest; and, in 1214, he had founded Dieulacres Abbey, near Leek, to relocate the community of Poulton Abbey to the other side of Cheshire, safer from attacks from the Welsh. In 1237, the earldom was annexed by the crown. The Black Prince, eldest son of Edward III, was buying wool from Dieulacres in 1347 and the Abbey owned land near Macclesfield, the location of the Prince's stud farm. Subsequently, there is evidence that the hereditary Plant surname was established in its main homeland, around both Macclesfield and Dieulacres, astride the Cheshire-Staffordshire border, as evidenced in the listed Plont(e) records of 1379, 1381, 1383-84, 1395, and 1406.

John of Gaunt, another son of Edward III, acquired Bolingbroke Castle in south Lincolnshire and lived there during the 1360s and 1370s. In 1394, a sexagenarian John Plant appeared as a witness at Lincoln in connection with the issue of John of Gaunt's earlier extra-marital affair. The Angevin Warennes, descendants of count Geffrey Plante Genest, had by then relocated their main base to Poynton in east Cheshire, near Macclesfield in the main (?subsequent) Plant homeland. A 1352 Plant record can be tentatively associated with this relocation to east Cheshire from the Warenne's Hundred in Norfolk. Migration to the south from east Cheshire might have related partly to the fact that Dieulacres Abbey was a major landholder in Staffordshire; and, as indicated by the listed 1381 Plonte record, the maintenance of these land-holding rights attracted more attention than might be imagined from a more usual view of religious duties for the eleven monks in 1381 at Dieulacres.

How this relates to the modern Plant surname is a matter for conjecture and ongoing investigation, except to say that there was an early secondary cluster of the Plant name around Burgh in south Lincolnshire, with the main cluster of the name persisting around Dieulacres, in Leek parish, at the northernmost tip of Staffordshire, just over the border from east Cheshire.

Refining the Plant story: an appeal for more data

Dr John S Plant and Prof Richard E Plant

Oct 2011

Abstract

More data about the Plant name would help to refine the story of its development. As well as more records for the name's medieval origins, more complete data is required in particular for seventeenth-century Plants in England. This is relevant to both: a better understanding of the nature of early clusters of the surname; and, computer model simulations of the main Plant family's exceptional growth.

Maps

Richard is helping with producing better maps, using some of the data I have collected over the past twenty or more years. The grey-scale maps (Figures 2 and 3) look better in colour but we hope they will reproduce adequately in the pages of Roots and Branches.

Computer simulations

Richard has also produced code for a computer simulation, to try to understand better the exceptional growth of the main Plant family. I have been programming for almost 45 years; but, I was unfamiliar with the R-code he used;¹ so, it has taken me a little while to get up to speed with this. There are a few interesting preliminary results.

The early polygyny model

Recently, I have been suggesting that early polygyny may have played a part in getting the main Plant family off to a fast start. I proposed this to explain the abnormally large Plant population, which seems surprising given that the DNA results indicate that the English Plants are largely a single family.

The initial results from the simulation show that three generations of polygyny, throughout a medieval family, can provide enough growth to reach the required Plant population by modern times. However, this model also leads to a population by the seventeenth century that seems too high.

The seventeenth-century question

There are two particular possibilities: either we are missing a lot of the seventeenth-century Plant records; or, we need a different model for the simulation, to allow an abnormal growth of the Plant population after the seventeenth century.

¹R.E.Plant, *Spatial Data Analysis in Ecology and Agriculture using R*, CRC Press, Forthcoming.

In Figure 2, which is discussed later, there are only 51 Plant households around 1670. This does not compare well with the simulation based on early polygyny, which gives a predicted population, by that time, of around a thousand Plants in each generation. We are still adjusting the simulation. However, if the polygyny model is correct and if something statistically unlikely did not happen, we are missing some Plant data for the seventeenth century.

Similarly, in an earlier analysis, I was concerned by the low number of Plant baptisms in the seventeenth century.² However, this was taken from my perusals of 1984 data when the IGI³ was incomplete. At the time of extracting this Plant data, I was working from microfiche. A better source now is the on-line Family Search web-site.⁴

The seventeenth-century Plant population is a key issue. It is also desirable to gain a more certain picture of the geographical distribution of the Plant name at that time. Hence, we would appreciate your help in obtaining more Hearth Tax data in particular. This is described further in a separate section below.

A map of medieval Plant records

A fuller account of the medieval records that I have gradually accumulated, for Plant and similar names, is given in the preceding article of this Journal. For the present article, I have selected some key records, for early instances of the Plant name. Very usefully, Richard has produced the corresponding map, shown in Figure 1. In the following discussion, I relate these particular records to possible hypotheses for the origins of the Plant surname.

The gardener hypothesis. This hypothesis for the origins of the name has been assumed in published Surname Dictionaries for over half a century and it is currently being based on item **10** of Figure 1. However, the *gardener* meaning does not fit well with the generality of early Plant records, which show for example that there were earlier Plants with some very different occupations. This is discussed more fully in the preceding article.

The offspring hypothesis. This hypothesis is compatible with more records though it takes on particular significance with the Welsh meaning *children* or '*clan*'. By the time of the '*gardiner*' record (item **10** on the map), the Plant surname was already in evidence at its so-called 'main homeland' (item **11** on the map). Here, it may have had a possible cultural or genetic input from item **7**, which is over the border into Wales. This supports an hypothesis of a Welsh meaning to the surname.

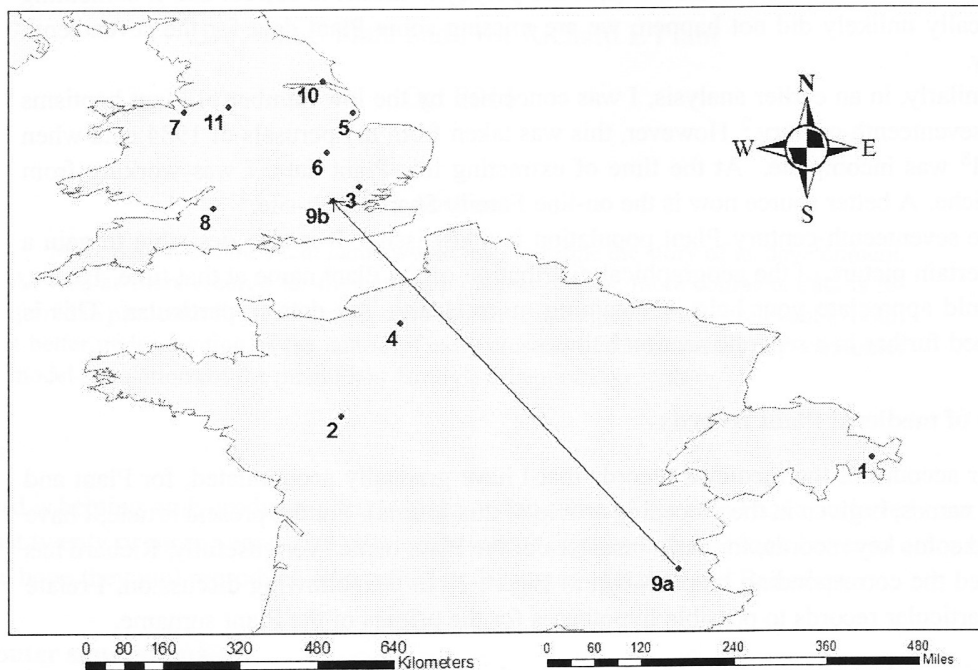
The from la Planta hypothesis. The evidence for a third possibility is a little more complex; but, it can be seen with a little effort and familiarity with Figure 1. Rather than originating in its so-called English 'main homeland', it is possible that the name could have migrated in early times to here (to item **11** on the map). It is possible that this could have been from far afield, notably from the Alps via Anjou, Normandy, and Provence. This is exemplified by the evident long-distance migration indicated by item **9** on the map, which suggests that such a Plant could be capable of some further migration. With such migration, the meaning 'from the Planta' might have

²Appendix of J.S.Plant (2001) *Maps of the Changing Distribution of the Plant name in England from 1601 to 1881* – <http://www.plant-fhg.org.uk/distrib.maps.pdf>

³International Genealogical Index.

⁴<http://www.familysearch.org>

Medieval Instances of Plant-Like Names



Key

- 1 1139-1798 Seat of the noble *Planta* family in the Upper Engadine
- 2 1202 Lands at Chinon and Loudun of Emeric *de la Planta* alias *de Plant'*
- 3 1262 First known evidence of the name in England; spelled *Plaunte*
- 4 1273 Three Rouen merchants called *de la Plaunt* and *Plaunt*
- 5 1279 At Burgh-le-Marsh near Bolingbroke, the name *Plante* is indicated to have been hereditary for 3 generations
- 6 1282 The name form *de Plantes* in Huntingdonshire
- 7 1301 First evidence of the *Plant* name local to the subsequent 'main homeland' of the surname
- 8 ca.1280-ca.1360 Records of *Plonte* name at Bath, explicitly hereditary by 1328
- 9 1350 London priest Henry *Plante* of Risole: **9a** is Risoul; **9b** is London
- 10 1379 A gardener called *Plant*
- 11 1379 onwards Several records of the name *Plonte*, sometimes *Plont*, in the subsequent 'main homeland' of the Plant surname

Figure 1: Some selected medieval records for the development of the Plant name. With French pronunciation, *Planta* could easily become *Plante*. In the Middle English Dictionary, *plaut* is an alternative spelling of *plante* and, in the west midlands, the usual spelling is *plonte*.

progressed from a possible location of *la Planta* (item 1 on the map) through French locations of the form *de la Pla...* of the name (items 2 and 4) to morph into an English version *de Plantes* of this (item 6). This was during the times of the formation of the surname in England, around the times of a Savoyard influx from the Alps into England. The Savoyard influence is associated with Eleanor of Provence, who was Queen Consort of England from 1236 to 1272 and whose uncle was from Savoy in the French Alps. The *Planta* name was apparently hereditary at 1 long before this; and, the similar *Plante* name is known to have been hereditary by 1279 at 5, having apparently been hereditary for three generations previously, which is early for England.

The early *Plant* surname in England. There were early administrative connections between items 5, 6 and 11 on the map, through the former earldom of Chester and Lincoln. However, it is no more than conjecture that this was relevant to early clusters of the *Plant* surname in Lincolnshire (item 5 on the map) and Cheshire (item 11). Alternatively, there is some indirect evidence, discussed elsewhere,⁵ that a *Plant* accompanied a mid-fourteenth-century displacement of the Warren family from near 5 to near 11. This migration could have taken the fully formed *Plant* surname with it, to its so-called English 'main homeland'. The Earl Warren had earlier acquired land near 7 which might also form part of a 'story' about how the hereditary Lincolnshire *Plant* surname (item 5) might have arrived in its east Cheshire 'main homeland' (item 11). However, this does not rule out that the surname could instead have arisen separately in the two places: 5 and 11.

Map of Early Modern and Modern times

Figure 2 shows a cluster of Hearth Tax households, around 1670, a little towards the north of the main concentration of *Plants* by 1881. The location of the cluster coincides very closely with item 11, from 1379, in Figure 1. This, along with my earlier analysis of baptism data, forms the basis of describing item 11 of Figure 1 as the English 'main homeland' of the *Plant* surname. There is also data for sixteenth-century Staffordshire,⁶ which confirms that it was the northern parts of this county that were populated by *Plants* in 1532-3.

The earliest evidence we yet have that the *Plant* name was hereditary in England corresponds to item 5 in Figure 1. This early origin hardly appears as a surname cluster by 1881, as indicated for Lincolnshire on the grey-scale map in Figure 2.

My earlier analysis of the *Plant* distribution,⁷ between 1601 and 1881, indicates that the situation by 1881 (shown in Figure 2) has changed little from that found in the latter half of the seventeenth century, apart from a general growth in the *Plant* population and its apparent migration beyond the confines of north Staffordshire. The baptism data for earlier in the seventeenth century, on the other hand, showed a distinct secondary cluster of the *Plant* surname in Lincolnshire. This raises the question of whether this rather pronounced feature had survived intact from medieval times (item 5 of Figure 1), perhaps then to be

⁵Appendix A of J.S.Plant (2005) *Modern Methods and a Controversial Surname* Nomina 28: 115-33
<http://cogprints.org/5985/>

⁶Section 30.4.1 of J.S.Plant (2005) *Plant name ramification and meaning*, Roots and Branches, Series 1, Issue 30 – <http://www.plant-fhg.org.uk/articles/plshef2c3a.pdf>

⁷J.S.Plant (2001) *Maps of the Changing Distribution of the Plant name in England from 1601 to 1881* – <http://www.plant-fhg.org.uk/distrib.maps.pdf>

disturbed around the times of the English Civil War (1642-51). This is a point needing further investigation.

An appeal for more Hearth Tax data

In particular, the Hearth Tax data in Figure 2 is incomplete. It might include most of the data for the main Plant cluster; but not all, since it omits most of Cheshire and all of Lancashire. More generally, there could have been a significant number of Plant households elsewhere, around 1670, perhaps particularly in south Lincolnshire or nearby. It would be very useful to have more complete data, even if it only confirms that there were no Plant households being taxed in certain parts of England.

The data that I already have has come almost entirely from my perusals of published data⁸ for near the so-called 'main homeland' of the Plants,⁹ together with a bit of data that has appeared on-line.¹⁰ The records show how many hearths in each household were taxed at various times in the 1660s and 1670s and they also give the name of the occupier. They are grouped by Hundred (sometimes called Warpentake) regions within each county and typically, within that, smaller regions within each Hundred.

Hearth Tax records are available at The National Archive (TNA) in London, as described in some detail on their web-site.¹¹ A list of their holdings can be seen through their E179 database. If you enquire at your local Reference Library, they might be able to help with supplying local copies of the records. In some cases, they might recommend alternative sources of data. For example, the Hearth Tax records for Lincolnshire are not yet in print and it may well be much easier to use protestation returns of 1642.

Please contact me if you are interested in providing more Hearth Tax or other seventeenth-century data for the Plant name (and similar names). It would seem best to coordinate the effort.

The 1881 Census data

Keith published 1881 Census data for Plants earlier.¹² His accompanying monochrome map of the UK Distribution of the Plant population was for the number of Plants in each county.

Richard has taken Plant Census data from an on-line site.¹³ The Plant numbers do not agree exactly with Keith's but they are very close. Rather than showing the total number of

⁸Section 30.4.1 of J.S.Plant (2005) *Plant name ramification and meaning*, Roots and Branches, Series 1, Issue 30 – <http://www.plant-fhg.org.uk/articles/plshef2c3a.pdf>

⁹Some of the sources of the data are as follows. W.K.Plant, A 1663 List of habitants in Macclesfield Hundred, Roots and Branches: The Official Journal of the Plant Family History Group, 4 (1992), 9. Collections for a History of Staffordshire, edited by the William Salt Archaeological Society (1925), pp. 157-242. Northwich Hundred Poll Tax 1660 and Hearth Tax 1664, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 118: together, the 7 records appear to apply to 5 different Plant households. D.Hey, The distinctive surnames of Staffordshire, Staffordshire Studies, 10 (1998), 1-28 (p. 14); the value of 10 Plant households in Pirehill seems to be incorrect and is 5 in Collections for a History of Staffordshire (1921), pp. 44-173. J.S.Plant, Roots and Branches, 30 (2005), 26-46 (32-34).

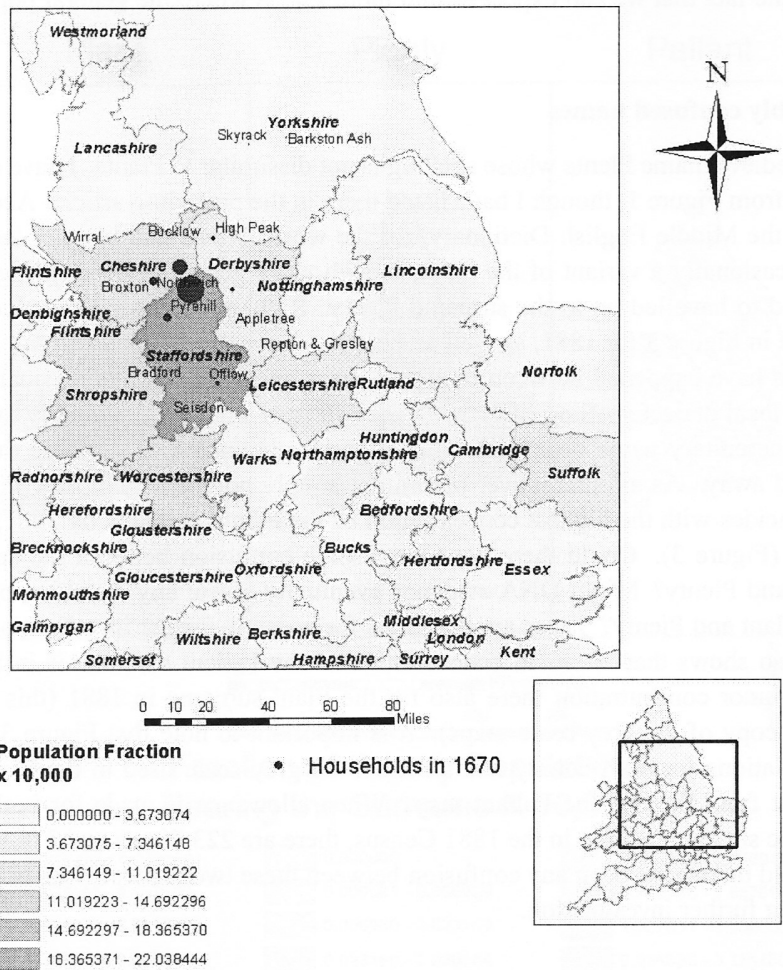
¹⁰<http://www.hearthtax.org.uk/>

¹¹<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/hearth-tax.htm>

¹²W.K.Plant (2001) *Plant Distribution in the 1881 Census*, Roots and Branches, Series 1, Issue 21, pages 16-18.

¹³<http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk>

1881 Plant Surname Prevalence



Plant households in Hearth Tax records (around 1670)		
Hundreds in certain counties and number of taxed households in each		
<i>Cheshire:</i> all Hundreds <i>unknown</i> except:	<i>Shropshire:</i> all Hundreds <i>zero</i> except:	<i>Yorkshire:</i> all Hundreds <i>zero</i> except:
Northwich 5	Bradford (South) 1	Barkston Ash 1
Macclesfield 10		Skyrack 1
<i>Staffordshire:</i>	<i>Derbyshire:</i>	
Totmonslow 19	all Hundreds <i>zero</i> except:	
Pirehill 5	High Peak 3	
Seisden 0	Wirksworth 2	
Cuttleston 1	Repton & Gresley 1	
Oflow 2		

Figure 2: A cluster of Plant households, around 1670, located near the heart of the Plant distribution of 1881. The 1881 data come from the Census for that year. The sizes of the superimposed circles are proportional to the number of Plant households in the Hearth Tax data, for around 1670.

Plants in each county, we have here chosen to map their population relative to the total population in the county. This perhaps gives a better picture of how the name has spread, since it corrects for the fact that we can expect to find more Plants where the general population is high.

Maps of possibly confused names

There was a medieval name Plente whose spelling is not dissimilar to Plante. I have omitted Plente records from Figure 1, though I have listed them in the preceding article. According to evidence in the Middle English Dictionary, for the words *plente* and *plaunt/plante*, the former was occasionally a variant of the latter, though more generally the spelling Plente can be expected to have led on to the surname Plenty. Richard has usefully included the Plenty surname in Figure 3 for 1881, as well as Plant.

Much could have happened between medieval times and 1881. Plente is usually considered to be a local dialect spelling of Plante/Plaunt. It may simply be that early evidence for the Plente hereditary name near Bath was for the beginnings of a surname that died out or migrated away. As an alternative, one might simply note that item 8 of Figure 1, for Plente, coincides with the highest concentration of the Plenty surname by 1881, which is in Somerset (Figure 3). Could there have been some confusion between the spellings Plente, Plente and Plenty? Might DNA evidence eventually reveal any matching between the surnames Plant and Plenty? These are questions for possible further investigation.

Figure 3 also shows that the main concentration of the Pallant surname is in Suffolk and there is a minor concentration there also for the Plant surname in 1881 (this can be seen in a good copy of the grey-scale maps). It is important to note that Figure 3 shows fractional populations for each county and also that the grey-scale used in the Plant map is very different from that for the Pallant map. When allowance is made for both these factors, the basic situation is that, in the 1881 Census, there are 223 Plants and 278 Pallants in Suffolk. Could there have been any confusion between these two names? This is another question needing further investigation.

Plant, Plenty, and Pallant Surname Distribution, 1881

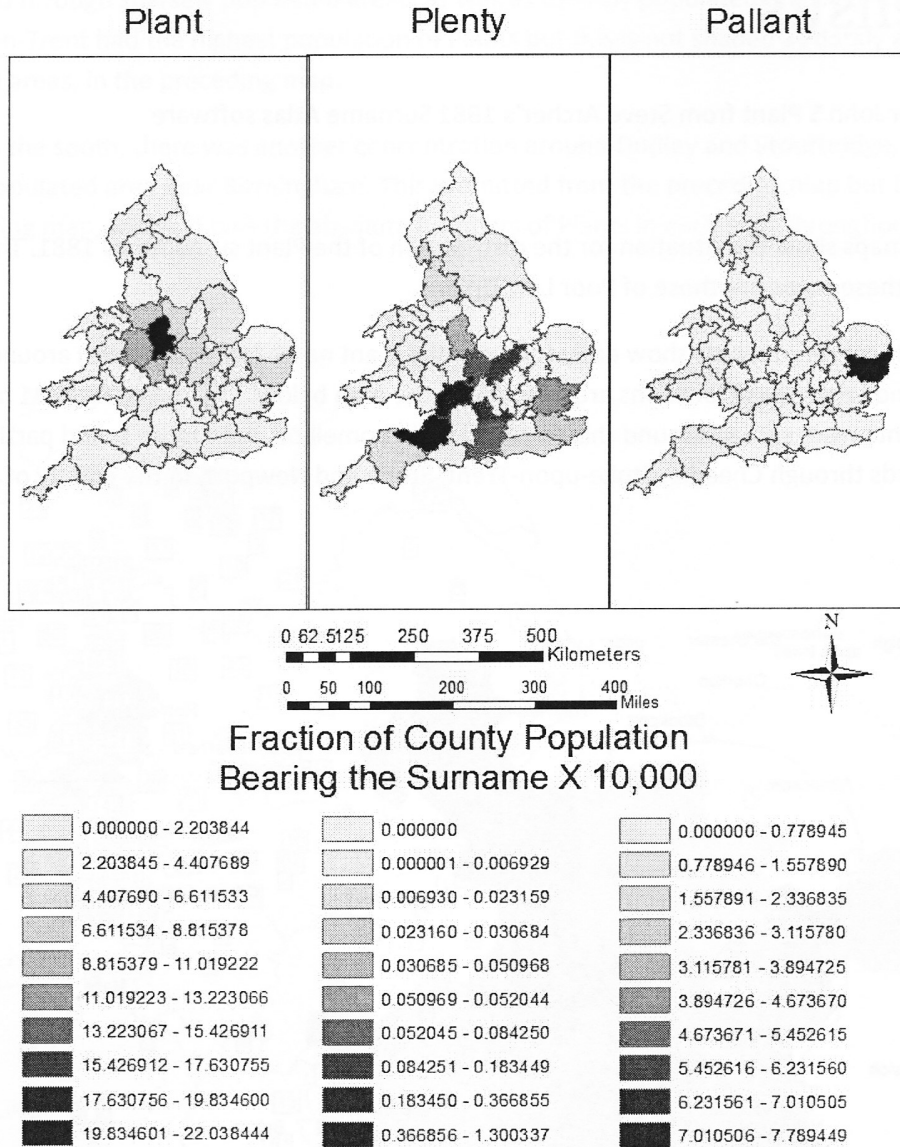


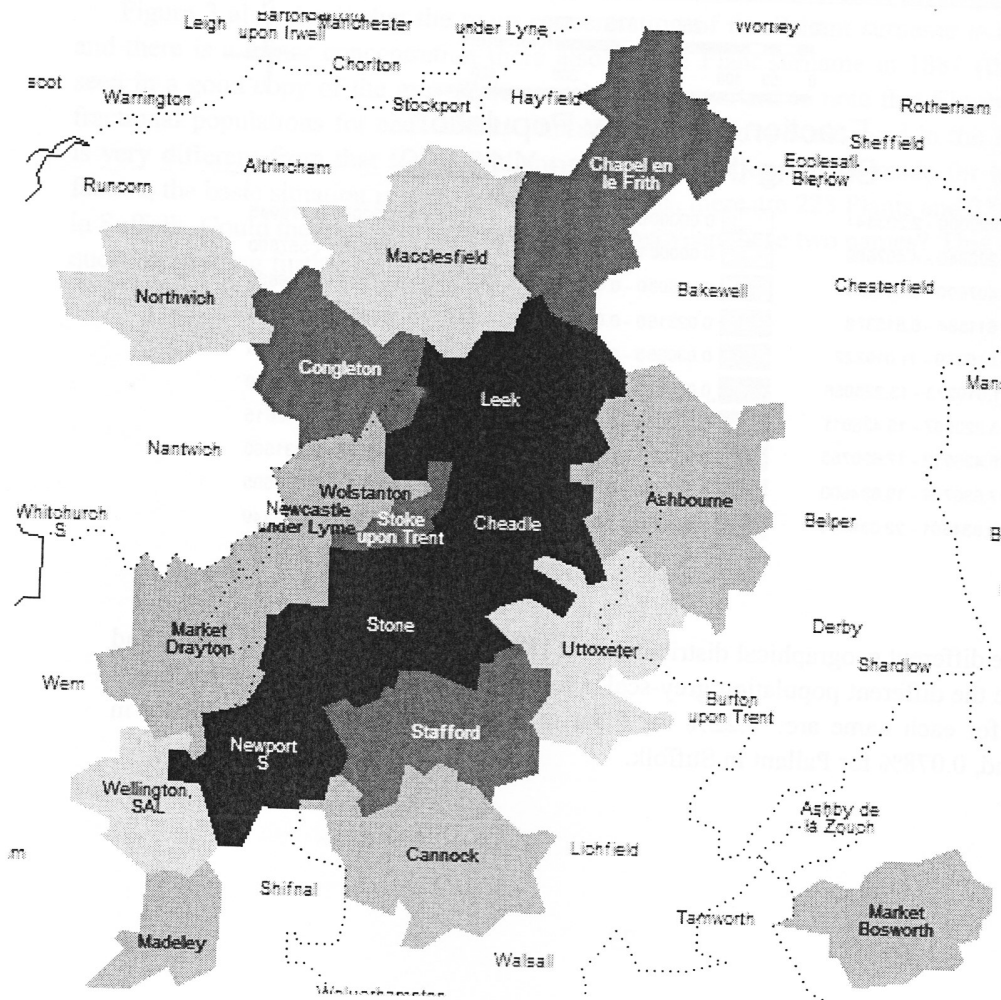
Figure 3: The different geographical distributions in 1881 of the surnames Plant, Plenty, and Pallant. Note the different population grey-scales for the three maps: the highest fractional populations for each name are: 0.22% for Plant in Staffordshire; 0.013% for Plenty in Somerset; and, 0.078% for Pallant in Suffolk.

Plant surname distribution in the 1881 UK Census

Produced by Dr John S Plant from Steve Archer's 1881 Surname Atlas software

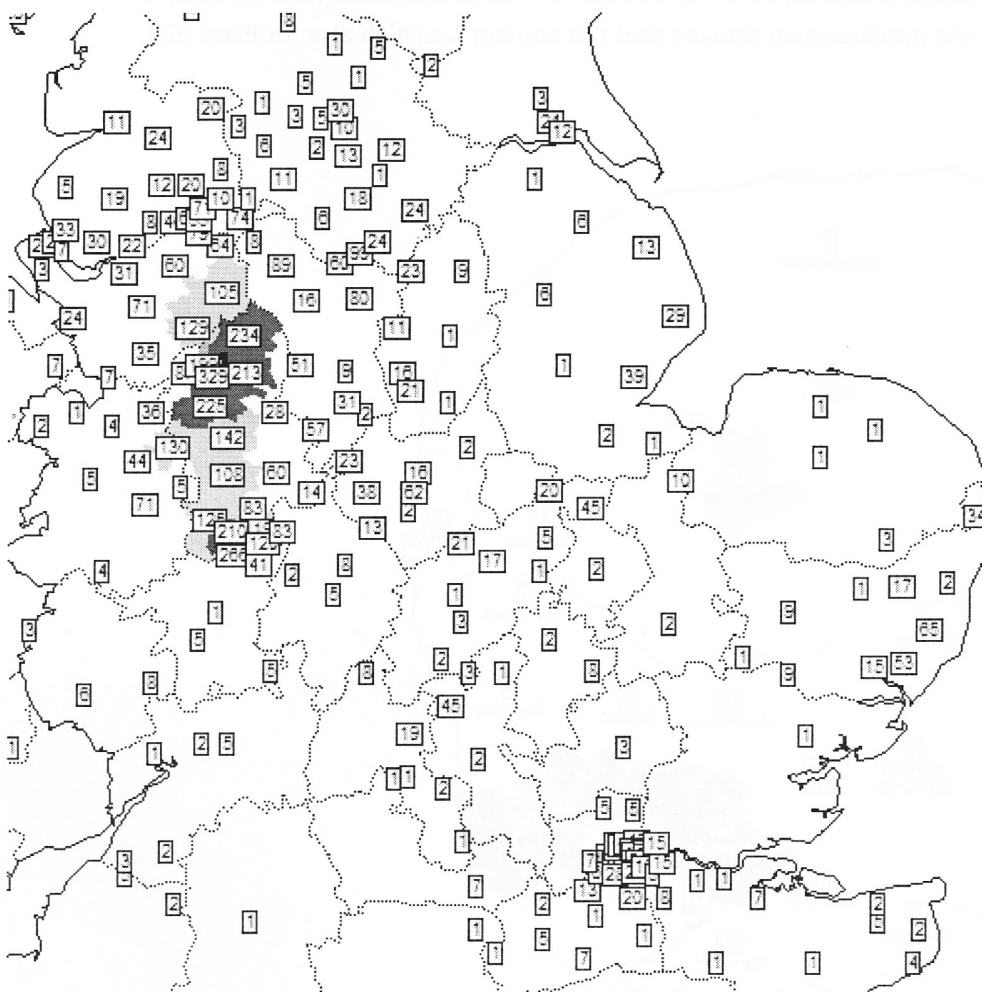
The following maps show the situation for the distribution of the Plant surname by 1881. The boundaries in these maps are those of Poor Law Unions.

Late fourteenth-century records show early traces of the Plant name (spelled Plonte) around Macclesfield and Leek. These locations are included in the map below. The following 1881 map shows that Plants were spread around this so-called main homeland, with more found particularly south-westwards through Cheadle, Stoke-upon-Trent, Stone and Newport, in the county of Staffordshire.



The preceding map shows the fractional number of Plants in each Poor Law Union district, around the so-called main Plant homeland. By mapping fractional populations, this emphasises how Plants had spread through sparsely populated areas, as well as densely populated ones. For example, Stoke-upon-Trent had the highest population of Plants but this is not shaded as darkly as some less populated areas, in the preceding map.

Further to the south, there was another concentration around Dudley and Stourbridge, which was a densely populated area near Birmingham. This is omitted from the preceding map but it shows up in the following map, which shows the absolute numbers of Plants in each area throughout a wider region.



There are for example 329 Plants in Stoke-upon-Trent and, at the southern tip of the main shaded cluster, 210 Plants in Dudley and 266 in Stourbridge, though rather fewer (120) in Birmingham itself. The map also shows the tight cluster of Poor Law Unions around London, towards the bottom right of the map, on the River Thames inlet.

Following the east coast on the map, up towards the curve of East Anglia, there is a small cluster of Plants in the County of Suffolk, with 53 Plants in Woodbridge and 65 in Plomesgate.

Further north still up this east coast on the preceding map, above the broad inlet of The Wash, there are 39 Plants in Boston and 29 in Spilsby, both in south-east Lincolnshire. These are of interest in so far as they correspond with the location of the first evidence yet known in England that the Plant name was hereditary. The Plante name had apparently been hereditary for three generations by 1279. There is DNA evidence for two Plants whose lines trace back to here around 1800; and these do not match with the DNA signature of main English Plant family. However, it is not known that the ancestral lines of these two Plants reach right back intact to the Plante name here in 1279.

Returning to the Suffolk cluster of Plants in the preceding map, there are similar numbers of the Pallant surname in the same location. This gives rise to speculation as to whether there might have been some confusion between the pronunciation of Pallant and Plant.

The next map, for Pallant, shows that the main concentration of this name (103 Pallants) is in Plomesgate, where the previous map showed that the number was high also for Plant (65).

