

**Harry Parkin (ed.)**. 2021. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, xxx + 1010 pp., £ 80.00 / \$ 125.00.

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/ang-2023-0008>

For many years, a modern dictionary of British surnames to replace P. H. Reaney's work, which first appeared in 1958 and was subsequently revised and augmented by R. M. Wilson in two further editions, published in 1976 and 1991, respectively (hereafter *DBS*<sup>1</sup>, *DBS*<sup>2</sup>, *DES*), was regarded as desirable by philologists, genealogists, and local historians alike. This wish was largely fulfilled in 2016 by the appearance of the four-volume *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (hereafter *FaNBI*). The total number of entries in *FaNBI* exceeds 46,000, though more than half of these are mere variants. *FaNBI* gives a run of historical forms for each surname and allows us to ascertain with some degree of accuracy the regional distribution of the old-established stock of British surnames by reference to their geographical distribution in the census returns of 1881. *FaNBI* is a monumental work and, though it is indeed value for money, its price of £ 400.00 would tend to impede its general availability. It is therefore to be welcomed that Harry Parkin has presented us in the form of the book reviewed here with what is essentially a digest of *FaNBI* at an affordable price. The dictionary is opened by Parkin's edited version of the excellent introduction to *FaNBI* by Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates, and Peter McClure (pp. ix–xxx). The introduction describes succinctly the modes of formation of the various types of family name in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Most importantly, it does not confine itself to the historically established linguistic categories of surname, namely, Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, English, French, and Dutch, but also examines the names brought by immigration subsequent to the census of 1881. In particular, the discussions of Chinese family names in Britain (pp. xxii–xxiii) and family names from the Indian subcontinent (pp. xxiii–xxiv) provide a concise guide to two areas which are full of complexities.

Parkin states that his dictionary has an entry for all, or almost all, family names that had 30 or more bearers in the UK in 2011 (p. x), and his total number of entries is approximately 43,500. Here he differs from his *Urtext*, *FaNBI*, which has over 46,000 entries and which set a frequency limit of 100 bearers or more in 2011. Unfortunately, Parkin has chosen to dispense with the historical forms and the additional information given by *FaNBI*. This is understandable in the interests of economy of space, but it means that the etymologies have to be taken on trust. Nevertheless, we can find some remarkable cases of historical continuity. For

example, the Anglo-Scandinavian personal name *Burcetel* < ON *Borketill* (cf. Runic Swedish *Borkætill*) is well attested in medieval East Anglia beside the more frequent syncopated variant *Burcil* < Old Danish *Thorkil*, *Thurkil* (see Insley 1994: 414–419), and Parkin (898, 902) shows that its continuation, the family name **Thirkettle**, **Thurkettle**, is characteristically East Anglian in the census returns of 1881. Parkin (685) notes that the family name **Oswald** is recorded in the census of 1881 in Fife, Lanarkshire, County Durham, and Lancashire. The base is the Old English personal name *Ōsw(e)ald* and the concentration of the family name in southern Scotland and northern England in the census of 1881 is ultimately a reflection of the survival of the personal name *Ōswald* in connection with the cult of the Northumbrian royal saint of that name. Parkin (685) regards ME *Oswald* as deriving from both OE *Ōsw(e)ald* and ON *Ásvaldr*, but this is unnecessary given that the Scandinavian *Ásvaldr*, *Ósvaldr* could well be an Old English or a Low German borrowing in the North. A second alternative mentioned by Parkin, namely, that the family name could be an English adaptation of the Irish **Ó hEodhusa** (cf. also Parkin 452, s.v. **Hussey**), is not relevant here. We also have family names with a purely local distribution. The locative surname **Pickup** is derived by Parkin (716) from either of two minor names in Lancashire, PICKUP in Habergham Eaves and PICKUP BANK in Yate and Pickup Bank, and is confined to Lancashire in the census of 1881.

Sometimes, the conciseness of an entry is misleading as is the case with the family name **Turpin**, which Parkin takes to belong to “the Old French and Middle English personal name *Turpin* (from Old Scandinavian *Þorfinnr*)” (928). It is true that ON *Þorfinnr* sometimes appears as *Thorpinus* in sources of the Middle English period (see Fellows Jensen 1968: 302–303), <ph> for [f] being derived from Middle Latin orthography (Fellows Jensen 1968: lxxxviii [§ 97]), and *FaNBI* (2751) mentions (rare) cases in which *Turpin* has been substituted for *Torphin*, *Thorfyne*, but there is no reason to doubt that the source of **Turpin** is the Latin *Turpinus*, a name based on Latin *turpis* ‘ugly, base’ and, as pointed out by *FaNBI* (2751), adopted by early Christians as a sign of humility. *Turpinus* is attested as the name of a serf at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges (*département* Val-de-Marne) in the early-ninth-century polyptyque of Abbot Irmino of Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Longnon 1886–1895: II, 232), but the chief inspiration for the use of this name was Turpin, archbishop of Rheims from 748 to 794. The tradition that this Turpin accompanied Charlemagne on his ill-fated Spanish campaign of 778 was widely disseminated by the Pseudo-Turpin chronicle and its vernacular translations and this is doubtless the reason for its appearance in England from the twelfth century onwards. There are, however, occasions on which Parkin’s brevity is more to the point, as is the case with the surname **Tidman**. Here, *FaNBI* (2668) gives three alternative etyma, namely, (a) the personal name ME *Tideman*, *Tedeman* < OE *Tideman*, (b) ME *tīthing(e)man* < OE *tēoðingmann* ‘the administrative head of a tithing’, and (c) a byname formed from ME *tīdī* ‘brave, valiant; skillful, able; virtuous,

diligent, upright; fine, beautiful' and ME *man* 'man'; Parkin (903) retains the third of these etyma, but corrects the second to ME *\*titheman* < *tithing(e)man* and rightly drops the Old English personal name of the first category in favour of Low German *Tideman*, a hypocoristic form of *Diederik* and a name which must have entered English through contact with the Hanseatic League. Apart from when it is borne by recent German immigrants, a similar medieval north German origin can be assumed for **Hildebrand**, the base of which is taken by Parkin (424) to be "Continental Germanic *Hildebrand*, *Eldebrand*, Old Scandinavian *Hildibrandr*". In fact, the name is originally Langobardic and reached north Germany in conjunction with the spread of the literary cycle around Dietrich von Bern (the Ostrogothic king Theoderic) in which Hildebrand occurs as the *Waffenmeister* of that king.

In examining the material in the volume reviewed here, the user is not infrequently confronted by questions of polysemy and homonymy. An example is provided by the family name **Gordon** for which Parkin (361) gives no less than five possible etyma, namely, (a) a Scottish locative surname from GORDON (Berwickshire); (b) a locative surname from one of the French GOURDONs, most probably that in the *département* of Saône-et-Loire; (c) a diminutive of Old French *gourd* 'dull, stupid, boorish'; (d) an Ashkenazic locative name, probably from the Belarusian city of HRODNA/GRODNO; (e) an anglicised form of Irish **Mag Mhuirneacháin**.

In general, Parkin's etymologies are accurate and carefully formulated, but, as is inevitable in a work of such size, there are occasional errors or entries which require additional information. It is sometimes the case that Parkin is misled by the information in Reaney's dictionary. For example, he derives the family name **Hulbert** from ME *Holbert* "probably from an unrecorded Old English form, *\*Holdbeorht*" (448). This etymology, which is taken over from Reaney (*DBS*<sup>1</sup> 167, s.v. **Holbert**), has been shown to be incorrect by Feilitzen (1963: 54), who demonstrated that ME *Holdebert* is a French variant of Continental Germanic *Hildebert*. Another case of mistaken identity is the family name **Godkin**, which Parkin derives from ME *Godekin*, "a diminutive of Old English *Goda* or *Gode*, from Old English *gōd* 'good' or from an abbreviation of a compound name formed with it" (355), but which is rather an import from Flanders corresponding to Old Low Franconian, Middle Dutch *Godecin*, *Godekin*. Again, like Reaney (*DBS*<sup>1</sup> 356, s.v. **Winbolt**), Parkin (980) gives ME *Winebold* < OE *Wineb(e)ald* as the ultimate source of the family name **Winbolt**, but it would be perhaps more apposite to derive it from Continental Germanic *Winebald*, attested, *inter alia*, in the name of Wynebald, Winebaldus, lord of Caerleon-Upon-Usk under William II, whose family came from Ballon (*département* Sarthe) in Maine (Feilitzen 1963: 59 and n. 1). In this context, there are occasions where Parkin could have provided more historical detail. For example, he takes the family name **Molyneux**, **Molyneux**, which was concentrated in Lancashire in the census of 1881, to be (a) an occupational surname from Old French *molineux* 'miller',

or (b) a locative surname from an unknown French place-name, or (c), in Ireland, a form adopted for **Mulligan** or **Ó Maol an Mhuaidh** “descendant of *Maol an Mhuaidh*” (636). In view of the concentration of the family name in Lancashire, it would have been appropriate to refer to a notable family of Lancashire gentry, Molyneux of Sefton, whose name is probably derived from Moulins-la-Marche (*département* Orne) in Normandy.

There are several other cases in which etymologies should be corrected or augmented. Examples include the following:

- **Earnshaw**: Parkin (271) takes this to be a locative surname derived from Earnshaw in Bradfield in the West Riding of Yorkshire, but it could equally well derive from Earnshaw Bridge in Leyland parish in Lancashire.
- **Ingram**: Parkin (458) rightly links the post-Conquest personal name *Ingeram* to Old French *Eng(u)erran*, but wrongly gives the Continental Germanic base as *Ingel-*, *Engelramnus*, *-rammus*. The etymologically relevant base is Frankish *Ingoramn*. Parkin (457, s.v. **Ingall**) is wrong to take *Ingenwulf* to be the Continental Germanic cognate of Scandinavian *Ingólfr*. *Ingólfr*’s Continental Germanic cognate is rather represented by ninth-century West Frankish forms in *Ingulfus*.
- **Tatlock**: Parkin (892) takes this name to be “unexplained”, but we can suggest that it is originally a nickname with a base comparable with Scots *tatelock* ‘a small lock of hair, wool, etc., matted together’.
- **Tovey**: Parkin (914) correctly derives this family name from the Scandinavian (Danish) personal name *Tōvi*, which he takes to be “of uncertain origin but seeming to be related to Middle High German *zōbe* ‘bondmaid’”. This is incorrect. Old Danish *Tōvi* is a regular hypocoristic form of *Thōrbiorn* or *Thōrfast* (cf. Insley 1994: 369).
- **Tuson**: Parkin (929) suggests that this is a patronymic formation perhaps containing a Middle English survival of an Old English theophoric name, “\**Tīwa*, a short form of *Tēowald* or *Tēowulf*”. It is nothing of the kind, but is a patronymic in *-son* containing a Welsh nickname from Welsh *tew* ‘stout, plump’ (cf. Parkin 896, s.v. **Tew**).
- **Willmott**: Parkin (979) correctly derives this family name from ME *Will(i)mot(t)*, a hypocoristic form of *William*, and compares it to Old French *Guillemot*. It should perhaps be remarked that *Will(i)mot(t)* is the Northern French variant which would have been native to northern Normandy, Picardy, and Artois, while *Guillemot* was the form used in *Francien*, the language of Paris and the Île-de-France.

In no way do these emendations detract from the quality and usefulness of Parkin’s dictionary. In a work of such complexity and size, occasional errors of

interpretation are unavoidable. However, the vast majority of Parkin's etymologies are sound and show sureness of judgement. Parkin has done a great service to scholarship by making the results of *FaNBI* available to a broader audience and his dictionary will prove an essential point of reference for philologists/linguists, genealogists, and (local) historians.

## Works Cited

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