

FEATURE ARTICLE

SURNAMES OF EAST ILSLEY BY ERIC SAXTON

A full analysis of the changing patterns of family names in East Ilsley is now being undertaken, dealing with many more names than just the top twenty, and also going back further, before registers were kept. The wills of East Ilsley residents of the 16th century are proving to be a fascinating source of information, about families, but also other things. For instance, two references have been found, showing evidence that the church had a steeple, and that it was in need of repair in the late 1500s. The present tower, as we know, was rebuilt in 1623.

The most common names are not necessarily those of the most influential families in the history of East Ilsley. The names of ordinary labourers' families would appear regularly in the registers if they had a large number of children, and also a high mortality rate amongst them; more so than someone who had fewer but more healthy offspring.

Approximately 9000 names, on average two dozen every year for the last 400 years, have been added to the East Ilsley Parish Registers to record Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials.

The following is a list of the 20 surnames, which have appeared most frequently over the whole period since 1608. Some names, which were common many years ago, are now almost non-existent, whilst others have become more common recently. The list is in alphabetical order.

Adnams (or Adams), **Allen** (or Allin), **Brown**, **Butler**, **Cannons** (or Cannings), **Deacon**, **Grey** (or Gray), **Gregory**, **Hibbert** (or Hibbard, Hibberd), **Kislingbury**, **Lambourn**, **Matthews**, **Mills** (or Miles), **Pocock**, **Rumble**, (or Rumbold, Rumball), **Smith**, **Tarlton** (or Taulton), **Taylor**, **Westall** (or Wastall, Westol, Westell), and finally, **Williams**.

The spelling of some names has changed or evolved over the years. When most people could neither read nor write, names were often written down as they sounded, hence the differences in spelling.

The name most often occurring in the East Ilsley Parish Registers in the last 400 years is DEACON with 310 entries. Coming close second with 293 is the name RUMBLE with its spelling variations, RUMBOLD, RUMBALL etc., and in joint third place, some way behind are BUTLER and MILES or MILLS, both with 170 entries. A full list of the top twenty is as follows –

1. Deacon (310)
2. Rumble/ Rumbold/ Rumball (293)
3. Butler (170)

3. Mills/Myles (170)
5. Westell/Wastall (162)
6. Adnams/ Adams (149)
7. Cannons/Cannings (147)
8. Allen/Allin (142)
9. Williams (140)
10. Gregory (119)
11. Brown (117)
12. Grey/Gray (115)
13. Hibbert/Hibbard (108)
14. Pocock (E) (106)
15. Matthews (95)
16. Lambourn (88)
16. Smith (88)
16. Tarlton/Taulton (88)
19. Taylor (85)
20. Kislingbury (79)