

Chapter 16


Origins of the Plant name

A VIEW WITH PARTICULARITY TO ITS MEANING IN NW ENGLAND

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The deliberations of this Chapter consider the origins of the Plant name. Supplementary theories are formulated beyond those that have traditionally been recognised. It seems that the Plant name could have developed mostly near medieval Lancashire — this appears to have implications when choosing a theory to be judged the most appropriate for the early meaning of the name.

16.1 Theories of Plant origins

raditional theories for the origins of the Plant name do not take explicit account of Plants in the north west of England. It is known that Plants existed in north Staffordshire by 1381, and near the border between Flint and NW Cheshire by 1301¹. Before then, it has been contended that most Plants could have originated in Lancashire to Cheshire's north². This takes the ancestral course back to theories of the Plant surname's likely origins, a topic that is fraught with difficulties in as much as the scant data is open to various interpretations.

Despite the uncertainties, a fuller debate of the possibilities will be presented in this Chapter, as this is no doubt of interest to most who have mused on the name. The recent evidence seems to imply a need to reappraise the traditional theories. Amongst the conjectures that are assembled here are ones of opposing meanings for *Plant* and, indeed, such counterpoised debate impinges on major issues at the heart of medieval 'English' history³.

16.1.1 Traditional theories for the Plant surname

Various suggestions have been made for the origins of the Plant name. The mention of John de la Plaunt in the 13th century Patent Rolls was taken, in a book written near the beginning of the 20th century⁴, to imply that the name derived from the old French word *plante* and that it had arisen because the original bearer of that name had been 'from the enclosure' or 'plantation'. On the other hand, the mention of Robert Plante in the 1273 Hundred Rolls was taken in the same book to imply a nickname from the Middle English word *plant* which could have been used in a variety of senses to mean 'sprig', 'cudgel', or 'young offspring'.

In more modern books, Plant records are generally cited to begin in East Anglia, near the English capital, where people gathered from various regions (Figure 16.1). There were (one or several) William Pla(u)nt(es) in Essex in 1262, in Norfolk in 1275, and in Cambridge

¹W.K.Plant, *Roots and Branches*.

²This has been suggested by for example David Hey, Professor of Local and Family History, Sheffield University.

³I am grateful to the Local Historian Martin Phillips, Assistant Director of Keele Information Services, for reading a recent draft of this Chapter.

⁴Ernest Weekly (1916), *Surnames*, p185.

in 1279. The associated explanation for the formation of the surname *Plant* has been that it is a metonymic for a ‘gardener’⁵. If this interpretation is correct, *Plant* can be set alongside the surnames *Gardiner* and *Gardner*.

16.1.2 The surname Gard(i)ner

The number of Gard(i)ners in the 1961/2 London Telephone Directory is 660, which is more than for Butcher (270) and Brewer (240) put together. This large number (for modern London) has led to this surname’s being ranked amongst the most common of those that can be associated with the outside officials and servants of a castle⁶.

Within the general scenario of a large English castle, it has been supposed that the usual purpose of a medieval gardener would have been to supply fruit in season and herbs at all times, fresh or dried, though producing roses and lilies for the ladies was also no doubt part of their remit⁷. As well as at the larger stone castles, there would also have been a large company to feed at the large manor houses, which commonly stood in the less hostile regions as royal administration centres in the stead of royal castles⁸.

16.1.3 A gardener theory for Plant

The name *Plant* is (so far) known to have been in East Anglia by 1262 and some 180 miles to the north west, in NW Cheshire (just south of Lancashire), by 1301. The name *Planterose* appears in Warwickshire in 1221 and some 100 miles to the east, in East Anglia, by 1272⁹. Along with *Planterose* it is largely by citing ‘similar’ names, which are known to occur (at least sometimes) in the SE of England, such as *Plaunteur* and *Plantebene*, that recent texts arrive at the ‘gardening’ interpretation for the origins of the surname *Plant*.

The name Henry *le Plaunteur* (in Huntingdonshire in 1281) seems clearly to mean a ‘planter’, though the precise meaning of ‘planter’ will be discussed further later.

Ralph *Plantebene* of Norfolk, in 1199, is cited as an additional justification of a ‘gardening’ interpretation of the ‘Plant related’ names. The standard rationale is that the surname *Plantebene* means a ‘planter of beans’¹⁰, though this might perhaps be compromised if one were to comment that *bene* is the Latin word for ‘well’ or ‘prosperous’. If for example the Latin meaning of *bene* is taken together with the ‘sole of the foot’ meaning of the Latin word *planta*, quite different interpretations could be deduced, perhaps carrying connotations of ‘fine standing’, ‘wealthy founder’, or ‘firm foothold’. Such alternative connotations will be considered again later.

Though the standard associations of the names *Plant* and *Planterose* with ‘gardening’ seem well reasoned, the rather similar name *Pluckerose* has traditionally raised questions¹¹.

⁵R.H.Reaney (1958), *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, p 253. Also W.K.Plant (Dec 1990), *Roots and Branches*, 1, p 4.

⁶C.M.Matthews (1966), *English Surnames*, pps 103, 111, 319.

⁷This is based for example on written evidence by one of the household of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, who was a brother of the Lancastrian King Henry V (1387-1422). He writes in the *Book of Nurture*:-

*Serve fastyng plommys, damsons, cherries and grapes to plese,
After mete, peers, nottys, strawberries, wyneberries and hard chese,
Also blawnderelles, pipyns, caraway in comfyte.
Compostes ar like to these.*

and he instructs the chamberlain about how to make ‘a medicinal bath’ for his lord with similar verses on boiling together no less than twenty herbs and flowers.

⁸The detailed rules concerning whether castles were royal, or in private ownership, was a matter of some ongoing dispute (Sir Maurice Powicke (1962), *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307*, Oxford University Press, Second Edition, p 20).

⁹W.K.Plant (Dec 1990), *Roots and Branches*, 1, p 4.

¹⁰P.H.Reaney (1958), *ibid*, p 253.

¹¹C.M.Matthews (1966), *ibid*, p 157.

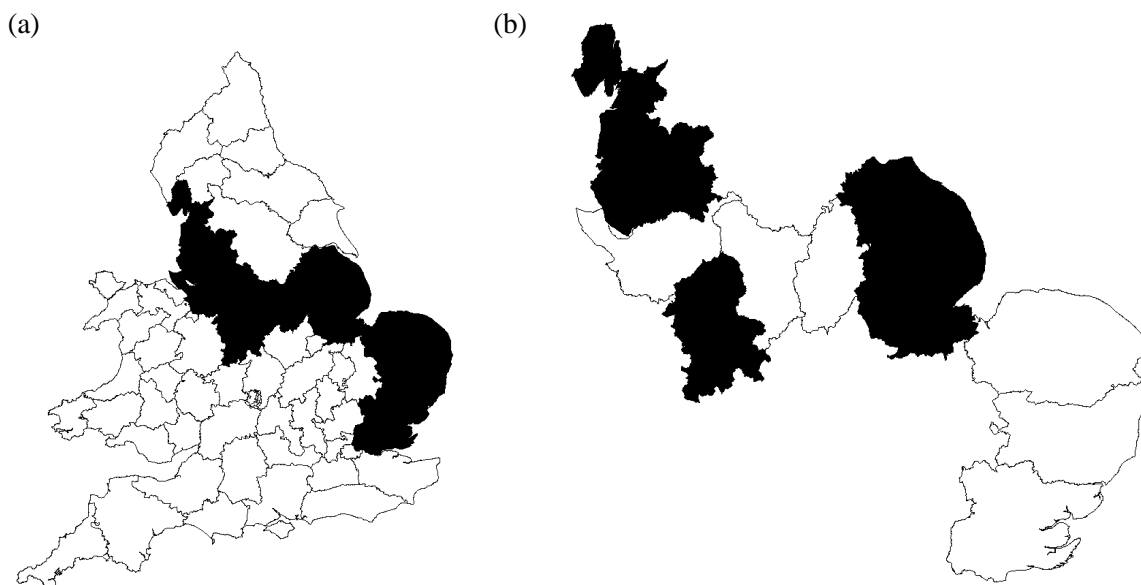


Figure 16.1: Some counties relevant to Plant origins with (a) showing their spread (black) from NW to SE England. In (b) the individual counties include, to the west of the pennines, the NW county of Lancashire (black) which lies north of Cheshire and Staffordshire (black) — the route through Derbyshire then passes east across the pennine foothills to Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire (black), with the East Anglian counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex reaching southwards towards London in the SE.

Apparently a rose carried a significance of rights over land. Thus, M.A.Lower (1860) mentions a friend of his who held Duchy of Lancaster land in Ashdown Forrest (Sussex) by one (red) rose¹². Given the likely Lancashire origins of the Plant name, one might wonder whether the Lancastrian red rose (which appears on the Plant coat of arms) carried significance also for the first Plants¹³.

In deference to ‘gardening’, which has been associated with the Plant surname, it seems relevant to compare the ways in which both of the names Plant and Gard(i)ner may have originated. For the moment, a simple example will suffice to show that the distributions of the Plant and Gard(i)ner surnames are different. On the general migratory path southwards from Lancashire in NW England through Cheshire to North Staffordshire, there are as many as 253 occurrences of the surname Plant in the 1996 Stoke-on-Trent Telephone Directory where there are, in contrast, only 50 occurrences for Gard(i/e)ner. For London (SE England), the pattern is strikingly reversed with for example 660 Gard(i)ners in the 1961 Directory and yet (by 1990) just 121 Plants. More particularly, recent studies of early Plant records¹⁴ lend weight to a supposition that the Plant name could (unlike Gard(i)ner) have originated mostly near Lancashire.

¹²P.H.Reaney (1958), *A Dictionary of British surnames*, p124 quotes the story from M.A.Lower (1860), *Patronymica Britannica* with ‘On the front of the farm belonging to him is a large rose tree, to which the reeve of the manor periodically comes and either plucking or pulling a flower, sticks it in his button hole, and walks off’.

¹³It should be added, however, that there is some doubt whether the red rose was a significant Lancastrian emblem by the times that the names Planterose and Plant came into existence. Though the white rose of York is said to have been used throughout the struggles of the so-called ‘War of the Roses’, in the second half of the 15th century, the red rose of the opposing Lancastrians is reputed not to have been seen until the last battle, Bosworth Field, in 1485 — there are however claims that the royal House of York destroyed earlier evidence for the royal House of Lancaster. Such debate (relating largely to the significance to the *colour* of the rose) has to be set alongside the indications that the names Planterose and Plant came into existence in the times of the still earlier royal House of Plantagenet.

¹⁴Such studies, which include examinations of early Poll Tax records for example, have been presented by David Hey at the 1997 Earl Lecture at Keele University, though they are not as yet published in detail.

16.2 A preliminary reappraisal of the evidence

N recent evidence for the distribution of the early Plants suggests that the meaning of the *Plant* surname should not be judged solely in a context of supposed East Anglian origins (*cf.* Figure 16.2). The debate should be developed to include such a set of alternatives as:-

possibility (1): there is no connection between the (few) SE and the (many) NW Plants, or necessarily for that matter between the names Plant, Plantebene and Planterose; *or*,

possibility (2): the Plant name originated in East Anglia either before the first bearers of that name, or before a unique reason for the formation of the name, moved to Lincolnshire and Lancashire; *or*,

possibility (3): some (or all) of the names Planterose, Plantebene, and Plant originated in the NW of England before a few bearing those names migrated, perhaps via Lincolnshire for example, to East Anglia.

It would be simplest just to consider possibility (1) and proceed to debating the origins of most Plants in the North West of England. Associated reasoning for the meaning of the Plant name might then remain valid also for possibility (3). There would remain possibility (2), however, whereby the main influence on the Plant name may have come with a small French (Norman and Plantagenet) contingent from the South East.

16.2.1 An East Anglian context

I t is at least apparent, from modern studies, that the veracity of the ‘gardener theory’ should not be unduly prejudiced by commonly held beliefs about the generalities of the south east of England.

A notion that Plant means a ‘cultivator of arable land’ here is not robust to scrutiny. Even though SE England is a region of arable farming, where horticultural activities might reasonable be supposed to have been commonplace, it should be noted, for example, that when the occupational surnames of East Anglia are appraised, as they appear between 1250 and 1350, there is in fact a scarcity of names that derive from either agricultural occupations or from the social classes found amongst the free and unfree cultivators¹⁵.

It can be added that possible associations of the ‘Plant related’ names with ‘rights of office’, ‘claims to status’, and ‘rights to land’ should not be neglected. In East Anglia the most common occupational names connected with agriculture are, in fact, ones associated with status or office, such as Reeve and Hayward.

16.2.2 Possible ramification from the north

L ancashire origins for the Plant name may have predated its ramification to Lancastrian lands in Lincolnshire. Moreover, such ramification could have occurred as early as before the times that a few Plants found their way to East Anglia to Lincolnshire’s south. Though further investigation remains desirable it can already be noted that such notions, for the evolution of the Plant name, are compatible with both general surname history and the prevailing contemporary political structure of England.

General surname history is compatible with a notion that the few Plants found early near Norfolk and Suffolk (in East Anglia) may have come from Lincolnshire or the North

¹⁵By the 16th century in Norfolk, examinations of large numbers of surnames show that some 19% were of the occupational type, though recent studies indicate that only 7% of those admitted as Freeman at Lynn before 1300, for example, had occupational names. Richard McKinley (1975), *English Surname Series: II Norfolk and Suffolk Surnames in the Middle Ages*, Phillimore Press, pps 31-33.

West. There is considerable evidence for migration from Lincolnshire (to Norfolk's north) and from Yorkshire (to Lincolnshire's north) into East Anglia and to London from an early date. It is known that many locative surnames¹⁶ (*i.e.* surnames that derive from a place name) arrived in Norfolk early from the north west of England, probably after settlement at some intermediate location such as Yorkshire¹⁷ or Lincolnshire. Modern studies show that, certainly by the early 16th century, there are significant numbers in Norfolk of locative surnames from Lancashire as well as from further to the NW, from Cumberland and Westmorland which lie to Lancashire's north. Despite the remoteness of this region of NW England from Norfolk, there are distinctly more surnames in early Norfolk from here than, for example, from the west Midlands which is nearer.

Such a migratory trend could perhaps be related, for some names, to the early political structure of England. History records for example that, even by Norman times, there was a connection across the North Midlands between Lancashire and Lincolnshire. The 'honour of Count Roger', also called the 'honour of Lancashire', included a large continuous district 'within the Lyme' (*i.e.* to the west of the Pennines), which centered on the seat of the Lord at Lancaster Castle, as well as scattered manors 'beyond the Lyme' in Lincolnshire in particular and elsewhere. This does not, in itself, answer such questions as whether Plants originated separately in Lancashire and Lincolnshire (Figure 16.2). However, it illustrates that there were particular political connections between these two counties from early times.

16.2.3 Some likely implications for the meaning of Plant

It accordingly seems that it needs to be asked in particular whether all of the 'Plant related' names originated in the same place. The evidence that a *few* such names occurred *sometimes* in the south east can not be considered to be conclusive. There is accordingly some doubt about whether any of the first Plants had heard of a *Plantebene* or a *Planterose*.

On the other hand it seems likely that more had heard of that other 'Plant related' name, the royal name *Plantagenet*. The latter clearly carries more status and this could be thought to bring a potential explanation for *Plant* more nearly into line with normal East Anglian surnames.

More generally, it seems reasonable to suppose that the likely influence of the *Plantagenets* should be given greater weight than it has explicitly been allocated in the 'gardener theory', which appears to rely mostly on considering just some *other* 'Plant related' names and assuming that the origins of *these* names were *directly* connected.

16.3 A Lancashire context in Plantagenet times

The East Anglian context of an early mixing of cultures, frequent arrivals from afar, and a strong association with France dating back to Norman times can be contrasted with the more isolated local history of the north west of England, where it seems quite feasible that (most of) the first *Plants* originated or, at least, arrived early. Against a backdrop of recent evidence about the early distribution of the *Plant* name, which appears to point towards the distinct possibility of Lancastrian origins, it seems appropriate to re-examine a 'standard theory' (*i.e.* the gardener theory) for the meaning of

¹⁶Though there may sometimes be more than one place with the same name, the origins of locative surnames are generally relatively easy to fix. Within an East Anglian context, modern studies of surnames in Norfolk and Suffolk show that some of the richer families had adopted *hereditary* surnames by as early as the beginning of the 12th century. For others there, the process was still developing for a further four centuries. It seems particularly relevant to add however that a high proportion of 14th century East Anglian townsmen are known to have had locative surnames that had originated elsewhere, even though *for most of them* this was from as near as 10 miles of their town. David Hey (1987), *Family History and Local History in England*, p 31.

¹⁷R.A.McKinley (1975), *ibid*, pps 97-8.

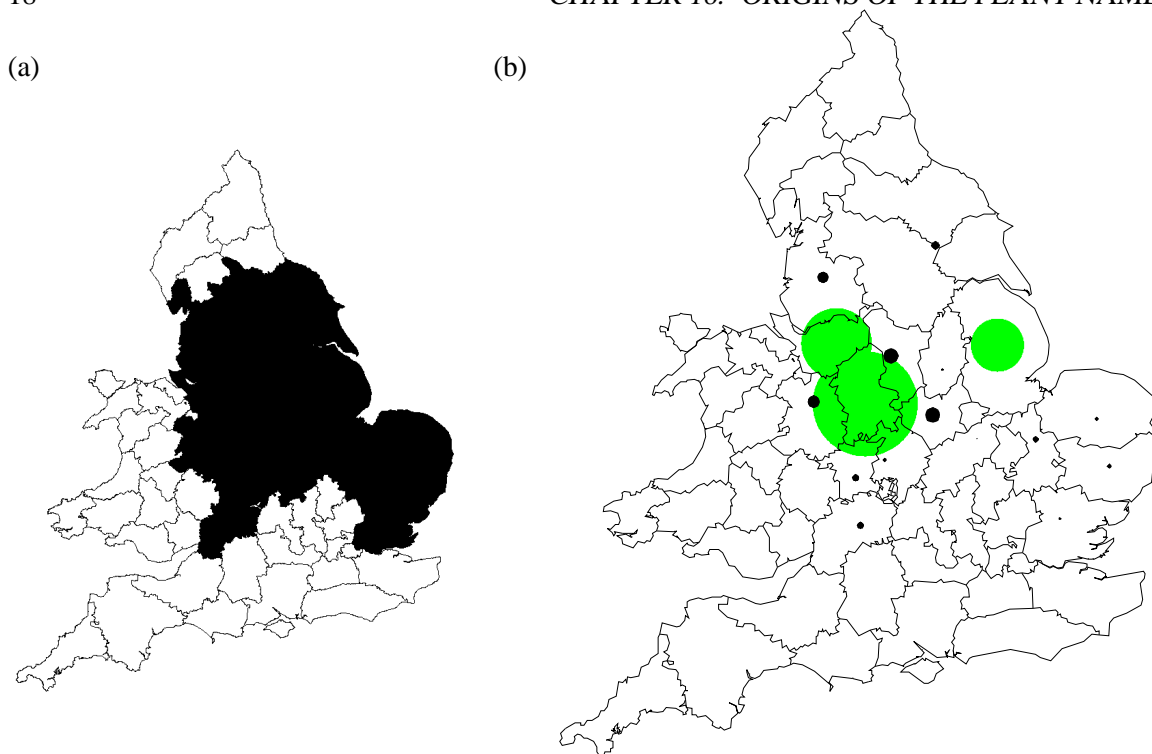


Figure 16.2: Distribution of pre-1700 IGI Plant records: showing (a) the region of England considered (black) and (b) the distribution of Plant records throughout those counties. Particularly large numbers (large grey spots) are found in Cheshire and Staffordshire in the NW Midlands, and also in Lincolnshire away to the east. Smaller numbers (black spots) reach down, for example, from Lancashire through the west Midlands. There is only a small spot for the whole county of Yorkshire (to the east of Lancashire), shown near the triple point joining its 3 ridings.

the Plant surname¹⁸.

In the search for a fuller understanding of the likely circumstances that may have surrounded the formation of the Plant name, it seems appropriate to consider some further detail of late medieval Lancashire. The evidence indicates that surnames formed later here than in East Anglia — the main influence for the development of surnames may have come with a small French (Norman and Plantagenet) influx from the south east. It seems less safe to assume that Plants themselves arrived here from the south east, since few traveled large distances and the main migratory trend of those who did appears to have been in the opposite direction.

Though knowledge of those times is scant, it is possible to consider some further relevant aspects of the available information such as:-

- the likely contemporary language,
- the known contemporary Plantagenet and Lancastrian history, including the arrival of Plantagenets in Lancashire with their likely impact on the local culture, as well as
- the general nature of Lancashire surnames.

This will lead on to further debate about the ‘most likely’ apparent meanings of the Plant name.

¹⁸An objective of further investigation would be to arrive at more realistic realms of likely association between such surnames and bye-names as Gard(i)ner, Plante, Plaunte, Plont(e), Plaint, Plauntes, Planche, Plank, Plaunteur, Plantebene, Planterose, and Plantagenet. Assumed connections between some of these names have led to the ‘gardener’ theory though the stoutness of its underlying assumptions has been questioned above, not least in the context of usual East Anglian surnames.

16.3.1 Some local linguistic considerations

The Norse word *planta* may have come to north Lancashire when for example Aethelfrith, King of Northumbria led his Angles westwards from Yorkshire across the Pennine mountains in 613AD, thus dividing the Celts into Scotland and Wales. Saxons from Wessex¹⁹, conquered the Northumbrian ‘Danelaw’ in the 10th century bringing their influence northwards to Lancashire from the South West²⁰. The Irish influence was apparently strong nearby in NW Wales — the old Irish word *cland*²¹ meaning ‘offspring’ has been supposed to have given rise to the Welsh word *plant* meaning ‘child’ or ‘children’²². The Welsh meaning of *plant* will be considered again later.

Unlike Derbyshire and Cheshire, it seems that Lancashire was spared the Norman devastations of 1069. The Normans no doubt brought with them the old Northern French word *gardinier*. The Norman influence on Lancashire appears to have centered mostly on Roger of Poitou, who was a son of a cousin of William of Normandy — it was this Roger who became Earl of Lancashire²³. It may have been the subsequent royal Plantagenets in particular, with their lands in central France, who reinforced the language of Lancashire with the old French word *plante*²⁴.

16.3.2 The English Plantagenets

It may be especially relevant, when contemplating the formation of the Plant surname, to consider Lancashire history around the first century or so of Plantagenet times. Lancaster had been just a days march from Scottish power at Shap in the 1150s. Henry II became the first Plantagenet king of England in 1154 (Figure 16.3) and, from 1165, Lancashire was held in Henry’s own hands. It was subsequently held (at least nominally) by the Plantagenet Kings Richard I, John, and Henry III.

The founder of the royal Plantagenet family was Geoffrey Plantagenet (d 1150), Count of Anjou, who was the son-in-law of King Henry I of England. Geoffrey had descended from Aubri, count in the Gatinais in about 990AD, and there are more-or-less plausible ancestral theories for him back for a further two or even three centuries before that²⁵. The fully legitimate Royal Plantagenet male line came to an end in 1399 when Henry IV of the Royal House of Lancaster replaced Richard II, though various *illegitimate* lines have been recognised to have continued to modern times²⁶.

¹⁹It is apparently more a characteristic of the south west of England that the Cornish word *plans*, *planz* means a ‘plant’ (Eric Partridge (1958), *Origins: a short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, p 501.). This apparently derives from the old High German word *pflanza*.

²⁰Some Norse names persisted however in NW Cheshire just to the south of Lancashire, in the Wirral in particular, following for example the settlement of a Dublin Norse chief there in 900AD.

²¹There is no occurrence of the rare surname Lland in the 1997 Stoke-on-Trent Directory and there has been only one known occurrence nearby at Keele University.

²²The ‘offshoot’ meaning of the Latin word *planta* has been compared with the old Irish word *cland* meaning ‘offspring’ and hence to the Gaelic word *clan* meaning ‘descendants’ or ‘tribe’. The old Irish word *cland* has similarly been compared to the Welsh word *plant* meaning ‘child’ or ‘children’ — there is also the Welsh word *planta* meaning ‘to beget children’. Eric Partridge (1958), *ibid*, p 501.

²³E.G.W.Hewlett (1922), *A History of Lancashire*, Oxford University Press, pps 49, 55, 59, 63, 67, 71.

²⁴Plant is a distinctive Staffordshire surname. A significant influence on Staffordshire surnames came from Lancashire to its north. The evidence indicates that there was less influence from Wales to its west.

²⁵A.R.Wagner (1961), *English Ancestry*, Oxford University Press, p 20.

²⁶The Duke of Beaufort represents an illegitimate branch, which descended from John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset (d 1410) who was a legitimated bastard son of Henry IV’s father, John of Gaunt. Another illegitimate branch is that of the Cornwall family which descended from Richard of Cornwall who was a natural son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall (d 1272) who was, apart from other supposed (though uncertain) bastards, the younger son of King John (Figure 16.3). A third generally accepted illegitimate branch is that of the recently extinct line of the Warrens of Poynton, who descended from Hamelin (d 1202) who was a bastard son of Geoffrey Plantagenet. Anthony R. Wagner (1960), *English Genealogy*, Oxford University Press, pps 33-4.

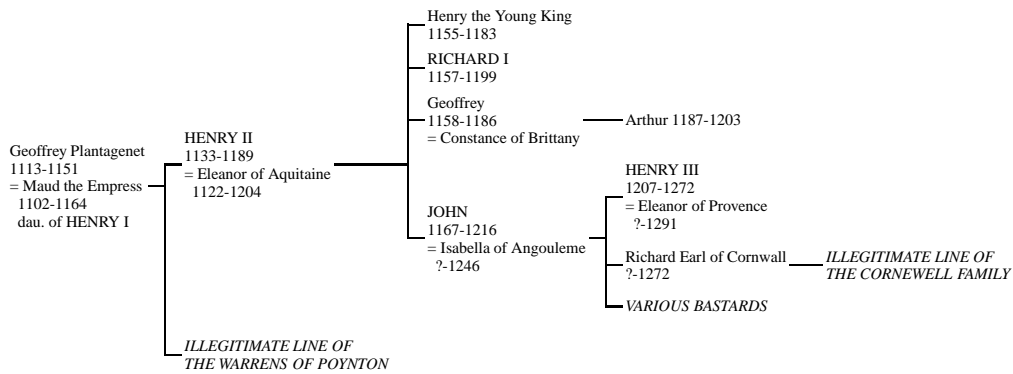


Figure 16.3: Some illegitimate lines of descent from the Royal House of Plantagenet: I Descent of the Henry III and various sibling bastards.

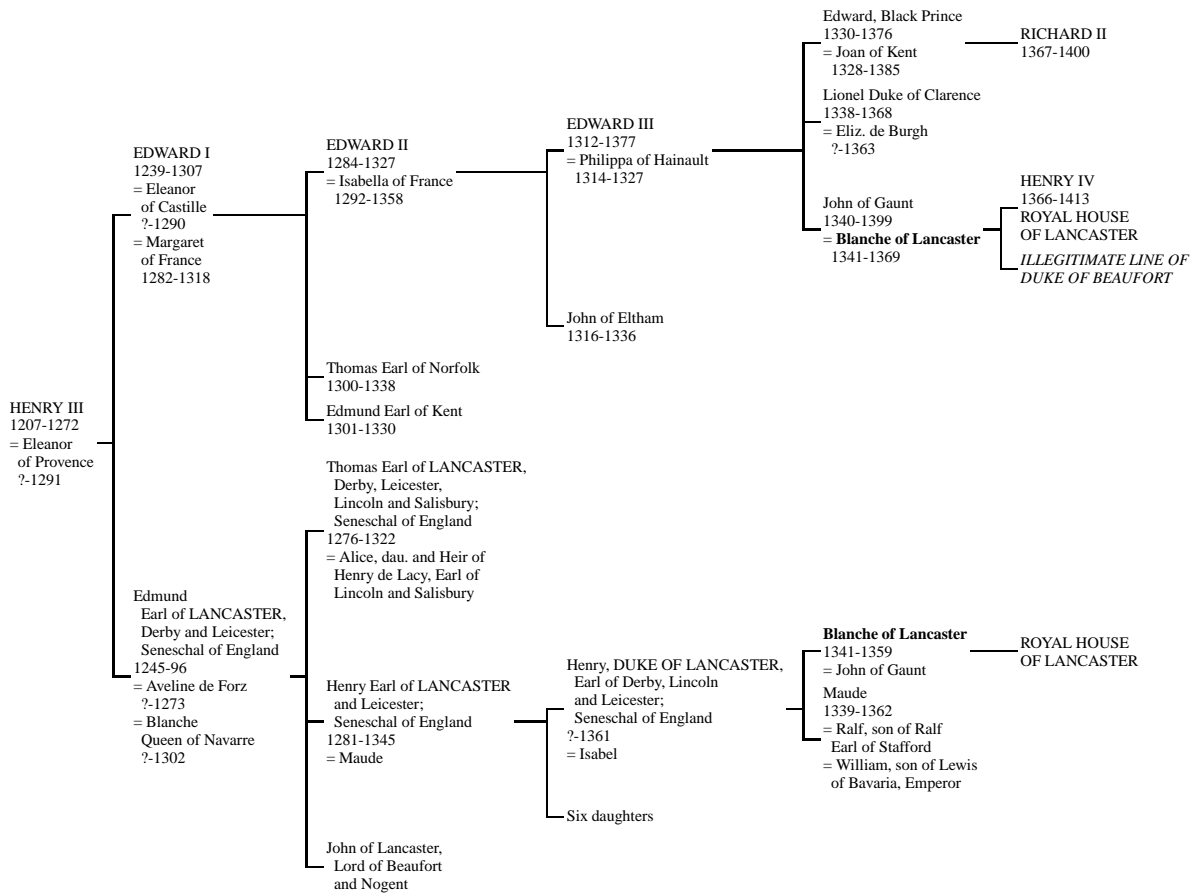


Figure 16.4: Some illegitimate lines of descent from the Royal House of Plantagenet: II Descent of the Royal House of Lancaster.

16.3.3 John ‘Lackland’ (Plantagenet)

It seems that it is especially relevant to turn attention to John, who appears to have been the first royal Plantagenet to make his presence felt significantly in Lancashire. By 1190, Henry II’s youngest and favourite son John ‘Lackland’²⁷ had become Lord of Lancaster holding Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and 4 other counties in the south west of England. He was also Lord of Ireland and, through marriage, Earl of Gloucester, though he was apparently known mostly by his Norman title Count of Mortain.

Unlike his predecessors, John was a frequent visitor to the north, founding an hospital in Lancaster. It was he who saw the potential for a port at Liverpool (SW Lancashire) and granted it a charter in 1202. In John’s 1199-1216 reign, significant additions were made to Lancaster Castle, with in particular £550 being spent on the King’s Lodgings there. At that time, there were Lancashire castles at Lancaster, Hornby, Clitheroe and Manchester²⁸. The royal court was often conducted in hunting lodges — it is reputed that John’s love of hunting was matched only by his love of lechery²⁹. The royal forests to the north of Cheshire surrounded Liverpool and such castles as Lancaster, Hornby (north mid Lancashire) and the Peak (at Castleton in NW Derbyshire).

Many illegitimate children of John have been listed, with varying degrees of certainty, and it has been supposed that there would be evidence for many more, if the records for John’s royal bedchamber were more complete³⁰. One apparent bastard John of King John was, for example, being supported by the custodians of the see of Lincoln in 1201.

John’s illegitimate daughter, Joan (Plantagenet), married Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, prince of North Wales, in 1204. This did not prevent John from murdering 28 hostages, sons of Welsh chieftains, in 1212. That year, John assembled the feudal host at Chester (NW Cheshire) with a view to subduing Llywelyn more finally. This planned incursion into NW Wales was cancelled at the last moment however because of rumours of growing discontent amongst the northern English Barons, which indeed broke out into Civil War and led on to the signing of Magna Carta in 1215.

16.3.4 Henry III and the Plantagenet Earls of Lancaster

In 1229, John’s successor King Henry III granted his south Lancashire lands, between the Ribble and the Mersey, to Ranulph Blundeville of Chester, who was a key supporter of the Plantagenet crown. This south Lancashire lordship passed in 1232 to the Earl of Lincoln, Ranulph’s brother-in-law William de Ferres. It was he who built Liverpool Castle (SW Lancashire) as his headquarters³¹.

Though it is generally reputed that Henry III was too pious to have had illegitimate children (unlike his predecessor John), there is uncertainty about some of his children. Little seems to be known for example about Henry III’s son William (?-?1256)³². He was apparently the only child of King Henry and Queen Eleanor of Provence who was not buried at Westminster Abbey³³. It has been suggested that this William was little publicised because like his sister Katherine (1253-7), he was deformed³⁴.

²⁷Kate Norgate (1902), *John Lackland*; Ralph V Turner (1994), *King John*.

²⁸J.C.Holt (1961), *The Northerners: a study in the reign of King John*, Oxford University Press, Map I.

²⁹J.C.Holt (1961), *ibid*, p 159.

³⁰Sidney Painter (1949), *The Reign of King John*, John Hopkins Press, pps 232-4.

³¹E.G.Hewlett (1922), *ibid*, pps 79, 87, 90-5. J.C.Holt (1991), *ibid*, pps 23, 210, 213, 241.

³²The only *early* evidence for the sons Richard, John, William, and Henry is in the Cheetham Manuscript *Flores Historiarum* which was written partly by Matthew Paris and which left St Albans soon after 1265 for Westminster where these sons were added as corrections. Margaret Howell (1991), *The Children of King Henry II and Eleanor of Provence*, in *Thirteenth Century England IV*, Edited by P.R.Coss and S.D. Lloyd, pps 57-72.

³³At the end of the year 1259, not 1256, the Cheetham manuscript has an insertion ‘*Willelmus filiosus et neptos Willelmi de Valence obiit et septus est apud Novum Templum*’. There is a still later margin note asserting that this burial at New Temple was that of the King’s son William ‘*Willelmus filius Regis Henrici obiit*’.

³⁴Matthew Paris mentions no disability when he records Katherine’s birth, and it is only when she dies that he describes

This William's more famous brother, Edmund (1245-96) had been trained as a child to thoughts of continental sovereignty, becoming King of Sicily in 1252. Well endowed, generous, and very popular with his knights, he had his heart set on the crusade. His devotion was vouched for by many besides the Grey Friars of Preston (Lancashire) whose house he founded, and the sisters of St Clare at Aldgate³⁵. It was this future Earl of Lancaster, Edmund 'Crouchback' (Plantagenet), whom Henry III sent from his Paris court to the English royal castles in 1262 as *capitaneous*, presumably of the military forces, with instructions to allow no parliaments to be held³⁶. Following the Baron's War³⁷, Edmund was created Earl of Leicester and seneschal of England in November 1265³⁸ and Earl of Derby in 1266³⁹. The following year, in 1267, Edmund became the first fully-recognised Earl of Lancaster, an honour which subsequently became the Duchy of Lancaster (Figure 16.4) and included lands in over half the counties of England.

The development of Plantagenet influence in 13th century Lancashire and the subsequent emergence of the Royal House of Lancaster rank amongst the most significant of those events that comprise late medieval English history. It is clear that competing forces within the Plantagenet government were critical at that time, and that power centred not least on the strategic seat of Lancaster⁴⁰.

16.3.5 Lancashire surnames

The relatively early date of formation for the Plant name suggests that the first Plants *may have been* associated with the more advanced nobility, from an early date for the region of Lancashire⁴¹. Many Lancashire surnames are locative and most of those that had ramified beyond their original parishes were well established by the year 1400⁴². The (so far) available evidence shows that *certainly by that time* the Plant surname had become *hereditary* in NE Cheshire, just to Lancashire's south east.

It is known that, by 1212, some 36% of the large Lancashire land owners had hereditary surnames, with a further 24% having bye-names that are not known to have been hereditary — the remaining 40% were listed just by their personal name or as a son of someone⁴³. Though there does not seem to have been a sharp distinction between large and small land owners for example, it seems that in general surnames developed much later here for most who were in the 'lower' social classes.

The most common type of surname in Lancashire is *locative* (*i.e.* derived from a local place name) and such names occur particularly frequently for land owners. Many locative surnames were derived for example from small settlements in Salford Hundred (SE Lancashire) — these ramified especially strongly from early times.

her as most beautiful in appearance but '*muta et inutilis*'.

³⁵Sydney Armitage-Smith (1904), John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, p 22.

³⁶F.M.Powicke (1947), *ibid*, p 430.

³⁷In the Baron's War (1264), Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester was killed at Evesham and his ally Robert de Ferrer, Earl of Derby, after being imprisoned in the Tower of London (1265), was released and then recaptured at Chesterfield (1266).

³⁸F.M.Powicke (1947), *King Henry III and Lord Edward*, Oxford University Press, pps 430, 518.

³⁹Sir Marcus Powicke (1962), *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, pps 198-208, 212.

⁴⁰The well documented case of Edmund's son Thomas Plantagenet (1273-1322), second Earl of Lancaster, may be cited for example. Setting aside foreign ambitions, he asserted his rights as the greatest feudatory of the Crown, by exercising an irregular dictatorship over a council of magnates to govern England and the King. Though he paid with his life for putting the King's favourite (homosexual) friend to death, the government of King Edward II could not subsequently stop the worship of this St Thomas of Lancaster.

⁴¹A considerable minority in Lancashire were without hereditary names even by early-Tudor times and the process was not completed until the 17th century.

⁴²David Hey (1987), *ibid*, pps 15, 32.

⁴³Richard A McKinley (1981), *English Surnames Series: IV The Surnames of Lancashire*, Leopards Head Press, pps 14, 17-8, 51-2, 271-4.


Occupational surnames are in general rarer in Lancashire than elsewhere⁴⁴. There are however particular examples of occupational Lancashire surnames such as Bowker, Webster, Taylor, and Lord. More particularly, occupational names associated with farming almost invariably derive from the herding of stock (*e.g.* Cowherd, Calvert, Coltman, Geldhirde⁴⁵). Sole exceptions are Marler, probably meaning a quarrier or perhaps a spreader of marl, and Cocker which possibly refers to the work of heaping hay in cocks though this work must have been seasonable.

Though the ‘*occupational*’ surname Lord is not locative and though it is also found elsewhere in England, it is most common in Lancashire and it is another example of a name that ramified strongly from early times in Salford Hundred, in this case around Bury and Rochdale. The surname Lord, like King elsewhere, can not be taken to mean necessarily that the original bearer held precisely that office and it might instead imply, for example, activities or demeanours that led to the adoption of such a name as a *nickname*.

Early Lancashire bye-names and surnames include several that include a verb with a noun (*e.g.* Baytebuck⁴⁶, Bendbowe, Brekelance, Briselaunce, Crakebon⁴⁷, Gaderpenye⁴⁸, Shakeshaft, Wynnepeny). This would not be incompatible with considering a possibility that there could have been Lancashire origins for a surname such as Plantebene (if *Plante* is taken as a verb and *bene* as a noun) or Planterose, though it should be added that Lancastrian origins have *not* been established for these names. Some Lancashire surnames of the ‘verb-noun’ type appear to be obscene⁴⁹ though these may have been related to the breeding of livestock.

It has often been supposed that illegitimate children at those times took their mothers’ surnames. The evidence for Lancashire however indicates that, when paternity was established, bastards took either their father’s surname or a diminutive form such as in the example of Hogkynson (Hogkyn is a diminutive for Roger).

16.4 Some early meanings of plant

 n recent times, the Plant surname has been supposed to have originated as a metonymic for a ‘gardener’ — a particular set of ‘Plant related’ names Plant, le Plaunteur, Plantebene, and Planterose are chosen as roots for this theory. Like Plantebene and Planterose, some Lancashire surnames appear to be of a *verb-noun* type and it may accordingly be relevant to consider the contemporary known meanings of the verb *to plant* as well as the noun *plant*.

There were connotations of *to plant* of ‘establishing a settlement’ (*e.g.* verb (3a) in Table 16.1 and pla(u)nter in Table 16.3). This can be carried through to such a connotation as ‘prosperous founder’ in a ‘Latin (Middle English)’ interpretation of *plante bene*. Even with an Anglo-Norman interpretation of *bene* as ‘bean’, a ‘founding’ meaning can still be retained if it is recognised that (straight rows of) beans may have had some particular association with establishing boundaries (*cf.* the French expression *planter des bornes* which means to ‘erect boundary posts’ or ‘set limits’).

Similarly, Planterose could be associated with establishing a ‘Plantagenet recognised emblem’, in a hedgerow for example. There are associated Anglo-Norman meanings:-

ros, roos: reed; reed-beds;

rose, roos: rose; embroidered rose;

⁴⁴The fraction of occupational names in the Lancashire lay subsidy roll for 1332 is 11% and this is lower than in comparable records for other counties. R.A.McKinley (1981), *ibid*, pps 249, 281-2.

⁴⁵Shepherd and Stidhirde both occur in Lancashire as rare bye-names.

⁴⁶Possibly meaning ‘feed buck’.

⁴⁷Possibly a nickname for a man who cracked marrow bones.

⁴⁸‘Gather penny’.

⁴⁹See Lumby, *Calendar of the Norris Deeds*, p 3 (Twyhecunt). R.A.McKinley (1981), *ibid*, p 365.

noun (sb1) (1a)	a young tree, shrub, or herb newly planted, or intended for planting; a set, cutting, slip; a sapling
noun (sb1) (1b)	a young tree or sapling used as a pole, staff, or cudgel
noun (sb1) (1c)	anything planted or springing up; a scion, offshoot, nurseling; a young person; a novice
noun (sb2)	the sole of the foot
verb (1a)	to set in place in the ground so that it may take root and grow (a living tree or herb, a shoot, cutting, root, bulb, or tuber; sometimes a seed; also, by extension, a crop, a bed of flowers, a garden, vineyard, orchard, forest, or other collection of plants)
verb (2a)	to insert, set, or place firmly, to fix in or on the ground or any other body or surface; to set down or up in a firm position; to put or fix in position; to post, station
verb (3a)	to found, establish, institute (a community or society, <i>esp.</i> a colony, city, or church)
verb (3b)	to settle (a person) in a place, establish as a settler or colonist
verb (5a)	to implant, cause to take root and spring up and grow; to introduce, <i>e.g.</i> an idea or sentiment in the mind

Table 16.1: Early meaning of *plant* in the Oxford English Dictionary. The OED adds quotations whereby these meanings can be recognised to have been in use, as a part of the English Language, by 825, 1377, 1362, 1382, 825, 1382, 897, 1300, and 1415 respectively.

The meaning ‘an embroidered rose’ can be compared in the North West of England to such symbolism as a Welsh dragon with a (Lancastrian red) rose in its mouth (possibly signifying a threat to the local ‘English’ people and their land from the ‘Welsh’) — such imagery is already embodied in the ‘standard theory’ for the meaning of the name *Pluckerose* which is traditionally associated with a token payment of a rose for Duchy of Lancaster land. Though it is often said that such imagery became ‘over-embellished’ in the 19th century, there is non-the-less a basis for supposing that the rose carried a special symbolism from early times and such symbolism can readily be carried through to the ‘Plant related’ name *Planterose*. As already indicated, connotations of ‘establishing rights to ground’ can be carried still further through to a ‘Middle English (French/Latin)’ interpretation of the name *Plantebene*.

The early French meaning *haie vive* for *plante* in Table 16.2 (*i.e.* quickset hedge) can perhaps be related to other meanings of *haie* (*e.g.* line of bayonets etc.) and hence to a modern *pied-à-terre* sense (*i.e.* temporary lodging, shooting box) of the root meaning ‘sole of foot’ of *plant(a/e)* (*cf.* Latin, OED⁵⁰ noun (sb2) of Table 16.1, and *pla(u)nte* (2) of Table 16.3). More generally, the various early French meanings listed in Table 16.2 relate quite consistently and emphatically to ‘establishing foundations’. The modern French meaning of ‘a philosophical foundation (*e.g.* of a science)’ can perhaps be related to the English meaning (verb (5a)) of ‘to introduce an idea’ and perhaps also to the listed Anglo-Norman meaning *to set down, record*. Early ‘Plant’ activities could hence be thought to have included (?Plantagenet recognised) responsibilities for ‘establishing’ (OED verb (3a)) and ‘recording’ rights at a time when, for example, the royal hunting forests around Lancashire’s castles were being opened up (Figure 16.5).

In the general region of Lancashire, the name *Pla(u)nt(e)* may have had, for the French nobility in particular, a connotation along the lines of ‘development foot’ of the (Plantagenet) royal authority. The Plantagenet authority was not without opposition however from the Llywelyn Princes and the Northern Barons, who had to balance their allegiance to the crown with the more local sentiments of their peasantry. For the peasantry, meanings closer

⁵⁰Oxford English Dictionary (1989) Second Edition.

plant	établissement; base, fondement; assiette d'un bâtiment, d'une statue; plan, disposition
plante 1	action de planter, plantation; plant, lieu où une chose est plantée; plant, jeune vigne; plan, disposition; base; haie vive
plante 2	platan
planter	fonder, établir; engendrer

Table 16.2: Some 16th century French meanings from *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française du seizième siècle* of E Huguet.

pla(u)nte (1)	plant; young shoot; young tree
pla(u)nte (2)	sole of foot; imprint
pla(u)nter	to plant; to strew; to set, place; to build, erect; to found, establish; to establish, settle; to install, situate; to set down, record; to establish, install oneself

Table 16.3: Anglo-Norman meanings from the Anglo-Norman Dictionary of Rothwell et al (1992).

to 'resented offshoots of (a Plantagenet) intrusion into their country' may have been more to the fore. It might be appropriate to look to dialect for ancient sentiments in the local yokeldom — in South Cheshire dialect, *plant* curiously has the rather disparaging meaning 'the scum that rises to the top of the vinegar'⁵¹ — this is similar to local sentiments found in Cheshire towards their first Norman earl⁵². The Welsh meaning 'procreated child'⁵³, which can be compared with the OED meaning 'a young person' (noun (sb1) (1c) of Table 16.1), will be discussed in some detail later.

16.5 A Lancashire context for Plant

Early thirteenth century Lancashire can be characterised partly by uneasy relations amongst the Northern Nobility, who had formed loose alliances within the overall government of the hitherto distant Plantagenets. Traditional local sentiments, rallying to rebellions against the English, were apparently particularly fierce nearby in NW Wales. Particular manifestations of unrest amongst the Northern Barons occur in brief periods of Civil War, notably before Magna Carta (1215) and in the Barons War (1264). Conflict with Wales continued on to later times as is illustrated by Edward I's Welsh campaign of 1277. Despite rebellions earlier in the century, it is known that by 1298 some 3000 Lancashire men served with the foot of Edward I in his Falkirk campaign (Scotland) in which the English archers played a key role in the defeat of William Wallace. This provides an outline of an apparent picture of local conflict, followed by a growth in the local popularity of the Plantagenets by the end of the thirteenth century.

Allegiance to the crown was not automatic in the early 13th century — this is exemplified by Roger de Montbegon, lord of the Lancashire barony of Hornby (near Lancaster), who was one of the 24 rebellious Barons who brought about Magna Carta. More generally however, Plantagenet influence would have been strong in the local Castles. It might accordingly be

⁵¹Joseph Wright (1905) *The English Dialect Dictionary*.

⁵²In 1071, William the Conqueror conferred the new title of earl of Chester on one of his chief supporters, his nephew Hugh of Avranches known to posterity as Hugh Lupus ('Hugh the Wolf') or, more disparagingly, Hugh the Fat. Alan Cosby (1996), *A History of Cheshire*, p 34.

⁵³In the 13th century, the Welsh meaning of *plant* may have been relevant though a 'West Midlands' dialect of 1400-50 has been related to the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, west Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, west Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, north Gloucestershire, and Monmouthshire (Kurath and Kuhn (1954) *Middle English Dictionary: Plan and Bibliography*).

proffered that, if we are to adhere to a standard explanation for the meaning of Plant, it could have been a Plantagenet context that encouraged some in the Lancastrian nobility to call their 13th century ‘gardeners’ *Plant* rather than by the ‘Norman’ word *gardinier*. For the French (Plantagenet) nobility here however, a more appropriate sense to Plant is apparently to be found in the ‘plant-related’ ramifications of ‘a developing foothold and rights’ towards the furthest reaches of Plantagenet power.

Amongst the most reluctant of the Plantagenet subjects, the word *plant* could have carried different connotations. In the eyes of some at least, the surname Plant could have signaled meanings along the lines of ‘offshoots of a (Plantagenet) rape of their country’. Plants appear to have originated mostly near Lancashire where the (modern) Welsh meaning ‘child’ of *plant* could already have been known by some — during the 13th century, there were for example Welsh settlers in Lancashire who had been driven out of Banister lands in Wales. It seems likely that, following the 1204 marriage of King John’s illegitimate daughter Joan (Plantagenet) to Llywelyn ap Iorweth, the ‘natural child’ sense of the modern Welsh word *plant* could have been to the fore in local thinking.

A local context of rival names and meanings appears to be pertinent, as a characteristic of 13th century Anglo-Welsh conflicts. The then Lord of Snowdon (NW Wales), Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, took the opportunity of the Baron’s War to expand his influence. After Henry III’s death, Llywelyn refused to do homage to Edward, the absent King. Matters came to a head when the feudal host assembled at Chester in August 1277 and the King established his headquarters around the royal apartments which were built for him and his wife at Chester Castle (NW Cheshire)⁵⁴. The consequences of those times are believed to live on, some 700 years later, in as much as a standard theory for the surname Llewellyn maintains that this name derives from the family and followers of Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, his predecessor Llywelyn ap Iorweth, and indeed some still earlier Llywelyns of Wales⁵⁵. Given that the *Llewellyns* and most of those in Wales called *Lewis*⁵⁶ are thought to have descended from the families and supporters of these famous Llywelyns, it might be conjectured by analogy that the *Plant* surname could have derived from such heteronymous meanings as ‘bastard child’ and ‘development foot’ of the contemporary royal *Plantagenets*. The possibility that the Plant name could have had its historical roots in the Plantagenet name or emblem will be considered further later.

Two different meanings of *plant*, for the French and the Welsh, could be relevant in so far as they may have spanned a breadth of understanding about the meaning of *Plant* as this surname began to emerge. For the French (Plantagenet) nobility ‘land rights’ could have been to the fore in connotations of ‘planting’ (or establishing rights to) vital ground. For their Welsh (‘illegitimated’) opponents, claimed rights for alleged ‘natural children’ of a Plantagenet incursion into their country could well have been central to their concerns. Indeed such opposing connotations for the word *plant* can be related to long standing debate about alleged Plantagenet attitudes towards ‘first rights’ over local women and primogeniture (*i.e.* the rights of the eldest ‘legitimate’ son to lands and succession). Thus, in this region of NW England, the name Plant may have come to have had various meanings associated with a ‘French colonial intrusion’, rather than just the supposed meaning ‘a medieval horticulturist’. Indeed, early Plants of the north west could have been involved with the sectarian struggles, and more with such activities as establishing boundaries and founding new livestock practices⁵⁷ than just with simply ‘gardening’.

⁵⁴ Anthony Tuck (1986), *Crown and Nobility 1272-1461*, pps 18-21. Alan Cosby (1996), *A History of Cheshire*, p 35.

⁵⁵ *cf.* C.M. Matthews (1996), *ibid*, pps 74, 202, 325.

⁵⁶ C.M. Matthews (1996), *ibid*, p 202.

⁵⁷ Agricultural surnames in Lancashire are primarily about stock herding. Also it is known that, in Macclesfield Forest for example, specialised *vaccaries* (cattle ranches) were operating by the 1360 — as well as rearing cattle for sale, cheese was being produced on a commercial basis by 1372 (Alan Crosby (1996), *ibid*, p 45).

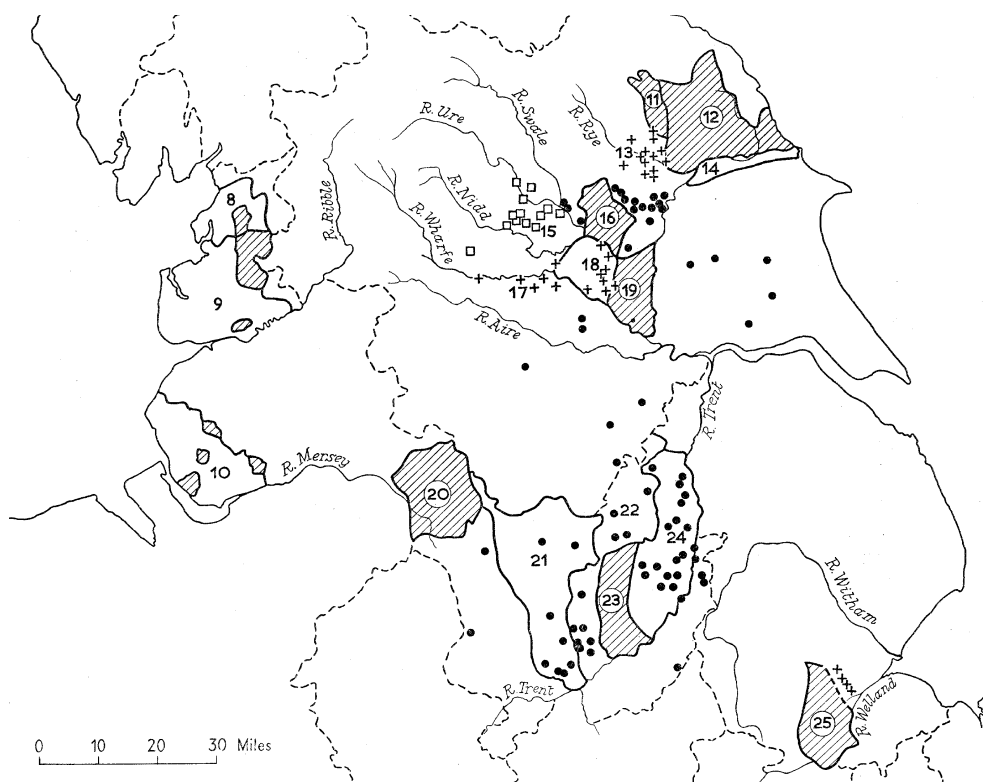


Figure 16.5: Royal Hunting Forests in the time of King John, including the Lancashire forests of (8) Lonsdale, (9) Amounderness, and (10) West Derby as well as (20) The Peak just to the NW of Cheshire. The unshaded areas were excluded from the forests by perambulations following the Charter of the Forest (1212 and 1225) whilst the black dots represent vills and townships amerced for forest offences between 1154 and 1215

16.6 Lancashire and later times in Cheshire

Here was some limited arable farming in the general region of Lancashire and Cheshire, which might perhaps relate to an early local meaning of *plant*. The 1086 Domesday survey for Lancashire mentions villeins, cottagers, ox-herds, serfs, bondswomen as well as the numbers of ploughs that the knights and labourers had. It seems that a main emphasis in this region, however, was on hunting and stock breeding rather than on arable farming — evidence for such activities appears in 12th century records for Lancashire and Cheshire. More particularly, such an emphasis appears in Lancashire surnames, as has already been outlined.

16.6.1 Hunting forests and stock breeding

When Count John (Plantagenet) became Lord of Lancashire, in lieu of the crusading Richard I, his knights, thegns, and free tenants in the local Plantagenet hunting forests secured a charter of liberties upon payment of £500. This allowed them to make clearings, put up buildings, and hunt game except within the lord's demense. This was confirmed by payment of a further £200 and 10 warhorses when John became King in 1199, indicating the growing wealth of some in Lancashire as its lands were opened up.

Just to the south in Cheshire, it is described by Earwaker (1877)⁵⁸ that, at the end of the 12th century, Randle Blundeville, Earl of Chester, granted to the monks of Combermere Abbey, near Nantwich, one carucate of land in his Forest of Macclesfield '*in a place called Winchull*' for the purpose of erecting a grange thereon, together with sufficient pasture for 2,000 sheep and their young ones each year, 24 cows with 2 bulls and their young ones each year; and 16 oxen and for 6 horses and 10 mares and their young ones every three years.

16.6.2 Plants in the forest of Lyme

By the late 14th century, there are known to have been Plants in Macclesfield Forest, on the pennine slopes of East Cheshire around Wincle (*i.e.* '*Winchull*')⁵⁹. This was part of the forest of Lyme. The word Lyme can still be found in the place names of Lyme in Cheshire, Ashton under Lyne (*sic*) in Lancashire to the north, and Newcastle under Lyme in Staffordshire to the south⁶⁰. The word Lyme may have derived from the Celtic word *elm* meaning a wooded frontier zone between the plains and high ground⁶¹. We might accordingly look to the early hunting forests of this general region (which were both wooded and unwooded) for possible clues about the early Plants.

This location suggests that it may be relevant to consider 'non arable' and 'non horticultural' meanings of the word *plant*. Certainly the evidence of an 18th century Dictionary confirms that there were still various other meanings for the word *plant* in common use by around 1700.

16.6.3 Some archaic meanings of the word 'plant'

Leaving aside for the moment the most obvious horticultural meanings of *to plant*, we are left with the following meanings in Samuel Johnson's relatively recent 18th century Dictionary:-

⁵⁸J.P.Earwaker (1877), *East Cheshire: Past and Present, or a History of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester*, vol II, pps 432.

⁵⁹This was around the times when most of the country's available agricultural land was being farmed and the expanding population was having no alternative but to spread onto the moors and into the woods and marshes. David Hey (1987), *ibid*, p 15.

⁶⁰Eilert Ekwall (1960), *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*.

⁶¹Alan Cosby (1996), *ibid*, p 20.

1. ...
2. To procreate; to generate.
3. To place; to fix.
4. To settle, to establish: as, to plant a colony.
5. ...
6. To direct properly: as, to plant a canon.

Johnson also gives the following meanings for a *planter* — (1) one who sows, sets, or cultivates; a cultivator; (2) one who cultivates ground in the West Indian colonies; and (3) one who disseminates or introduces. In particular, he illustrates this third meaning with for example the following quote from Addison (1672-1719):-

Had these writings differed from sermons of
the first *planters* of christianity in history or
doctrine, they would have been rejected by those
churches they had formed.

Indeed, this does not appear to be an isolated reference to ‘planting christianity’. Another quote from Nelson refers to ‘The Holy Apostles, the first *planters* of christianity’. Such a sense thus apparently relates back to ancient times, before the Plantagenet crusades which were concerned (partly) with (re)claiming (access to) the Holy Land for Christians. This indicates for example that the early bye-name *le Plaunteur* need not necessarily have related to ‘gardening’ — the name may have related more to the early (897AD) OED meaning of *to plant* (verb (3a)) which relates to ‘founding colonies, cities, and churches’.

16.6.4 A meaning of plant in the forest of Lyme

The particular sense for *plant* of ‘planting christianity’ appears to explain a 17th century inscription at Wincle Chapel, at the southern limit of Macclesfield Forest in the forest of Lyme, where there are known to have been contemporary Plants. Earwaker⁶² remarks ‘*On the lintel of the doorway in old letters is the inscription:-*

HERE DOE O LORD . WINCLE
SVRE PLANT THY WORD . CH.

*and over the blocked-up chancel door is ... the date ... 1647*⁶³. This archaic usage takes us back roughly halfway to Plantagenet times and this meaning of the verb *to plant* might have been entwined in the 17th century Wincle Plants’ understanding of their surname.

The Wincle Chapel inscription appears to be a call to the ‘Lord’ to help govern the locality with his word. The site of this inscription, on a christian Chapel, provides a clear context of a call to the ‘Lord God’ to ‘plant christianity’⁶⁴. This sense, by then, may have supplanted an earlier connotation which could have involved an allegiance to a more temporal (Plantagenet) lord. There is accordingly reason to suppose that the *Plant* surname could have had a 17th century connotation here along the lines of ‘*an auxiliary to the Lord*’.

⁶²J.P.Earwaker (1877), *ibid*, pps 436-7.

⁶³This inscription can still be seen over the Chapel doorway.

⁶⁴It might also be thought that there could have been atavistic echoes, given the context of this region, of a call to a more temporal ‘Lord’ (*e.g.* to an erstwhile lord of Lancaster) — such a plea might almost, it might be imagined, have been guided by an ancient spiritual call to reaffirm the people’s compliance with the (by then ancient) Plantagenet (Forest) Laws.

16.7 A résumé for the Plant surname's origins

It has been suggested in recent times that the Plant name could have originated as a metonymic for a 'gardener'. The following *reservations* can be marshaled against this however. First, it has been demonstrated that there is a significant doubt about whether the first Plants had heard of a *le Plaunteur*, a *Plantebene*, or a *Planterose* with whom common origins are assumed. Secondly, there are other interpretations of the underlying words *plaunteur*, *plante*, *bene*, and *rose*. It may be noted, for example, that official documents were in French or Latin until 1258, when Henry III issued a proclamation for the first time in English since the times of William the Conqueror⁶⁵. Alternative interpretations of the names *le Plaunteur*, *Plantebene*, and *Planterose* might accordingly relate to such meanings as 'establishing' and 'recording' development rights.

A 'gardener' meaning for Plant has been supposed to be correct in a standard Dictionary of British Surnames. The cited evidence relates mostly to East Anglia. A supposition that most Plants originated in East Anglia seems doubtful however and this itself casts doubt on the rigour of a deduction that Plant means simply a 'gardener'. The Plant surname appears to have originated instead mostly near the border lands of North Wales where it seems more apt to consider such brutal and contradistinct meanings as (1) 'development foot' and (2) 'bastard child' of the Plantagenet royal authority. More romantic counterparts to these meanings can be summarised as (1) perhaps in a word 'a gardener', though this seems too restrictive in as much as other kinds of (royalist) auxiliary can plausibly be considered, and (2) 'a (noble and natural, or almost Messianic) child', as will be explained later below.

16.7.1 A possible diminutive of Plantagenet

It might be supposed that there could have been a connection between the Plant and Plantagenet names *from the outset*. If such a connection were to be made, it would then remain to deliberate whether this could imply that the Plants were *initially*:-

theorem (1): auxiliaries of the local Plantagenet forces — Plant could thus be analogous to Welsh occurrences of the name Lewis, which has been considered in surname history to have originated with a meaning 'followers of the Llywelyn Princes of Wales' — *cf.* French connotations for *plant* along the lines of 'development foot', or

theorem (2): (claimed) illegitimate children of the Plantagenets — diminutives of fathers' names were used from early times for illegitimate children in Lancashire — *cf.* the Welsh connotation for *plant* of 'procreated child'.

There is some *evidence* that Plant could have originated as an abbreviation for Plantagenet. It appears to be undisputed that the Plantagenet name had originated as a nickname for Geoffrey of Anjou (1113-51). Even though it is generally held that it was only towards the end of Plantagenet times that *Plantagenet* was adopted as a royal family *surname*⁶⁶, there can be little doubt that those close to the early Plantagenet reigns would have been aware, at least, that the Plantagenet *nickname* had been carried by King John's grandfather Geoffrey. John Lackland had come to Chester in 1185 with a view of crossing to Dublin though he was recalled by his father following the death of John's brother Geoffrey⁶⁷ — two Latin Charters were subsequently issued by John, Count of Mortain and Lord of Ireland (later King John) to confirm the rights of Chester merchants to trade in Ireland⁶⁸. The two

⁶⁵John Harvey (1948), *The Plantagenets 1154-1485*, p 66.

⁶⁶Harvey asserts that Plantagenet was adopted as a surname by Richard (1411-60), Duke of York, who was the father of Edward IV. Harvey adds evidence that the Plantagenet name was passed to illegitimate children by the times of a bastard of Richard III, who was Edward IV's brother. This bastard hid himself in obscurity after the battle of Bosworth Field and he ended his days in charge of the building of Sir Thomas Moyle's mansion in Kent, where he was buried in 1550 (aged over 80) under the name of Richard Plantagenet. (Harvey (1948), *ibid*, pps viii and 138).

⁶⁷Rupert H Morris (1893) *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, pps 11 and 484.

⁶⁸These Charters apparently date from around 1188 up to 1199 when John became King of England — subsequently

Charters were both issued at Lutegareshalle and they have respectively 3 or 4 witnesses with, in each case, one being *Rogero de Plan'* (sic). This then leads to speculation about whether the name *Plan'* was an abbreviation for *Plantagenet* and whether this was widely understood around 1200 in Chester. I am grateful to W.K.Plant⁶⁹ for the following evidence for near Chester, for a century later:-

... the Flint Receipts of 1301 contained the name of Ricardo Plant of Ewelowe. On the 14th November 1302 a marriage took place at Flint of Elizabeth Plantagenet and Humphrey de Bohem. This suggests that the Plantagenet and Plant name were in use in the same district at the same time...

Ewelowe and Flint adjoin NW Cheshire. The evidence makes it seem likely that the similarity of the Plant name to Plantagenet would have been noticed here near Chester, by around 1300. The similarity of name could hence be thought to have signaled an 'evident compliance' of the Plants with the (at times faltering) dominance of the local royal authority (cf. theorem (1)) — it could have even imbued the Plants with an air of being an extension of the Plantagenets' dynastic rights (cf. theorem (2)). Certainly it is not new, with documentary evidence dating from 1528, to suppose that the Plant name is a corruption of *Plantagenet*⁷⁰.

16.7.2 A 'child' or a 'princeling'

It is not (as yet) clear whether a 'human child' meaning to the word *plant* predated Plantagenet times — this then gives train to a choice of emphases, as can be indicated by two variants of theorem (2):-

theorem (2a): an existing meaning 'child' of *plant*, which has parallels in the old Irish word *cland*, was embellished with a 'princeling' connotation in Plantagenet times, or

theorem (2b): it was not until Plantagenet times that the 'human child' meaning of the word *plant* began to emerge in the Welsh borderlands from its earlier root meaning of 'botanical offshoot'.

In other words, the emphasis for a relevant 'child' meaning to plant could be that this meaning was either (1) already being embellished further, or (2) just beginning to be humanised from 'vegetable origins'.

More particularly, there is evidence that, around the likely time and place of the Plant surname's formation in the north west of England, a meaning *a lord's love child* or *princeling* could have arisen through an interplay of two royal cultures⁷¹:-

- that of the earlier Kingdom of Wessex, which had reached as far north as Lancashire, and
- that of the royal House of Plantagenet, which was becoming more fully established in Lancashire.

This brings together such facts as:-

he granted another Charter to Chester, as well as a Charter to a new port at Liverpool.

⁶⁹W.K.Plant, President of the Plant Family History Group, private letter dated 13th May 1998.

⁷⁰I am informed that a deed, dated 1528, for John Plant of Stony Cliffe indicates '*this name is supposed to be corrupted from Plantagenet*' (this has been connected to the reference *Ancient Parish of Leek*, p 33, though this appears to be just a reference to the use of vinegar for purification at the times of the medieval plagues). There is also, for example, a newspaper clipping, apparently dating to the inter-war years of the 20th century, suggesting that the Plantagenets were now to be found amongst the 'lower classes of the Plants' (W.K.Plant, private communication).

⁷¹Certainly, 'a child in Plantagenet times' is supported as a valid meaning for Plant by the Oxford English Dictionary, which recognises 'young person' or 'novice' as the only meanings of *plant* that refer explicitly to a person. This meaning arises near the borderlands of North Wales and, in Welsh, the word *plant* means a child.

- there had been Wessex domination of Wales and, by the 13th century, there was ongoing Anglo-Welsh conflict — around 1200, John ‘Lackland’ had personally begun to make the Plantagenet influence felt significantly around the region of Chester and Lancashire, which is where the Plant surname appears to have formed,
- there was already an ongoing Wessex tradition of Childe meaning ‘a young nobleman or prince’ — the last male descendant of the royal House of Wessex is called Edgar Atheling or Edgar Child indifferently in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and, in the centuries after the Norman Conquest, the word ‘Childe’ was often used to mean a youth of noble birth, a heroic young man, almost a prince — a standard theory for the meaning of the surname Child(e) then flows from this ‘princely’ status as exemplified by the romantic line⁷² ‘*Childe Roland to the dark tower came...*’, and
- the Welsh word *plant* means ‘child’ and the OED recognises ‘a young person’ as a meaning to the English word *plant* — such a meaning was apparently being disseminated from the Welsh borderlands by the 14th century, through William Langland’s epic poem *Piers Plowman* of 1362 (later versions around 1367-86), which carries connotations for *plant* of a lord’s love child or princeling.

We may note in particular that, by 1362, there is the quotation (LANGL.⁷³, *P.Pl.*, A.I, 137):-

*Loue is the leues thing that vr lord asketh
And eke the playnt [plante, plaunte, plonte] of pees.*

It is with this quotation that the OED recognises an early ‘child’ meaning to *plant* — the quotation suggests an interpretation, for Plant in the Welsh borderlands, of a *lord’s love child*⁷⁴. The poem of *Piers Plowman* relates to the elevation of a poor peasant to being a symbol of Jesus, finally castigating the low moral standards of those times — it may accordingly be no accident that Langland’s phrase *plaunte of pees* is ambiguous, with the alternative interpretations that a lord’s love can help to beget a *princely child* (*i.e.* a secular ‘Prince of Peace’⁷⁵, *cf.* theorem (2a)) or ‘horticultural success’ (*i.e.* a ‘planting of peas’, *cf.* theorem (2b)) through the divine ‘providence of the Lord’ (*cf.* the later Wincle Chapel inscription).

Some possible background to this phrase ‘*plaunte of pees*’ can be outlined as follows. Ralph V Turner (1994)⁷⁶ writes that ‘*John, like his son (Henry III) later, turned to the Anglo-Saxon past for support of his pretentions*’. It seems that the past to which he may have turned would likely have included the contentious Wessex legend of ‘Edgar Childe’ from whom the romantic title of Child(e) appears to have flowed (*cf.* Figure 16.6). In as much as the title Child(e) carried an ‘atheling’ or ‘prince’ connotation, it could have been seen to have affronted the legitimate supremacy of the Norman crown. A century or so later, John ‘Lackland’ may have planned to erode this perceived threat to his historic ‘French based’ legitimacy (though primogeniture had not earlier been regarded as the sole criterion for royal succession) — to this end, he may have sought to represent his bastards as contemporary equivalents of the Wessex Child(e). Certainly the writings of the anti-royal 13th century chroniclers of south east England, as well as others later, indicate that John Lackland had planted various illegitimate children around his lands in the times when he was Lord of (Lancaster and) Ireland, such that it is quite conceivable that John could personally have fathered (*cf.* theorem (2b)) a ‘princeling’ meaning to *Plaunte*. It is also compatible with John’s purported character that he could himself have encouraged (*cf.* theorem (2a)) a

⁷³William Langland (1362), *The vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*.

⁷⁴Certainly the OED uses this quotation to illustrate the meaning (noun (sb1) (1c)) *a young person*, which is the only meaning of *plant* that the OED recognises to mean a person.

⁷⁵Some further background to this can be outlined as follows. Guerilla warfare was in progress when, for example, Henry III ordered in 1233 that the Sheriff of Shropshire should pay 57 shillings for the heads of 57 welshmen who had been slain in the valley of Church Stretton (Harvey (1948), *ibid.*, p 70.). Shropshire is immediately to Cheshire’s south. Immediately to Shropshire’s south east is Worcestershire, where William Langland had written by some 130 years later of the ‘*plaunte of pees*’, apparently implying that a Lord’s love child could help to beget peace (*cf.* Prince of Peace).

⁷⁶Ralph V Turner (1994), *King John*, p 201.

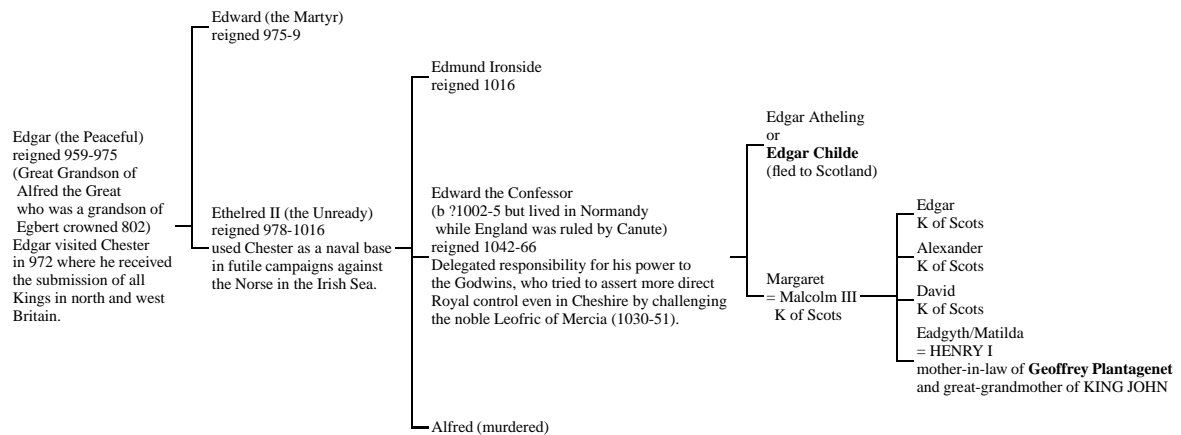


Figure 16.6: Some cognate ancestry of the Plantagenets and a *contentious* link back through *Edgar Childe* to the royal House of Wessex — at the time of the Norman Conquest Edward the Confessor was said to have died childless.

‘princely’ connotation to the word *plant* — it has become widely accepted, in recent decades, that John had a flair for administrative detail, as well as a reputation for mischievous humour and ingenious planning, and a sensitivity to perceived slights of his royal authority.

More generally it can be surmised that, for a ‘princely’ theory to hold an aspect to the meaning of the Plant name, the originator of this meaning would have needed to know about either:-

theorem (2a): both the Child(e) and Plantagenet epithets as well as an existing ‘Welsh borderlands’ meaning *child* of plant, or

theorem (2b): the implication of ‘illegitimate child’ when Plant is seen as a diminutive of Plantagenet.

It is accordingly not crucial, for a ‘princely’ theory, to suppose that the first Plants were truly royal bastards — it could simply be supposed that the Plant name could have been adopted instead, with a rather mischievous (*cf.* theorem 2(b)) or spiritual (*cf.* theorem 2(a)) ‘princeling’ aspect to its meaning, just as a fanciful nickname.

16.7.3 Both a ‘child’ and a ‘royalist auxiliary’

As indicated above, early evidence for NW Cheshire and Flint, which was a district to the fore of 13th century Anglo-Welsh struggles, suggests that the Plant name could have begun with its carrying an official Plantagenet status though, alternatively, it could have developed just a ‘nickname’ (*cf.* the Welsh word *plant*). A ‘child’ aspect to the Plant name in this general region seems probable and, moreover, a ‘princely’ aspect to the name could, in due course, be judged to be just as credible as ‘gardener’. To the extent that the OED indicates that *plant* had, in the Welsh borderlands, an apparent meaning ‘a love child of a lord’, the Plant name can be compared with the Lancashire surname, Lord. Such ‘title’ names are often regarded as being ‘whimsical’ rather than necessarily factual. With this proviso, and with an assumption that the Plantagenet nickname or emblem was known, Plant can be summarised throughout its *various* meanings as being (either mischievously or officially) a ‘heteronymous royal diminutive’ with particular local connotations of:-

a (noble and natural) child; and, through the meaning of the verb, a founder or a (French) colonist or a gardener or a land steward; or, more generally, a royal(ist) auxiliary

(*cf.* OED, the Welsh language, Dictionaries of early French, local medieval history, Lancashire surnames,

and standard theories for Welsh occurrences of Lewis and Llywelyn, as well as for the surnames Plantagenet and Childe and for the rare bye-names Plantebene, Planterose, and Pluckerose).