

# MEDIAEVAL ENGLISH PET NAMES

by  
Lord Michael FitzGeoffrey, GdS

---

The information behind this article comes primarily from Charles Wareing Bardsley's *English Surnames: Their Sources and Significations*, seventh edition, published in London in 1901. This book is available for free download in Acrobat PDF format from Google Books at:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=mv4cAAAAYAAJ&num=15>

What do I mean when I say, “pet names”? The technical word is “diminutive”. In other words, a more intimately familiar, often shortened version of a name, for example: *Billy* from *William*, or *Betty* from *Elizabeth*. The word *pet*, in reference to pet names, is a shortened version of the French word *petite*, meaning *little one*. This article does not cover the kind of nicknames that are often unrelated to their bearer's actual name, such as a person whose name is *John* being called *Lefty*, due to his being left-handed.

Interestingly, many medieval pet names are preserved even until current times in the hereditary surnames that fill our telephone directories. Many English surnames started out as patronyms and metronyms. (A patronym tells who a person's father is. A metronym tells who his or her mother is.) Also, the patterns by which pet names were formed came from both Anglo-Saxon English and Norman French.

In some cases a pet name was formed by literally shortening the name, and often substituting a different first letter, to make a rhyme. A few examples are:

Christopher > Kit, Kitt, or Kitte	Anne > Nan
David > Dawe	Cecilia or Cecily > Cis, Cesse, Sis, Siss, or Sys
Gilbert > Gib, Gibbe, or Gyb	Eleanor, Elinor, Leonora, or Alianor
Nicholas > Cole or Col	> Annora, Ellen, Lina, Lyna, or Nel
Richard > Dick or Hick	Etheldreda > Ethel
Robert > Dob, Dobbe, Hob, or Hobbe	Isabel > Ib or Bell
Roger > Hodge or Dodge	Matilda > Maud
Walter > Watte	Petronilla > Parnel or Pernel
	Theophania > Tiffany

In many other cases, a pet name was formed by adding a suffix to either the proper name or very often to a shortened version of it. Often, the resulting pet name was even longer than the name from which it came. These suffixes were of four principal varieties:

- (i) **Kin** from the Anglo-Saxon.
  - Adam > Adkin, Adekin, or Atkin
  - Anthony > Tonkin
  - Baldwin > Bodkin

Bartholomew > Badkin or Batkin  
 Daniel > Dankin  
 David > Dawkin or Dakin  
 Elias > Alkin or Allkin  
 Jane > Janekyn  
 John > Jenkin, Hankin (from the Latin *Iohannes*)  
 Henry > Hawkin or Halkin  
 Hugh > Hughkin or Huckin  
 Geoffrey > Jeffkin  
 Lambert > Labmekyn, Lambekin, or Lambkin  
 Laurence or Lawrence > Larkin  
 Luke > Luckin  
 Mark > Markin  
 Matilda > Mawdkin, Meakin, Mekin, Malkin, or Makin  
 Peter > Peterkin, Perkin, or Parkin  
 Radulf or Ralph > Rapkin or Rawkin  
 Reginald, Ragenald, Rainald, Reynold, Renaud, Reinaud, or Renard  
     > Rankin, Reynkin, or Reynkyn  
 Robert > Hopkin  
 Roger > Hotchkin or Hoskin  
 Simon > Simkin, Simpkin, or Symkyn  
 Theobald, Thibault, or Thibaud > Tipkin  
 Thomas > Tomkin or Thompkin  
 Walter > Watekyn or Watkin  
 William > Wilekyn or Wilkin

(2) **Cock** also from the Anglo-Saxon.

Adam > Adcock  
 Alexander or Alisaundre > Saundercock (via *Saunder*) or  
     Sandercock (via *Sander*)  
 Baldwin > Balcock  
 Barbara > Babcock  
 Bartholomew > Badcock or Batcock  
 Daniel > Dancock  
 Elias > Elcock, Ellcock, Alcock, or Allcock  
 Geoffrey > Jeffcock  
 John > Johncock, Hancock, or Handcock (both via Latin *Iohannes*)  
 Laurence or Lawrence > Laycock  
 Luke > Locock, Luckock, or Lucock  
 Mark > Marcock  
 Philip > Philcock  
 Richard > Hitchcock  
 Simon > Simcock  
 Timothy > Timcock  
 William > Wilcock or Wilcoc

- (3) *Ot* or *et* from the Norman French.
- Abel > Abelot, Ablett, or Ablott
  - Arnold > Arnott, Arnet, or Arnyet
  - Brice > Briccot
  - Cecilia or Cecily > Cissota, Sissot, Sysstot, or Sysstott
  - Douce, Duce, Dulce, or Dulcia > Dowsett, Doucett, or Duckett
  - Charles > Charlat, Charlot (*fem.* > Charlotte)
  - Constance > Cussot
  - Cuthbert > Cowbeyt or Cobbet
  - Daniel > Danett or Dannett
  - Dionisius > Dyott, Dyot, Diot, or Denot (via *Dennis*)
  - Drew or Drogo (not Andrew) > Drewett or Druett
  - Eleanor, Elinor, Leonora, or Alianor
    - > Annot, Alinot, Alnot, Anota, Linot, or Linota
  - Elias > Elliot, Eliot, Allot, Alecot, Alyott, or Elicot
  - Emeric or Emery > Emelot
  - Emma > Emmett or Emmot (both *fem.*)
  - Eve > Evett or Evitt (both *fem.*)
  - Gerald or Gerard > Garret, Jarret, Jarratt
  - Gilbert > Gibbett
  - Giles > Gillet or Gillot
  - Guy > Guyot, Gyot, Wyot, Wyott, or Wyatt
  - Hamon > Hamnet, Hammet, or Hamonet
  - Henry > Hallet, Halket, Henriot, Heriot, or Haryott (*fem.* Harriet or Harriot)
  - Hugh > Huet, Hewet, Hewett, or Howett
  - Isaac > Higgott or Higgett
  - Isabel > Bellet or Bellot (via *Bell*); Ibbot, Ibbit, Ibbet, Isotte, Ebot, Ezota, Isot,
    - Izott, Ibote, or Ibotta (via *Ib*)
  - Ivar, Iver, Ive, or Ives > Ivett
  - John > Jackett (via French *Jacques*; *fem.* > Jacquetta)
  - Juliana > Gilot, Gillot, Juet, Juetta, Jewit, Jewitt, Jowet, Jowett, or Juliet
  - Laurence or Lawrence > Larrett
  - Luke > Luckett or Lockett
  - Margaret > Margot, Marget, Merget, Margett, Maggot, Magot
  - Mary > Marriot or Mariot
  - Matilda > Tillot or Tyllott
  - Miles or Milo > Millot, Millet, or Mylett
  - Nicholas > Colet, Colett, or Collett (*fem.* Collette; via *Col*)
  - Pagan, Payne, Paye, Paine, or Pain > Paynett or Paynot
  - Paul > Paulett, Poulett, Powlett, or Pollitt
  - Peter > Perot, Perret, Perrett, Parrot, or Parret
  - Phillip > Phillot, Phillipot, Philpott, Philpot, Fillpot, Fylpot, Phillot, Philipot,
    - or Phylpotte
  - Robert > Robynet (via *Robin*)
  - Roland > Rowlett, Rowlet
  - Simon > Simonet, Simnet, or Symonet

Stephen > Stevenet, Stevenot, Stennet, or Stennett  
Theobald, Thibault, or Thibaud > Tibbot, Tebbott, Tibbat, Tibbet, or Tebbutt  
William > Guillemot, Gwillot, Gillot, Gillott, Gillett, Williamot, Willmot,  
Wilmot, Willot, Willet, Willert, or Willimote

Sometimes the *-ot/-et* form was rendered instead as *-elot* or *-elet*.

Bartholomew > Bartelot, Bartlett, Bertelot, or Burlet  
Cecilia or Cecily > Cesselot  
Christian > Crestolot or Crestelot  
Hamon > Hamlet or Hamelot  
Hugh > Hughelot, Huelot, Hulot, Hullet, Hullett, Howlett, or Hewlett  
Richard > Richelot or Rickelot  
Robert > Hobelot (via *Hob*)  
Theobald, Thibault, or Thibaud > Tebbelot

(4) *On* or *en* also from the Norman-French.

Alice or Alys > Alison  
Beatrice or Beatrix > Beton, Betten, Betin, Betyne, Betan, or Beaton  
Catherine > Catlin, Cattlin, Catlyn, or Katlyn  
Gilbert > Gilpin, Gibbin, or Gibbon  
Guy > Guyon  
Hamon > Hamlyn or Hamelyn  
Hugh > Huon, Hugon, Huguon, Hugyn, or Huggin  
Isaac > Higgin  
John > Jacklin (via French *Jacques*; *fem.* Jacqueline)  
Mary > Marion  
Nicholas > Colin (via *Col*), Collin, or Nixon  
Peter > Perrin  
Radulf or Ralph > Rawlin or Rollin  
Richard > Diccon, Dicken, or Diggon (via *Dick*) or Hitchin  
Robert > Robin, Dobbin, or Hobin  
Thomas > Tomlin  
William > Wicken