

The Kennedys of England

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Although not native to England, both the Irish and Scottish Kennedys have been coming to England for many centuries. In addition to the selection of early records highlighted in my [Kennedy study report](#), Edmund O’Kennedy was taken as a prisoner to Surrey in 1358 by the Earl of Ormond¹. If we take baptisms as a definitive proof of permanent settlement we have to look somewhat later and generally after the Reformation; before that other legal documents give hints and there were quite clearly several Kennedy families in the London area no later than the 1540s². There are also some additional London wills from the early 1600s that have come to light that are clearly of Scottish origin³; it would appear that there were several well-connected Kennedys who moved to England in the vanguard of King James VI/I. One earlier London record is James Kenede who received a pardon in 1462 whilst living in St Martins in the Field⁴.

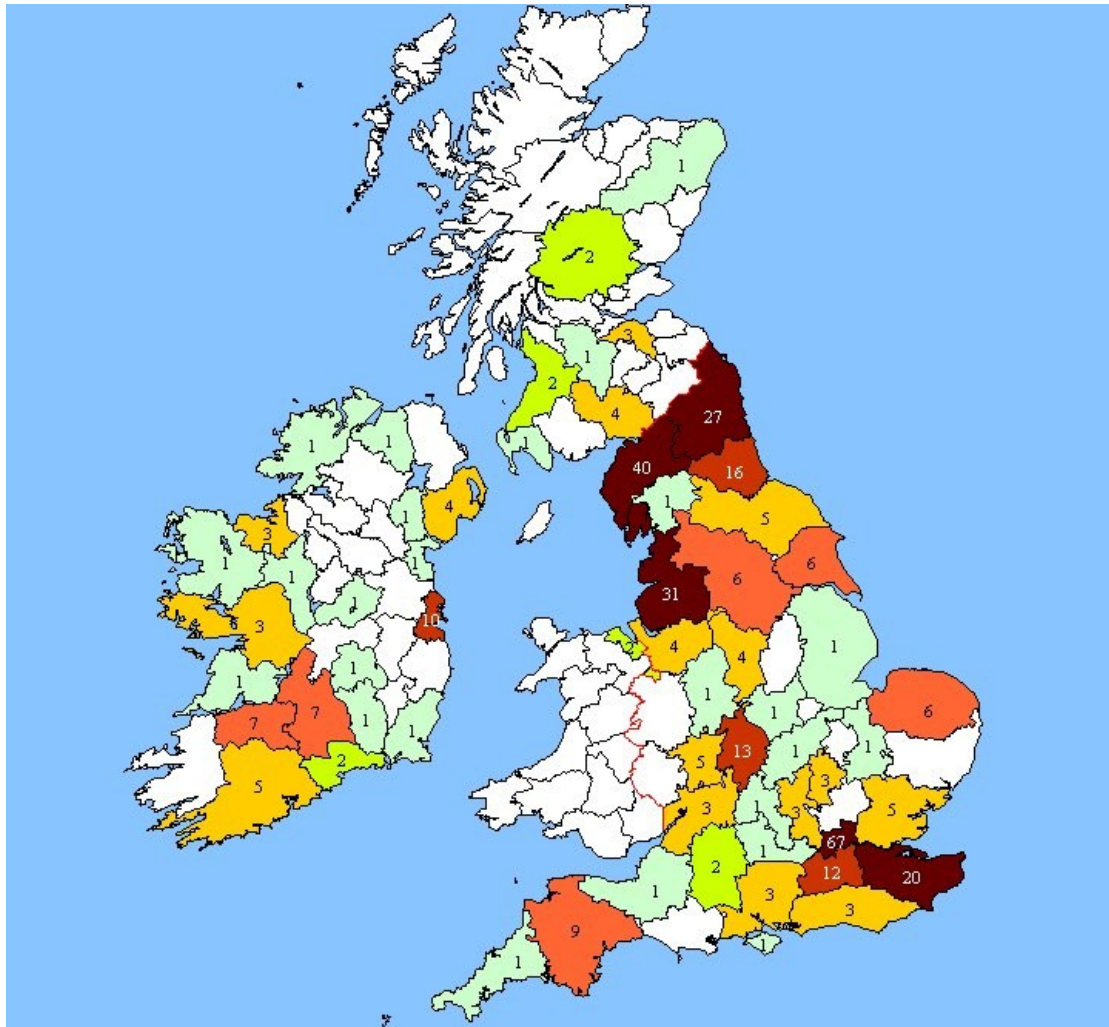
As usual it is very challenging to distinguish these immigrants by country of origin and it is only in the national censuses of the nineteenth century that we have comprehensive data on where the English Kennedys were coming from. The map below shows the place of birth of each Kennedy head of household in the 1851 census, the first to demand county of birth in England or country of birth if from Scotland or Ireland. Some, sadly in a minority, went further and gave an Irish or Scottish county; it is too cumbersome to portray both immigrant groups in the same diagram. I consider the relative numbers within Ireland and Scotland to be quite informative but their absolute numbers really need to be scaled up. In other words, it is likely that the bulk of entrants from Ireland came from Dublin or Tipperary, and that the bulk of Scottish Kennedys came from south-west Scotland and Perthshire. It would not be until 1911 that giving the exact county outside England was a census requirement, and a detailed analysis of this data will be the subject of a separate article.

¹ Ormond Deeds 1350-1416 no. 46

² For example, John Kenedye appears in the lay subsidy roll in London’s St Giles without Cripplegate in 1541 (London Record Society v. 29)

³ Testamentary records in the Commissary Court of London 1571-1625 (British Record Society vol. 97): Archibald Cannadie 1613; James Canada 1618 leaves a bequest to Maybole, Carrick.

⁴Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland, ed. Joseph Bain, iv entry no. 1331



For now, let us concentrate on the settlement pattern within England. Two points are immediately worthy of comment. The first is the modest concentrations in Devon and Norfolk. The former is almost entirely due to presence in the Portsmouth/Devonport/Stoke Damerel area brought about no doubt by the naval sector. The numbers in Norfolk are more surprising and await more analysis.

The second and maybe bigger surprise is that Cumberland is by far the most dominant county, considerably ahead of Lancashire. Within the former this is entirely due to the hugely prolific Stapleton-Bewcastle Kennedy family, up close to the Scottish border slightly NE of Carlisle. The exact origins of this group are not yet proven and several researchers have done work into the subject. It suffices for now to observe that they were rural farmers and were present no later than 1730 but apparently not in county listings from the mid-1600s. Treated as one big family who were marrying across the parish border (see the Stapleton parish register), they outnumber both the native Liverpool and Manchester Kennedy families, no mean feat.

Is the presence of the Kennedys in the rural English borders this early surprising? Not really. They were recorded in Carlisle town by 1600 although this is not in my opinion a likely source, since people tended not to move out of towns into farming the countryside. Much more likely is that they crept over the border from Dumfriesshire (the adjacent Roxburghshire parish of Castleton does not contain significant numbers

of the surname although sadly its register only dates back to 1749). The deficiency of the parish registers overall is a big problem and although Canonbie, the Dumfriesshire parish up against the English border, has baptisms from 1693, its marriage register (which might have given a parish of origin) only goes back to 1768. Nevertheless, we can see Kennedy baptisms in Canonbie from 1707 onwards. No Kennedy record in the English register for Stapleton gives a Scottish origin for either party in a Kennedy marriage although there are some who resided in Bewcastle.

To end with two minor observations. Firstly the registers described above are from two different churches, the Scottish Kirk and Anglican. Presbyterian churches were established in England by Scots but the Stapleton-Bewcastle group were Anglican. Secondly, there is a small settlement called Scotstown in the area between Stapleton and Bewcastle. How many people there were recent Scots is hard to make out just by surname, as many were 'Borders' names such as Little, Armstrong and Elliott.

We now turn to the other side of England and to the parish of Whickham, County Durham. Here we find what to date is one of the earliest settled Kennedy families in England outside London, where their first entry in the Anglican parish register⁵ dates back to 1587 (Rowland Kenate). This was no temporary presence as Durham is also to date the only county with a published hearth tax⁶ showing Kennedys (1666 Lady Day) – one John Kennady in Durham town with one hearth and another of the same name with two hearths in Whickham Fellside. In between the times of these two sources, the same Kennedy group appear in the Durham Quarter Sessions⁷ in 1602 when Edward Kenettie and his wife Agnes are robbed of a purse containing 80s 'on the Queen's Highway at Fugar House near Whickham'. This is presumably the same Edward Kennaty and Agnes Rodda who were married in 1592 in Whickham.

What to make of this sum of money (c. £400 in 2005 values) in a district whose entire reputation from around the time the Kennedys surface is coal-mining? And where have these Kennedys come from? In their socio-economic history of Whickham, Levine and Wrightson⁸ spend some time discussing the issue of recruitment from across the Scottish border but without coming up with any real concrete evidence. There were discussions and plans around the start of the 1600s to use Scottish workers and there are some names suggestive of Scots but little more than this. Moreover, an analysis of neighbours' names in Whickham Fellside in 1666 (see Appendix A) shows almost no onomastic trace of Scots or indeed anyone not local to the area apart from the sole Kennedy. Meanwhile Ireland and the Irish do not even merit a mention in Levine and Wrightson; Ireland, Aidan Clarke tells us, imported almost all its coal from England in this period⁹. Lasker and Roberts¹⁰ tried to measure population influx figures using only the Whickham parish registers, so the first generation which

⁵ Whickham register of marriages 1579-1812; baptisms 1576-1756. There is an earlier Kennitye baptism in Berwick upon Tweed in 1574.

⁶ County Durham hearth tax assessment Lady Day 1666 (London: British Record Society, 2006)

⁷ Durham Quarter Session Rolls 1471-1625 (Surtees Society, 1988)

⁸ The making of an industrial society. Whickham 1560-1765, David Levine and Keith Wrightson (Oxford, 1991).

⁹ The Irish economy 1600-60, Aidan Clarke, p184. Ch. VI in: A New History of Ireland III (1534-1691), Oxford 1987

¹⁰ Secular trends in relationship as estimated by surnames: a study of a Tyneside parish, GW Lasker and DF Roberts, *Annals of Human Biology* v9 no. 4 (1982) pp299-307

already contained Kennedys formed their baseline. (They did however find some explicit references to foreign soldiers in the parish in the 1640s after the Wars, one explicitly called a Scotsman and one child ‘Michael son to John MacKneil, a redshank’).

What do we know of the people who lived in Whickham Fellside in the mid-1600s? In the discussion of the Hearth Tax, the editors make special mention of this district as one with a notable proportion of high status residents, including Sir Thomas Liddell (11 hearths), Sir James Clavering (10) and Lord Baltimore (10). John Kennedy was hardly in this league at two hearths but he was doing better than the 83 ‘non-solvants’ and the 80 unnamed who were granted exemption certificates¹¹. He was one of 20 at the same level of social status.

It is still unknown when the Kennedys arrived in the parish. Their first marriage is 13 years into the register in 1592 and the first baptism 11 years inside in 1587, sufficiently close that their presence might predate the register altogether. Although mining there can be traced back to the fourteenth century, Levine dates significant work to the so-called Grand Lease of 1578¹², which for the first time permitted unrestricted mining. In other words, the register and local mining recruitment date to almost exactly the same time, and other sources are needed to attempt to ascertain if it was coal-mining work that drew the Kennedys in. Even then, it may remain a matter of speculation why no other obvious Scots lived on Fellside. It would also leave open the question of why a coal-miner was carrying a purse of 80s.

A footnote reference in Levine does reveal evidence that at least some of these Kennedys were miners:

*“The copyholders’ quarrel was with the coalowners not the workmen. The workmen seem to have been outside all of this. One, called to give evidence in 1620, could speak confidently of current practice in the wain carriage of coal, but declared himself ignorant of, and therefore unable to comment upon, such matters as land tenure in Whickham, former customs concerning the dowelling of coalways, the history of coalmining in the manor over the last generation, and the levels of compensation formerly paid to copyholders. Another said of such matters, ‘he cann saie nothing to them being but a coteman’ [sic], and yet another that he could not depone ‘by reason he is no copiholder nor farmer but onlie liveth by his own industrie and paines’. PRO DURH 7/18 pt. 1, testimony of Christopher Robson; 7/19 pt. 1 testimony of Ralph Kenetye, John Dover.”*¹³

Appendix A. Social peers of the Kennedys, Wickham parish, 1666

There were 25 households liable to the hearth tax in Wickham Fellside in the 1666 assessment. Four were social elite with 7-11 hearths – Sir Thomas Liddell, Sir James Clavering, Robert Harding and Lord Baltimore. The remainder typically owned 1 or 2 hearths (one had 4). Apart from the Kennedy who is the centre of our research, the

¹¹ Unnamed in the printed Hearth Tax edition, but names available in TNA E179/327 pt 3 (1671). There were just over 100 exemption certificates in a later return of 1673.

¹² Levine and Wrightson, p18.

¹³ Levine and Wrightson, pp203-4

other surnames in this social group were as follows, somewhat crudely grouped by their geographical origins.

Co. Durham & surrounding area origin:

Pallister x2, Maddison x2, Robson x2, Brignall, Hudson, Appleby, Hodgson, Emmerson, Errington, Layburne.

Yorks-Lancs:

Blackburne,

Ubiquitous (English) origin:

Turner, Sandersx2, Moore, Bucke

Others:

Healocke

From this quick analysis using Archer Software's Surname Atlas, it can be seen that most of the names could be considered local and the remainder are widespread English names. Only Robson has any showing in Scotland, with a strong showing just over the border in Roxburghshire; however its peak distribution is local with Gateshead poor law union being its top relative area. Clearly on this basis, Kennedy stands out as the only purely non-English surname. (Healocke doesn't actually feature in the Surname Atlas and time doesn't allow further study on this. The similar sounding Hillock, of course, has multiple origins).

Proof of wandering Kennedys much earlier can be seen in the printed records from Kendale barony in Westmorland, which show a surprisingly early presence dating to 1370 when Thomas Kenedy was living in Barbon¹⁴. This is all the more unexpected in that there is no trace of the surname in the Westmorland hearth tax which survives from 1670¹⁵. There were no Kennedys present in the area in the earlier extracted records but the previous listing, a lay subsidy roll from 1332, lists a Patrick Scote and a Robert de Berewyk [Berwick] along with more local surnames such as Redmayne and de Baynbridge [Bainbridge lies 20 miles east in Yorkshire]. In view of these earlier men and the lack of indication of Irish presence, it is assumed that Thomas Kenedy hailed from Scotland although an origin in Leinster or the Isle of Man cannot be ruled out, as both are known to have had Kennedys earlier in the fourteenth century. The map below shows some of these places with approximate dates and includes the non-Kennedy Scots; Patrick Scote's precise origins are of course unknown.

¹⁴Records relating to the Barony of Kendale, ed. JF Curwen, v2 p370

¹⁵Westmorland Hearth Tax Michaelmas 1670 & surveys 1674-5 ed. C. Phillips et al, p181.



Origins, known or speculative, of residents of Barbon, Westmorland in 1332 and 1370.