

Yorkshire Surnames  
and the Hearth Tax of  
1672-1673

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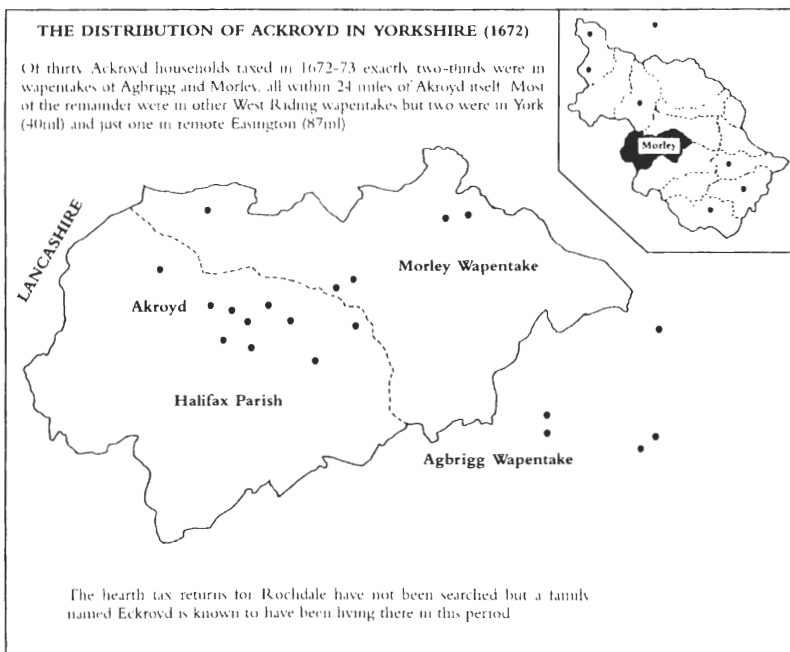
# *Yorkshire Surnames and the Hearth Tax Returns of 1672-73*

## **Introduction**

Few names sound as Yorkshire as Ackroyd. The surname is instantly recognisable as one of a group which are derived from medieval farms that had been cleared from the West Riding woods and moors. Minor place-names ending in *-royd* are very common in the Calder Valley, where Akroyd was the 'oak clearing', 800 feet above sea level in the township of Wadsworth, on the other side of the valley from Heptonstall. John de Aykroide was the constable of Wadsworth in 1381 and Samuel Aykeroyd of Aykeroyd was recorded in the Heptonstall parish register in 1648. The origins of this West Riding surname are clear. The early generations of the Ackroyds or Akeroyds did not at first move very far from their original home, but then, like many West Riding families, they began to multiply during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and to spread further afield. In the Yorkshire hearth tax returns for 1672-73 we find 30 households of Ackroyds. Three had ventured north to Linton, Dent and Thornton in Lonsdale, two had got to York, two had moved to North Elmsall and Kirkby Fleetham, two had settled in the south of the county at Rotherham and Hatfield Woodhouse and one had got as far east as Easington. Others had crossed into Lancashire, but all the rest were taxed in places that were not far from the home of the name: 3 in Warley, 2 each in Ovenden, Clayton, Midgley, Soothill and Wakefield and 1 each in Halifax, Wadsworth, Shelf, Eccleshill, Haworth, Calverley and Rothwell. Thirteen of these Ackroyd households still lived in the ancient parish of Halifax, which included the farmstead that provided the family name.

The Dungworths are another Yorkshire family whose origins are easy to find. The hamlet of Dungworth stands on the Hallamshire moors to the north west of Sheffield. Half of the 180 Dungworths who subscribed to the national telephone service in 1986 were listed in the Sheffield telephone directory and further back in time the distribution of the surname was confined to that district. A William Dungworth was recorded at Storrs, half a mile from the hamlet of Dungworth, in 1323. The Dungworths were not as prolific as the Ackroyds and did not venture as far. Only 7 families of Dungworths were recorded in the hearth tax returns of 1672; 4 of them in Dungworth township, 1 in the adjacent township of Bradfield and 2 at Attercliffe (on the other side of Sheffield but still within Hallamshire, where they had migrated by 1440). Soon, however, one of the family was to move

far away from the home of his ancestors. In 1680 Richard Dungworth was one of the Yorkshire Quakers who emigrated across the Atlantic to New Jersey. He is a sharp reminder that, although most members of a family remained within their own neighbourhood, individuals moved away, especially to London, which was always a magnet for the young, or to seek their fortunes in regional centres such as York and Hull. The wanderings of these adventurers made little difference to the distribution pattern of a family name, but we must bear in mind that not everybody was content to stay within the limited horizons of the ancestral neighbourhood.



Barrowclough or Barraclough is another distinctive Calder Valley name, but its origins are less certain than that of Ackroyd. Its early concentration is in Southowram and Hipperholme townships. The first element of the place-name denotes a grove or wood and a clough is a Pennine name for a ravine. The Peter del Bariclouge who was recorded at Hipperholme in the Wakefield manor court rolls in 1315 and the John Barowclofe who paid poll tax in Southowram in 1379 were probably the ancestors of all the bearers of this distinctive West Riding name, which developed a number of variants. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Barracloughs began to spread

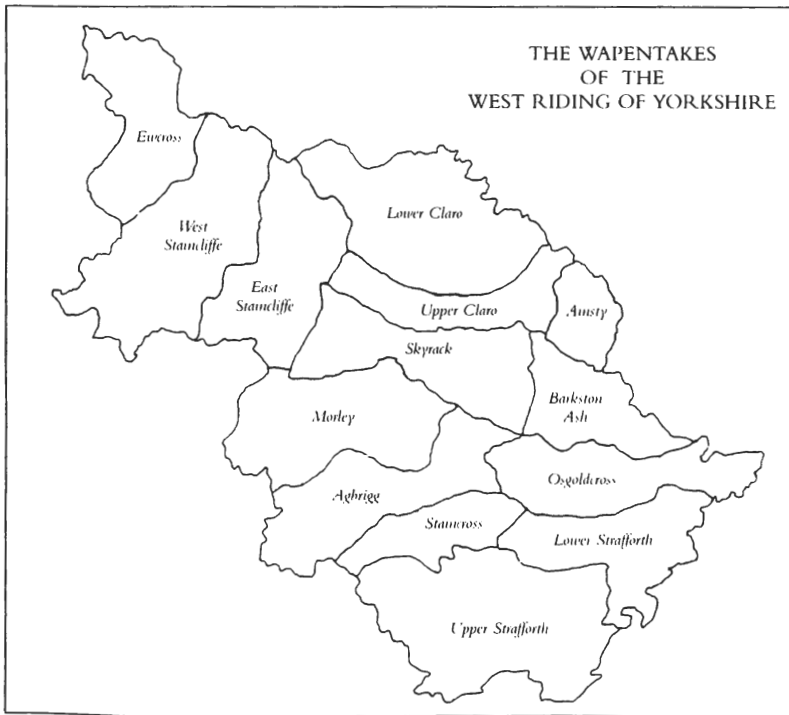
outwards, but in 1672 they were still found most commonly in the Calder Valley, or just beyond, with 5 in Halifax, 4 in Northowram, 3 each at North Bierley and Skircoat and 1 each in Southowram, Gomersall, Liversedge, Eccleshill, Langfield, Holbeck, Hunsworth and Scammonden. Four Barracloughs lived in Hull but the rest had got no further than Keighley, Featherstone, Snaith, Wath (2) and Hemingfield.

If the distribution pattern for Barraclough in 1672 was similar to that for Ackroyd, then that for Broomhead resembled the pattern for Dungworth, albeit the surname had become more widespread. This is unsurprising, for Broomhead is a minor place-name on the edge of the Hallamshire moors, about three miles north of Dungworth. The first reference to the surname is in 1280, when Henry de Broomhead witnessed a deed for a neighbour. In 1326 the Broomheads moved a short distance to Bradfield, where the senior branch remained for centuries; in 1379 William Broomhead and his wife paid poll tax there. When the hearth tax was collected 7 of the 16 households of Broomheads were living within the chapelry of Bradfield and 3 were housed across the Rivelin Valley in the township of Upper Hallam; 2 others were living further east at Loughton and Warmsworth and 4 households had ventured north to Campsall, Pontefract, Wakefield and Tong. Although a few Broomheads or Brumitts (as the name is also written) had crossed the southern county boundary into Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, the concentration of the name in the western part of Hallamshire was still marked.

Locating the home of a family name from its distribution pattern in the late seventeenth century is not always as straightforward as in these four examples, but in a surprising number of cases it is. The patterns suggest the places where we should make a start with genealogical methods in order to trace a name back as far as we are able and where to look for the earliest references to a name in taxation lists and manor court records. In very many cases the seventeenth-century pattern allows us to make the reasonable suggestion that a surname has a single-family origin. The argument that a significant proportion of English surnames are derived from single ancestors has recently been supported by DNA analyses of the male Y-chromosome, which, like a surname, is passed on from father to son. This exciting new development has offered strong support to the idea that some of Yorkshire's distinctive surnames each originate from a particular place with just one person.

The distribution patterns of surnames are a great help to local historians who are seeking to define the geographical limits of their local societies. In the past, people were attached not only to their native parish or township but to a wider, vaguer unit which they spoke of as their 'country', the equivalent of the French *pays*. The use of this word to mean a neighbourhood has passed

from everyday speech, but it was once common usage for the familiar local neighbourhood that was bounded by the nearest market towns. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines this usage as 'A tract or district having more or less definite limits in relation to human occupation, e.g. owned by the same lord or proprietor, or inhabited by people of the same race, dialect, occupation, etc.' The Ackroyds and Barracloughs belonged to the Calder Valley, the Dungworths and the Broomheads to what Daniel Defoe described as 'the country called Hallamshire'. They rarely ventured, if ever, into each other's territory. Yorkshire's distinctive surnames were not found scattered throughout the county but were concentrated in the districts where they had originated or in places where families had settled during the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. We can still observe this ancient pattern at the beginning of the twenty-first century, though it has become much less sharp than it was at the time of the hearth tax returns, which offer a convenient snapshot of surnames half way between the period of their formation and the present day.



## The Yorkshire Hearth Tax Returns

The tax on hearths was the chief source of revenue for Charles II's government. Between 1662 and 1688 it raised about £200,000 a year. Each hearth was taxed at the rate of 2 shillings per annum, payable in two instalments at Lady Day and Michaelmas. The tax collectors, assisted by the local constables, recorded the name of each householder, together with the number of hearths that he or she possessed. Those people who were too poor to pay church and poor rates, or who occupied premises worth less than 20 shillings a year, or who possessed property worth not above £10, were exempt from the tax. Over the nation as a whole, the exempted poor amounted to about a third of the population. In some townships their names were recorded, but in most cases the lists are incomplete.

The returns for each county were arranged by wapentakes or hundreds, which in turn were divided into townships. They give a general indication of wealth and they have been used to good effect by historians for the analysis of social structure and for estimating total population at township and county level. They are also of great interest to students of vernacular architecture. Here, we are concerned to demonstrate their value for the study of surnames. Despite their deficiencies in the under-recording of the exempted poor, the returns show with great clarity that in the late seventeenth century very many Yorkshire surnames were confined to particular districts, which were generally the ones where the surname originated or which had become the 'home' of a name early in the period of surname formation during the middle ages. These distributions sometimes point to a different explanation of the etymology of a surname from that offered in the standard dictionaries. Local and family historians can make a substantial contribution to a subject that has long been the domain of the linguist.

J. D. Purdy's account has shown that the records of the Yorkshire hearth tax are plentiful and for the most part are in good condition, though a few membranes are missing. We have relied here on the returns that have been transcribed and printed, though we are aware of some problems with these. The best return for the West and East Ridings (Lady Day 1672) and the North Riding (Michaelmas 1673) is being prepared for the Borthwick Texts and Calendars series. The Ripon Historical Society and the Ripon, Harrogate & District Family History Group have together published 14 booklets covering most of the county. The Skyrack wapentake returns for Ladyday 1672 have been published in volumes 2 and 4 of the Publications of the Thoresby Society and the same returns for Strafforth & Tickhill and Staincross wapentakes have been published by the Names Project Group at the University of Sheffield. The returns for the three ridings of Yorkshire contain nearly 80,000 names. Despite the omissions, this is a very large