

Garrett Name history to 1066

An Annotated Historical Timeline of the Development of the Name Garrett/Garret/Garratt/ Etymologists have, for a long time, declared that the name Garret comes from the French Gerard (or Girard). But it has not been clear how this evolved. Now there is an interesting historical trail which seems to explain how this happened.

About 1086 there were about 18 men whose first names were Gerard within the forces of the Normans under William the Conqueror who invaded the British Isles. Over time it is believed that these Gerard names evolved to Garret (and variants), as well as some Fitzgeralds, and a few Chamberlains. That is roughly the same period during which surnames also began to evolve. The Gerards, loyal to the invading king, became Yeomen, administering and sometimes owning land on behalf of the King, and employing the indigenous population. Sometimes these persons were called tenants-in-chief, or under tenants

These 18 lines can be sorted out by the use of DNA. Contact the writer for more information. From the point of view of studying the relationship of various Garret lines it is important to realize that there could be as many as 18 different Garret, Fitzgerald, and Chamberlain lines, each developing from the 18th century yeomen named Gerard. Fitzgerald derives from son of Gerald, an old Irish naming convention. And at least one Gerard became the Chamberlain to King William, and adopted Chamberlain as his name. .

The Domesday Book, a survey of British life ca 1066 - 1086 is the major source of the information leading from Gerard to Garrett and variants. The identification of the original 18, plus or minus, Gerards comes from this source. It is impossible to know how many Gerard lines survived independently because some presumably intermarried, and some probably were wiped out by the great plague. Gerards became Garrets or variants on the fact that the geographical locations of the Gerards at the time of the Domesday Survey, were the same geographical locations that Garrets and variants were found in the next 100 years or so. The primary reason for this name evolution was simply the Anglicization of the French Girard to the English Garret or variant.

Celtic through Norman to British Isle annotated time line for Garret and variants

TIME LINE-DATE EVENT

-600 1st wave of Celtic invaders

-250 2nd wave of Celtic invaders

367 Roman British attacked by Picts and Saxons

367 - 1066 From time to time Nordic raiders arrived on the east coast of the British Isles, starting with Hengist and Horsa, followed later by the Saxons, Jutes, Angles, etc.

By the 9th century the Danes were arriving and ruled a section of England now called Lincolnshire and the East Midlands.

About the same time the Vikings arrived in the Orkneys and Shetlands where their influence persists to this day. Another group of raiders came to the northeast coast of England and settled in York. Recent archaeological excavations have amplified the knowledge of this latter group.

1066 The Normans who conquered England in the year 1066 came from the area called Normandy, but "Norman" is a version of the word "Norseman." A few centuries before the Norman Conquest of England, these people (as then Vikings) had raided the north coast of Europe. This included the whole of the coast line from Latvia through the Baltic, across the Hanseatic States through France and Spain as far as Portugal. Although they settled primarily in Western Europe, they did partly colonize the Orkneys and Shetlands, but they never settled in the rest of the British Isles. Normans they were, now quite far removed from their Vikings beginnings. By 1066, though, they had adopted European customs, the French language and Roman Catholic Christianity. These Normans who conquered England were, for their time, very modern Western Europeans.

But remember that the invader Prince William was a Norman. But many of his troops were not; they came from a geographical area much broader than just Normandy.

The point is that although there were already some Norsemen in the British Isles before 1066, there is no record of anyone named Gerard before the 1066 invasion. These Gerards might have been Norsemen by heritage, or might have been from other parts of Western Europe.

1066 The last stage of a family quarrel occurred at the Battle of Hastings, often referred to as the Norman conquest of England. King William of Normandy attacked the forces of his cousin King Harold of the British Isles, and King Harold was killed. (Cooperation have been better way!) The important point here is that GERARD was the name of that small group of 18 of King William's invaders.

1086 The 18 men (from the invaders) with the name GERARD that came over with King William, were now the land owners or principal tenants, called Yeomen. Conquering armies typically took the lands, and the Lords gave the tenancies to their soldiers. In this case some were GERARDS. The name GERARD was used only by the conquerors; Saxons would not have used the hated name. Soldiers who became Yeomen retained this position for centuries. They were the middlemen, loyal to the Lords, and they employed the indigenous population.

1086 The Domesday Book occurred at this time. It was a domestic survey including background information in England. In it there were 18 Gerard names which in most cases seem to have a link with the appearance of a GARRET family in the same area toward the end of the middle ages, Ca 1450

1100s The Isle of Man and the great Norman Castle at Peel was taken over by the Norman/English. A few GARRET families may have ancestors that date back to that time, but most will be descended from immigrants related to the Norman/English invasion.

1169 Strongbow's Anglo-Normans arrive in Ireland at invitation of the exiled King of Leinster, Dermot McMurrugh

1200 By this time most of 1086 GERARD families had adopted the name GARRET but one or two did not. The most famous of these was GERARD of the Chamberlain to King William, who held vast areas of the land between Hereford and Winchester. The First Chamberlain of this family is buried in the Hereford Cathedral, and proudly took the surname Chamberlain. The most notorious of that line was Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.

Donald G. Dickason, January 2005

WHAT'S IN A NAME ... Are you called **GARRATT**?

Corresponding versions are found right across the continent - e.g. Gerhardt (Germany), Giraud (France). All these names, whatever the spelling, are derived from terms which the old Norse Invaders brought with them during their incursions into western Europe and that accounts for their wide distribution. The common unit was "gairu", which means spear or javelin. It was found frequently in old English then for some reason was dropped in preference to "spear". A text dated 1205 first reads: "He held in hys hands a gare", but 70 years later it was re-written using the words "a speare". The old word still survives in terms such as "goad" (a pointed stick used to urge animals forward), and expressions with a pointed or triangular connotation such as in tailoring (Gore - a triangular cutting) or in place-names referring to a triangular piece of land as in Langar, near Nottingham.

The turbulent times of the early middle ages imposed upon men the need to be able to handle weapons. A man who was adept in the use of his spear would be greatly admired and if he had proved his skill in battle by slaying his opponent he would have been dubbed "Gairu-wald". This combines the word for spear with "wald" meaning "power". His name could then be interpreted as "He who is mighty with his spear". It eventually modified into "Gerald". Running alongside this name was another, "Gerard" which combined "gairu" with "hardu" (hard) and, to use a modern idiom, would signify. "He who shoots to kill!" It is interesting to note that if wielded forcibly, spears would break in two. A broken spear was a sign that a man had proved himself in battle and eventually a stylised representation of a broken spear was adopted to form the chevrons on the sleeves of some army uniforms. Both Gerald and Gerard were not only extremely popular names in Britain, even before the conquest, but as far south as Italy it was to be found, and a family of that name there moved into France and then into England and crossed over into Ireland, taking the name FitzGerald. This has become so involved in Irish history that it is often believed to be exclusively Irish. The two personal names "Gerald" and "Gerard" became inextricably confused when they transposed into surnames and they cannot easily be distinguished. In 1511 Oxford University registered one student as "Thomas Garad or Garrarde or Garrett". In 1555 the shoemaker to Princess Elizabeth (later Queen) was named as both Garrett and Garratt in the same set of accounts.

The sources of confusion are first that the letter "I" in some of the forms based upon Gerald has dropped out, making it difficult to differentiate from Gerard. This development can be seen in other surnames such as "Harold" emerging as "Harrod" or in such dialect words as "owd" for "old". Secondly the initial "G-" in both names modulated into "J-". The reason for this (very simply) is that the "jay" sound of "G-" between 1000 to 1600 was often represented by the letter "I-" as, for example "Iesus" (Jesus) and "Iutan" (describing the people called "Jutes"). Because "I" was rather an insignificant character scribes tended to write it with a tail and this evolved into "J". It first appears in 1221 in the case of Adam Jeroldus (Ely). Taking mostly examples from names listed locally, "Garratt" (52 entries) is first recorded under John Garrat in 1553 (Rochester) and as Jarratt in 1597 (Surrey). Families named "Gerrard" (32 entries) can look to an ancestor who took his name from "Gairu-hardu" (ie. The Killer!) and later, "Gerard". The earliest record is for John Gerard (1230: Somerset). The spelling "Jarrold" (1221) predates "Garrod" (1540) but both belong to Suffolk. In Ireland the historical character Maurice Fitzgerald is chronicled roundabout 1169. In Scotland there is a Henry Gerard for 1190. The name is noted as being imported from England and this spelling is apparently the only one prevailing. Although examples are to be found elsewhere, the names of Garrod and Jarrold are strongly represented in East Anglia. The publishers called "Jarrollds" are established in Norwich. But the most distinguished bearer of the name of "Garrett" was Elizabeth, daughter of Newson Garrett of Aldeburgh in Suffolk. She is better known with her married name "Anderson" and she was the first woman doctor in Britain, and incidentally, the first to hold Mayoral Office (Aldeburgh, 1909).

Gerard: Notes

Recorded in many spellings and found through Europe, this is a variation of the surname Garrett. This was one of the most popular pre medieval personal names, and translates as "spear-brave" from the elements "geri," a spear and "hard" meaning hardy, brave or strong. The personal name was introduced into Britain by the Norman-French in 1066, and is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 in the Latin spellings of Gerardus and Girardus. In the modern idiom there are nearly thirty recorded derivatives of the personal name as surnames, including Garrard, Gerard, Gerrard, Gerald (English), Gerard, Giraud, Gerardet (France), Gerardi, Ghiraldi (Italy), and many others. Amongst the very early recordings is that of William Gerard, in the assize court rolls of Yorkshire in 1219. Among the several notable namebearers mentioned in the Dictionary of National Biography are Sir William Gerard, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, 1579, and Alexander Gerard (1792 - 1839), Himalayan explorer who ascended peaks hitherto unscaled and penetrated into Tibet. The first recorded spelling of the family name is shown to be that of Hugo Gerard, which was dated 1199, in the "Pipe Rolls of Northamptonshire", during the reign of Richard 1, known as "Richard the Lionheart" 1189 - 1199. Surnames became necessary when governments introduced personal taxation. In England this was known as Poll Tax. Throughout the centuries, surnames in every country have continued to "develop" often leading to astonishing variants of the original spelling.

Originally Nordic GERARD. It was a Given Name. Came to the north coasts of Europe in 9thC with Nordic Raiders.

By mutation it became GERRARD, GERHARDT and similar in France, Germany, Switzerland and along parts of the Baltic Coast.

It first came to the UK in the year 1066 with William the Conqueror's army and 20 years later there were some 19 men recorded as landowners in England with this name. They were all from the Conqueror's armies.

Two hundred years later when Sirenames came into use descendents of these Normans whose father happened to have been given the name of GERARD came to have this name as a Surname. In England the pronunciation apparently became anglicised and early Clerks transcribed it as GARRAT or GARRET, sometimes with an additional 'T' on the end and occasionally with an extra 'TE'. In a few cases the hard G at the front became a soft J.

Also, which is confusing to Family History researchers, the name was often spelt differently in different years for the same person. Thus there is no significance as to whether today you are a GARRETT or a GARRATT.

Finally, all UK GARRATTS must, by definition, originally have been YEOMEN by direct descent on the male line, with the obvious proviso that some people in the past had slipped down the social scale, and we know of two families that were of higher social rank at one stage in the past 1000 years.

Early records of the name mention Gerordus (without surname) listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. Hugo Gerard was recorded in 1199 in Northumberland. William Gerart was documented in 1281 in the County of Suffolk. Johannes Gerard of Yorkshire, was listed in the Yorkshire Poll Tax of 1379. Thomas Garard registered at Oxford University in 1511.

English (chiefly Lancashire) and French (Gérard): from the personal name *Gerard, Gérard*, introduced to Britain from France by the Normans; it is composed of the Germanic elements *gar, ger* 'spear', 'lance' + *hard* 'hardy', 'brave', 'strong'.

Spelling:

GA followed by one or two 'R' then any vowel except a 'U' then one or two 'T' and sometimes an 'E' is added.