

The origin of some English surnames are obvious eg. *Smith*, *Carpenter*. Others are more obscure because they may have changed considerably since they were first used.



A potter at work

Surnames (family names) are not like first (given) names. The surname grew out of the need to distinguish one John from another: **John the cook** or John the barber. Where he lived may have been the way to identify him: **John on the hill** or John by the woods. Perhaps he had moved from abroad: **John French**, John Fleming (from Flanders). He may have had a very distinctive appearance such as **John the wild**, John the long fellow or John with the white head. Or he got his father's given name as a surname: **John Peters**, John Peterson.

Around the 14th century surnames were fixed and no longer referred to the person bearing them. This happened in towns first, in the country later.

- **British family names:** *Armstrong*, *Baker*, *Barber*, *Beckham*, *Bishop*, *Black*, *Bush*, *Carpenter*, *Churchill*, *Cook*, *Cooper*, *Cuttler* (made knives), *Eastwood*, *Edward*, *Edwards*, *Fairchild*, *Fisher*, *Fleming*, *Fletcher* (made arrows), *French*, *Greenwood*, *Harper*, *Harris*, *Hill*, *Holland*, *Hunter*, *Ireland*, *Kitchener*, *Little*, *Longfellow*, *Peters*, *Potter* (made pots), *Richardson*, *Shakespeare*, *Shipman*, *Short*, *Silver*, *Smith*, *Sweet*, *Tailor*, *Townsend*, *Turner* (made wooden bowls), *Upjohn*, *Watson* (Walter's son), *Webster*, *White*, *Whitehead*, *Wild*, *Williams*

**Occupations:** *Baker*, .....

**Home or Place of Birth:** *Eastwood*, .....

**Appearance or Character:** *Short*, .....

**Father's or Mother's name:** *Harris*, .....