

# **The Attfield surname, its origin and history**

*by John Attfield*

Why are some people called Attfield? And why are they relatively few in number? These questions, intriguing at least for anyone connected with this name, can be investigated from different angles. Firstly, early forms of the name can be traced in order to determine its original meaning. And secondly, genealogical records (now available on the internet in abundance) can be collated in order to map the name's distribution and history. This essay adopts both approaches, and hopefully also sheds some interesting light on wider aspects of surname history.<sup>1</sup>

In the Royal Society's obituary to John Attfield (1835 – 1911), Professor of Practical Chemistry to the Pharmaceutical Society and editor of the *British Pharmacopoeia*, his surname's origin is described as follows: "The name – originally At-the-fields, and later Atte Felde or Atefeld – is purely English, and it is therefore easy to trace the descent of John Attfield from the John Atefeld who flourished in 'the Ville of Staundon' (now Standon, eight miles north-east of Hertford) as far back as 1361."<sup>2</sup>

That this cannot be the last word on the subject is shown by the fact – of which the professor, himself an enthusiastic genealogist, was certainly aware – that John Attfield's own family did not settle in Barnet, on the borders of Hertfordshire and Middlesex, until two generations previously. His grandfather Richard moved there around 1770, and the family's earlier origins were not in Hertfordshire but in Surrey.

## **The meaning of the Attfield surname**

The etymological meaning of the name Attfield, "... 'at the field' from residence thereby"<sup>3</sup> or "dweller by the open field",<sup>4</sup> is relatively clear. There are many recorded instances of early variations of the name dating at least to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, or even the 12<sup>th</sup>,<sup>5</sup> but unfortunately these are of limited use in tracing the origins of modern-day Attfield families.

In the Winchester Pipe Rolls relating to the parish of Headley in Hampshire, 1210 – 1670, transcribed and put on the internet by Philip Brooks,<sup>6</sup> the following early name variants are found among others:

1224	Henry de Felde
1226	Mabel of the field
1284	Nicholas at the felde
1292	John atte felde
1296	Cristina ate Felde
1349	William atte Felde
1409	Agnes atte Felde

These examples – which can be duplicated from other parts of the country – are from the mediaeval period during which hereditary surnames were becoming established in England. They show some of the steps in the early evolution of this type of surname, e.g. from ‘de’ to ‘atte’, which also took place with other topographical names; other examples from the above source include “atte Knowle”, “atte Church”, “atte Putte” (=Wells), “at the Brook”, and many others. Anthony Adolph describes the process as follows. Topographical surnames “arose from a geographical feature that distinguished the person’s home. Originally they were often prepositioned ‘atte’ or ‘at’, so Clement who lived in or by a meadow would have been Clement atte Lee. The prepositions were usually shed by the 14<sup>th</sup> century but, where they were not, surnames such as Atlee arose.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Ron Collins, this type of surname had an even earlier origin. “Such names were employed in France at an early date ... and were introduced into England by the Normans, many of whom were known by the titles of their estates. The surnames adopted by nobility were chiefly of this type, being used with the particles ‘de’, ‘de la’ or ‘del’ (meaning ‘of’ or ‘of the’). The Saxon equivalent was the word ‘atte’ (‘at the’), found in names such as John atte Brook, Edmund atte Lane, Godwin atte Brigg, and William Atwood, John Atwell and Atwater; in other cases the Norman ‘de’ was substituted; and in still others, such as Wood, Briggs, and Lane, the particle was dropped.”<sup>8</sup>

In mediaeval times, topographical and local names with the prefix “atte” were very common. In the transition to modern times, in the great majority of cases the prefix was either dropped entirely or transformed, for example to the possessive ending “s” (e.g. “atte Brigg” to “Briggs”) or “er” (e.g. “atte Crouch” to “Croucher”).<sup>9</sup> This shortening process may well have taken place in the spoken language some time before it occurred in formal written documents such as the Pipe Rolls. Undoubtedly the same process occurred with “Field”, so that while names like “atte Feld”, etc, were quite common in mediaeval times, in the majority of cases they became shortened to “Field” and the modern surnames “Attfield” and “Atfield” are relatively rare.

### **Modern Attfield name distribution**

That the modern name is not common can be seen from a count of At(t)field households and individuals in the period for which census data is available, as shown below:

Number of At(t)fields (England & Wales, 1841 - 1901)<sup>10</sup>

Census	Individuals	Households
1841	457	94
1851	529	100
1861	576	120
1871	655	141
1881	640	139
1891	701	151
1901	982	213

(For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the spellings Attfield and Atfield were somewhat interchangeable, also of course depending on the whims of the census enumerators. The 1841

census recorded half as many Atfield as Attfield households, but by 1901 Attfield outnumbered Atfield by about four to one. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries various other archaic spellings also existed which disappeared later, e.g. Attfeild, Atfeld or Atfielde. “Hattfield”, which occurs in a few parish records, is probably always a clerical error.)

By comparison, the 1841 census recorded over 8,000 individuals called “Field”, over 3,000 “Fielding”, over 1,000 “Fields” and over 1,000 “Fielder”.

The 1841 distribution of At(t)field individuals and households by county shows the surname’s geographical concentration:

Distribution of At(t)fields by county (England & Wales, 1841)<sup>11</sup>

County	Attfield	Atfield	Total	Households
Surrey	179	76	255	55
Middlesex (incl. London)	55	14	69	15
Berkshire	1	31	32	6
Hampshire	13	7	20	4
Sussex	8	10	18	3
Somerset	2	8	10	1
Northamptonshire	--	9	9	1
Worcestershire	6	2	8	2
Dorset	6	1	7	1
Lincolnshire	2	5	7	2
Warwickshire	1	5	6	2
Kent	--	5	5	1
Other counties	3	8	11	1
Total	276	181	457	94

These counts are based on the spellings used by the census enumerators, even in cases where this is known to have been wrong. It is important to note that several of the “strays” found in isolated counties – such as the individual households recorded in Somerset, Northamptonshire, Dorset and Lincolnshire, as well as several in Middlesex – are known to have migrated from Surrey within the previous 1-2 generations.

The geographical concentration is further shown by the distribution of At(t)field households within Surrey:

Distribution of At(t)field households (Surrey parishes, 1841)<sup>12</sup>

Farnham	13	Clapham	1
Windlesham	8	Elstead	1
Egham	7	Guildford	1
Albury	5	Kingston	1
Lambeth	5	Richmond	1
Chobham	2	Shere	1
Compton	2	Witley	1
Godalming	2	Woking	1
Byfleet	1	Worplesdon	1
Chertsey	1		

## The Attfield name in Surrey

In contrast to its later geographical concentration, in mediaeval times the name occurs in many different parts of Surrey. At Rotherhithe c.1300, “Hamo atte Felde ... clerk, granted to William de Rokesle and his wife Sarah a curtilage which he had bought of Adam de Aldeham”.<sup>13</sup> In 40 Edw III (1367) “Richard de Burstow granted to Sir Nicholas de Louvain and Henry Attefeld his Manor of Burstowe, with all his lands in the Village of Burstow, and in the parishes of Horne, Horle and Wivelsfield”.<sup>14</sup> In 1418 the Manor of Apps, Walton on Thames, “was held under the Croysers by John Pegays and William atte Field, probably feoffees”.<sup>15</sup> At Guildford in 30 Hen VIII (1539) a Henry Atfeld was among those nominated to provide harnesses “for serving the King in his wars”.<sup>16</sup>

Numerous early references to the name can be found in the parish of Chobham. The 14<sup>th</sup> century Chertsey Cartulary Records and Chobham Court Rolls, transcripts of which are available on the internet, contain many instances of the name “atte Felde”.<sup>17</sup> Another early Chobham reference, on the occasion of Henry VIII’s visit to the town in 1545, records: “Dewe to Thomas Atfelde of Chobham for two lodes 14 feet of Tymber, three lodes of joysts taken at his house & his labour for lodyng of the said tymber, £1 14s. 6d.”<sup>18</sup> In 1559 Robert Atfelde of Chobham, evidently a substantial yeoman, left legacies to his widow and four children along with a bequest for mending the church bells.<sup>19</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the antiquary John Aubrey noted an inscription in Chobham parish church, “on a stone in the south aisle (now obliterated or hid by a pew): ‘Hic jacet corpus Johannis Attfield de Millards, qui obit 12 Junii 1675, aet 65. Nec non hic jacet corpus Constantiae Attfield uxor praedicti Johannis Attfield, quae ob. 7 Nov 1667, aet suae 35’.” And on another stone: “Here lies buried the body of Walter Attfield, who dyed Dec 21, 1656, aged 43 years”.<sup>20</sup> The surname also occurs there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. Sarah Attfield of Chobham, spinster, left a will in 1772 containing a legacy to her nephew Henry John Attfield, also of Chobham.<sup>21</sup>

While these numerous Chobham references over several centuries point to a probable continuity of the surname there, the lack of unbroken genealogical records unfortunately prevents us from linking up the above individuals or connecting them to any later Attfield families. The earliest Attfield baptisms in Surrey recorded in the IGI<sup>22</sup> start in 1576; the first such records are in the parish of Worplesdon, between Woking and Guildford (where the family was known as “Attfield alias Ripley”, discussed later). The first burial listed there is also dated 1576.<sup>23</sup>

Locations of other early Attfield baptisms in Surrey include Egham (1597), Cranley (1625), Guildford (1638), Bramley (1676), Pyrford, near Chertsey (1708) and Godalming (1709). Early burial records are at Bisley (1571), West Clandon (1609), Guildford (1639), Chobham (1656), Pirbright (1667), Send (1681), Egham (1690) and Woking (1692), but none of these families can be reliably traced through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of course this is dependent on the survival and availability of early parish registers.

In 1841 the largest cluster of Attfield families in Surrey was at Farnham, near the Hampshire border. Roger White and Merion Burt, who are studying the Farnham Attfields, have

traced a continuous lineage into the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a Hedge Atfeild or Feild in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and his antecedents.<sup>24</sup> Their evidence, however, shows that this family migrated to Farnham from elsewhere, probably Woking. Although the Farnham parish registers go back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest recorded Attfield burial there is in 1714 and the earliest baptism in 1747, implying that the ancestors of the numerous Attfield families living at Farnham in 1841 did not arrive there until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Other descendants of this same Hedge Atfeild also seem to have settled at Chertsey, where Nathaniel Atfeild the Elder, brewer and Nathaniel Atfeild the Younger, draper (who died in 1733), signed a property lease in 1728.<sup>25</sup> This particular branch of the family – which, with a bit of imagination, is probably traceable through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century – evidently moved to Chertsey from Woking some time in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. There are very few Attfield records in Chertsey pre-dating this.

The antecedents of Hedge Atfeild probably lived at Windlesham, where the family of “Field or Attfield” was said to be “very ancient”.<sup>26</sup> In a will dated 1596, Henry Hedge of Bagshot in the parish of Windlesham, yeoman, left legacies to the family of “Nicholas Atteilde my son in law”<sup>27</sup> (Nicholas was Hedge Atfeild’s father). The earliest record of the name at Windlesham is in 1561 when William Molyneux released a moiety in the Manor of Freemantles to John Attefield.<sup>28</sup> In 1588 John Attfield, yeoman, presented a rector to the church as patron.<sup>29</sup> Early Windlesham wills include those of John Atfeild also Feild, yeoman (proved in 1627),<sup>30</sup> Henry Atfeild, carpenter (dated 1636, proved in 1655)<sup>31</sup> and John Atfeild, yeoman (proved in 1658),<sup>32</sup> but despite this evidence of surname continuity the fragmentary nature of the parish records means that in most cases it is not possible to reliably trace these families into later generations. As well as Hedge Atfeild’s line, the earliest Attfield/Field lineages in Windlesham that can be plausibly traced into the 20<sup>th</sup> century date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In nearby Egham, where Attfields existed at an early date, the longest unbroken lineage into the 20<sup>th</sup> century originates from a Henry Attfield who was born c.1748, although earlier baptism records date back at least to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The lineages of a number of At(t)field families in Winkfield, just across the border in Berkshire, can be traced back to the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The ancestors of these families most likely migrated there from Surrey – possibly from Egham or Windlesham – one or two generations earlier. Some of these Berkshire families later adopted the name “Hatfield”.

Thus, as shown above, early genealogical evidence of the At(t)field surname in Surrey indicates that it was heavily concentrated in a small cluster of mid-Surrey parishes, especially Chobham, Egham, Windlesham, Woking, Worplesdon and their neighbours. This points strongly to the origination of the modern surname in that locality. Of course it is quite possible that the name also emerged independently elsewhere, but migration from this single original source would seem to be more likely.

### **Occurrences in other counties**

Of the 69 At(t)fields recorded in Middlesex (including London) in 1841, 14 were in parishes close to the Surrey border (e.g. Isleworth, Teddington, Shepperton, Brentford/Ealing,

etc), often working as servants, and can doubtless be counted as belonging to the Surrey branches. The Attfields in Barnet, as mentioned above, were recent migrants from Surrey, and the same applies to the family of Henry Attfield, butcher of Aldgate. Only a handful of the At(t)field heads of household in London in 1841 were actually born in Middlesex, indicating that the great majority of the Attfields living in London were recent settlers.<sup>33</sup> Of course there are also earlier individual references to the surname in London, such as the Reverend Ambrose Attfield, Vicar of St Leonard Shoreditch, who died in 1684.

Turning to Hampshire, there are records of a substantial Atfield family in the parish of Kingsclere in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>34</sup> but its later history is unknown. The merchant William Atfield of Cosham House, who left substantial legacies to his “five dear daughters” in 1846,<sup>35</sup> was the last of a lineage which had lived at Portsea since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is not known whether these Hampshire Atfield families were originally native to the county, or whether they migrated there from Surrey or elsewhere at an early date. The majority of At(t)fields recorded in Hampshire in the 1841 census were living in Aldershot, and belonged to a family that had moved there from Surrey in the recent past.

In Sussex the At(t)field surname has existed since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1841 census there were three households and 18 individuals, 10 Atfields and 8 Attfields. The Atfields were all born in the county, the oldest individual being born c.1776, mostly living in the Chichester area. The Attfields were more scattered, and almost all were born outside Sussex. A generation or so later, in the 1871 census, there were 6 Atfield and 5 Attfield households living in Sussex with a total of 66 individuals, the majority of whom were born in the county. After that the waters are muddied by the growth of south coast towns like Brighton and Eastbourne.

The only other county with significant numbers of At(t)fields in 1841 is Berkshire, already discussed above. Its proximity to Surrey leads one to suspect that the ancestors of all or most of these Berkshire families must have originated in Surrey.

### **Possible origins of the modern surname**

The relative rarity of the modern At(t)field surname, and its extreme geographical concentration, can be taken as evidence of a possible single-family origin. In other words, despite the frequency of the mediaeval “atte Feld” form – and the apparently rather commonplace meaning of the name – it is probable that the modern form of the name arose only once, or at most on just a handful of occasions.

That this possibility cannot be ruled out even for such a seemingly commonplace topographical name is shown by the following example discussed by David Hey:

“Atwater is another topographical surname from the south of England which is uncommon enough and sufficiently concentrated in its distribution to suggest a single-family origin. Only twenty-five At(t)water(s) were registered in 1842-46, ten of them in two adjacent Kentish districts of Milton and Medway, five in Horsham (Sussex), at the other side of the Weald, one in Alton (Hampshire) and nine in four London boroughs. Atwell, on the other

hand, must have had more than one point of origin, for the sixty-three Atwells and Attwells were spread across south-western England and eighteen had died in London.”<sup>36</sup>

Modern-day “At(t)-” surnames are indeed far less common than one might expect, as shown below:

At(t)- surnames: number of households (England & Wales 1851)<sup>37</sup>

Atwood/Attwood	462
Atwell/Attwell/Attewell	184
Atfield/Attfield	100
Atwater/Attwater	28
Atlee/Attlee	21
Athill/Atthill	10

Other possible topographical “At(t)-” surnames which might theoretically be expected to exist somewhere among the population, e.g. Atford, Atchurch, Atlane or Atmill, were not recorded at all in the 1851 census. These names had either already become extinct or had never existed in modern times. In any case such names cannot have arisen on more than a handful of occasions, if at all, although mediaeval names like “atte Church” or “atte Lane” certainly existed. By contrast, names like Ford, Church, Lane, Mills and so on, are of course quite common.

Following David Hey’s argument,<sup>38</sup> and accepting that the surname At(t)field only arose rarely at most, the assumption must also be that it originated in one place. Given the relative immobility of pre-20<sup>th</sup> century society, it is reasonable to take the earliest available geographical distribution – in this case the 1841 census – as evidence of the name’s original location. A high concentration in one single county and its immediate neighbours, as in the case of At(t)field in Surrey, is clear enough evidence that the name was historically rooted in Surrey and almost certainly originated there.

So how did the modern Attfield surname arise? I can see two possibilities:

- 1) One or more families retained the mediaeval “atte Feld” form for longer than others for some reason, so that it eventually became fixed as such while the great majority of other families shortened their name to Field, etc.
- 2) One or more families, perhaps previously named Field, chose to “re-invent” the name Atfield or Attfield, possibly as a distinguishing mark.

It is conceivable that both these eventualities occurred in different families at different times and places.

### **Evidence for retention or re-adoption**

In the Winchester Pipe Rolls from Headley, mentioned above, it is noticeable that names like “Henry de felde” (1224), “John of the field” (1248), etc, did not simply relate to any old field, but sometimes referred to a particular piece of property. The transcriber, Philip Brooks, notes that: “the field in this entry is preserved in the name of Field House at

Wishanger, Headley. ... John may have been living at or about Field House or the name may be derived from an ancestor who had once lived there".<sup>39</sup> A later entry from 1416 refers explicitly to "land called 'atte Felde' (Field House, Headley)". Thus it may be that the name "Attfield" could have been retained as a way of designating a form of possession or occupancy.

A family styling itself "Attfield alias Ripley" (as well as a variety of earlier transitional forms such as "Ripley alias Fylde" and "At Fylde alias Rypley") lived in the parish of Worplesdon from at least the mid 16<sup>th</sup> until the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>40</sup> This is the earliest Surrey lineage which it is possible to trace through several generations; the last recorded "Attfield/Ripley" baptism was in 1719 after which the Worplesdon records peter out, although "Attfield/Ripley" burials took place at Farnham as late as 1783 and 1784.<sup>41</sup> One of the last recorded members of this family, Alice Attfield alias Ripley, married Richard Huntingford – whose will indicates that he was quite a substantial landowner – at Worplesdon in 1734.<sup>42</sup>

The reason for the exceptionally long-lived "Attfield/Ripley" alias has been lost to history, but the fact that it persisted over so many generations indicates that the family insisted on retaining the alternative names. One possible explanation is that a surname was adopted as a condition of inheritance; another is a desire to preserve traces of a relationship to a wealthy or prominent family, in much the same way that middle names were sometimes used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If this was what happened, there is unfortunately no way of knowing whether a family of Ripleys adopted the name Attfield or vice versa, but in any case it seems to be evidence of a valued family connection. The village of Ripley is near to Worplesdon, and several Ripleys were still living in the neighbourhood in 1841, so it is possible that the Attfield alias was adopted by a family called Ripley that originated from there. But this is conjecture. In any case, by the time of the 1841 census the alias had fallen out of use.

Many of the earliest Attfield references at Windlesham refer to the family as "Attfield or Field", and indeed these names appear to have been interchangeable locally over a period of centuries. There are several 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century examples, including "John Atfeild or Feild" who held a moiety in the Manor of Freemantles in the 1580s, and "John Atfeild also Feild" who wrote his will in 1626. This individual was evidently a prominent citizen, being buried in the church chancel and leaving a bequest to "the poor of Windlesham".<sup>43</sup> The Henry Attfield who played cricket for Chertsey and Surrey in the 1770s and 1780s was often referred to as "Field",<sup>44</sup> and a "John Attfield alias John Field" made a will in 1828 and died in 1839.<sup>45</sup> The last person styling himself "Attfield otherwise Field" died at Windlesham as recently as 1887.<sup>46</sup> Here again, this persistent use of the alternative names suggests that the name "Attfield" was deliberately retained – or "re-invented" – because it was seen as a desirable distinguishing cachet, especially since the family evidently played a prominent role in local society.

Additional evidence for this is provided by John Atfield Taylor, baptised at Windlesham in 1754, son of Edward Taylor and Ann Field. John's son, John Attfield Taylor, was baptised at Windlesham in 1790. This early use of the middle name – a practice which was relatively rare in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but became much more common in the 19<sup>th</sup> – can be seen as evidence that (a) one or more Field families liked to use the name Attfield, and (b) the

name was significant enough locally for the Taylor family to choose to use it persistently across several generations. I am not aware of any modern examples of a transition in the other direction, i.e. an Attfield family shortening its name to Field.

Finally, there is at least one case where the surname Attfield was adopted by a family previously named Hatfield. Ann Hatfield, born c.1821 at Hartfield, Sussex, daughter of Mark Hatfield and Jane Neller, had a son in 1842 baptised (at Buxted, Sussex) as “Edward Edwards Hatfield”. For some unknown reason, by the time of his marriage in 1863 Edward had adopted the surname Attfield. His sons George and Percy became farmers near Eastbourne, where their name is perpetuated in the street name “Attfield Walk”. Mark Hatfield’s antecedents cannot be traced with any certainty, but they seem unlikely to have had any direct connection with the Surrey Attfields.

## Conclusion

There are two accepted approaches to researching the history of surnames: etymological and genealogical. In the Attfield case, the etymological approach – searching for and interpreting early occurrences of the name – is interesting but unfortunately provides few definite clues to the history of the modern surname. The genealogical approach – with its emphasis on name distribution and lineages – provides a closer link to the modern evolution of the name, but does not take us far enough back into the past to give definitive answers regarding the modern name’s origins. The ideal case – finding an unbroken lineage from an original “atte Feld” to a modern-day Attfield – would be wonderful but hardly realistic. Therefore the origins of the modern name must remain speculative.

The mediaeval “atte Feld” name was evidently quite common. The modern surnames Attfield and Atfield, by contrast, are relatively rare because in most cases “atte Feld” became shortened to “Field” at some point in history. The question, therefore, is how and why the “At(t)-” element was preserved in a minority of cases.

The extremely concentrated geographical distribution of the surname in 1841 is evidence of a possible origin in a single family, or (perhaps more likely) a small handful of families. The concentration in Surrey and nearby counties is strong evidence that the modern name’s origin and history are essentially Surrey-based. Early parish registers and similar records show a concentration in a few mid-Surrey parishes between Woking and Windlesham, suggesting that the modern name originated there. It is possible that the name also emerged independently in other places, but migration from a single point of origin would seem to be a more likely explanation.

Although no direct line can be traced from “atte Feld” to “Attfield”, it is hard to imagine that the mediaeval and modern versions are entirely unconnected. Therefore, as discussed above, I can see two possible explanations for the origin of the modern Attfield surname:

- Retention of the mediaeval “atte Feld” form by one or more families for longer than others for some reason, so that it eventually became fixed as such.
- Re-adoption or “re-invention” of the name Attfield, possibly as a distinguishing mark, for example by a family previously called Field.

The very persistent “Attfield alias Ripley” (16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) and “Attfield otherwise Field” (16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) examples mentioned above, as well as the later Hatfield case, are evidence for possible occurrences of the second alternative. They seem to indicate that some families (a) wanted to use the name Attfield, and (b) believed that it carried a local significance. Certainly, the “Attfield otherwise Field” family was locally prominent at Windlesham over a long period. Of course it is quite possible that these early Attfields did in fact come from families which were called “atte Feld” in mediaeval times, or at least believed that they did.

Clear evidence for the first alternative is harder to pinpoint, but the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century occurrences of the surname at Kingsclere, Hampshire, as well as the early references at Chobham, may conceivably be survivals of the mediaeval form. A variety of transitional forms from “At Fylde” to “Attfield” are also be found at Worplesdon in the same period. The fact remains that “atte Feld” became shortened to Field in the great majority of cases, and its survival into modern times – if at all – was very rare. It is suggested here that one possible reason for its survival in a handful of cases may have been as a means of designating a form of possession or occupancy. But this is purely speculative.

This essay has been based on a study of the literature on surname history, and references to the Attfield surname in early documents and other sources, as well as detailed genealogical research into a range of Attfield lineages and correspondence with other Attfield researchers. It is in no way definitive, and I would be most grateful for any feedback, corrections, or pointers to further research.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to my fellow Attfield researchers, Merion Burt, Harry Dutton and Roger White, for their valuable information, comments and feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Obituary to Professor John Attfield, FRS, in Proc Royal Soc Series A 1911-1912 Vol 86 pp xlv-xlvi. Thanks to Harry Dutton for drawing it to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> Ancestry.com. English and Welsh Surname Dictionary [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2003. Original data: Charles Wareing Bardsley, A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames With Special American Instances. Baltimore, MD, USA: Genealogical Publishing, 1967. Originally published London, 1901.

<sup>4</sup> P.H. Reaney & R.M. Wilson, Oxford Dictionary of English Surnames. Oxford University Press, 2005 edition.

<sup>5</sup> “He [Professor John Attfield] had evidence of Attfields living in England in the 12th century (Solomon, Kent), the 13th century (John, Warwickshire) and the 14th century (John, Hertfordshire).” From the notes attached to an Attfield lineage privately produced and circulated by Colin Attfield, Hoddesdon, 1956.

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<sup>6</sup> Extracts from Winchester Pipe Rolls 1210–1670 relating to Headley, by Philip Brooks (<http://www.johnowensmith.co.uk/headley/piperoll.htm>)

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Adolph: “Tracing your family history”, Collins, London 2004, p.287

<sup>8</sup> The Origins of Family Names, by Ron Collins (<http://www.earwaker.co.uk/origins.html>)

<sup>9</sup> This example is taken from a Croucher surname website:  
<http://www.croucherconsult.co.uk/genealogy/Croucher.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Source: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) census indexes. Alternative index sources, e.g. Origins Network or 1837online, yield slightly different results. “Households” are based on a count of persons recorded as head of household. For 1841 this was done by individually examining each entry.

<sup>11</sup> Source: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk), see previous note. In addition to those indexed as such in the source, three Atfield families in Winkfield wrongly indexed as “Alfred” have also been included since omitting them would unduly distort the Berkshire figures.

<sup>12</sup> Source: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk), q.v.

<sup>13</sup> Victoria County History of Surrey: Volume 4 (1912), pp.91-2. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43036>

<sup>14</sup> Owen Manning: History and Antiquities of Surrey, Vol.2, 1809, p.279.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria County History of Surrey: Volume 3 (1911), pp. 467-75. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=43009>

<sup>16</sup> Owen Manning: History and Antiquities of Surrey, Vol.1, 1804, p.31.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.chobham.info/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Will at Surrey History Centre, DW/PA/7/6 ff.110v-111v; DW/PA/5/1559/49, proved 16.6.1559.

<sup>20</sup> Owen Manning, Vol.3, op.cit. In 1667 John Attfeild was a churchwarden at Chobham, see Surrey Quarter Sessions Roll XXIX, Reigate, 31st March 1668, m.94 (transcript printed by Surrey County Council, 1951).

<sup>21</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/983, 2.12.1772.

<sup>22</sup> The International Genealogical Index of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, at <http://www.familysearch.org>.

<sup>23</sup> West Surrey Burial Index, published on CD-ROM by the West Surrey Family History Society, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Private correspondence with Merion Burt and Roger White.

<sup>25</sup> Lease and release for a messuage and half-acre of land in Chertsey (a house and orchard in Goose Pool Lane) dated 26 - 27.7.1728 and for the same property dated 2 - 3.8.1728, Surrey History Centre, Ref: 6200/136.

<sup>26</sup> William Urmston Searle Glanville-Richards: The registers of Windlesham, Surrey, from 1677 to 1783 : with biographical notices of some past and present families now residing in the parish, privately printed, London 1881, p.55 (available online at [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)).

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<sup>27</sup> From a collection of Woking area wills on CD-ROM, published by the West Surrey Family History Society. He is referred to elsewhere in the same will as “Nicholas Feilde”.

<sup>28</sup> Victoria County History of Surrey: Volume 3 (1911), pp. 376-78. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=42990>

<sup>29</sup> Owen Manning: History and Antiquities of Surrey, Vol.3, 1814, p.87-88.

<sup>30</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/151, 6.2.1627.

<sup>31</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/244, 25.7.1655.

<sup>32</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/280, 24.8.1658.

<sup>33</sup> “London had always been a powerful magnet for young people from all over the country ... The astonishing growth of the capital city’s population can be accounted for only by a continuous inflow of immigrants. This is why distribution maps of surnames that usually show a concentration near the name’s point of origin also mark significant numbers in and around London.” David Hey: Family Names and Family History, Hambledon & London, London 2000, p.83.

<sup>34</sup> For example, “Peter, son and heir of Thomas, Fauconer, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of John Atfield” was baptised in 1510 (“Kingsclere, its Heritage and Genealogy”, at <http://www.kingsclere.org.uk>), “John Atfield or Atfielde, Yeoman of Woodlands” wrote a will in 1618, and in 1658 “Wm. Atfield left for the poor 20s. a year out of Old Farm” (William White, History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 1859, pp.472-6).

<sup>35</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/2033, 17.4.1846.

<sup>36</sup> David Hey, *op.cit.*, p.152

<sup>37</sup> Source: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk), figures based on heads of household.

<sup>38</sup> See for example David Hey: “Locating the Home of a Family Name”, in Reaney & Wilson, *op.cit.*, pp.511-520.

<sup>39</sup> Winchester Pipe Rolls, q.v.

<sup>40</sup> The earliest recorded examples of this name are Henry Ripley alias Fylde, 1546, and Agnes At Fylde alias Rypley of Burpham in the parish of Worplesdon, will dated 1574 (both mentioned in Guildford Freeman’s Books 1655-1933, published by Guildford Corporation, 1963, p.10). The earliest baptism recorded in the IGI, Daniel son of Harry Atfield or Ripplye, was at Worplesdon in 1576, and Harry Atfyld alias Rippley (or Rippley alias Atfyld) was buried at Worplesdon also in 1576. It should be noted that the Worplesdon parish registers have only been preserved from 1570.

<sup>41</sup> West Surrey Burial Index. Another isolated case of an Atfield-related alias in the same locality is Mary Atfield alias Watts, buried at Worplesdon in 1734.

<sup>42</sup> A transcript of Richard Huntingford’s will can be found on the “Family History of Margaret Macculloch and David Hall c1150-2006” website, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~macculloch/>

<sup>43</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/151, 6.2.1627.

<sup>44</sup> “He seems to have been known as ‘Field’ and this often appeared on old scorecards”, footnote to scorecard of Hampshire v Surrey, Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon, 26.8.1773, at <http://cricketarchive.com>. Unfortunately the web page for this particular scorecard has since been amended and the footnote has disappeared.

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<sup>45</sup> Will at Surrey History Centre, DW/PC/7/8; DW/PC/5/1839/1, proved 25.5.1839.

<sup>46</sup> Will of George Attfield otherwise Field of Windlesham, Probate Register (London), 18.6.1887, folio 484.