



## Not Smith and Jones – Rare British Surnames On The Cusp Of Extinction

**There's no 'bread' left and we're nearly out of 'relish' – MyHeritage.com identifies endangered British surnames**

**London, United Kingdom – April 26, 2011** - To mark the completion of the 2011 UK census – when every person in the land is required to enter their personal details for posterity – leading family history website **MyHeritage.com** ([www.myheritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com)), has identified the rarest British surnames. These include unusual last names that have lingered for centuries but are on the cusp of extinction (with just a handful of bearers), endangered (with under 200 bearers), or now missing, presumed extinct in 2011.

A full breakdown and explanation of the history and origins of the rarest surnames of Britain can be found on the [MyHeritage.com blog](#). On this page, MyHeritage.com is also seeking the general public's help to confirm whether surnames thought to be extinct have truly disappeared and, if so, just who the last bearers were.

Included within British surnames on the brink of extinction – with under 20 bearers currently in the UK are: **Tumbler** (an acrobat / performer), **Sallow** (the medieval word for the willow tree), **Fernsby** (derived from a dwelling near the ferns), **Dankworth** (a farmstead), **Relish** (French origins of taste/flavour) and **Miracle** (Welsh form of Maurice). Extremely endangered, within a hair's breadth of vanishing, are the surnames which recall months '**January**', '**February**', '**April**', '**June**', '**September**', '**October**', '**November**' and '**December**'.

Surnames such as **Bread** (from the occupation of baking), **Spinster** (a spinner or unmarried woman), **Pussmaid** (little minx) and **Bytheseashore** (abode close to lake or pool) appear to have become extinct in Britain.

**Ajax** and **Edevane**, both rare Welsh surnames, are endangered in the UK with fewer than 200 bearers left.

Laurence Harris, UK Genealogy Manager for MyHeritage.com, explains why surnames decline:

“There are numerous explanations for the decline and disappearance of certain British surnames. Occupational surnames linked to common professions such as Smith and Baker enjoyed a natural head-start when last names first started to be recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Henry VIII making it compulsory for marital births to be recorded under the surname of the father): unusual names linked to more niche professions were always going to be fewer in number.”

“The Napoleonic conflicts and the First World War saw entire generations of young men wiped out: boys who often bore distinctive surnames relating to the villages or hamlets from which they came. Likewise, migration resulted in already rare names leaving British shores, in some cases enjoying a new lease of life in the Americas or Australasia. Another interesting development has been 19<sup>th</sup> Century migrants, particularly from Eastern Europe, anglicising their names and inadvertently breathing new life into an extinct British name.”

“A further explanation for decline is developing trends in slang and language, which have given once-innocent names crude or humorous connotations in the modern age, prompting bearers to seek to amend them to avoid ridicule or negative associations. However in many cases the principal cause for a name dying-out is more linked to simple fate: in less enlightened times, a man with only daughters was guaranteed that his family name would end with him!”



## [MyHeritage.com](#) - Background

**MyHeritage.com** is the most popular family network on the web. Millions of families around the world enjoy having a private place for their families to explore their family history and keep in touch. MyHeritage.com's Smart Matching™ technology empowers users with an exciting and innovative way to find relatives and ancestors. With all family information stored in a secure site, MyHeritage.com is the ideal place to share family photos, and celebrate and preserve special family moments. With 730 million profiles and 17 million family trees, and available in 36 languages, MyHeritage.com is nurturing family relationships and uniting families worldwide.

To see the full breakdown of British surnames on the brink, visit <http://blog.myheritage.com/2011/03/rare-british-surnames/>