

The COBBOLD Family History Trust

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Family Name.

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A section of this website is devoted to 'Family Name and Crests'. Ancestors Magazine published in April 2004 an article which used as an example some research which had included the name Cobbold. The relevant part of that article is reproduced below with thanks to Ancestors Magazine.

The evidence from surnames

A close look at the history of individual surnames quickly shows the value of this line of study. For example the East Anglian surname Cobbold derives from a personal name and may be familiar as the name of a firm of brewers. Information about the personal name is needed to throw more light on the origin of the surname, and the negative evidence is immediately helpful. The fact that Cobbold as a personal name is missing from the records in 1377-81, at least from those that have survived, points to a much earlier origin for the surname and that is reinforced by David Hey's observation that five Cobbolds were listed in a Suffolk subsidy roll of 1327, all living near the Norfolk border. That tight-knit distribution supports his view that the families were probably related and shared a common progenitor. In other words, all those who bear the name are likely to descend from just one Suffolk man with the personal name.

Fortunately our investigation need not end there, for the history of Anglo-Saxon personal names in East Anglia has been researched by a Swedish scholar, Dr B. Selten. He identified the Old English personal name as Cuthbeald or Cuthbald, interpreted as 'famous bold', but he found no reference to it in East Anglia earlier than 1219, when the land of 'Alani Cubald' was mentioned in a Norfolk land transfer. We would describe 'Cubald' here as a by-name rather than a surname and his selection of later examples shows that it had a variety of spellings in Middle English. Among those he lists are Cutebald, Cubald and Cobald, which illustrate different stages in the surname's development. It is noticeable though that many of these were from Norfolk sources and it would be interesting to know if they had to do with places near the border with Suffolk. P.H. Reaney in *A Dictionary of English Surnames* has just one direct reference to the personal name – Cotebaldus de Wigornia – recorded in a Dublin document that dates from before 1200, and several examples similar to those of Selten dating from 1066, which include by-names. Only one of them is from Suffolk: that is John Cobald (1309)