

HODGSON SAGA

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Preface

In Britain, the Hodgson surname was the 173rd most common (766 per million) in 1881 and the 206th most common (650 per million) in 1998.¹

What is the meaning of the Hodgson surname? How was it formed? Where does it originate? Who were the ancestors of the original Hodgsons? Where did they come from? This book answers all these questions. It is the definitive collection of material on Hodgson origins and heritage.

This volume is different from a conventional family history. Family research normally involves family pedigrees, built generation by generation, using documentary sources. But information is scarce before 1700. I have pioneered a new line of enquiry, using early data on the geographical distribution of Hodgson families. Most early Hodgsons were in areas of Norse Viking settlement. This suggests that the Hodgsons were of Viking descent. This brought the Hodgson story back in time to the tenth century.

Following the suggestions of surname experts, I proposed that Hodgson derives from the Norse Viking forenames *Oddgeir* or *Oddr*. Thus Hodgson comes from *Oddgeirson*. Alternatively it may derive from the Norse *Hrodgeir*.

Recent evidence from analysis of DNA in the Y-chromosome, which is passed from father to son, confirms the thesis of Norse origins. This DNA evidence casts additional light on the origins of some Hodgson ancestors in Ireland.

Norse Viking settlers came from Norway and settled in Ireland. In about 902 AD they moved across the Irish Sea and colonised parts of Cumberland and North Lancashire.

This volume first deals chronologically with the history of the Norse settlements in Ireland and England. The DNA and surname distribution evidence are surveyed after the historical account.

Evidence on the Vikings comes from:

1. Place names, which can indicate patterns of Norse, Irish-Norse and Danish settlement.

2. Relics, principally stone crosses and tombstones, weapons and coin hoards.
3. Sagas and other written sources.
4. Dialect studies (e.g. Reaney 1927, Ellis 1985, Graddoll 1981, Orton and Halliday 1998).
5. Genetic evidence (e.g. Horizon 1994, Capelli, *et al.* 2003).
6. Surname evidence (Hodgson 1993).

Early studies of the Vikings used the first four types of evidence (e.g. Collingwood 1908). Type five is made possible by recent DNA-decoding technology. It has been applied to other surnames (Sykes and Irven 2000) and this is the first DNA study of the Hodgson surname. Type six has been pioneered by the present author.

Generally I employ the ancient English county names, in existence before major local government reorganisation in 1974. However, the term 'Cumbria' is used here occasionally to refer to the area of the modern county, which includes Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness.

Material on family histories was kindly contributed by Douglas G. Harris, Bruce G. Hodgson, Clayton E. Hodgson, John Edward Hodgson, Keith W. Hodgson, Michael Conn Hodgson and Bruce Moorhouse.

The author is also grateful to Peter Christian, David Hodgeton, Bruce G. Hodgson, Gordon C. Hodgson, James Day Hodgson, Joan S. Hodgson, John Hodgson (HWA text and data management), John W. Hodgson, Peter K. Hodgson, the late Father Brendan Hodgson, Marie Kitchin (Oxford Ancestors), Tim Paine, Kath Strickland (Kendal Record Office), Karl Sanne, Francis Sejersted, Mark Thomas (University College London), Mike Weale (University College London) and all participants in the Hodgson DNA Project, for help, discussions and inspiration.

This second edition is updated with additional information, maps, figure, picture and photograph. An improved DNA analysis has been made possible by more Hodgson samples and more DNA information now available on the Web.

¹ Source: www.britishsurnames.co.uk. Hodson was the 714th most common (228 per million) in 1881 and the 785th most common (204 per million) in 1998.

For more information on the Hodgson heritage go to the www.hodgson-clan.net website.
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A Viking Prayer

Lo, there do I see my father.

Lo, there do I see my mother, my sisters and my brothers.

Lo, there do I see the line of my people back to the beginning.

Lo, they do call to me.

They bid me take my place among them in the halls of Valhalla,

Where the brave may live forever.

This Viking prayer is from the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*, which in turn is based on the novel *Eaters of the Dead* by Michael Crichton. Crichton based part of his story – and the incantation above – on the written memoir of the Arab traveller Ibn Fahdlan, who visited Viking settlers in Russia in the tenth century.

7. The Formation of the Hodgson Surname

Previous chapters traced the movement of Norse invaders and settlers from Norway, to Ireland, Northern England and across the Pennines to the East. These migrations brought elements of Norse language and culture. But the Hodgson surname was not formed until much later. This chapter explains how the Hodgson surname emerged among people in the North of England with a Norse linguistic and cultural inheritance.

Viking Naming Customs

The historian Sir Frank Stenton (1942, p. 17) points out that the Scandinavians had the custom of passing the same personal-name through different generations and branches of the same family: 'It was also common practice for a man to name his child after some notable chief of his neighbourhood or some intimate friend of his own.' This habit, Stenton explains, 'is connected with the late survival in the north of the belief that the soul of an individual was represented or symbolised by his name, and that the bestowal of a name was a means of calling up the spirit of the man who had borne it into the spirit of the child to whom it was given.' As Peter Foote and David Wilson (1970, p. 115) elaborate: 'There is some evidence to suggest that a transfer of character, even re-birth, was believed to go with the name.'

A result of this custom was that there were many men bearing the same personal name and it was often necessary to distinguish between them by a nickname. In addition, it was common to name a child after its father by adding the suffix '-son' or '-daughter' to the father's personal name.

For example, a person could acquire a first name 'Erik' and later a nickname such as 'Longshanks', hence 'Erik Longshanks' would be this person's full name. Alternatively, if Erik was the son of Knud, the son could be named 'Erik Knudson'. His sister could be 'Birgitte Knudsdaughter'.

Many Viking first names were compounds such as 'Thorstein' (= 'Thor's stone' or 'thunder stone') or 'Thorbjørn' (= 'Thor's bear' or 'thunder bear').

Oddgeir and Hrodgeir as First Names

A name found in modern Norway is *Oddgeir*. The words 'odd' or 'oddr' mean literally 'sharp point', or 'arrowhead'. The word 'geir' means 'spear'. Hence *Oddgeir* means 'point of spear'. Another Norse name is *Hrodgeir*, meaning 'fame spear'.

If modern Norwegian were a guide, then the pronunciation of *Oddgeir* would be something like 'Odd-gire', to rhyme with 'fire'. The stress would be on the first syllable, the 'g' would be hard rather than soft and the 'r' would be almost silent. So *Oddgeir* would sound almost like 'odd guy', with the stress on the first word. Similarly, *Hrodgeir* would sound like 'hrod guy'.

What is the origin and meaning of 'fame spear' or 'point of spear'? In a *Dictionary of Northern Mythology* (Simek 1993, p. 242), under the entry for Odin – the father of the gods in Norse mythology – we find the following answer:

According to the *Ynglinga saga 4*, it was Odin who first brought war into the world, and battles are begun by a spear being thrown into the hostile army to dedicate it to Odin.

As already noted, one of Odin's attributes is his spear, and he is often depicted riding a horse and holding aloft this weapon.

A member of a Norse army was charged with the privilege of starting the battle by lunging a spear over the enemy. This would be the 'point of spear' or 'fame spear'. It would be the first thrust of battle, with a sharp projectile signalling the first drawing of blood – a sacred act according to Norse beliefs. The person given this responsibility would be named a *Hrodgeir* or *Oddgeir*.

Names beginning in *Odd-* were sometimes shortened to *Oddi*. It could have been further shortened to *Odd*. Crucially, as Gillian Fellows-Jensen (1968, p. 202) notes, as a first name '*Oddr* is common in both Norway and Iceland throughout the whole period' of Scandinavian settlement in Britain. This suggests that *Oddr* and *Oddi* were more common among the Norwegians and Icelanders than the Danes and Swedes. She points out that a more frequent version of these names in Sweden and Denmark was *Udd*.

The *Domesday Book* was a survey of most of England in 1086. Unfortunately it did not cover Cumberland and much of Westmorland. However, it contains several examples of the name *Oddi*, particularly in the Yorkshire area.

Norse is one of the Teutonic languages, which include Old German, Anglo-Saxon and Danish. The Old German and Anglo-Saxon equivalent of *Oddgeir* and *Hrodgeir* is *Hrodgar* or *Hrothgar*. It has the related meaning of 'fame spear'. Among the Viking settlers in Normandy, *Hrodgar* became *Roger* in Norman French. This is the most familiar form of this Teutonic name in Britain today. While the Hodgson surname is related to these other Teutonic variants, it is of specifically Norse origin.

Oddgeirson and Hrodgeirson

In Viking times it was possible for the son of a person named *Oddgeir* or *Oddi* to acquire the names *Oddgeirson* or *Oddson* as a second name. However, this second name would not be passed from father to son in the pattern of modern surnames. It would be a descriptive and filial name, rather than a surname proper.¹

For example, Erik the son of *Oddgeir* might be called Erik *Oddgeirson*. Assume in turn that Erik *Oddgeirson* had a son called Knud. This son might be called Knud Erikson, but not Knud *Oddgeirson*. This is filial name transmission, not surname transmission.

In a Viking community the frequency of the second names *Oddgeirson* or *Oddson* would depend up on the frequency of use of the first names *Oddgeir* or *Oddi* and the probability that these first names would be passed from father to son as *Oddgeirson* or *Oddson*. *Oddgeirson* or *Oddson* would survive from generation to generation, even if it were not passed generally from father to son.

The pronunciation of *Oddgeirson* would be something like 'odd-guy-son', again with a stress on the first syllable. It would be frequently contracted to *Oddson*. Filial names such as this existed well before the rise of surnames and surname transmission.

¹ A filial name is a name denoting a father-son relationship, typically ending in '-son'.

In large areas of England, Danish or Norse were the main language until the thirteenth century. Alexander Bugge (1921, p. 175) quotes a thirteenth century writer: 'The Norwegians occupied many districts and islands of this realm, and afterwards it has never been possible to expel them.' For some time the Norse and Danes persisted with their language and customs.

Origin of the Hodgson Surname

Surnames emerged in England around the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, the Scandinavians used occasional and temporary filial names many centuries before the establishment of permanent surnames along the male line. The record of an *Odesune* in the *Domesday Book* confirms that the prefix *Od-* with the suffix '-son' were both in use long before the fourteenth century (Feilitzen 1937, pp. 20, 333).

Hence, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, names deriving from *Oddgeir*, *Oddr* or *Oddi* or *Hrodgeir*, such as *Oddgeirson*, *Oddgson*, *Oddson*, *Odesun* or *Hrodgeirson*, would be found among the Norse cultural remnants in the North of England. Names such as *Oddgson* would have become locally familiar as a second name, and as early as the tenth century.

One of the most famous Norse poets was Eric Oddsson, the author of the *Hryggjarstykki Saga*, which was completed some time after 1161. Today, the surname of 'Oddsson' can still be found in Scandinavian telephone books. Names such as *Hrodgeirson* are less common.

In England, from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, it is likely that first names such as *Oddgeir* and *Hrodgeir* would have spread to nearby communities. Nevertheless, the rate of spread and usage would be greater in areas where the Norse cultural influence was strongest.

When surname transmission began in the fourteenth century, surviving second names such as *Oddgeirson*, *Oddgson*, *Oddson*, *Hodgeson* or *Hodgson* would be passed more systematically from father to son in the modern manner, as family names. Subsequently the fixed surname would be passed on through the male line to all succeeding generations.

Eventually *Oddson*, *Oddgeirson* or *Hrodgeirson* would have become transformed, partly through the drift and homogenisation of

local dialects, to Hodgson. To the stressed syllable *Odd*, the ‘H’ would have been added as an Anglicisation of the peculiar Norse pronunciation of the leading vowel.

There are several recorded place-names, originally starting with the letter *O-* that later acquired an initial *H-*. Hence Hodstock in Nottinghamshire was recorded as Odesach in the *Domesday Book* of 1086. Hognaston, Hopton and Hopwell in Derbyshire were Oचनाестun, Opetune and Opeuuelle respectively, in the same document. In Staffordshire, Hopewas was recorded in 1086 as Opewas. Huddersfield in Yorkshire was originally Odesfelt, and so on. In these cases, the *H-* was added in the twelfth or the thirteenth century (Ekwall 1960).

The Norse would have pronounced ‘Odd’ in a manner different from us. It would have sounded more like ‘aud’ with the vowels sounding similar to those in ‘caught’. The addition of the initial *H-* in Hodgson may have been partly a result of the difficulty of assimilating this peculiar Norse vowel sound into the evolving English language.

Oddson, *Oddgeirson* or *Hrodgeirson* were thus transformed into Hodgson. Thereafter, the Hodgson surname, established as a permanent family name in about the fourteenth century, would gradually diffuse by migration throughout the North of England.

I earlier overlooked the possibility that Hodgson may derive from the Norse name *Hrodgeir*. This is related to the name of the Old English king *Hrothgar* in the ancient tale of *Beowulf*. From *Hrodgeir* the leading ‘H’ in Hodgson would be acquired directly from Norse. But it seems that *Hrodgeir* was less common than *Oddgeir*, and the derivation of Hodgson from *Hrodgeir* has not yet been proposed by an etymologist.

In sum, the Hodgson surname derives originally from names such as *Oddgeir*, *Odd*, *Oddi* or *Hrodgeir*. Accordingly, a vicinity in which the Hodgson surname became in relatively frequent use would reflect the earlier and local commonness of the *Odd*, *Oddi*, *Oddr*, *Oddgeir* or *Hrodgeir* first names.

The frequency of Hodgson among the surnames that became established in the fourteenth century would depend largely on two factors: (a) the frequency of the first names *Oddgeir*, *Odd*, *Oddi* or *Hrodgeir* at the point in time when surnames

became established, and (b) the propensity to use the filial form ‘-son’ in the formation of a surname. Factor (a) depended on the strength of Norse culture and naming patterns and (b) depended partly on the pre-existence and retention of Scandinavian filial naming patterns.

From available evidence I estimate that about 75 per cent of all Hodgson surnames were established (in 1200-1400) in predominantly Norse areas of settlement, particularly Cumbria and Lonsdale. There is no evidence of widespread use of the Hodge forename in these Norse areas. Elsewhere it is possible that some Hodgson surnames were derived from Hodge. But the main origin of the surname is Norse.

Early Records of the Hodgson Surname

The first recorded Hodgson was John, bailiff in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1276. He served as mayor in 1278, 1280 and 1281. His son Richard was bailiff of Newcastle upon Tyne, in 1281 and 1288. There is no trace of their descendants for nearly a century and a half, but it is believed that the Hodgsons of Hebburn are descended from this source (Burke 1938, vol. 4, p. 310).¹

A Henry Hoggesone appears in the 1325 Court Rolls of Thomas Earl of Lancaster in West Derby, near Liverpool. Adam Odesone appears in the 1342 ‘Feet of Fines for the County of York’, for Swillington, Garforth and Great Preston, near Leeds. A Richard Hogeson is recorded as holding land in Liverpool in 1346.²

A William Hoggeson appears in the 1381 poll tax returns for North Meols in Lancashire. The 1379 *Poll Tax Returns for the West Riding of Yorkshire* (table 2 overleaf) give the following variants of the Hodgson surname (with number of families in brackets): Hodgson (1), Hodson (3), Hogeson (8), Hoggesson (3), Hogheson (2), Hoghson (1), Odeson (1), Odson (1). It appears that at this time the leading ‘H-’ was becoming prominent, with older forms such as Odeson and Odson beginning to die out.

Hence in 1379 and 1381 several recorded Hodgson forms coexisted – all with probably the same roots. Almost everyone was illiterate, there

¹ See chapter 14 below.

² Farrer (1901, 1915), Baildon (1910).

<i>Names</i>	<i>Location</i>
John Hoghson	Grindleton, in Great Mitton parish near Clitheroe
John Hodson	Hellifield, in Long Preston parish in Ribblesdale
William Hodson	Hetton, in Burnsall parish in Wharfedale
Robert Hodson , John Hogheson and William Hogheson	Keighley parish
William and Idonia Hogeson ; Alicia Odson and John Odson her son	Wortley, in Tankersley parish near Sheffield
John and Agnes Hogeson	Bradfield, in Ecclesfield parish near Sheffield
Robert and Cristiana Hogeson	Kimberworth in Rotherham
Robert Odeson and Alicia née Smyth	Worsbrough, in Darfield parish near Barnsley
William and Alicia Hogeson	Stubbs Hall, South Kirkby parish near Barnsley
Henry Hogeson and Alicia née Smyth	Greasbrough in Rotherham
John Hoggeson	Ferry Fryston, near Castleford
Robert Hogeson	Kellington near Pontefract
John Hoggeson	Pigburn, in Brodsworth parish near Doncaster
John and Cicilia Hodgeson	Norton, in Campsall parish near Doncaster
Peter Hogeson	Barnby Dun near Doncaster
John and Agnes Hoggeson	Stainforth, Hatfield parish near Doncaster
Robert and Johanna Hogeson	Fockerby, in Adlingfleet near Goole

Table 2: Hodgsons and Variants in the Poll Tax Returns for the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1379

were no standard spellings, and clerks would spell the same sound in different ways.¹

By the fifteenth century the standard spelling of ‘Hodgson’ became more common, but it was not universal. A John Hogeson became Rector of Bolton by Bowland in Yorkshire in 1404. A William Hodgson is listed in 1409 as a freeman of Newcastle upon Tyne. A John Hodgeson was mentioned several times in the Bradford Manor Court Rolls in Yorkshire from 1411 to 1422. The marriage of a John Hodysson, aged 58, is recorded in Northumberland in 1417. A Thomas Hodgson was born in Collierley, in the Parish of Lanchester, County Durham, in 1424. The Hodgsons of Stella and Acton in Northumberland have traced their pedigree back to 1424. Thomas Hogeson the armourer and John Hogeson the smith are recorded as freemen of the City of York in 1440 (Surtees Society 1897, pp. 159, 163). Title deeds mention a Henry Hodgson in Forton, near Garstang in Lancashire in 1449. A Thomas Hodgson was born in Bradford in 1465. Records show a Sir William Hodgson in Marton in Craven in Yorkshire in 1476. An Alexander Hoggeson is listed as a freeman of the City of York in 1494.²

Subsequently, Hodgson and its variant spellings become more numerous in the records, appearing in northern towns and cities such as Preston, Bradford, Newcastle and York.

According to one authority, the Hodgson arms were displayed by members of the family at the battle of Towton in Yorkshire in 1461, during the Wars of the Roses (J. Hodgson 1925). This was the largest battle ever fought on British soil.

¹ In the *Poll Tax Returns* for Barnby Dun near Doncaster in Yorkshire there is the name Alicia Hogedoghter (referring to a father-daughter relation), showing the survival of Scandinavian naming practices as late as 1379. The 1379 *West Yorkshire Poll Tax Returns* are available on www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/Misc/SubsidyRolls/YKS/SubsidyRolls1379Index.html

² See Bardsley (1901, p. 390), Burke (1938, vol. 4, p. 310), Farrer and Brownbill (1914, p. 108), Lower (1860, p. 159), Surtees (1820, vol.2, pp. 265-7, 359), Surtees Society (1897, p. 220), Whitaker (1805, pp. 95, 131), *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 2nd series, vol. 25, p. 121.

Early Surname Studies

One of the earliest Victorian surname studies is by Mark Lower and was published in 1842. Lower (1842, p. 96) suggests that Hodgson may come from 'son of Roger', but immediately adds: 'if not from Odo'.

In a more extensive discussion of the surname, Robert Ferguson (1858) entertains a number of possibilities concerning its origin. One is to connect it to the Scandinavian first name *Odda*. Ferguson notes that this name, although frequently appearing before the Norman Conquest, does not appear to be a word in the Anglo-Saxon language. He writes:

Might it not be from Old Norse *oddr*, a dart or arrow, whence Oddr and Oddi, common Scandinavian names? (Ferguson 1858, p. 225)

In two editions of his major work on British surnames, Henry Barber (1894, p. 143; 1903, p. 207) presents more than one possible explanation, and notes in particular that Hodgson may derive from the Old Norse *Oddgeir-son*.

Also around the turn of the century Charles Bardsley takes a similar line, offering multiple explanations including 'son of Roger' but also giving due prominence to the possibility of Old Norse origins. For him, the derivation of the Hodgson surname could be from

'the son of Odo' from the nickname Oddy, sometimes Hoddy, whence Odson or Hodson. There can be no doubt that Odo is the parent of many of our Hodsons. In Yorkshire it was for two centuries one of the most popular forenames for boys. (Bardsley 1901, p. 390).

Clearly, Victorian authorities on the derivation of English surnames give at least partial and sometimes predominant support to the thesis that the Hodgson surname is of Norse origins.

However, the earlier and widely accepted Norse explanation has disappeared from modern reference books. Responsible for the most comprehensive and influential post-war work on English surnames, P. H. Reaney falls under suspicion as being principally responsible for this omission. He and other modern authors have given an implausible explanation which instead suggest a Norman French – or possibly Anglo-Saxon – origin of the Hodgson surname. Reaney and others have not only disregarded the earlier

authorities but have also failed to enquire into the distributional evidence that strongly undermines the credibility of their own supposition.

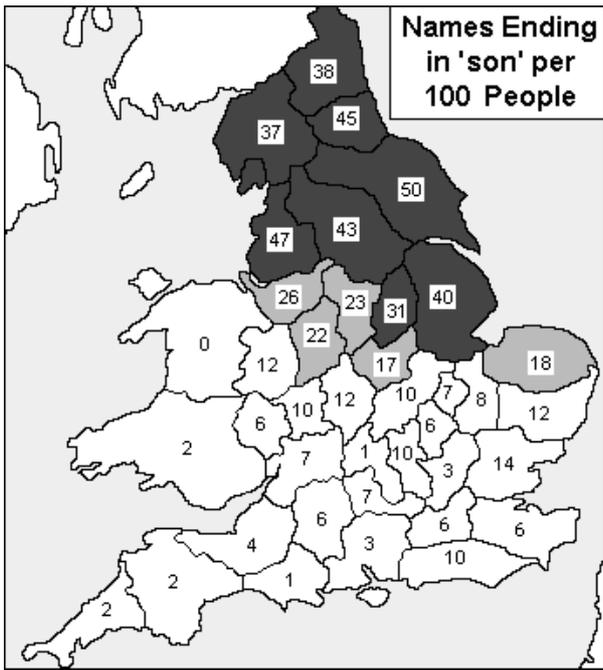
Implausible Explanations

The inquirer wishing to discover the origins of the Hodgson surname in the modern reference books will encounter an apparently unanimous and seemingly impregnable explanation. Reaney's (1958, p. 166) ubiquitous *Dictionary of English Surnames* claims that Hodgson is derived from 'son of Hodge' and that Hodge, in turn, is a 'pet-form of Roger'. The reader may consult Reaney's often-reprinted book *The Origin of English Surnames* and come across the same explanation (Reaney 1967, p. 155). Here Reaney notes that Roger is of French origin and can take a form such as 'Rodger' in Old German. Instead of further entertaining the possibility of Anglo-Saxon or other pre-Norman origins, Reaney (1967, pp. 152-5) unambiguously designates 'Hodgson' as a surname deriving from a post-Conquest personal name. It is thus suggested that the 'Roger' root of the Hodgson surname was brought over in or after 1066 by the Normans. Presumably Roger gave rise to the Hodge nickname, and the surname Hodgson followed.

Other modern reference books, such as the *Penguin Dictionary of Surnames* (Cottle 1978, p. 184) or the *Longman History of British Surnames* (McKinley 1990, pp. 109, 105) simply replicate Reaney's thesis. According to these sources, the Hodgson surname derives from the French personal name Roger that was probably introduced during the Norman Conquest.

The modern reference books also hint at an alternative origin of the Hodgson surname, from the Old Germanic language associated with the Anglo-Saxon invasions. The possibility of Scandinavian origins is not even mentioned.

It is strange that the prospect of Scandinavian origins is ignored in the modern texts. The filial form ('-son') clearly has Scandinavian roots, as the early modern studies of Danish and Norse settlement in England observe (Worsaae 1852). This can be confirmed by the number of surnames ending in 'son' or 'sen' in Scandinavia today. As shown in map 8 on page 31, names ending in 'son' are much more common in the counties of Northern England.



Map 8: Frequency of filial names in England and Wales

Source: Crystal (1995, p. 26)

The main problem with the idea that the Hodgson surname has either Norman or Anglo-Saxon predominant origins is that the patterns of settlement of these groups do not correspond with the actual distribution of Hodgson surnames in pre-industrial times, nor even as they are still distributed today.

	1539-1700
Cumberland	2.4
Westmorland	1.2
Lancashire	0.8
Yorkshire	0.6
Durham	0.7
Northumberland	0.3

Table 3: Percentage of Male Hodgson Marriages by County¹

¹ The density figures cited here for Lancashire, Northumberland and Yorkshire are incomplete, in that they relate only to the area covered by maps 9-11 below (see pages 36-8). Nevertheless, the major part of each of these counties is included.

Using parish registers, it can be shown that the highest ratios of Hodgsons to the general population are mostly found in and around the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. Table 3 indicates the population densities in each county, determined by calculating the number of Hodgson marriages as a percentage of the total number of marriages. This general pattern, with the highest densities to the west of the Pennines and in the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, is portrayed in more detail in maps 9-11 (pages 36-8) below.

This preponderance of the Hodgson surname in Cumbria points to Norse rather than Norman or Anglian origins.

What of the Missing Records?

It has been pointed out in response that the parish records are incomplete and that the records of many marriages are missing. This is true, but it is extremely unlikely that the missing records would reverse the general pattern reported in table 3.

Consider the possibility that half of the marriage records are missing in both Cumberland and Northumberland. Further assume that in these missing documents there are no marriages to a Hodgson male in Cumberland – if true, this would undermine the hypothesis of Norse origins to the severest possible extent: Under this severe assumption, to make the density higher in Northumberland than in Cumberland, the missing records in Northumberland would have to show at least 2.1 per cent of all marriages being to a Hodgson male. In other words, the density of Hodgson marriages in Northumberland in the missing records must be more than *seven times greater* than they are in the surviving records. This is very unlikely.

Modern Hodgson Surname Distribution

W. Parson and W. White (1829) published a list of surnames of the gentry and tradespeople in Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness. Hodgson was the seventh most common at 1.2 per cent. H. B. Guppy (1890) studied surname distribution but focused on yeoman farmers only. More comprehensive evidence on nineteenth-century surname distribution comes from censuses, which we taken every ten years from 1841.

The two maps below show the distribution of the Hodgson surname according to the <http://www.britishsurnames.co.uk> website. Darker shades of grey show higher levels of concentration of the surname. Note that the 1881 map clearly shows a greater density of Hodgsons in Cumbria, west of the Pennines. This concentration persists, but by 1998 the surname had diffused more to other areas of Britain.

All the comprehensive evidence available shows that the Hodgson surname was historically of a greater density among the population to the west of the Pennines, in the North of England.

Refuting the Alternative Theories

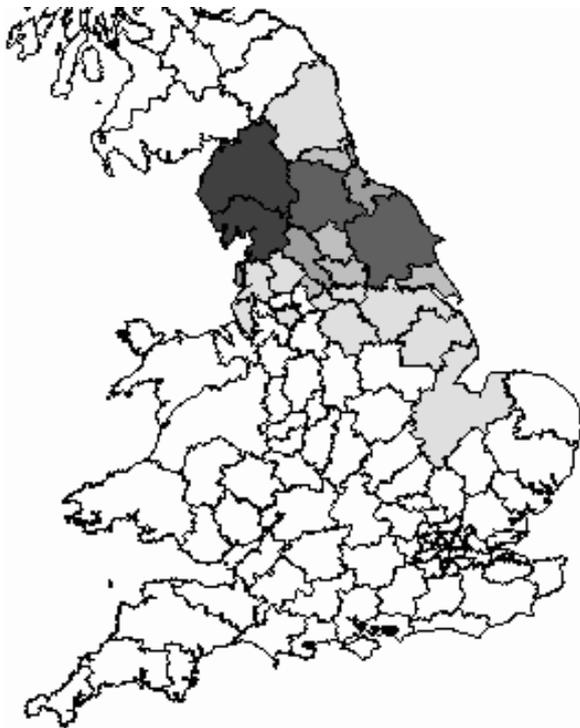
A problem with the claim of Anglo-Saxon origins is that the distribution of Hodgson surnames does not correspond to the pattern of Anglian and Saxon settlement. In the fifth and sixth centuries, Anglians and Saxons established themselves in various parts of southern and eastern England. The most important of their kingdoms in the North was Northumbria. This began in the sixth century with the fusion of the Anglian kingdoms

of Bernicia (in the vicinity of Northumberland and Durham) and Deira (to the south and east of Yorkshire). Northumbria thrived for over three centuries, until the Viking invasions.

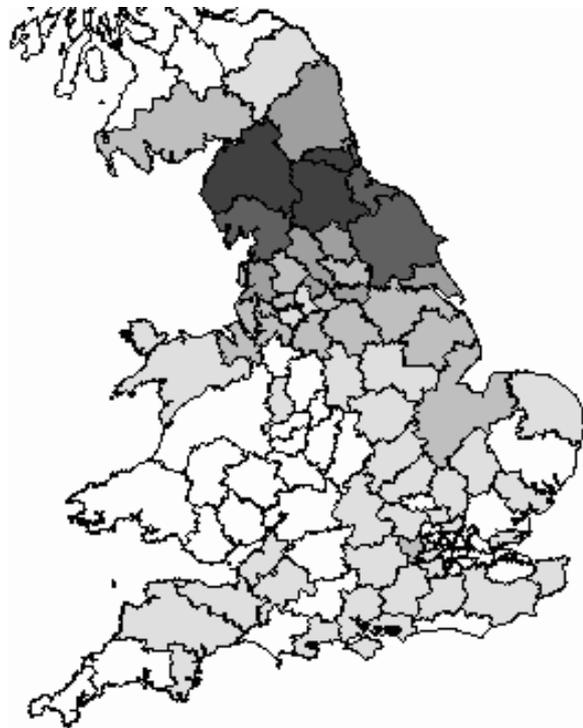
Although the Northumbrian kingdom expanded westwards, progress was relatively slow. In his history of Northumberland, John Marsden (1992, p. 18) points out that:

If the English had overwhelmed the eastern parts of Britain by the second half of the fifth century, the Celtic west was to hold out against them for longer than other regions of the western empire resisted Germanic domination.

The earliest evidence of permanent Anglian settlements west of the Pennines is late in the seventh century (Blair 1977, p. 48). In contrast, Anglian settlements were established on the eastern side of the Pennines in the fifth century. Given that the Hodgson surname is much more common on the western side of the Pennines, the idea of Anglo-Saxon origins is undermined by the fact that the Anglian presence was stronger and more longlasting on the eastern side.



Map 9. Hodgson Surname Distribution 1881



Map 10. Hodgson Surname Distribution 1998

In sum, if the Hodgson surname has an Anglian or Saxon root we must explain the following:

- (1) the predominance of the name to the west of the Pennines, where Anglian rule was established for a relatively short period of time;
- (2) the comparative rarity of the Hodgson surname north of the Tyne (in the present county of Northumberland) which was the heartland of Anglian Northumbria;
- (3) and the comparative rarity of the surname in other areas of dense Anglian settlement, e.g. the East Midlands and East Anglia.

These anomalies undermine the idea that the Hodgson surname is of Anglo-Saxon derivation.¹

It is also obvious that the actual distribution of Hodgson surnames does not correspond to the areas of Norman incursion or predominance in England. The Norman invasion of 1066 was from the south and their later consolidation of power over northern England took several years. Cumberland was the last area of England to fall under their domination. The Normans did not take Carlisle until 1092 and did not rule the whole of Cumberland until 1157.

Although the Normans were themselves of Viking origin, after settling in Normandy they quickly lost their Scandinavian language and became speakers of French. The conquerors of 1066 thus brought French rather than Scandinavian names with them.

If the Hodgson surname is derived from a Norman root, we would have to explain why the surname is so predominant in Cumberland and relatively rare in the South and South East of

¹ A Hodgson surname poster published by 'Hall of Names Limited', claims that the surname is Anglo-Saxon and originates from the county of Northumberland. However, Hall of Names Limited has failed to respond to three written requests to supply evidence supporting their claim. The website www.houseofnames.com also declares that the surname comes from Northumberland. These claims may simply result from the fact that the first recorded Hodgson was in Newcastle (see page 28 above). But one name does not authenticate general surname origins. It would be absurd to suggest that all the Hodgsons (or variants) appearing in Lancashire, Yorkshire or elsewhere in the next 100 years were all descended from one Newcastle family.

England. Why does it occur on the poorer fringes of the Norman empire and not in the southern areas where the Normans first settled and found the richest lands?

The other explanations of the origin of the Hodgson surname simply do not square up with the facts of historical settlement by the Anglo-Saxons or by the Normans.

We know that modern-type surnames were not fully used until about the fourteenth century. In the case of the Hodgson surname we are looking for the root of the first syllable in a personal name. The surname distribution evidence discussed in the next chapter, and the recent DNA evidence presented in chapter 9, both confirm that this personal name is of neither Anglo-Saxon nor Norman origin. Its roots are Norse.



