

The
Ancient History
of the Distinguished Surname
Marr

Though shrouded by the mists of time, the chronicles of Scotland reveal the early records of the Norman surname Marr which ranks as one of the oldest. The history of the name is interwoven within the colourful plaid of Scottish history and is an intrinsic part of the heritage of Scotland.

Diligent analysis by professional researchers using such ancient manuscripts as the Domesday Book (compiled in 1086 by William the Conqueror), the Ragman Rolls, the Wace poem, the Honour Roll of the Battle Abbey, the Inquisitio, the Curia Regis, Pipe Rolls, the Falaise Roll, tax records, baptisms, family genealogies, and local parish and church records shows the first record of the name Marr was found in Yorkshire where they were seated from very early times and were granted lands by Duke William of Normandy, their liege Lord, for their distinguished assistance at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 A.D.

Variable spellings of the name were typically linked to a common root, usually one of the Norman nobles at the Battle of Hastings. Your name, Marr, occurred in many references from time to time, and variables included were Mar, Marre, Mare, and more. Scribes recorded and spelled the name as it sounded. It was not unlikely that a person would be born with one spelling, married with another, and buried with a headstone which showed another. Preferences for different spellings were derived from a branch preference, to indicate a religious adherence or sometimes to show nationalistic allegiance.

The family name Marr is believed to be descended originally from the Norman race. The Normans were commonly believed to be of French origin but were, more accurately, of Viking origin. The Vikings landed in the Orkneys and Northern Scotland about the year 870 A.D., under their King, Sturgud the Stout. Later, under their Jarl, Thorfinn Rollo, they invaded France about 911 A.D. The French King, Charles the Simple, after Rollo laid siege to Paris, finally conceded defeat and granted northern France to Rollo. Rollo became the first Duke of Normandy. Duke William who invaded and defeated England in 1066, was descended from the first Duke Rollo of Normandy.

After the Conquest, Duke William took a census of most of England in 1086, it became known as the Domesday Book. By 1070, William's nobles were growing restive, dissatisfied with their grants of land. William took an army north, and laid waste most of the northern counties. King Malcolm Canmore of Scotland offered refuge to these nobles, granting them land. Later, King David, about 1160, also encouraged his Norman friends to come north to join the royal court and obtain lands.

The surname Marr emerged as a notable Scottish family name in the county of Yorkshire where they were recorded as a family of great antiquity seated as Lords of the manor and estates in that shire, granted to Baron de la Mare by William the Conqueror. They were originally of La Mare in Normandy. This branch eventually transferred to Blackheath in Cheshire but the senior line became extinct. Like many other Norman names they moved northward at the invitation of King David of Scotland about 1120, and were granted lands in Aberdeenshire which they named Marr. James Marr of Aberdeenshire, Gilbert and John Marr of Linlithgow, rendered homage to King Edward I of England on his brief conquest of Scotland in 1296. In 1353 Donald Marr was Archdeacon of Brechin, and John Marre, merchant of Aberdeen, traded freely with the English. This name should not be confused with the Earls of Marr who were actually Erskines and acquired part of the lands of Marr from which they derived their title. Of note amongst the family at this time was James Marr of Aberdeen.

The surname Marr contributed much to social and political affairs of England or Scotland. Later, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries the country was ravaged by religious and political conflict. The Monarchy, the Church and Parliament fought for supremacy. The unrest caused many to think of distant lands.

Settlers in Ireland became known as the "Adventurers for land in Ireland". Essentially, they "undertook" to keep the Protestant faith, and became known as "the Undertakers". There is no evidence that the family name migrated to Ireland, but this does not preclude the possibility of their scattered migration to that country.

The news about the attractions of the New World spread like wildfire. Many sailed aboard the fleet of sailing ships known as the "White Sails".

In North America, migrants which could be considered kinsmen of the surname Marr, or variable spellings of that same family name included Alexander Marr who settled in Maryland in 1747; Christopher Marr settled in Virginia in 1715; James Marr settled in Virginia in 1774; George, Jacob, John, Peter and Thomas Marr arrived in Pennsylvania between 1800 and 1870; Joseph Mar settled in Louisiana in 1721; Andrew and Mary Mare settled in Virginia in 1663; Nicholas Mare with his wife and two children settled in Virginia in 1700.

From the port of arrival many settlers joined the wagon trains westward. During the American War of Independence some declared their loyalty to the Crown and moved northward into Canada and became known as the United Empire Loyalists.

Meanwhile, the family name was noted in the social stream. There were many notables of this name, Marr, Alan Marr, British Ship Builder; Sir Alan Marre, British Parliamentarian; Lady Marre, Lecturer; Sir Leslie Marr, Lecturer.

In the process of researching this distinguished family name we also traced the most ancient grant of Arms from the branches which developed their own Arms.

The most ancient grant of a Coat of Arms found was:

Red with two silver lions.

The Crest was:

A Leopard with spots.

