

### Treeton Local History Group, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2011

#### Placenames and Surnames by Mr Ray Battye

Talking about place names, Ray explained that it is possible to tell something of the history of a place by its name. Going through History starting at 600 BC when Britain was largely Celtic, through Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman invasions, he showed how these peoples and their languages have influenced us and formed the mongrel language that we own as English today and have left their mark on our place names. There are many Celtic place names still in use; one example was *pen* which is a Celtic word for hill and forms part of many places. The Romans language gave us many words, one well used was *Caester* meaning castle which has become *Chester* and *caster* as part of some place names. The Saxons presence around the Home Counties was obvious from the old counties of Middlesex (middle Saxons) Essex (east Saxons) Wessex (west Saxons) – now existing only in Thomas Hardy novels, and Sussex (south Saxons). From the Viking we have many guttural sounding names and these are mostly in the North of the country, where they settled. Finally the Normans brought many French sounding place names. Our language continued to develop in this way, being a mixture of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and French until Edward the III in 1362 declared that Middle English should be our language, but it didn't stop growing and new words are added all the time. Talking about surnames he said that originally no-one had a surname. In order to distinguish between people with the same first name several descriptions were added. Some were named from their occupation, Carpenter, Wheeler, Smith and Shepherd for example.

Some from their parents Robinson (son of Robin), in Scotland and Ireland, son became Mac or Mc. Also a place could be used to identify a person; Ray gave us a lot of example of these. He spoke very well and his talk was very interesting and informative.

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Written by Administrator

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