

THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF
THE DISTINGUISHED
SURNAME
PRITT

The surname Pritt is a name of Anglo-Saxon origin. It was a name given to a crafty or cunning individual. Further research revealed that the name is derived from the Old English word *prætig*, which meant crafty. Some variants of the name have the suffix *man* appended to them; this seems to have occurred sometime in the late 15th or early 16th centuries.

While your recent ancestors and famous people bearing your surname may be known to you, it is often a family's distant past which fades into the unknown over the centuries. Research has shown that this surname is of Anglo-Saxon origin. Few cultures have had the lasting impact on English society as that of the Anglo-Saxons. The Pritt family history draws upon this heritage as the bearers of the name influenced and were influenced by the history of the English nation. Historians have carefully scrutinized such ancient manuscripts as the Domesday Book, compiled in 1086 A.D., the Ragman Rolls (1291-1296), the Curia Regis Rolls, the Pipe Rolls, the Hearth Rolls, parish registers, baptismals, tax records and other ancient documents and found the first record of the name Pritt in Staffordshire where they held a family seat from early times and their first records appeared on the early census rolls taken by the early Kings of Britain to determine the rate of taxation of their subjects.

Many different spellings of the surname were found in the archives researched. Although the spelling Pritt occurred in many manuscripts, from time to time the surname was spelt Prettyman, Pretyman and Pretty, and these spelling variations were frequent, even between father and son. It was common to find the same individual referred to with different spellings of their surname. By example, the famous playwright William Shakespeare signed his name with different spellings and legal documents added further to the possible variations. "Shakespeare," "Shakespere," "Shakespear," "Shakspere" and "Shaxspere" were all used in reference to this famous individual. Typically, scribes, church officials and the bearers of a name spelled words as they sounded rather than adhering to any spelling rules used today.

The Saxons were a Teutonic tribe originally from northern Germany who began to settle in England in about the year 400 A.D. Their first settlements were in Kent, on the south east coast. Gradually, they probed north and westward from Kent and during the next four hundred years forced the ancient Britons back into Wales and Cornwall to the west. They won territories as far north as Lancashire and Yorkshire, pushing the Britons into Cumbria and Southern Scotland. The Angles, another Teutonic tribe, occupied

the eastern coast, the south folk in Suffolk, the north folk in Norfolk. The Angles sometimes invaded as far north as Northumbria and the Scottish border. The Angle and Saxon cultures blended together as they came to dominate the country. For hundreds of years England was comprised of five independent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms until unification in the 9th century. By 1066, England, under Harold, was enjoying reasonable peace and prosperity. However, the Norman invasion from France and their victory at the Battle of Hastings meant that the Anglo-Saxon landowners lost their property to the invaders. The Saxons were restive under Norman rule, and many moved northward to the Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire, where Norman influence was less pervasive. Rebellious Norman nobles frequently joined them in their flight northward.

As peace was restored, the Pritt surname emerged as that of a notable English family in the county of Stafford where they were recorded as a family of great antiquity seated as Lords of the manor of Lichfield and estates in that shire. The first on record was Engeram Prety of Hope-Cum-Tideswell in 1192. The "man" at the end of the name was appended to certain branches about the 15th century. The Prettymans were of Norfolk, Bawton in Suffolk, and Barnard Castle in Durham. Meanwhile the Prettys flourished in midland England and also branched north into Scotland.

Distinguished members of the family include Sir John Pretyman, 1st Baronet (ca. 1612-1676), of Lodington, an English politician, Member of Parliament for Leicester from 1661 to 1676.

Lieutenant Walbanke Ashby Pritt MC, DFC (1897-1928) British First World War flying ace credited with five aerial victories; Frank Pritt, American former salesperson and product manager for Harris Corporation who founded Attachmate Corporation in 1982 and later listed on Forbes' list of 400 richest Americans in October 1995; Ryan Pritt (b.1986) American co-owner of Pritt Entertainment Group and public address announcer for the Cleveland Indians; Charlotte Pritt (b.1949) American educator, businesswoman, and politician; Denis Nowell Pritt (1887-1972) British barrister and Labour Party politician, a defender of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin; and John Pritt Harley (1786-1858) English actor.

During the course of our research we researched the Coat of Arms for the family name. The most ancient grant of a Coat of Arms found was:

A red shield with a lion passant between three gold stars.