

A Peak District Family -

But, how many variants do I need?

First steps

As a boy, I readily accepted my father and grandfather's "certainties" about our surname - one of our forebears had been "Cock of the May" (i.e. he'd won the annual village sports day). Our family was part of the Grindon (north Staffordshire) MYCOCKs and we were absolutely nothing to do with the Flagg (north Derbyshire) MYCOCKs, let alone MAYCOCKs and MEACOCKs.

In my mid-twenties my wife and I both became interested in finding out more about our family histories. My progress was slow but steady, following the then standard pattern of visits to St Catherine's House in London to find, alternately, marriage and birth index entries; wait for the certificate and repeat to go back another generation. For my mother's side of the family before civil registration, I managed a number of visits to the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO), but for the MYCOCKs, my cousin Keith had visited Lichfield Record Office (LRO) and transcribed all the MYCOCK entries in the Grindon parish registers (PRs) back to the end of the 17th century – this was going to be easy. How wrong can you be? From our separate analysis of the records, including censuses to 1871 (the latest then publicly available, with no indices, and only at Portugal Street, London), Keith and I agreed that our 3x great grandfather was John MYCOCK, born in Grindon about 1792. But there we hit a problem - three John MYCOCKs were baptised at Grindon between August 1791 and October 1793.

My family research was then very much off and on for ten to fifteen years, with other commitments and interests taking priority, but I eventually got back to thinking about 3x great grandfather John and realised I had to try to rule out two candidates, rather than positively identify only one. This entailed gathering as much information about MYCOCKs in a minimum of a twenty mile radius from Grindon as I could from various sources, including the BMSGH indices for Staffordshire¹ and checking pre-1858 wills at LRO.

By 2003, I realised that I'd collected a significant amount of data about a great number of MYCOCKs over a significant period of time - surely this qualified as a one-name study?

All the surname reference works I have seen are unanimous that the "-cock" suffix indicates a pet or diminutive form and all but one agree that the "My-", "May-" and "Mea-" prefixes are abbreviations of Matthew. The exception is the 1860 "Patronymica Britannica" which states that MYCOCK is a diminutive of Michael², MAYCOCK of Mary³ and doesn't include MEACOCK; until a more modern work authenticates this, I will accept that it is a diminutive of Matthew. The Oxford Dictionary of English Surnames is typical of modern works and refers both MYCOCK and MEACOCK to the entry for MAYCOCK⁴ - "*a diminutive of May from Mayhew (Matthew)*". In his most recent volume of "the Distinctive Surnames of North Staffordshire"⁵, Edgar Tooth agrees and claims instances of M(A)YCO(C)K in Grindon from 1376, but frustratingly does not cite sources.

I joined the Guild in 2004, but the issue of variants led to an initial reluctance to register the MYCOCK study. The Guild "*defines a One-Name Study as Research into the genealogy and family history of all persons with the same surname and its variants*"⁶ (the current definition which has changed little, if at all, since 2004). The inclusion of variants is emphasised by our President and founder member Derek Palgrave who states in his introduction to the Guild - "*Several of us made a decision to find out as much as we could about the bearers of a particular surname **including its proven variants***"⁷ (my emphasis). Would I, therefore, be expected to register, study and answer queries on MAYCOCK and MEACOCK as well as MYCOCK?

Roger Goacher, who was then the Registrar, assured me that I wasn't required to register all variants, despite the above. He also pointed out the difference between variants and deviants and gently suggested that my proposed variants of MYCOCKE, MICOCK and MICOCKE were more likely to be deviants. As I wanted potential contacts to be able to search on these versions, I nevertheless registered them as variants. I have since discovered that there is a small, but significant, community of MICOCKs living in, or originating from, the Seychelles, but have not yet been established how, or if, they are related to the English M[Y/I]COCKs.

Having registered my ONS, I realised I had a lot of work to do to meet the Guild's standards on data collection. Downloading relevant entries from the IGI was easy and quick, but what should I do with the data now I had it. From my work I have a lot of experience with data storage and retrieval and knew that a database would suit me best - many other one-namers use spreadsheets, card indices and many other methods, but I'm happy with databases. Whilst I had the skills to write one, I realised that it needed to be flexible and cater for a wide variety of data types and formats, so looked for one "off the shelf". Thanks to Howard Benbrook and the Guild Bookstall, I discovered Custodian⁸, written by Guild members for one-namers and have used it ever since, in conjunction with Legacy⁹ for reconstructing family trees.

Having found data storage and retrieval mechanisms, I downloaded GRO index entries from images of the original entries at 1837Online (now Findmypast¹⁰) and UK census entries from Ancestry.co.uk¹¹ using their transcriptions as guides, but compiling my own transcriptions from the images of the original Enumerators' books. In parallel with downloading data from the internet, I continued to visit both DRO and LRO as often as I could to transcribe PRs from known MYCOCK areas. Initially, I did little research on MYCOCKs outside the British Isles, in order to progress as rapidly as I could without setting myself impossible tasks.

Where are we?

Figure 1 shows the current worldwide distribution of MYCOCKs as represented by PublicProfiler¹² - the relatively low numbers outside the UK vindicate my decision to limit initial research here. However, I know there are far more of us in Australia than in Asia, despite the map showing the same frequency colour coding and strongly suspect this site also underestimates the numbers in the USA and overstates the relative importance of New Zealand (there's only one MYCOCK family there to the best of my knowledge). Nevertheless, PublicProfiler is a useful indicator of where to set research priorities. It's also possible to "zoom in" to a specific country; for the UK this can show distributions at county level, but that doesn't seem to me to be adequate discrimination.

In the Surname Detective, Rogers advocates analysis and mapping of telephone directory entries to derive current surname distributions¹³. However, this is one of the aspects of this 1995, mainly pre-internet, publication which needs to be updated to take account of the types and volume of data which are now readily available. In recent years, significant numbers of households have disappeared from UK telephone directories, either because they have chosen to be ex-directory or, increasingly, they have given up landlines in favour of mobile telephones (14% in 2010 according to an Ofcom survey¹⁴). As it is difficult to access older, more complete directories, I chose instead to use the Electoral Register from 2002, the last year in which the whole register was published. I was lucky to be able to download entries for 2002, 2003 and 2004 some years ago when 192.com had a free offer over Christmas; sadly this hasn't been repeated more recently. When electors could opt out of the public register, the number of MYCOCKs fell by over 25%, from 814 in 2002 to 604 in 2003.

Figure 2 is a map of the distribution of the 2002 MYCOCK electorate in England and Wales, created using GenMap¹⁵, produced by Steve Archer, another Guild member. I chose to use GenMap because, as in **Figure 2**, it allows distributions to be shown within the boundaries of the 1881 Registration Districts, providing a useful common reference for data from different periods. Scotland is omitted because it did not have RDs in the same way as England and Wales; in this case, this omits only one MYCOCK, living in Fife.

Figure 3 shows a map of the places of birth of 596 MYCOCKs derived from the 1851 census; a further 35 could not be mapped because they were either born out of the country (3), did not give adequate definition of their place of birth (25) or specified unrecognisable places (7). There were no MYCOCKs born in Scotland.

Comparing **Figures 2** and **3** shows that we've spread out in the UK in over 150 years, as may be expected with increased modern mobility. What is more striking is the distinct similarity in the region including the RDs with the greatest numbers of name-bearers - a 25 miles radius circle centred on Hartington, in Derbyshire but near the border with Staffordshire, would cover them in both cases.

My PR transcriptions show that the churches with the highest numbers of MYCOCK baptisms are Chelmorton, Derbyshire (199); Grindon, Staffordshire (174); Taddington and Tideswell, Derbyshire (both 74), accounting for over 50% of the baptisms found to date. All these villages are within 10 miles of Hartington (where I have found no MYCOCK baptisms), pointing towards MYCOCK being predominantly a Peak District name, split between north Staffordshire and north Derbyshire. This is borne out by family tree reconstruction; to date, I have 47 unconnected trees varying in size from 1,820 to only two (really a fallen twig!). The two largest trees have their origins in Grindon (1,820 individuals) and Flag (840

individuals); it is highly likely that a number of the smaller trees belong to the main Flagg tree, but it appears that the Chelmorton Curate around the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries was not particularly good at keeping the registers, so these trees end at around that time, when the required linking baptismal records are missing.

It seems likely that the presence of a number of our family in the Sheffield area may be the result of migration from the Peak District to take up the cutlery trade. An analysis of the Cutlers' Company of Hallamshire registers by Graham Ullathorne shows that there was continuous migration from 1624 to 1814 and that at least one MICOCKE High Peak family had a son apprenticed in the cutlery trade in or before 1641¹⁶.

The same small regional concentration of MYCOCKs is also evident in the 1881 UK census, as shown at **Figure 4a**, produced with Surname Atlas¹⁷, another Steve Archer product. The small numbers in Wales have been traced back to Grindon; two MYCOCKs in Scotland, not shown in Figure 4a, have been traced back to Flagg in the chapelry of Chelmorton. As MYCOCK, MAYCOCK and MEACOCK are etymologically synonymous, it is informative to contrast the distributions of MAYCOCK and MEACOCK shown in **Figures 4b and 4c** respectively. Perhaps surprisingly, there is very little overlap in the “hot-spots”.

Apart from Chapel en le Frith, it can be seen that the MAYCOCKs predominate to the south and east of the MYCOCK heartland. (The apparent relatively high numbers of MAYCOCKs in the Chapel en le Frith RD has been shown by comparison of the same families in the 1871 and 1891 censuses to be mainly due to mistranscriptions, or mis-hearing of MYCOCK, most in the census record itself.) The MEACOCKs are either side of the Mersey in the Wirral and Liverpool and in Daventry and Brentford.

I have yet to accumulate enough data from before the 19th century to attempt meaningful distribution analysis, but what I have collected already indicates that this type of analysis may not be possible for the MYCOCKs, as distinct from MAYCOCK and MEACOCK. The absence of standardised spelling in earlier centuries looks likely to frustrate efforts to segregate the three main variants. For instance, where do the two testators named MACOCK listed in Calendars at the LRO in 1689 and 1813 fit in? From their locations (Fenny Compton, Warwickshire and Churchbroughton, south Derbyshire), I could guess that they or their descendants became MAYCOCKs, but can't be sure enough. Similarly MAICOCK (1784 Manchester marriage), MECOCK(E) (16th & 17th centuries south Derbyshire PR entries), MEYCOCK(E) (16th & 17th centuries PR and probate, various locations including Peak District) ... In all, I have found instances of 50 distinct variants/ deviants, including MOCOCK(E)s, although only one is from before 1800.

Are we related?

From the general agreement that MYCOCK is a diminutive, I expected to find multiple origins. This expectation added weight to my boyhood certainty of the Staffordshire and Derbyshire MYCOCKs being unconnected. However, a small DNA project, run in parallel to the ONS, appears to indicate otherwise. The table below shows a summary of the main results to date.

DYS	383	390	391	388a	385b	426	388	439	388-1	392	388-2	458	459a	459b	455	454	447	437	448	449	464a**	464b**	464c**	464d**	460	GATA H4	YCA Ila	YCA Iib	456	607	576	570	CDYa	CDYb	442	438	
MYCOCK STS	13	24	14	11	11	14	12	12	12	12	13	28	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	19	29	14	15	16	18	10	11	19	23	15	15	18	17	36	36	12	12
MYCOCK DBY	13	25	14	11	11	14	12	12	12	12	13	28	17	9	10	11	11	25	15	19	29	14	15	16	18	10	11	19	23	15	15	18	17	36	36	12	12

Three Grindon tree members, whose Most Recent Common Ancestor (MRCA) was baptised in 1682 have the “MYCOCK STS” profile; additionally, two members of a separate tree, originating later and elsewhere in Staffordshire have the same profile. Five members of the main Flagg tree (MRCA buried 1710) share the “MYCOCK DBY” profile, as do two members of a smaller Flagg tree. The similarity of these two profiles, differing only in the second marker (DYS390), indicates that the Derbyshire and Staffordshire MYCOCKs shared a common ancestor between 400 and 600 years ago. So much for boyhood certainty!

So far, four MAYCOCKs, one of them documented as descending from another Flagg MYCOCK tree, and three MEACOCKs have joined the project, but their DNA results show that they are genetically unrelated to the MYCOCKs.

Does linguistics help?

If DNA analysis cannot explain the obvious differences in the distribution of the three modern variants of my surname, perhaps linguistics will be able to help? In a 1997 article¹⁸, Peter Christian presents, in layman's

terms, the principles for determining the etymological or linguistic origin of a surname, stating that:

“The central sources for English surname origins are post-Conquest medieval records, not parish registers, or general historical records of earlier settlement.” and *“The derivation of one name from another requires detailed linguistic explanation of how the earlier form developed into the later in accordance with known linguistic developments of the period.”*

From these statements, two aspects of my ONS become clear:

- I have not yet sufficiently researched the availability of, or collected relevant early records required for this analysis, and
- I do not, in any case, have the necessary detailed understanding of historical linguistic developments terminology and notation or how to apply them to my surname and its variants.

Variations in pronunciation of vowels seem to be particularly relevant to MYCOCK, MAYCOCK and MEACOCK. A Google search for “Great vowel shift” reveals a large amount of literature relating to a dramatic change in the way vowel sounds were pronounced, at some time between 1200 and 1600 (estimates vary), occurring first in the south of England and moving north gradually. This shift resulted in vowels either shortening or lengthening and/ or changing altogether.

Despite the homogenising influences of world-wide media and the internet, regional variations persist across the UK even now. The Peak District accents of north Derbyshire and north Staffordshire are very similar and can easily be misunderstood by anyone not familiar with them. On my regular visits to the Peak District, I can still hear some of the older hill farmers speak of “getting t'shape off t'mower”, meaning “getting the sheep off the moor”. So, the accent local to my apparent MYCOCK origins has until recently pronounced an “ee” sound as “ay”.

The Peak District accent of approximately two hundred years ago is reported in *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield*, which reports in transliterated dialect a conversation of 1874¹⁹, relating to bull-baiting in the early 19th century (it was made illegal by the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835). A Mr BAGSHAWE is remembered as volunteering to personally anchor the bull, in the absence of a suitable stake - “tey im to mey”. This shows two distinct vowel sounds with the same pronunciation - he meant “tie him to me”, so both the “ee” sound of “me” and the “i” sound of “tie” were pronounced “ay”. In that case, both MYCOCK and MEACOCK would be pronounced MAYCOCK, but it isn't clear to me how this might result in the distinct geographic ranges of these three main forms.

Perhaps this is where the Family Names of the UK project²⁰, with which the Guild is collaborating, can set the gold standard by explaining obvious differences in location of etymologically similar surnames - I can but hope ...

Now what?

From my analysis to date, I feel vindicated in my decision not to register MAYCOCK and MEACOCK as variants, as there is not yet any apparent geographic or genetic linkage with MYCOCK, despite the common etymology. However, I also recognise that my continued research into the earlier periods will need to include these and a number of other variants, if I am to determine the origin of the MYCOCKs.

I have tantalising glimpses of MYCOCKs (or close variant) at or near my own roots over 700 years ago and the next phase(s) of my ONS will be to attempt to link them to the more complete records from the late 17th century onwards. Properly determining the development of the surname will need a detailed knowledge of linguistic developments over the centuries, both nationally and regionally - any volunteers?

Figures:

- 1 PublicProfiler MYCOCK World Distribution
- 2 MYCOCK in the UK Electoral Roll 2002
- 3 MYCOCK Places of Birth from the 1851 UK Census
- 4a MYCOCKs in the 1881 UK Census
- 4b MAYCOCKs in the 1881 UK Census
- 4c MEACOCKs in the 1881 UK Census

References:

1	Birmingham & Midlands Society for Genealogy & History website, <u>Search Services</u> URL: http://www.bmsggh.org/search/sea1.html accessed 7 August 2011
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3	Lower, <u>Patronymica Britannica</u> p221
4	P.H. Reaney & R. M. Wilson, <u>A Dictionary of English Surnames</u> (Oxford University Press, Revised third edition, 1997) p 304
5	Edgar Tooth, <u>The Distinctive Surnames of North Staffordshire Vol IV: Personal & Pet Names</u> (Churnet Valley Books, 2010) p 191
6	Guild of One-Name Studies website, <u>One-Name Studies</u> URL: http://www.one-name.org/onename.html accessed 6 August 2011
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10	findmypast website, <u>search with the experts</u> URL: http://www.findmypast.co.uk/home.jsp accessed 6 August 2011
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16	Graham Ullathorne, <u>Migration from Derbyshire to Hallamshire: The Evidence of the Cutlers' Company Records 1624 to 1814</u> (Northern History Vol LXI: 1 March 2004) p 91
17	Archer Software, <u>Surname Atlas</u> URL: http://www.archersoftware.co.uk/satlas01.htm accessed 6 August 2011
18	Peter Christian, <u>What Surname Distribution Can't Tell Us</u> , URL: http://www.spub.co.uk/surnames.pdf accessed 12 June 2011
19	Ed Robert Eadon Leader, <u>Reminiscences of Old Sheffield: Its streets and its people</u> (Leader & Sons Sheffield, 1875) p 212
20	<u>Family Names of the United Kingdom (FaNUK)</u> URL: http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/cahe/elc/research/researchcentresandgroups/fanuk.aspx accessed 31 July 2011

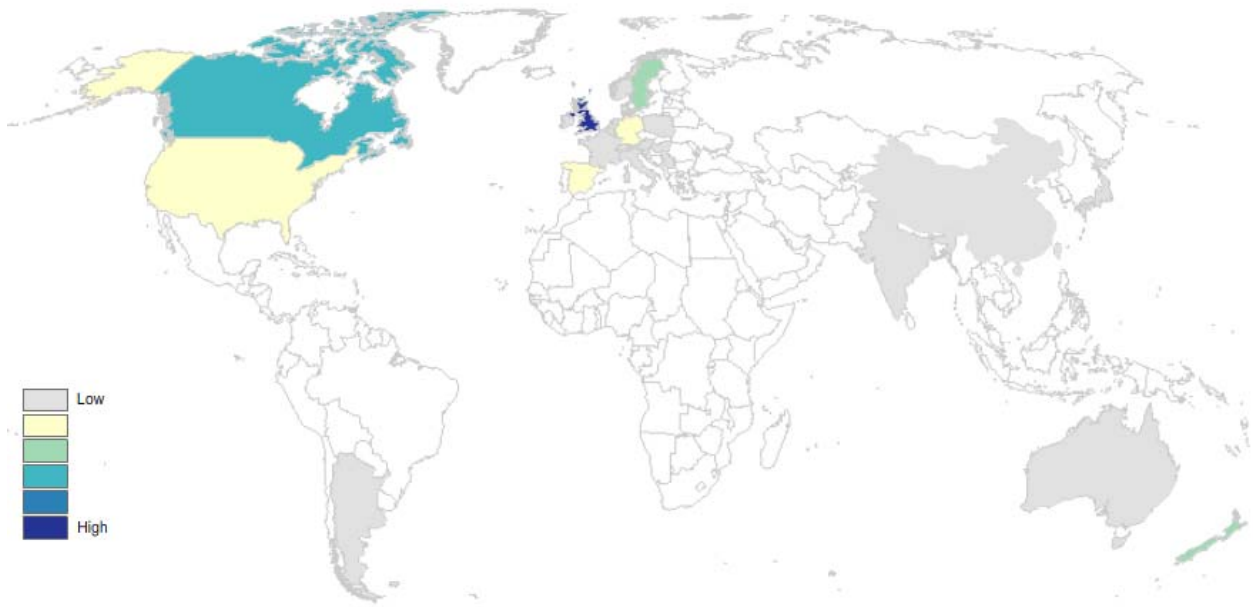


Figure 1 – PublicProfiler MYCOCK World Distribution

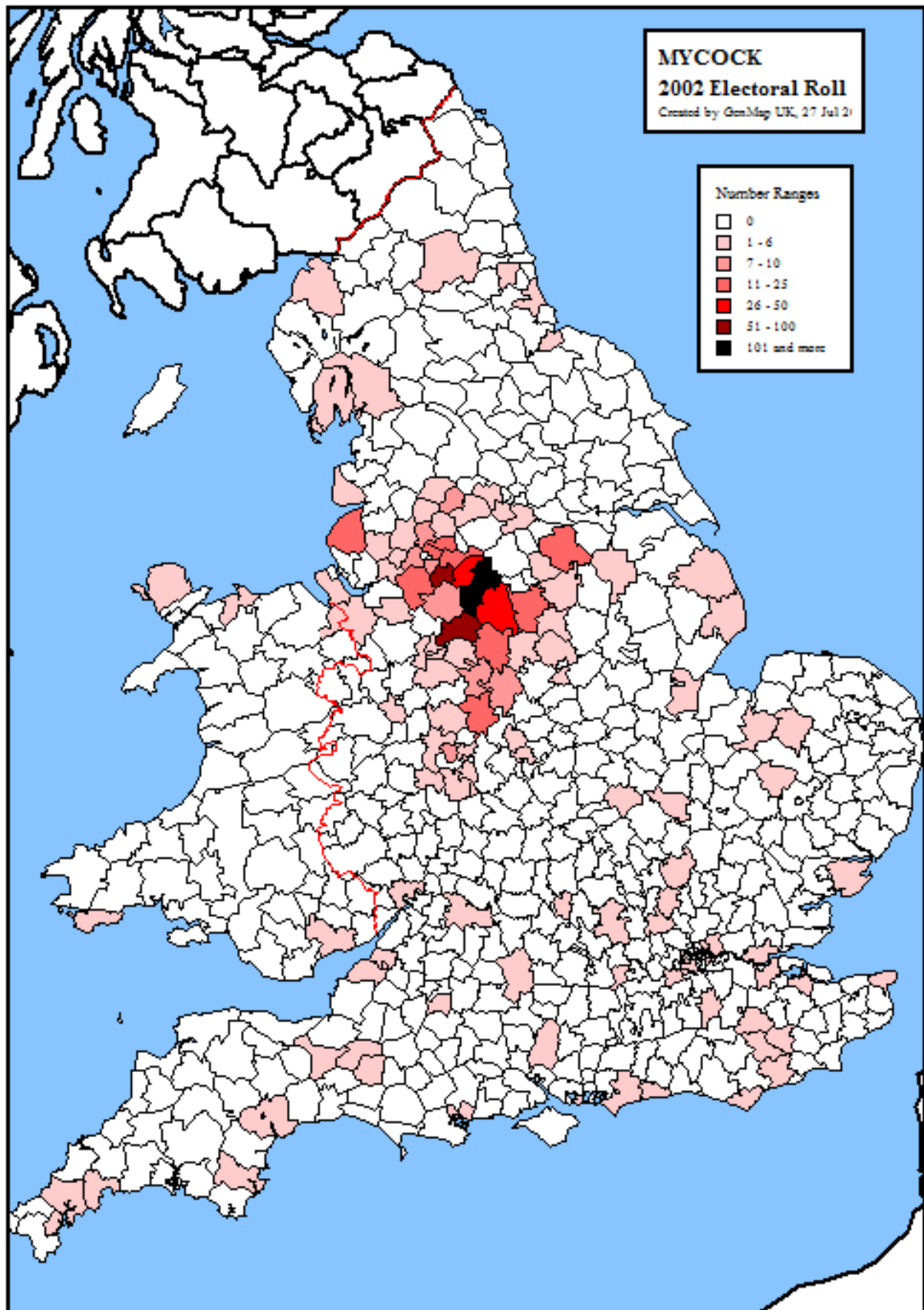


Figure 2 – MYCOCK in the UK Electoral Roll 2002

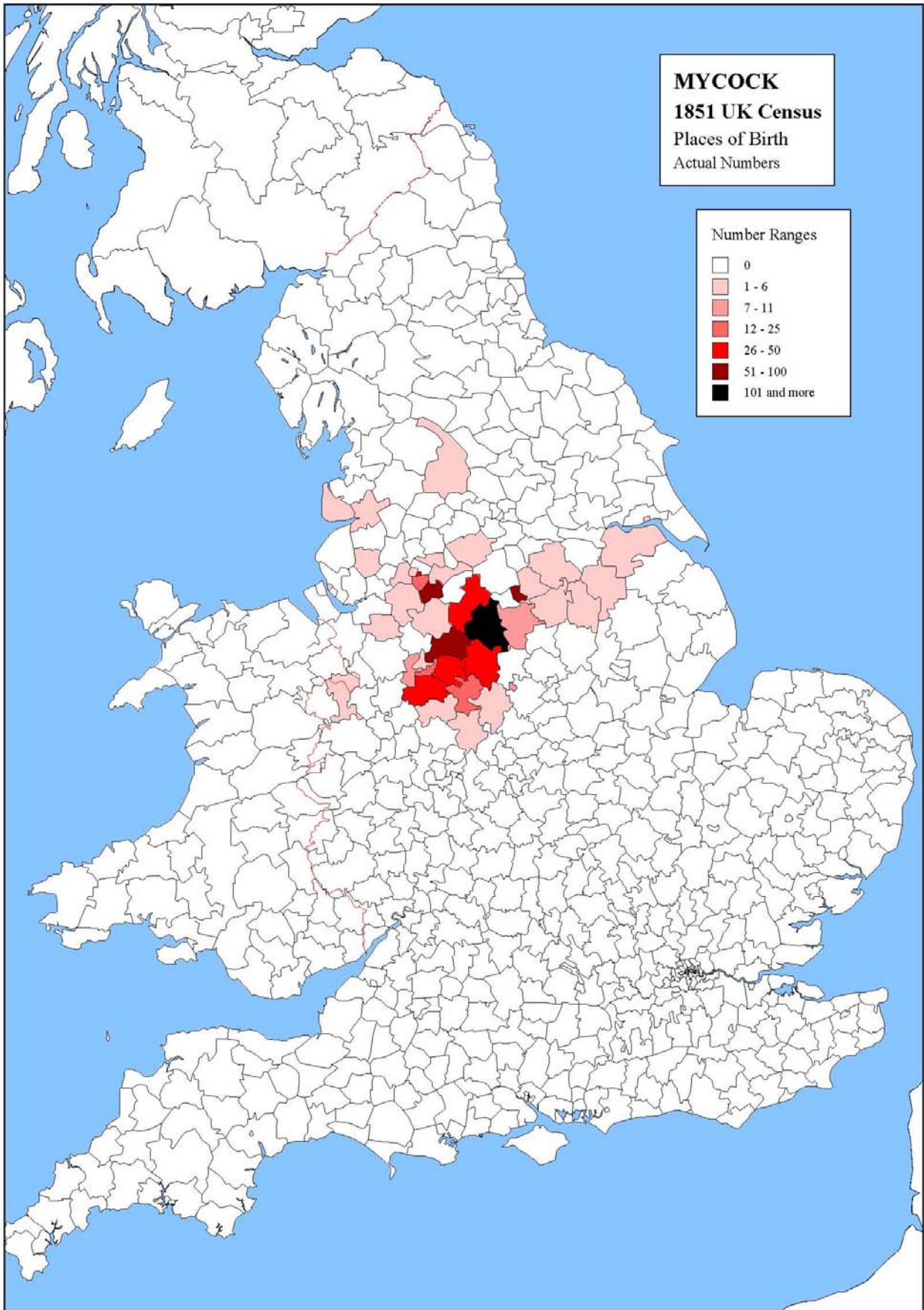


Figure 3 – MYCOCK Places of Birth from the 1851 UK Census

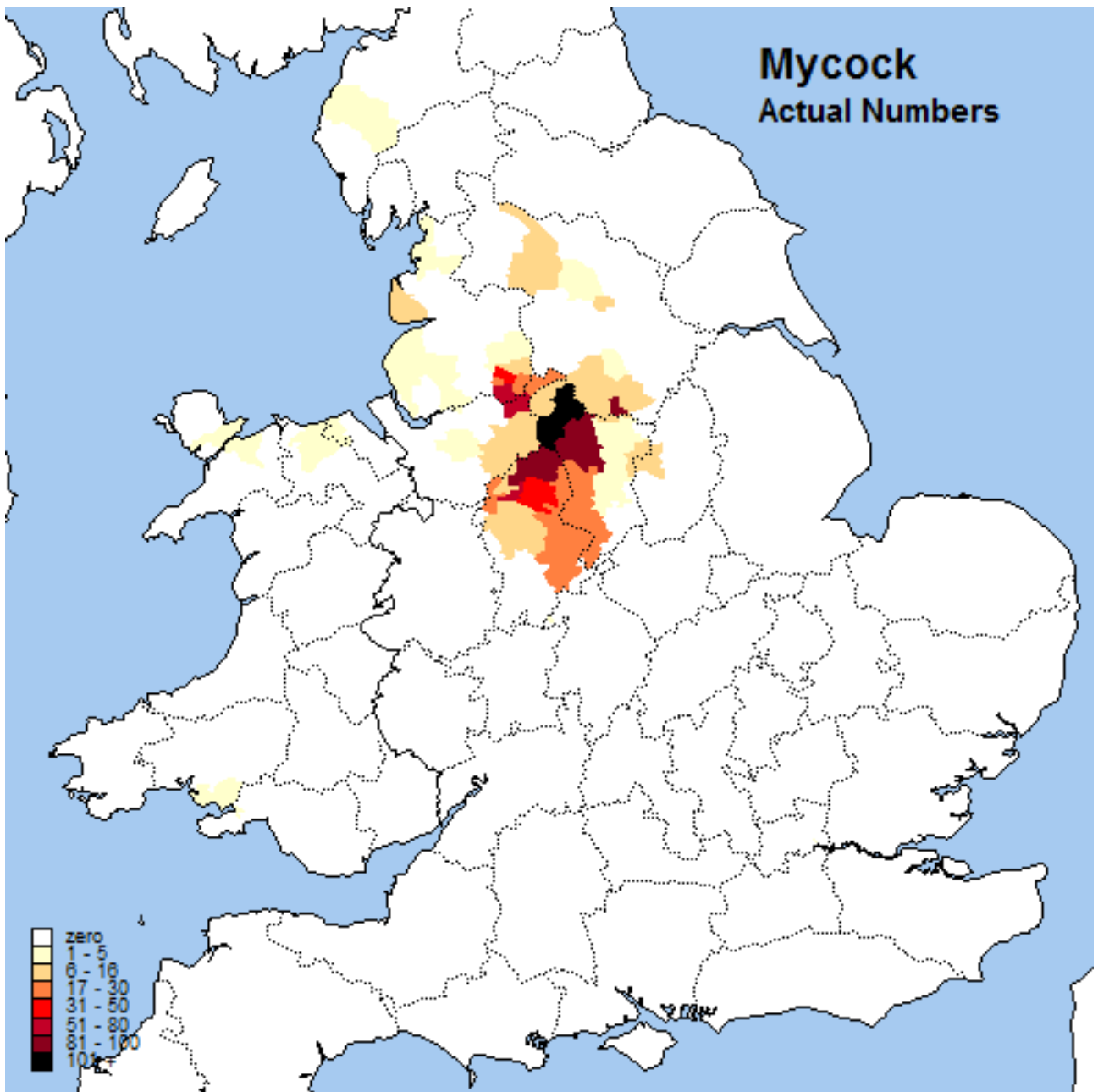


Figure 4a – MYCOCKs in the 1881 UK Census

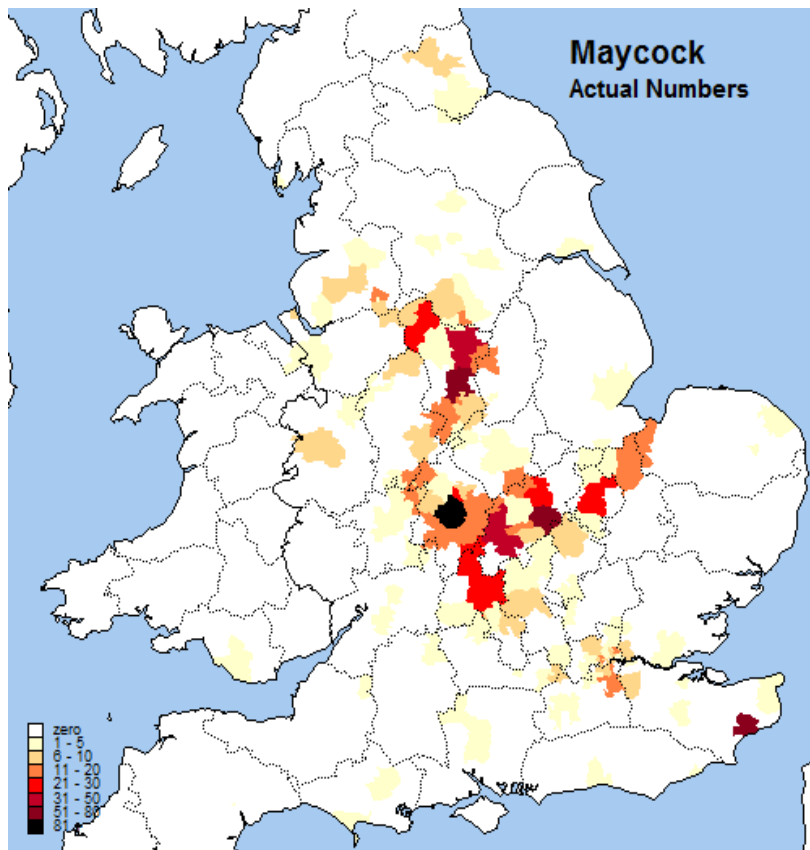


Figure 4b – MAYCOCKs in the 1881 UK Census

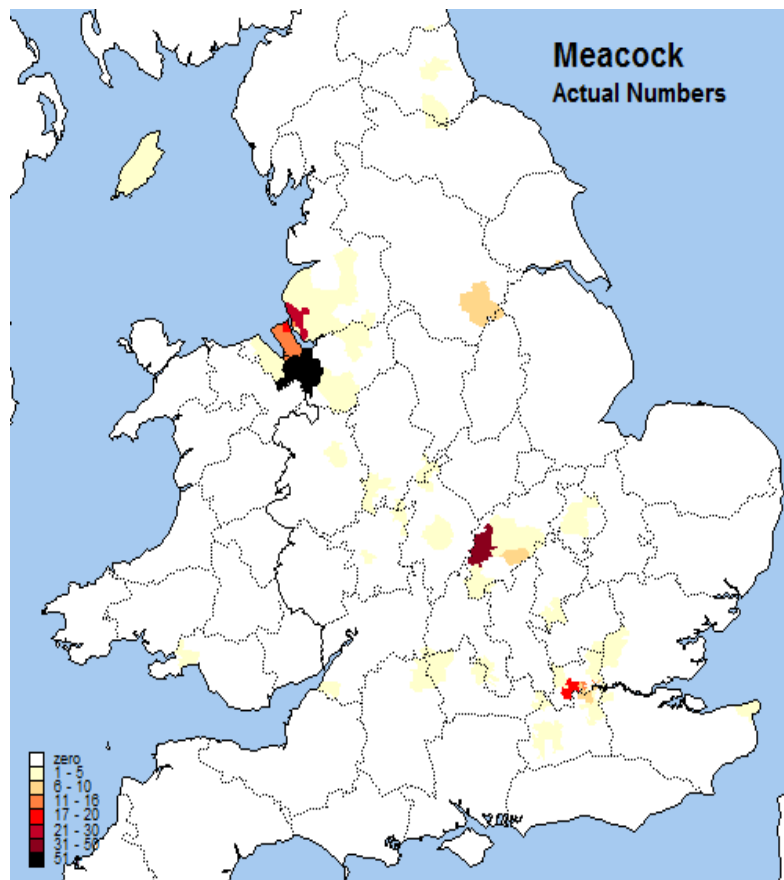


Figure 4c – MEACOCKs in the 1881 UK Census