

ORIGINS OF THE NAME DICKASON (and its variants)

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The origins of the name Dickason are interesting, for in these can be seen the reasons for the common misspelling that so often occurs. Genealogists accept that the name Dickason is a corruption of Dickinson. In this form it has been derived firstly from Dick, the English abbreviation for Richard, then from assimilating the suffix -in or -kin, signifying the younger of the kinship, and lastly -son, the son of Richard.

The name Richard is Teutonic in origin and meant harsh king or ruler. Though it makes a rare appearance in England before the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD, it is only with the advent of the first Norman king of this name, Richard I, who ruled England from 1189 to 1199 that it gained in popularity. This was no doubt due to the adventures of Richard I, which earned him the additional name of Coeur-de-Lion.

One must go back some 600 years before 1066 to the mid-Fifth Century to find the origins from which Richard has been derived and then transmuted by varying spellings into modern languages. The leading syllable is from the same source as Ragn, it is he who executes judgment, the ruler or king – the same as the Indian Rajah, and Rex which is connected to the Latin regere, to rule. In Gothic it was Reiks, then Rich in Old High Germanic and Ric or Ryce in Anglo-Saxon.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon record of the name Richard dates from the year 673 AD, when Egbert, the King of Kent, died and left the throne to his son Etric, who was usurped by Lothaire (Hlothere) the late king's brother. Lothaire took possession of the kingdom and in order to secure the power in his family, enlisted Richard, his son, in what was ultimately a vain attempt to secure continuity for the family.

Etric, the disinherited prince, sought help from the King of Sussex in the adjoining kingdom. Etric won a battle against Lothaire and Richard in 684. Lothaire died of wounds and Richard fled across the sea into Germany, thence onwards to Lucca in Tuscany, where he became a monk and is said to have wrought many miracles.

The Norman dynasty must have had some connection with Lucca, for it is recorded that The Holy Face of Lucca was William Rufus's favourite oath when he followed William I to the English throne. The second Norman duke, Richard I, grandson of the founder of the duchy of Normandy, is the first Norman to bear the name. He transmitted it to two successors. Although Richard became a national name and three Richards have held the throne, the name was discarded by British royalty after the enormities imputed to the last Plantagenet.

The origin in English of the nickname Dick stems from the French form of nickname for Richard used when hereditary surnames began in England. Surnames had begun to make their appearance in France from about the Tenth Century onwards. With the Norman Conquest, Dicon, Diquon and Digon were introduced into England. At that time, Anglo-Saxon names were still confined to personal names only. Then the use of surnames began in the British Isles, with the old personal names rapidly superseded by the new versions of Christian names being introduced.

Between 1066 and 1400 most families in England adopted permanent surnames, usually indicative of patronymic descent or occupation. In 1465 the use of surnames was made compulsory by Act of Parliament. This was followed in 1538 when the order was given by Thomas Cromwell, vicar-general to King Henry VIII, whereby it was made the duty of every parish clergyman to keep registers of baptisms, marriages and burials. This order was in fact implemented very slowly, being largely ignored at first.

The earliest record in England of the nickname Diquon is in the old English forms Diccon and Dicon, Dickin coming at a later stage. The son of Diccon arises where the parent was named Richard, the old nickname adopting the French and later, English colloquialism of using the letter D for names beginning with R – denoting the diminutive.

Thus in this period we have Dodge for Roger, Dob for Robert and so on. Later we find the letter H appears as an alternative to D – hence the old English rhyme Hickory, Dickory Dock. Humphrey replaced Dumphrey and led to Humpty Dumpty. Hick was later lazified into Higg, and thence to the patronymic Higgin and Higginson. The word Dick, however, stuck more closely to the sharpened form to become in later usage the first portion of a patronymic name.

As surnames came to be adopted, the use of the word son, denoting the male child, came to be used in turning a local or nickname into a baptismal surname. Hence the son of the cook, Cookson; the son of the

shepherd, Shepherdson, and in the same way Diccon became Dicconson and Dicon became Diconson. The early forms of the surname that derived from Diquon appear variously in the rolls and lists of population of England as Dicon, Diccon, Dicconson and Dicun. The use of Dickon as an abbreviation for Richard is substantiated, for instance, by William Shakespeare's King Richard the Third where Norfolk is warned not to give overt support to Richard III, whose fate is mostly probably sealed:

Jockey of Norfolk, be not so bold,
For Dickon thy master is bought and sold. (Act V, Scene 3, 304–5)

Another example is the record of John and Henry Dicounesson de Clesnesse, being the sons of Richard, the son of Henry de Clesnesse listed in the patent rolls, Northumberland in 1359. Other early variations include:

1296 William de Dyck Edinburgh
1366 William Dykounson S.R.A.Archive
1388 John Dykonesson F.R.Y.
1518 Henry Dicason GILD Y
1585 Gilbert Dyckenson Sheffield Archive
1598 Henry Dikersone A.D. v.i. (Nf)
1598 Nicholas Dickersone, son of Dicun

By the late Seventeenth Century, we begin to find the usage and spelling as Dickason. One of the early cases is the birth of Susanna Dickason, daughter of Elizabeth Dickason, being entered in the records of St John the Baptist Church, Walbrook, in the City of London. A few years later, in 1692, the same records mention Daniel Dickason, son of Elizabeth Dickason, evidently the same mother as Susanna's. In Necton, Norfolk, on 16 November 1684 we have the birth of John Dickason.

The following are the related variations of the name derived from the diminutive for the sons of Richard:

OLD	MODERN
Decunson, Dekoun, Deekon, Deekin	Dick, Dicks, Dicke, Dickie
Dicason, Dickason, Dickeson	Dickason, Dickenson, Dickerson, Dickinson
Diccon, Dicconson	Dickens, Dickin,
Dickon, Dickons, Dickonson	Dickison
Dicon, Diconson	Dickson, Dixon
Dicounesson	Dyke, Dykes, Dykstra, Dyason
Dicun	
Dikson, Dickson, Dikkonson	
Diquon, Digon (French)	
Dyck, Dycks, Dycson, Dyckenson	

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