

# THE SURNAME ROYALL and its Variants

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I used to think that the spelling of the name Royall with one or two 'L's was a matter of importance. Once I had embarked on tracing my own line of Royall's, I discovered that before the mid-19th century the variation was of little or no importance. The spelling of the name in registers was largely dependant upon the competence, whim or perhaps the hearing of the Parish Priest or Parish Clerk. One needs to remember, of course, that many individuals, even Royalls!, could not read or write and when they married made their 'mark' X. There are many examples of badly kept registers in the 18th century and in some parishes they were neglected altogether for a period of years.

Initially my research was in the parish registers of Norfolk, and over a wide area of that county. I quickly came upon the variants Rial, Riall, Roiall, Ryal, Ryall & Royel. Royle rarely appears in Norfolk registers although not uncommon elsewhere, particularly in the North West of England.

The actual change in the spelling of the name can sometimes be clearly seen in one set of parish registers and within a short span of time. The Acle registers show that a Thomas & Mary who are Ryall in a 1672 entry have become Roiall in entries made in 1678 and 1681 and Elizabeth the subject of the 1681 entry has become Royal in a 1682 entry in the Burial register. This spelling then continues in other entries relating to the family.

The spelling Roiall is a variant originating, as far as I can see, in Acle but also found in Ludham; this is, no doubt, due to the fact that a number of parishioners from Ludham were married in Acle. This variation would seem to have a phonetic origin and did not continue for long.

In the Trimmingham registers between 1768 and 1782 we have the variations of Royall, Royal, Royell and Royall again with the earlier spelling of Ryall and a later one of Rial.

In the registers of Weeting we see, as it were, the process in reverse. John Royall of that village was married by license at Swaffham to Mary Johnson on 8th November 1796. The spelling is quite clear, as it is in the Weeting register which records the baptism of John Royall the son of John and Mary in the following year. In 1805 the second child of this couple was baptised and the name is spelt Ryall, this is repeated in 1807 and 1811 entries. Between 1819 and 1824 there are four more Ryall entries in the Weeting registers and no more Royalls.

I was alerted to a Dorset family of Royalls by an entry in an index, of the will of John Royall of Staunton Caudle, proved in 1600. A search of the registers of this parish and of Bishops Caudle revealed a large number of Ryalls but few Royalls, but sometimes both names are used of the same person. Haynes Ryall son of Henry Ryall of Sherbourne is noted in the Alimeni Oxoniensie as of Wadham College 1687-1688 and Rector of Beer Hackett in 1690 as Royall. I can't resist recording the fact that Ryalls also lived in the villages of Alfpuddle and Piddelltrenthide. In Dorset Ryalls far outnumber Royalls.

A George Riall of Middlesex, who was a member of Christ Church, Oxford 1584-85 became Rector of Middleton in Essex as a Royall. A Worcestershire line of Royalls gives an example of the change from Ryal to Royall, as a William Ryal had a son Joseph born in 1842 who had become Royall by the time he was married.



I am indebted to Nicholas Royal of Bristol for information about his line that can be traced to his g.g.g.grandfather John Royal who was born in Bradfield, Yorkshire in 1762. His name was recorded as such in the muster roll when he joined the army. The parish registers of Bradfield provide a number of variant spellings: Royal, Royle, Royale, Ryall & Riall. John Royal was discharged from the Army in 1805 in Weymouth where his regiment was stationed and he settled there.

A Joseph Royall was living in the "neck of land in the Corporation of Charles Cittie in Virginia" in February 1624; he is probably the same Joseph Royall aged 22 who sailed for Virginia in the ship Charitie in 1622. Another Joseph Royal was a J.P. for Henrico County in Virginia in 1726. Yet another Joseph, Ryale this time, is recorded in the muster of citizens of Pashehays, Maine in 1624. An Alice Riall was "licensed to go beyond the seas in the sloop Ascension" in 1635. A William Royall the emigrant founder of New England Royalls had settled at Salem by 1629.

A number of Royalls live in the Burton on Trent area of Staffordshire today. The earliest references to this line occurs in the list of wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The will of Paule Royell, a gent of Burton on Trent, was proved in 1658 and earlier still in 1620 the will of a William Ryle was proved in favour of his relict Margaret. In the adjacent County of Derbyshire a Thomas Royell owned land in Hartysborne in 1566.

In 1560 the will of a Thomas Royall a Mercer of the City of London was proved in the P.C.C. and in 1593 that of Richard Riall a Merchant Taylor and Citizen of London. Another Richard Riall was a Yeoman of the queens chamber. Yet another Richard Royall was a royal servant - he was an officer of the Pantry, in the office of the Bailiff of the Manor of Whitewyke, Leicestershire he died in 1570 and a successor was appointed in his place on 19th Jan 1571 at 4d a day for life. A Phineas Riall was tailor to Oliver Cromwell and a Sir Phineas Riall commanded British Troops in the War of 1812 (against the U.S.A.).

Mention should be made of the early use of the name Ryall/Royall in registers. I have discovered that I am not the first of this name to be a Prebendary, as one Edmund Ryall was Prebendary of Preston in Hereford Cathedral in 1427. Even earlier 1397-1412 John Ryall was Prior of St.Dennis, Southampton and William Ryell was Rector of St. Mary Hubbard, London, 1394-1400. In Norfolk Robert Ryal was Rector of Mattishall in 1451. As all these priests exercised their ministry before the Reformation we should not expect to discover any descendants! By the time George Royall became Rector of Middleton Suffolk in 1590 clerical marriage was lawful. In 1324 a Nicholas Royle was a juror in an inquisition in the Chippenham Hundred of Wiltshire.

Surnames are often derived from place names, indeed place names are often used as surnames. There are three places in England called Ryall: one each in Worcestershire, Dorset, and Northumberland.

The Worcestershire Ryall was Ruyhale in the 12th century, Ryhal in the 13th C; Ruhale, Ruyhale in the 14th C; Royall, Royalles, Ryalles, in the 16th C. This Ryall certainly provides examples of its use as a surname. In 1249 the Bishop of Worcester gave land in Ryall to John de Ruyhale, there are further references to his widow Isobel de Ruyhale and in 1332 the 'de' has been dropped and we have a Joan Ruyhale and in 1399 a Richard Ruyhale. A farm called Ryalls Court still exists.

Ryal in Northumberland forms part of the moorland parish of Stamfordham. In the 13th Century there are references to William of Ryal and Dame Joan de Rial (1262).

Ryall in Dorset in the parish of Whitechurch Canonicorum was Rin hull in 1240 and later variations were Rohull and Ryle. Whether or not there is any evidence for the large number of Ryalls in and around the Dorset village of Bishops & Staunton Caudle deriving the name from the more westerly village of Ryall, I do not as yet know.

All three place names are probably derived from "Rye-Hill"; from the Old English ryge and hyll and the name refers to a corner of a field or hill where rye was grown. It is not a place name that I have as yet come across in Norfolk where Ryalls, Rialls and Royalls are far from uncommon, but this does not mean that the origin of the name is not linked with places where rye was grown, or possibly with those who grew rye. One thing that cannot be established on present evidence, is the notion, or hope fondly held by some, of a connection, even if only through service, with the Royal Household.

In addition to the three Ryalls there is a Ryhall in Rutland which between the 7th and 13th Centuries produced the variants of Rihale, Righale, Riehale, Ryale, Real, Ryall, Riall and Ruyhall. In this case there is no evidence to show that a surname was derived from the place name.

The history of all four locations mentioned, each in a different part of England, provide examples of variants in the place name, not unlike the variants that have occurred in the surnames. All four place names relate to settlements, hamlets or manors. Possibly research will uncover a wider use of the place name, for local topographical features, i.e. particular fields, hills or small valleys etc.. David Mills of Queen Mary College London says that Ryall, Ryhill etc. is a quite common place name type and that it is certainly possible for the surname to be derived from the place name.

The Acts of the Privy Council for the period 1552-54 referring to Royal plate (Treasure from Spain) give examples of Royal, used as an adjective, being spelt both as Ryall and Riall.

Among the references to Royalls, Ryalls and Rialls to be found in various state papers of the 16th & 17th Century, a Privy Council Act of April 1557 refers to Matthew Riall of Newe Castell who was suspected of coining and an order for trial was made.

On 21st April 1654, a letter was written by Commander Peter Pett of Chatham Docks to the Navy Commissioners which "Asks orders for Wm. Royall, employed in collecting and marking timber lost out of the 'Blessing' of London and found drifting in the river; as it had been seized by the Lord of the Manor".

Whether further research will throw more light on the origin of the surname remains to be seen. That variations in the spelling can take place frequently and within a short space of time, is clear from even the limited numbers of examples given in the paper. It is clear that during the 17th and 18th Centuries, there were some Norfolk villages in which related families spelt their surnames in differing ways. No doubt they all pronounced it in a similar fashion.

The compiler of a substantial genealogy of the line of Royals descended from Joseph Royall who travelled in the "Charitie" and settled in Virginia in 1622 writes, "As you may have observed the name "Royal" as passed down to our generation, has been spelled and recorded in various records as: Royals, Royall, Royalls, Royle, Ryals, and Ryalls".