

# Thirteenth-century personal names

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Common forenames are usually heavily abbreviated – *Will*, *Job* – so that it is necessary to know their full form and declension in order to expand them in the appropriate case, or to determine which case is being used. It is conventional to use their modern equivalents (where available) in English translations and indexes.

There are lists of common names in the nominative (see below), but these do not help to expand some of the tricky ones. This list is a tentative attempt to provide that detail.

## Men's names

### Second declension

The commonest form for straightforward masculine names, following the usual rules for 2<sup>nd</sup> declension nouns, ending in *-us* or *-er*:

<b>Nominative</b>	<b>Genitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Egidius	Egidii	Giles
Nicholaus	Nicholai	Nicholas
Radulfus/Radulphus	Radulfi/Radulphi	Ralph
Ricardus	Ricardi	Richard
Willelmus	Willelmi	William
Alexander	Alexandri	Alexander
Silvester	Silvestri	Sylvester

and so on. The majority of names follow this pattern, and need no further discussion.

### First declension

Some men's names are first declension, but do not follow the usual first declension pattern of *-a*, *-e*. Their nominative does not fit into the standard set of endings. This is tricky, because the other cases can look like women's names. Also, the genitive uses the medieval *-e* ending, rather than Classical *-ae*, which can lead to confusion with third declension ablative. Common examples:

<b>Nominative</b>	<b>Genitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Adam	Ade	Adam
Andreas	Andree	Andrew
Elias/Elyas	Elie/Elye	Elias
Lucas	Luce	Luke
Mathias/Matthias	Mathie/Matthie	Matthias/Matthew?
Thomas	Thome	Thomas

### Third declension

As with ordinary third declension nouns, you just have to learn the genitive, because it often varies from or extends the nominative. However, there is a common pattern of names ending in *-o* or *-on* with a genitive *-onis*, as well as two of the commonest names:

<b>Nominative</b>	<b>Genitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Fulco	Fulconis	Fulk
Hamo	Hamonis	Ham?
Hugo	Hugonis	Hugh
Ivo/Yvo	Ivonis/Yvonis	Ivo
Odo	Odonis	Odo
Wido	Widonis	Guy
Salomon	Salomonis	Solomon
Sampson	Sampsonis	Samson
Simon	Simonis	Simon
Johannes	Johannis	John
Michael	Michaelis	Michael

## Women's names

### First declension

Most female names follow the straightforward pattern of first declension nouns, *-a*, *-e*. There is also one example (at least – but I can't think of others) of the ending *-ix*:

<b>Nominative</b>	<b>Genitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Alicia	Alicie	Alice
Beatrix/Beatrixia	Beatricie	Beatrice
Cristiana	Cristiane	Christiana/tina
Isabella	Isabelle	Isabel
Matilda	Matilde	Matilda/Maud
Roesia	Roesie	Rose

### Third declension

As usual with the third declension, you just have to learn the genitives, but there are only a few which spring to mind:

<b>Nominative</b>	<b>Genitive</b>	<b>Modern</b>
Agnes	Agnetis	Agnes
Matillis	Matillidis	Matilda/Maud

The name Fides (Faith) is third declension (genitive Fidis), according to Martin, but fifth declension (genitive Fidei, like the common noun for faith), according to Gooder.

## Indeclinable names

Many Jewish and Biblical names seem to stay the same wherever they are used – they do not have any cases other than the nominative form. Examples include: Aaron, Abraham, Benjamin, Bonamy, David, Isaac, Moyses.

The same may apply to some Welsh names: there are the forms Madocus and Griffinus, but sometimes Madoc or Griffin are used without case endings.

## Changeable names

The written forms of names were not fixed. There are variant spellings for many names, and writers did not feel bound to stick to the same form for the same person, even within the same paragraph. Sometimes, it appears that one clerk preferred one spelling, another another (for instance, pipe rolls and chancellor's rolls are meant to be identical, but one roll will consistently use Galfridus where the other prefers Gaffridus). Other examples:

Alienora        Eleanora  
Matilda        Matillis.

There are a few names which may be interchangeable, or may be intended as quite distinct names, but can be confused when abbreviated:

Math'            Mathias or Matheus/Mattheus  
Marg'            Margareta or Margeria.

There are also male and female pairs of names, which can be confused when they are abbreviated, unless one pays attention to case endings:

Albreda        Albredus  
Cecilia        Cecilius  
Dionysius     Dionysia  
Thomas        Thomasina, etc.

## Sons and daughters

Individuals are often identified by parentage and take the Christian name of their father as a surname; for example, Henry son of Nicholas, Margaret daughter of William. In such cases, the Latin for 'son' (filius-i) and 'daughter' (filia-e) is invariably abbreviated to fil'. The name of the father will be declined in the genitive singular. So:

Henric' fil. Nichol' = Henricus filius Nicholai  
Margar' fil. Willelm' = Margareta filia Willelmi

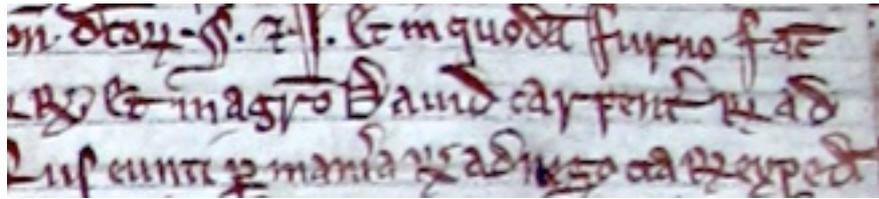
Be wary, if the case of an individual's name changes, so too does the case of filius/filia. The name of the father will remain in the genitive case. So:

(dative) Henrico filio Nicholai = to Henry son of Nicholas  
(genitive) Margarete filie Willelmi = of Margaret daughter of William

## Other surnames

Many people are named after places, either *de* somewhere or by a descriptive noun or adjective - Hugo le Franceys, Alardus Flandrens'. Generally left unexpanded, like other place-names (and indexed under the modern place-name).

Occupational names – Faber / le Fevre, le Careter / caretarius, carpentarius / le Charpenter – are tricky, particularly as names are not necessarily capitalized. Sometimes they are clearly descriptions of an actual trade (Walterus caretarius persone de Offord), sometimes surnames in the modern sense. I don't think there is any straightforward rule for dealing with this – I have tended to capitalize the French names and just guess about the Latin ones. Here is a nice example of a trade as description:



The clerks who wrote the rolls clearly took it upon themselves sometimes to translate names into French or Latin. The same person turns up in the pipe roll and the Chancellor's roll as Hugo Faber and Hugo le Fevre; he probably thought his name was Hugh Smith, or even Hugh the smith. Similarly, the rolls show alternatives for Willelmus suz le Boys and Willelmus sub Bosco, Walterus de la Sale and Walterus de Aula.

French names are often Latinized. The Beauchamp family turn up as de Bello Campo, bishop Peter of Aigueblanche as de Aqua Blanca, Peter des Roches as de Rupibus (in the Chancery rolls and Matthew Paris, for example), etc.

### Further reading

There may well be a useful list of Latin names somewhere which I have missed. However, when I have been looking for names to fit an intractable contracted form, I have only found a few useful resources:

There is a list of names (in the nominative) and modern English equivalents at the end of *The record interpreter*, compiled by Charles Trice Martin; it is also available online –

<http://comp.uark.edu/~mreynold/recint7.htm>

*The Oxford dictionary of English Christian names*, by EG Withycombe, gives Latin versions of current English names;

there is a page on Christian names, giving declensions of 20 common names, in Eileen Gooder, *Latin for local history*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1978), p. 118;

and a last resort is to try the indexes of printed rolls, in the hope that a first name has been indexed in the form – Y, X son of.

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