

Oxford Reference

The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland

Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates, and Peter McClure

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Print Publication Date: 2016

Print ISBN-13: 9780199677764

Published online: 2016

Current Online Version: 2016

eISBN: 9780191781797

Bell

Variants: LEBBELL, BELLE, BEL, BELLS

- **Current frequencies:** GB 76944, Ireland 6215
- **GB frequency 1881:** 55974
- **Main GB location 1881:** N England: esp. Northumb, Cumb, and Durham, and Scottish Lowlands: esp. Dumfriess
- **Main Irish location 1847–64:** widespread: esp. Ulster

1 English: relationship name from the Middle English personal name *Bell*, possibly a pet form of *Isabel*, which, in the form *Isabela*, is originally the Spanish equivalent of ELIZABETH but was fairly frequent in medieval England.

Further information:

Belli, genitive case form of *Bellus*, is a Latin form of Old French *Bel* 'beautiful', otherwise unknown as a personal name.

Early bearers:

Ailuardus filius Belli, 1086 in Domesday Book (Suffolk); Ricardus filius Bell, 1279 in Hundred Rolls (Hunts); Osbertus filius Belle, 1297 in Subsidy Rolls (Yorks); Roger Bell, 1536 in IGI (Felthorpe, Norfolk); Richard Bell, 1538 in IGI (Ingham, Suffolk); Richi. Bell, 1538 in IGI (Pickworth, Lincs); Johanna Bell, 1541 in IGI (Barkway, Herts); John Bell, 1541 in IGI (Westminster, Middx).

2 English: nickname from Middle English *belle* 'bell' (Old English *belle*), probably for a bellringer or bellman (see BELLMAN, BELLRINGER).

Early bearers:

Seaman Belle, 1181–7 in Ekwall, ELPN (London); Serlo Belle, 1190 in Pipe Rolls (Yorks).

3 English: nickname from Middle English *bel* 'fair, fine, good' (Old French *bel* 'beautiful, fair'). See also BEAL.

Early bearers:

England:

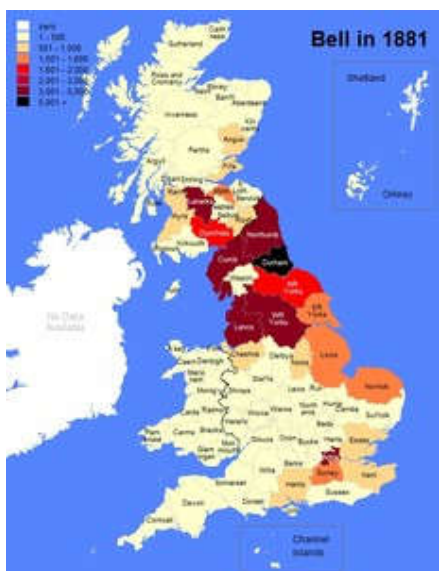
Hugo bel, 1148 in Winton Domesday (Hants); Robertus bellus in Winton Domesday; Robert le bel, 1186–1200 in Saint Benet of Holme Register (Norfolk).

Scotland: David Bell, canon, 1263 in Inchaffray Register (Dunkeld, Perth); Adam Belle, 1296 in Scotland Calendar (Berwicks); Thomas dictus Bell, canon, about 1340 in Scone Charters (Dunkeld, Perth); Janet Bell, 1562 in IGI (Dunfermline, Fife); Johne Bell, 1612 in IGI (Dumfries, Dumfriess).

4 English: locative name for someone who lived '(by the) church or town bell or bellhouse', or for someone who lived '(at the sign of) the bell'.

Early bearers:

Roger del Bel, 1209 in Pipe Rolls (Norfolk); Robert de la Belle, 1222 in Saint Paul's Domesday; John atte Belle, 1332 in Subsidy Rolls (London).



[Click to view larger](#)

Bell, 1881 frequency.

© Archer Software

Copyright © 2020. All rights reserved.