

The origin of the surname

HAVING thus dealt with the identity of these apparently dissimilar forms of surnames, we may now enquire whether the origin of Phillimore and the various allied surnames can be ascertained. There is no reason for suggesting that they are either surnames of occupation or of patronymic origin,¹ and, in fact, it is fairly obvious that they are local in their derivation. It is needful, then, to ask what places there may be known by any similar names. Dismissing the doubtful Finmore in Kent, already referred to in connection with the Filmer family, we have in Oxfordshire a parish called *Finmere*, about four miles from Buckingham; a farm now known as *Finnamore*, a detached part of Lewknor parish, but now forming part of Buckinghamshire; *Finemere Wood*, not far from Quainton, Bucks, near Quainton Road; a place in Shropshire now called *Fennymere*; in Herefordshire a *Fenmore*; and in Nottinghamshire a *Fillemore Close*, a field-name in Ruddington parish. In Hampshire *Filmer Hill*. In Yorkshire we find *Pilmoor*, and in Berwickshire is a hamlet called *Pilmore*. In Yorkshire, also, is *Fynmer*, now *Fimber*. In Ireland we have *Fynmoure*, in county Tipperary. In Glamorganshire is *Vylenmaure*, and Victor Hugo gives the placename of *Phillinmore*, though this last may merely be the novelist's invention. The parish of *Fullmer* exists in Buckinghamshire, but there is no reason to associate it with Phillimore, though it may have originated what appears to be the distinct surname of Fulmer, which occurs in that county, and there is, or was, in 1541, a wood called *Filmore*, in the parish of Thornbury, Gloucestershire, a manor anciently owned by the same lords as was Finmere in Oxfordshire. Finmere, therefore, must be dealt with in a separate chapter, for there is much to say about this village, and it will be needful to deal with it somewhat fully since it is doubtless the origin of most of the surnames with which we are concerned, though it would not be safe to assert that all who derive their name from one village are necessarily of the same kindred; for a village may supply a surname to two or three distinct families. The lord of the manor assumed it by reason of residence and dominion; his tenant, or other inhabitant of the village, migrating to a neighbouring town, became known by a similar surname, which, with him, indicated the place of - his origin, and superseded the surname, if any, by which he had previously been known. Of the other places mentioned a few brief notes will suffice.

Finemere Wood is the name of some meadows in Buckinghamshire, forming a spur of high land in the parish of Quainton, and south of East Claydon parish. It is about eight miles south-east of the Oxfordshire Finmere. In the early ordnance maps the place is marked as Fine Moor; in the later ones it appears as Fenemere; and in the 1893 survey it is given as Finemere Wood. It is thus referred to in *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War*, vol. i, p. 30 :-

“In a distant part of the estate, in the midst of lonely meadows and woods, far removed from any road or even footpath, is a spur of land called Finmere, standing out into the flat plain towards Oxford, with a far-reaching view over fields, copses, hill and dale, arable and grass, stretching for thirty miles or more to Edge Hill in one direction to the north-west, and to Cumnor Hurst, the house of Amy Robsart, in another, to the south-west. In this most appropriate situation there was a tiny hermitage, which with meadow pastures and wood for repairing fences and houses and passage (sic) for swine, was given by Henry 11 to a religious house of the ascetic Order of Augustines, who allowed the hermit 13s. 4d. a year. If the holy man did not live on acorns and the beauty of the position it is difficult to see on what he fed, unless he condescended to a goat, and perhaps a garden of herbs, for the distance from human help must have been great indeed in the thirteenth century, as it can hardly be reached now in bad and muddy weather.”

It seems clear that it never has been a place of any note, and the assumption that it was the site of the Hermitage is probably but a too hasty identification, for though Finmere, by Buckingham, was undoubtedly associated with the Augustinians at Bristol, we have no evidence that this place was in any way connected with them. Having regard to the nature of the locality and the adjoining names of Great Moor, Shogmoor, Parmoor, Bagmoor, Cadmore, and Balmoor, this Finemere is likely to be a mere local description, still extremely appropriate, of the natural features of this Fenny Moor.

Finnamore Farm is a place some three miles north of Hurley, about half-way between Henley -on-Thames and High Wycombe. It is so marked in the ordnance survey of 1886. This is near Ackhamsted, an outlying and detached portion of the Oxfordshire parish of Lewknor, but locally situate in Buckinghamshire, with which county it has been incorporated since 1851. In the ordnance survey of 1833 it is entered as Fenny Moor, and as Finnemoor in the Buckinghamshire Census for 1851. Near it is Moor Common, Moor's End, and, a mile away, is Widmer Chapel. Probably its occurrence is to be explained in the same way as Finemere Wood, near Quainton.

Fenmore, in Herefordshire, is named in 1467 in the “Inquisitio post-mortem” of Thomas Welynton. Its precise locality is not known.

Fenneymere, in Shropshire, is a place of some antiquity, which as early as 1121 was described in a grant as “quadam terrula cum Iacu qui vocatur Finemera.” This gave name to a family of whose pedigree for some five generations we have record down to near the end of the thirteenth century. Full particulars are given in Eyton's *Antiquities of Shropshire*. Their pedigree is given in tabular form in the *Family of Fynmore*, compiled some years ago by the present writer.

Fynmer, now *Fimber*, is a hamlet in the parish of Wetwong, not far from Great Driffield, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. In 1292 Thomas Ugtred “in Cales commorans” had a grant of free warren in Fymmer-juxta-Fridaythorpe. It is named in 1289, when Thomas Burdon had a grant of free warren in Wilberfoss, Fymmere and Fons Bella. It is named as Fynmer in the Inquisition post-mortem of Ralph de Neville in 1367. The Master of St. Leonards, York, in 1372, possessed twenty-four oxgangs of land in Fynmer.

A place named *Pilmoor* is also in Yorkshire, a station on the North-Eastern Railway, half-way between York and North Allerton. It may have originated some similar surname, but in the absence of evidence it seems more probable that the surname Pilmore, at any rate in the South, is a variant of Filmore.

Another *Pilmore* is in Berwickshire, and may give name to the Lowland Scotch family of Pilmore, several of whose testaments are recorded in the Commissary Court of Brechin. There does not appear to be any reason for associating the name or family with the Finnimores or Filmores of the south.

Fillemore Close is a field-name on the Parkyns estate at Ruddington in Nottinghamshire, which occurs in a list dated 1792. About a couple of dozen fields are mentioned having names terminating in moor, as Bassimore, Longmoor, Lowmoore, Brookmoor, etc. Of the origin of this Fillemore nothing is known.

Vylenmawre is the name of a mill in Glamorganshire, mentioned in 1375 in the Inquisition post-mortem of Edward le Despencer, “Molendinum de Vylenmawre quod valet per annum ultra reprisas vj^h xiiij^s iiij^d”. As it formed part of the possessions of the earls of Gloucester, who were lords also of Finmere, it might be suggested that it is a Welsh form of the owner's name, but in all probability it signifies merely the “great mill”.²

Of *Fimer Hill* or *Filmore*, in Hampshire, no particulars have been noted, but as that county is one of the habitats of the allied surnames, it may be an instance of the transference of a personal name to a locality. It is eleven miles west of Winchester, half-way between Tisted and Privett, on the main road from Alton to Fareham.

Fynmoure, in county Tipperary in Ireland, was clearly at one time a place of some note, for in 30 Edward 1, 1301, John de Fresingfield obtained the right of holding there a market and fair, besides having the privilege of free warren. Far away as this place is from the Oxfordshire village of Finmere, it is not improbable that it takes its name therefrom, just as in our day the names of English villages are transferred to new settlements in Australia, Africa, or America. For it must not be forgotten that Tipperary adjoins the county of Clare, which obtained its name from the famous Strongbow, who was of the same great Anglo-Norman family which held the lordship of the Oxfordshire Finmere; and as we know that it was hardly a century before that Gilbert de Finemere was for a time in Ireland, it may well be that the Irish village gained its name at the instance of either a Clare or a Fynamore. There is no evidence that this Irish village gave its name in turn to any family; and though there are Irish Finnimores who have been connected with Wicklow, King's County, and Dublin since the middle of the sixteenth century, they preserve the tradition, probably a correct one, of being descended from Cromwellian English settlers, presumably from Devonshire.

Phillinmore, named in Victor Hugo's *L'homme qui rit*, is presumably a fancy of the writer. Nothing has been found to identify it with any known place.

None of these places, except Finmere in Oxfordshire, and Fennemere in Shropshire, so far as evidence goes, have been connected with families of the same name, and as we have nothing to show the continuance of the Shropshire family of de Fennemere beyond the thirteenth century, it remains only to deal with the Oxfordshire village, and with the various families deriving their names from it.

1. The statement of Ferguson that Phillimore and Filmore are derived from an old German personal name, Filimer, signifying “full famous”, is probably but a mere guess, and does not appear to be supported by any evidence. The suggestion in *English Surnames* that Fynamour is connected with the French *amour*

may be passed over, although it is very likely that the Christian name of Dulcia Fynamour (*temp.* Edw. I), mentioned in Mr. Bardsley's book, may have been selected as suitable for a surname ending in *amour*.

2. The *Black Book of St. Davids*, a sixteenth century transcript of a manuscript compiled in 1326, mentions David Fynmaior as a landowner at Trefoin, now Trevine, in Pembrokeshire. At present the occurrence of the name here is unexplained.