

Where does the name come from?

In May 2005 I came into contact with Robyn Lewis from Tasmania. In the course of an exchange of emails I asked her what she knew of the derivation of our surname. She provided the information shown below:

"Thanks for your Rawson pdf. It would appear we are not related, at least not after your John Rawson in 1764. I am descended from the Halifax (W Yorkshire) Rawsons, and have traced our tree back to about 1400 in the Rawson line and 1066 in the Stansfelds (who married into the Halifax Rawsons). Our lot produced a number who came to Australia, most notably Charles, Lancelot and Edmund who settled near Mackay, and Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson who was Governor of NSW from 1902-09.

I thought you may have been descended from one of the former (the latter had only surviving daughters).

If you are looking into your original John Rawson, I would suggest the Bradford (Yorkshire) line. The families branched about 1750; my lot went to Halifax (and yours is definitely not in there) and the other stayed or went to Bradford. Many of the latter seemed to have been solicitors.

If you are interested in such things, the motto of the Rawsons of Halifax was 'Laus Virtutis Actio' which means 'the deed is the praise of virtue'. I am not sure about the Bradford ones, you can look that up also, and it is probably similar.

The family crest contains a raven's head, symbol of the origin of the surname, Ravenson. The name would appear to be originally Anglo-Saxon (whereas Stansfeld is Norman), but that is a supposition (mine) at this stage, although it is based on a list of Anglo-Saxon words and name origins.

"From the info I have, the name appears to have been derived from Ravenson, i.e. son of Raven; as mentioned it appears to be an Anglo-Saxon name. Perhaps they liked ravens – they are on all the crests of all branches – so it does not appear to be trade-linked (my branch were certainly farmers before turning into textile merchants in the 1700s). There was one Rawson who was keeper of the ravens at the Tower of London (which are, incidentally, still there), but that was well after 1066 when the surname first appeared. As you may know that was the time of the first surnames and often people just picked something they liked or were associated with, it was not always their trade."

"In one of my books on my Rawson ancestors (Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, you may have heard of him, former Governor of NSW) p4, it says:

'The Rawsons of Yorkshire, tradition says, are descended from the Saxon family of Rauenchil (Rauenchilson, Rauenson, Rawson) who have been located in the valley of the Aire long before the Norman Conquest. They are a very ancient stock... and in the Domesday Book their holdings of land in Shipley ...in 1086 are mentioned. [The name Rauenshil is used in that].

.....Rawson has been the family surname for the past 5 centuries (this was published in 1914). Previous to that it was Rauenchilson and Rauenson, and the first mention of the name as it now stands occurs in the poll tax ...in 1379, where we find the head of the family described as Johannes Rawson"