

## Middle English Gender-neutral Given Names

Scolastica la souriete

© Triste Elliott

The purpose of this article is to present a list, with supporting data, of Middle English names that were given to both genders in period. I used as my primary sources *A Dictionary of English Surnames* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*, supplemented by other sources as I deemed necessary.

During the Middle Ages, most records were kept in Latin. As such, a lot of the names that were used for both genders are concealed behind Latin endings, usually -us for masculine names and -a for feminine names. For example, a person named Philip might have their name recorded as Philip (unlatinized), Philipus (a Latin masculine form) or Philipa (a Latin feminine form). In English daily life, regardless of how their name was recorded, people with this name were called Philip. A large proportion of the following list falls into this category.

Another record pattern I found among this group of records was diminutive forms. Diminutive forms sometimes originate from completely different names for the masculine and feminine versions, even though the diminutive itself looks identical. For example, the name May is a diminutive of the masculine name Matthew, but the feminine form is a diminutive of Mary or Margaret. Nicknames like May are the equivalent of the modern nicknames Sam and Chris. Sam can be short for Samuel or Samantha, while Chris can be a short form of Christopher or Christine.

There are a few names where there is a female diminutive of a masculine given name, but no examples of the feminine form. The existence of the female diminutive strongly suggests the existence of an unrecorded female form. These are Ivo/Ivetta, Massy/Masota and Tibbe/Tibota.

While I have focused on dated citations, where the most up-to-date historical name dictionary stated plainly that a certain name was given to both females and males, I included that statement in the Notes column even if they did not supply full supporting dated examples.

The names in the gender-neutral column are my best guess at the most likely gender-neutral forms in Middle English, based on the citations that I have been able to find. Some of them may sound masculine or feminine to the modern ear. Medieval English people had a different mental map of masculine and feminine names than 21st century people. In spite of how deeply gendered the Middle Ages were, some names were given to infants of both genders, and this list is a list of those names. These suggested gender-neutral forms are not necessarily the only Middle English gender-neutral forms. There may be others that are also registerable based on the same data or additional data.

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
Abelot	Abelot 1279	Abelota 1277	R&W	Ablett	
Aldred		Aldreda 1086 1219, Adeldreda 1202, Aildreda 1206, Etheldreda 1290 1304	HC&M	Awdry	

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
	Ældred Ældret Aldret Eldred Eldret 1086, Aldret about 1145-65, Eldredus 1161- 77, Alredus 1206		HC&M	Aldred	
Amand	Amandus 1199	Amanda 1221	R&W	Amand	
Ami	Ami c1250, Amye 1297	Amia 1193	R&W	Amey	
Amis, Amice	Amisius 1211	Amicia 1189	R&W	Ames	
Anastas, Anastasy	Anstasius 1188	Anastasia 1221	R&W	Ansteys	
Acelot Aslot	Aslot 1379	Acelota 1377	HC&M	Aslett	
Aschelin, Acelin	Ascelinus 1162	Acelina 1195	R&W	Aslin	
Aubri, Albree	Aubri 1279	Albree 1221, Albray Aubray 1279	HC&M	Aubrey	Masculine name from Old French Alberi, Aubri, feminine from Old French Albree, Aubree, Auberee
Ailet	Ailletus 1180- 1207, Alettus 1212, Æliot 1202, Alyott 1311	Ailleth Ailed 1198, Ailhiet 1202, Ailith Ailleth 1207	HC&M	Aylett	Masculine name from Old English Æðelgeat, feminine from Old English Æðelgyð
Basil, Basill	Basill' 1170- 1200	Basill' 1296, Basilia 1134 1154- 89	HC&M	Baseley	
Basse	Basse 1301		HC&M	Bass	“English: relationship name from the Middle English personal name <i>Bas(s)e</i> . This could be an Old French form of Continental Germanic <i>Baso</i> (perhaps meaning ‘purple’) or more commonly a pet form of Middle English and Old French <i>Basile</i> or <i>Basily</i> , used of men and women alike.”
Bencelin	Benzelinus 1086	Bencelina 1207	HC&M	Bence	
Benedict, Beneit		Benedicta 1346	Inquisitions p23		

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
		Beneita 1189	DMNES	Benedicta	
	Beneit 1193, Benedictus 1200		HC&M	Bennet	
Bette	Bette 1289	Betta 1247	R&W	Bett	Betta may be a nickname for Beatrice; Bette is a nickname for Bertram or Bartholomew
Chun	Chun, Chunne 1279	Chuna 1248	HC&M	Chown	
Cristian, Christian	Cristien 1170-1200, Cristianus 1201	Cristiana 1170-1200 1215-1245 1300-30 1355-85 1379, Christiana 1154 1379, Christina 1100-30 1170-1200	HC&M	Christian	
Clemens		Clementia 1162, Clemencia 1210	HC&M	Clemence	
	Clemens 1153-38 1212		HC&M	Clement	
Colet	Collet 1202	Colette 1379	HC&M	Collett	
Colin	Colinus 1191 1196 1207	Colina 1250	HC&M	Collin	
Denis	Dionisius 1154-89, Dionis 1327 1332, Denis 1176, Denes 1379	Dionisia 1154-89, Deonisia 1212, Denise 1321	HC&M	Dennis	
Douce	Douce 1274, 1307	Duze 1219, Dulcia 1275	R&W	Douce	
Eilaf	Eilaf Ailof Elaf 1086, Ailef 1175	Eilieua 1154-89	HC&M	Ayliffe	Masculine name from Old Norse Eilifr, feminine from Old English Æðelgifu
Elis, Helis, Elice	Helias about 1150, Elyas about 1160, Heliseus about 1175, Helyas, Elyas 1154-89, Elis 1220, Elice 1224	Elicia 1319	HC&M	Ellis	Elis is an Old French version of Elias; Elicia is a nickname for Elizabeth or possibly a feminine version of Elis
Eustace	Eustachius 1086, Eustacius 1166-	Eustachia 1214 1222	HC&M	Eustace	

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
	75				
Felis	Felix 1122 1229 1381, Felys 1379, Felice 1381, Felis 1381	Felicia 1194 1207 1218	HC&M	Felix	
Florence	Florentius 1130- 2 1201	Florentia Florenca 1207-8	HC&M	Florence	
Galien	Galionus 1130, Galienus 1212	Galiena 1207	HC&M	Gallyon	
Gile, Giles	Gilo Ghilo, 1086, Gisle, Egidius, Gilo, Gile 1154-89, Gile 1196, Gilo 1210		HC&M	Giles	
		Egidia 1225	HC&M	Marley	
Jimme, Gemme	Gemme 1251 1306	Gemma 1219, Jemma 1283, Jimme 1286	R&W	Gem	
	Jimme 1286 1306, Gemme 1251	Jimme 1286, Gemma 1219, Jemma 1283	HC&M	Gem	
Gillot	Gillot 1379	Gilletta 1198, 1221, Gillot 1379	R&W	Gillet	diminutive of Giles
	Gilot 1280, Gelotus 1379	Gillota 1198, 1222, Gillot' 1379	HC&M	Gillett	
Gilian, Jilian	Jilianus 1206, Gilianus 1279	Giliana 1198, Jeliana 1274	R&W	Gillian	Also Jelion and Jilian
	Jilianus 1206, Gilianus 1279	Giliana 1198 1315, Jeliana 1274	HC&M	Gillian	
Goda, Gode	Goda 1086 1194, Gode 1086	Gode 1086, Goda 1086	HC&M	Goode	
Gold, Golde	Golde 1279		HC&M	Gold	“English: relationship name from either the Old English masculine personal name <i>Golda</i> or the feminine personal name <i>Golde</i> .”
		Golde 1222	DMNES	Golda	Golde is in the genitive case; the nominative would be Golda.
Henn	Henn 1588	Henna 1192	HC&M	Henn	Nicknames for Henry

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
Hilary	Hilarius 1100-30 1177	Illaria, Ilaria, Hillaria 1219	HC&M	Hilary	
Hugelin	Hugelyn Hugelinus 1052- 65, Huchelinus 1086, Huelinus 1221	Hugolina 1219 1309	HC&M	Hulin	Nicknames for Hugh
Ive		Iuetta 1166 1175 1221	HC&M	Ivatt	“English: relationship name from a pet form of the Old French personal name <i>Iva</i> , feminine form of <i>Ivo</i> .”
	Iue 1101-7, Iuo, Hiue 1155-60		HC&M	Ive	
Jakemin	Jakemyn 1314	Jakemina 1321	R&W	Jackaman	
	Jakemyn 1314, Jacomyn 1379	Jakemina 1321	HC&M	Jackaman	
Jaket					“English: relationship name from the Middle English personal name <i>Jaket</i> , perhaps a diminutive of Jack (from <b>John</b> ) but more likely a borrowing of Old French <i>Jacquet</i> , a pet form of <i>Jacques (James)</i> , used for men and women alike.”
		Jaketta 1300	HC&M	Jackett	
John, Jone, Jonet	Johannes 1140, Jon 1292, Johan 1379		HC&M	John	“The feminine <i>Joan</i> , latinized as <i>Johanna</i> , was also common and had the same forms and pronunciation as <i>John</i> . The surname may derive from either. <i>Johan</i> became <i>Jan</i> and <i>Jon</i> , and <i>Jehan</i> became <i>Jen</i> , with diminutives <i>Janin</i> , <i>Jonin</i> , <i>Jenin</i> ; <i>Janet</i> , <i>Jonet</i> , <i>Janet</i> ; <i>Jankin</i> , <i>Jonkin</i> , <i>Jenkin</i> .”
	Jonot 1308		HC&M	Janet	
	Iohn 1387, John 1402, Ion Jon 1413, Ione 1417- 18, Iankyn 1417-			DMNES	John

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
	18, Johannet 1429, Ienyn Jenyn 1439				
		Jonata 1379, Janet 1381, Jeneta 1562, Iohane 1395, Ione 1418, Iohn 1424- 25, genet 1387, Ionet 1406, Ienet 1431,	DMNES	Joan	
Golle	Golle 1203, Gewe 1275, Jowe 1227 1327	Golle 1219	HC&M	Jew	
Hugelin, Huelin	Hugelyn Hugelinus 1052- 65, Hvchelinus 1086, Huelinus 1221	Hugolina 1219 Huhelina 1263	HC&M Rowe, p105	Hulin	
Joie	Joie 1219	Joia 1195	HC&M	Joy	
Joce	Iocius c1140-50, Gocius Hy2	Jocea 1199, Jocosa 1346, Juicia 1211, 1212	R&W	Joyce	
	Josce Iocius about 1140-50, Joce 1195, Josce or Joice 1313 1320	Jocea 1199, Juicia 1212	HC&M	Joyce	
Julian	Julian 1154-89	Juliana 1185-7	HC&M	Julian	
Justin	Justinus 1175-80 1229	Justina 1221	R&W	Justin	
Kytte					“English: relationship name from the Middle English personal name <i>Kytte</i> , a pet form of the male name <i>Christopher</i> and the female names <i>Katharine</i> and <i>Christina</i> .”
	Kytte 1286	Kytte 1379	HC&M	Kitt	
Laurens, Laurence	Laurentius 1141- 9, Laurencius 1219	Laurencia 1201 1296	HC&M	Lawrence	
Legard. Leggard	Leggard 1327	Ligarda 12th, Legarda 1230	R&W	Legard	
Levet, Livet	Leueget 1086,	Leued 1066,	HC&M	Levett	

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
	Lefget about 1095, Levetus 1146-53, Leuiet 1166, Liviet 1205	Liutha, Liuete 1221, Leuith' 1221, Leffeda 1230, Livith, Livid 14 <sup>th</sup> cent.			
Leve	Leue 1086	Leva about 1188	HC&M	Levis	
Lucian	Lucianus 1212	Luciana 1205	R&W	Lucian	
Marin	Marinus 1192	Marina 1230	R&W	Marrin	
	Marinus 1192 1379	Marina 1230 1302 1465 1477, Marona 1377 1379	HC&M	Marrin	
Mazelin Mazeline	Mazelini 1252, Mazelino 13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Mazelinam 1209 1212, Mazeline 1212 Mazelina 1212 1221	HC&M	Maslen	Mazelinam is in accusative case; the nominative would be Mazelina.
Masse, Massy		Maseth' 1307, Masota 1327, Mazota 1332	HC&M	Masset	“English: relationship name from a Middle English feminine diminutive of the personal name <i>Masse</i> , a pet form of <i>Matthew</i> ”
	Mathiu Maci 1086, Masci 1198, Massy 1377, Massi 1379		HC&M	Massey	
May	Maye 1379	May 1379	HC&M	May	Masculine nickname for Matthew, female for Mary or Margaret
Mildon	Mildo' Mildon' 1219	Mildoina (sic) 1246	R&W	Mildon	
Mildred, Meldred	Meldredum 1231	Mildred 1381 Mildrede 1504	HC&M	Mildred	
Milot. Millot	Milot about 1248	Millota 1377, 1379, 1381	HC&M	Millett	masculine name from Miles, or Mill, short form of Millicent
Nicol, Nichol	Nicolaus DB, Nicholaus 1147-66, Niculus Hy 2	Nic(h)olaa 1207-8	R&W	Nicolas	
Odlin, Odelin	Hodlyn 1315	Odolina 1086, Odelina 1198	HC&M	Odlin	
Organ	Organus 1236	Organa 1325	R&W	Organ	
Osemund,	Osmund 1086,		HC&M	Osmond	

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
Osmund	Osmundus 1138-48 1211, Osemundus 1222				
		Osemunda 1214	Rowe p18		
Paulin	Paulinus 1066, Hy 2	Paulina 1169	R&W	Paulin	
Perrin	Perrinus 1207, Pierron 1307	Peryna 1280, Perrin 1392	HC&M	Perrin	
Philip	Filippus 1142-53, Philipus c1150, Phelippus 1290	Philippa 1195	R&W	Philip	
Philipot					“English: relationship name from the Middle English personal name <i>Philot</i> , a pet form of <b>Philip</b> , used of both men and women.”
Philot	Phelipot 1377	Philipot 1379	R&W	Phillott	
		Philota 1273	HC&M	Phillott	
Rane, Reyn	Rane 1377	Regina 1203, Regin’ 1275, Reina 1214, Reyna 1244	HC&M	Raine	Masculine nickname for Reynold or Rayner, feminine given name meaning queen
Raulin, Raulyn	Raulyn 1277, Raulin 1303		HC&M	Rawlin	
		Raulina 1269	Rowe p123		
Richold	Riceold 1101-1200, Richeud 1155-85, Richoude 1170-1200, Richold 1177	Ricolda 1151-4, Richolda 1216	HC&M	Richold	
Simon	Simon, Simundus 1134-40, Symundus 1150-60, Simon 1155-89, Simund, Simon 1154-89		HC&M	Simon	
		Simona	Rowe p91		

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
Sired	Sired Siret 1086, Sired(us) 1095 1213	Sigreda 1086, Sigreth 1143-7, Sigerith 1218, Sirith 1218-19; Syrith 1240 1245, Sigerith 1266, Sigreda 1319 1328, Sireda 1332	HC&M	Syrett	Masculine name from Old English Sigraed, feminine from Old Norse Sigridhr, Sigrith
Thoma	Thoma 1379, Toma 1379		HC&M	Thoma, Thomas	“(i) relationship name from a pet form of the Middle English personal name <b>Thomas</b> . (ii) relationship name, perhaps occasionally from the Middle English female personal name <i>T(h)oma</i> .”
Thomas	Tomas 1377, Thomas 1377			Thomas	
		Thomasia 1308	Rowe, p 244		
Thor	Tor Tori Thori 1086, Thor 1130-50, Tor 1167-81, Thore 1219	Thora 1210, Thura 1197	HC&M	Thore	
Tibbe	Tebbe 1177 1208 1379		HC&M	Tebb	“(i) relationship name, usually from a pet form of the Middle English personal name <i>Tebbold</i> (see <b>Theobald</b> ). Compare <b>Tibb</b> . (ii) relationship name, alternatively from a rhyming form of <i>Ebb</i> as a pet form of <b>Isabel</b> (compare <b>Ibbs</b> and <b>Ebbs</b> ).”
	Tibbe 1286, Tybbe 1290		HC&M	Tibb	“English personal name <i>Tibbe</i> , which was used in the 13th century as a pet name for both men (from <i>Tibald</i> (Theobald)) and women (a shortened form of <i>Tibot</i> , a pet form of

Gender-neutral forms	Masculine	Feminine	Source	Heading	Notes
					<i>Isabel</i> , see <b>Tibbett</b> .”
Tibet, Tibot	Tibotus 1468		Phillipps p158		
		Tibota 1279	R&W	Tibbets	“ <i>Tib-et Tib-ot</i> may be diminutives of <i>Tibb</i> , from <i>Tibaud</i> (v. <b>Theobald</b> ) or of <i>Isabel</i> .”
		Tibota 1279 1381, Tybota 1306 1381, Thibota 1377, Tebota 1379	HC&M	Tebbutt	“English: relationship name from the Middle English personal names <i>Tebot</i> , <i>Tibet</i> , or <i>Tibot</i> . These may be diminutives of <b>Tebb</b> and <b>Tibb</b> , pet forms of the male name <i>Tebaud</i> or <i>Tibaud</i> (see <b>Theobald</b> ), or rhyming forms of the female personal name <i>Ibet</i> , <i>Ibot</i> , or <i>Ebot</i> (see <b>Hibbitt</b> and <b>Ebbutt</b> ), diminutives of <i>Ibb</i> and <i>Ebb</i> , pet forms of <b>Isabel</b> .”
Tunnok	Tunnok 1246	Tunnok’ 1219, Tunnok 1240	R&W	Tunnock	
William	Willelmus 1155, 1183, 1222 etc		DMNES	William	
		Willelma 1353	Inquisitions p376		
Wimarc, Wymarc		Wimarc 1219, Wimarc Hy 2	R&W	Wymarc	
	Wymarcus 1346		Inquisitions p206		

### Bibliography

Hanks, Patrick, Richard Coates and Peter McClure. *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

*Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids, with Other Analogous Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office; A.D. 1284-1431: Kent to Norfolk*. United Kingdom, Stationery office, 1899.

Phillipps Thomas. *Institutiones Clericorum in Comitatu Wiltoniae, Ab Anno 1297, Ad Annum 1810, Volume 1*. Typis Mediomontanis, in turre Lativiensi impressus [i.e. Middle Hill Press], 1825

Reaney, P. H. and R. M. Wilson. *A Dictionary of English Surnames*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Rowe, Joseph Hambley. *Cornwall Feet of Fines* Volume 1. Devon & Cornwall Record Society. 1914.

Uckelman, S.L., ed. *The Dictionary of Medieval Names from European Sources*, Edition 2023, no. 1.

Withycombe, E.G. *Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.