

# ***Distribution of the Middlebrook Name in England***

***By Ian Middlebrook***



***The town of Morley and the surrounding areas were where our Middlebrook ancestors lived 400 years ago. It was at one time part of the Parish of Batley, located in West Ridding, West Yorkshire. (OS Map 1900s, Yorkshire, England)***

Morley is a West Yorkshire town, between Leeds and Bradford. Morley means "wood by a moor". The name was recorded as Morelige in 1156. Morley was first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1087 but it was a relatively isolated village up until the time of the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. The town at one time, was located in the Parish of Batley.

The distribution of the Middlebrook names were Identified in various counties and towns in England. They were compiled in a paper entitled the ***Search for Joseph Middlebrook (born circa 1610)***, and posted on *The Guild of one Name Studies* at ([https://one-name.org/name\\_profile/middlebrook/](https://one-name.org/name_profile/middlebrook/)) The first paper was included in the MFA newsletter and posted on the MFA website, under research documents. The distribution of Middlebrook names were plotted on maps for 1800, 1900 and 2000. The 1800 distribution was based on the 1851 census of birthplaces of all individuals who were born between 1770 and 1830. The 1900 distribution were for individuals found in the 1901 Census, based on their place of residence at that time. The 2000 electoral roll was used to show the distribution of all Middlebrook individuals in 2000.

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### **Name Variants**

The main variants in the UK are MIDDLEBROUGH and MIDDLEBROOKE, whilst MIDDLEBOROUGH is just hanging on. MIDDLEBROOKS has become abundant as a variant in the USA.

### **Name Origin**

The origin of the Middlebrook name could be from England or derived from from Middelburg in the Netherlands, after merchants from that city settled at York in the late 14th Century.

### **Name Distribution**

The historic centres for this name in 16th century England were in **West Yorkshire (esp. Craven district), South Yorkshire (esp. Thorne) and south Lincolnshire (esp. Harmston)**. Subsequent expansion has mainly been towards the industrial areas of Lancashire and the West Midlands.

The distribution map from 1800 shows that the Middlebrook name (and its variants) was concentrated around a few key areas at that time. Below are my brief observations on the history of the Middlebrook name in each of those areas.

**West Yorkshire** – This area has probably given rise to more Middlebrook families than any other, and there is still a strong Middlebrook presence in and around the town of **Morley** – an area where the name has been known for at least 400 years, going back to the earliest surviving registers for the **parish of Batley** (which included Morley at that time).

**Lancashire/Yorkshire border** – this is another area with a long history of Middlebrooks, particularly in remote parts such as **Carleton-in-Craven, Long Preston and Slaidburn**, where Middlebrook families were living back in the 1500s. The Middlebrough variation seems to have been more common in this part of the country.

**South Lincolnshire** – the Middlebrook name has a long history in this area, going back to the 1500s in parish registers (eg. **Harmeston**). Despite this long history, my preliminary research has indicated that the families remaining in that area through the nineteenth century can probably all be traced back to just one man, William Middlebrook, who lived at Great Hale in the mid/late 1700s. This branch of the surname may well have a distinct local origin that is unrelated to the Middlebrooks of Yorkshire.

**London** – virtually all English surnames have been found in London at some point in their history, and there have been Middlebrook families in the capital since at least the early 1600s. However, it is unlikely that there is a separate source for the family in that area. It is much more likely that they migrated to London from further afield.

**West Midlands** – there has been a consistent Middlebrook presence in this area since the early 1700s. However, unless earlier examples can be found, I doubt that there is a distinct local origin for this branch of the family. They are more likely to have migrated there from another part of the Middlebrook range.

### **Movement After 1800**

From one map to the next, we can see evidence of small-scale local migration across the last two centuries.

Between 1800 and 1900 the main movement was away from the rural areas of **West Yorkshire and the Lancashire border**, and towards the growing industrial towns of the area, such as **Bradford, Blackburn and Preston**.

Between 1900 and 2000 the most significant shift was towards **South Yorkshire**, with big increases in **Sheffield and Doncaster**. There has also been a more general dispersal, in small numbers, across new areas of the country.

**Map of England Counties and Major Towns**



*The arrows denote the counties of the early distribution of the Middlebrook name.  
Map Source: <https://www.theedkins.co.uk/jo/maps/uktowns.htm>*