



# Royal Flush or Not?

## Understanding Royalty, Nobility and Gentry

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### Definition of Royalty and Nobility

The difference between royalty and nobility is that royalty “means that they were born into their position. Therefore only the king and queen and their direct relations can be considered royalty. ... Nobility is a title conferred on a person if they meet certain requirements.”

“The Aristocracy of England,” <http://www.aristocracyuk.co.uk/>

### Royalty

Definition of royalty is people of royal blood or status.

Ranks of Royalty –

King or Queen

Prince

Princess

The royal family includes the immediate royal heirs as well as the extended family. Many also hold noble titles such as the Duke of Cornwall, which the heir apparent to the throne, and the Duke of York, as well as the Duke of Cambridge. [www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)

### Nobility

Originally, nobility grew out of the feudal warrior classes. Nobles and knights were warriors who swore allegiance to the king in exchange for land.

“Peers, Peeresses and other People,” [www.avictorian.com/nobility.html](http://www.avictorian.com/nobility.html)

“...hereditary permanent rank is what most Englishmen prize above all earthly honours. It is the permanency, especially, that they value.” Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914*, p. 92

Noble Titles and Order of Precedence –

Duke

Marquess

Earl

Viscount

Baron

A peer of the realm is someone who holds one or more of the above titles. The peerage is a continuation of the original baronage system which existed in feudal times.

“Historically the peerage formed a tightly knit group of powerful nobles, inter-related through blood and marriage in successive generations...” *Debrett's Essential Guide to the Peerage* and Wikipedia

In Scots law, there are certain titles that are recognized by the Crown as almost comparable to but not quite at the level of the peerage. These titles include:

Chiefs of Clans (Highlands)  
Chiefs of Names (Lowlands)

*Debrett's Essential Guide to the Peerage*

## **Aristocracy**

What is the aristocracy?

It is the highest class in certain societies, especially those holding hereditary titles or offices.

## **Peerage vs. Baronage**

The peerage is the modern continuation of the baronage system which existed in feudal times.

## **Baronetage and Knightage**

Baronets are neither members of the peerage nor of the knightage. As holders of a hereditary dignity, in precedence they are above all knights except for Knights of the Garter in England and Knights of the Thistle in Scotland. Because of their title, they are allowed to use “Sir” in front of their names. *Debrett's Essential Guide to the Peerage* and Wikipedia

“The Knightage is the collective term for Knights Bachelor, and Knights and Dames of the Orders of Chivalry. Knights and Dames are titles conferred by the Crown, and are for life only.” Today there are around 3,000 living knights and dames.

*Debrett's Essential Guide to the Peerage*

## **Gentry**

Landed gentry consisted of land owners who could live entirely off rental income. Gentry included four different groups in England. They were:

1. Baronets – a hereditary title originally created by King James in 1611.
2. Knights – originally a military rank, this status was increasingly awarded to civilians as a reward for service to the crown.
3. Esquires – by custom held by certain office holders such as barristers, justices of peace, and higher ranked officer in the military.
4. Gentlemen – generally men of high birth or rank, good social standing, and wealth, who did not need to work for a living. Wikipedia

In Scotland, Laird is a generic name for landed gentry and holds the same social rank.

## Rankings and Numbers of the Nobility

Each of the countries have rankings in precedence of their peers

### England

#### Duke

|                            |              |  |
|----------------------------|--------------|--|
| The Duke of Cornwall       | Created 1337 | Always held by the eldest son of the monarch |
| The Duke of Norfolk        | Created 1483 | Premier Duke of England                      |
| The Marquess of Winchester | Created 1551 | Premier Marquess of England                  |
| The Earl of Shrewsbury     | Created 1442 |  |
| The Viscount Hereford      | Created 1550 | Premier Viscount of England                  |
| The Baron de Ros           | Created 1264 | Premier Baron of England                     |

### Ireland

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| The Duke of Leinster      | Created 1766 |
| The Marquess of Waterford | Created 1789 |
| The Earl of Cork & Orrey  | Created 1620 |
| The Viscount Gormanston   | Created 1478 |
| The Lord Kingsale         | Created 1397 |

### Scotland

|                            |              |   |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|
| The Duke of Rothesay       | Created 1398 | Usually Prince of Wales as heir to the throne |
| The Duke of Hamilton       | Created 1643 |   |
| The Marquess of Hunt       | Created 1599 |   |
| The Countess of Sutherland | Created 1230 |   |
| The Earl of Crawford       | Created 1398 |   |
| The Viscount Falkland      | Created 1620 |   |
| The Lord Forbes            | Created 1442 |   |

### Wales

No existing Duke

|                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| The Marquess of Powis | Created 1687              |
| The Earl of Glamorgan | Created 1093 & 1217, etc. |
| The Viscount Powis    |                           |
| The Baron Abergavenny | Created 1087 & 1392       |

### Welsh Terms for Titles –

| Title    | Male Singular | Female Singular |
|----------|---------------|-----------------|
| Prince   | Tywysog       | Tywysoges       |
| Duke     | Duc, Dug      | Duces, Duges    |
| Marquess | Ardalydd      | Ardalyddes      |
| Earl     | Iarll         | Iarlles         |
| Viscount | Isiarll       | Isiarlles       |
| Baron    | Barwn         | Barwnes         |
| Baronet  | Barwnig       | Barwniges       |

The number of ducal families in British history is twenty-six.

Masters, The Dukes: The Origins, Ennoblement and History of 26 Families

## The English Peerage by the Numbers

| Date | Dukes | Marquesses | Earls | Viscounts | Barons | Total (including women) |
|------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------------------------|
| 1658 | 2     | 2          | 55    | 7         | 53     | 119                     |
| 1700 |       |            |       |           | 173    |                         |
| 1753 | 21    | 1          | 82    | 12        | 60     | 185                     |
| 1800 | 19    | 11         | 87    | 15        | 125    | 267                     |
| 1850 | 20    | 21         | 116   | 22        | 220    | 399                     |
| 1900 | 22    | 22         | 124   | 30        | 324    | 522                     |

Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914*, p. 486-487

## What Does All of this Mean?

Everyone descends from nobility and royalty!

"There is an extremely high probability that a modern English person with predominantly English ancestry descends from Edward III, at a very minimum over 99%, and more likely very close to 100%."

There must be, around the globe, at least 100 million descendants of Edward III.

<https://community.dur.ac.uk/a.r.millard/genealogy/EdwardIIIDescent.php>

Other sources estimate it is around 80% of England's modern population that descends from Edward III.

Matt Crenson, "Star Is Descended From Kings. Of Course, Most People Are," *The Washington Post* (13 August 2006)

Three million men are estimated to be direct descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Imagine how many descendants when adding all of the women and indirect male descendants.

"3 million people in the world are descended from one Irish High King," IrishCentral.com

## Helpful Sources and Websites

### Books and Films

Be sure to search under the country of interest, England, Ireland, etc. – Nobility

James Alexander, *A Complete English Peerage*

942 D22ja

James Anderson, *Royal Genealogies* 929.2 An23r

*Burke's Landed Gentry* 942 D2buf and 942 D2bug

*Burke's Landed Gentry of Great Britain* British film 1696601 item 1

*Burke's Peerage, Baronetage, & Knightage* 942 D22bur

*The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, extant, extinct, or dormant* 942 D22cok, vols. 1-14

*Debrett's peerage, baronetage, knightage, and companionship...* 942 D22dib

John O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees* 941.5 D2oha

Douglas Richardson, *Magna Carta Ancestry: A study in*

*Colonial and Medieval Families* 942 D5rdm

Douglas Richardson, *Plantagenet Ancestry: A study in*

*Colonial and Medieval Families* 942 D5rd

Douglas Richardson, *Royal Ancestry: A study in Colonial and Medieval Families* 973  
D2rd

### **Internet Websites**

[www.almanachdegotha.org](http://www.almanachdegotha.org)

[www.angelfire.com/realm3/ruvignyplus/index.html](http://www.angelfire.com/realm3/ruvignyplus/index.html) -- Descendants of Edward III

[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

The Royal Collection

[www.burkespeerage.com](http://www.burkespeerage.com)

[www.debretts.com](http://www.debretts.com)

[www.hereditarytitles.com](http://www.hereditarytitles.com)

<http://royalancestry.org/index.htm>

National Societies of Royal and Noble Ancestry

[www.thepeerage.com](http://www.thepeerage.com)

[www.ukdukes.com](http://www.ukdukes.com)