

Towns Named as the Most English

RIPLEY AND HEANOR have been named as the 'most English' places in the country in a new study.

According to the Origins Info survey Ripley has a larger proportion of residents with an English background than anywhere else in Britain. 88.6 per cent of people in the town have a name with English origins.

Richard Webber, a visiting professor at University College London, who carried out the research said: "By studying names you can make a reasonably accurate guess of where they come from and we've matched that with the towns they live in."

Heanor was second behind Ripley while Sutton-in-Ashfield, in Nottinghamshire, came third. "It's definitely an East Midlands phenomenon. People from Ireland, Scotland and Wales came to England hundreds of years ago and Ripley and Heanor were simply too far away from the ports," Richard Webber said.

He believes the results are also down to Ripley industrialising early, and on a small scale: "The surrounding villages were able to provide labour for the mills without the need to bring people in from elsewhere."

The trends could have political effects as well. "There's a different atmosphere in places like Liverpool where there's a higher population of Celtic people. "Perhaps they're more sympathetic to Brussels and the EU than people in Ripley because they see it as a way of balancing English dominance," said Richard Webber.

The study of some six hundred thousand names uncovered a number that originated in Ripley and Heanor.- Allsop, Cresswell, Eley, Stenson and Whawell, among others, all have their origins in Ripley while Calladine and Beebe are Heanor based.

Names don't come more English than Tony England who has lived in Ripley his whole working life and has spent the last 24 years running the England and Barker Jewellers on the market place.

"It's a good little town," he said, "I've never felt like moving away. It's had its problems like anywhere else and the supermarkets have affected the smaller traders and market but overall it's a great town with nice people.

"I wouldn't have said it was the most English place in the country but it's a good thing for the town, it'll get us some coverage and put us on the map."

The story made national news in the Daily Mail and Times newspapers and was even reported in India by news agency Zee News.

Richard Webber said: "The programme we've developed with Experian, a company in Nottingham, contains names from places like Australia, Italy and Spain that aren't currently found in the UK. We hope this could be a valuable tool for governments and businesses."

To find out what country your name originates from visit the Origins Info website at www.originsinfo.com.

Vanessa Grant, who has been working for Max Spellman Picture Framers on Oxford Street for the last year, said: "I had to read it twice at first, it's unbelievable, it did make me laugh. I suppose with the old dry stone walls and the market it is quite English.

"I always think of places like Kent and Cornwall as more typically English though."

Clive Whittingham