

**THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED  
SURNAME  
OSIELDS**

The ruins of tall craggy towers and castles are still scattered along the Scottish/English border, home to this notable surname Oshields. Their ancient history is closely woven into the rich fabric of the border chronicles.

Through diligent research amongst some of the most ancient manuscripts such as the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, the Inquisitio, the Ragman Rolls, the Domesday Book, baptismals, parish records, tax records and cartularies, researchers found the first record of the name Oshields, in Berwickshire where they held a family seat from ancient times.

The name, Oshields, occurred in many references, and from time to time, it was spelt Shiel, Shiell, Shiels, Shiells, Sheil, Sheill, Sheils, Sheills, Shield, Shields, O'Shiel, O'Shields, O'Shield,, as well as other ways. Scribes and church officials spelt the name as it sounded, and frequently the spelling changed even during the person's own lifetime.

The ancestors of the family name Oshields are believed to be descended from the Boernicians, an ancient founding race of the English/Scottish border dating from about the year 400 A.D. The border was home to Clans such as the Sturdy Armstrongs, the Gallant Grahams, the Saucy Scotts, the Angry Kerrs, the Bells, the Nixons, the Famous Dicksons, the Bold Rutherfords, and the Pudding Somervilles.

From these war-like clans of the border the surname Oshields was found in Berwickshire. This distinguished clan took their name from the reivers small houses or huts which abounded on the eastern English/Scottish border. Burns included the line "the swallow jinkin around my shiel." The first on record was Thomas in 1274 at Traqueyr, followed by William Schelle of the county of Edinburgh who rendered homage for the clan to King Edward the 1st of England on his brief conquest of Scotland in 1296. He was followed by Simon Schele who was dean of the guilds in Edinburgh in 1403. The clan lands were known as "West Scheill," but they held lands in the barony of Glasgow and Andrew Scheill was the tenant in 1515. They also held territories in Roxburghshire and Peebles. Archibald Sheills represented Peebles in the final Scottish Parliament of 1702 to 1707. They also had interests in Northumberland on the other side of the border, and Catherine, the heiress of Samuel Shields married William Pawson, High Sheriff of Northumberland in 1783. The family later branched south to Uppingham in Rutland. Notable amongst the family name during their early history was William Schelle of Edinburgh.

Clan feuds became so intense that in 1246 A.D., six Chiefs from the Scottish side

and six from the English side met at Carlisle and created a set of laws acceptable to the border territory and its people. These were unlike any laws prevailing in England or Scotland or, for that matter, anywhere else in the world. For refusal of assistance when called, a person could be hanged on the instant, without a trial. While clans were on this "hot trod" to recover stolen property,(from which we get the modern expression "hot to trot"), they were protected from almost all eventualities.

When the Crowns of England and Scotland were united under James VI of Scotland in 1603 the Border Clans were dispersed to England, northern Scotland and to Ireland. Some were banished directly to the Colonies.

In Ireland, they were granted lands previously held by the Catholic Irish. They signed an "Undertaking" to remain Protestant and faithful to the Crown. In Ireland the family settled in Ulster, where their name became O'Shiel and O'Shields, who were hereditary physicians located in Donegal. The family held Castle Burg in Galway, and Drawad in county Tyrone.

The New World beckoned settlers from Ireland (who would come to be known as the Scotch/Irish), as well as from the Old country. They sailed aboard the armada of sailing ships known as the "White Sails" which plied the stormy Atlantic. Some called them, less romantically, the "coffin ships." Among the early settlers bearing the Oshields surname who came to North America were: Reverend Archibald Shields who led the first Virginian settlement also held estates in Jamaica. Thomas Shield settled in Virginia in 1638; Walter Shield settled there in 1650; Mary Sheilds settled in Montserrat in 1685; Elizabeth Sheild settled in Charles Town South Carolina in 1772; Lawrence, Catherine, and Jane Sheil(l) settled in Boston Mass. in 1850. In Newfoundland, Thomas Shiel was a fisherman of St. John's in 1774; William Shields who migrated from Edinburgh was keeper of Cape Spear Lighthouse, and died in 1836.

In America, these pioneers became the nucleus of the first settlements from Maine to the Cumberland Gap, from Nova Scotia to the Prairies.

In more recent times, many of the family name Oshields have achieved prominence. Among them were: Francis Alexander Shields (1941-2003) American Republican, executive at Revlon, best known as the father of the actress Brooke Shields; Christa Brooke Camille Shields (b.1965) American actress and former fashion model better known as Brooke Shields; James Shields (1810-1879) American politician and U.S. Army officer; Francis Xavier "Frank" Shields (1909-1975) famous amateur American

tennis player; General Ronald Shields; Francis Shields (b.1930) tennis player; Martin Shields, Scottish photographer; and William Joseph Shields (1888-1961) original name of Barry Fitzgerald.

The most ancient grant of a Coat of Arms was researched as:

A blue shield with a silver chevron charged with a green trefoil between three doves close, proper.

The Crest was:

A dove holding an olive branch, proper.

The ancient family Motto for this distinguished name was:

Vincit qui patitur

Motto translation:

He conquers who endures.