



ESCOMB SAXON CHURCH

THE MOST DISTINGUISHED SURNAME BYLES

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ORIGINS

The name Byles is rooted in the ancient Anglo-Saxon culture. It is a name for someone who works as a maker of polearms or halberds and billhooks as these were common weapons in early times. The name could also be a baptismal name derived from son of William, although this latter origin is less likely.

ANCIENT HISTORY

While your recent ancestors and famous people bearing your surname may be known to you, it is often a family's distant past which fades into the unknown over the centuries. Research has shown that this surname is of Anglo-Saxon origin. Few cultures have had the lasting impact on English society as that of the Anglo-Saxons. The Byles family history draws upon this heritage as the bearers of the name influenced and were influenced by the history of the English nation. Historians have carefully scrutinized such ancient manuscripts as the Domesday Book, compiled in 1086 A.D., the Ragman Rolls (1291-1296), the Curia Regis Rolls, the Pipe Rolls, the Hearth Rolls, parish registers, baptismals, tax records and other ancient documents and found the first record of the name Byles in Somerset, where they held a family seat from ancient times, long before the Norman Conquest in 1066.

SPELLING VARIATIONS

Many different spellings of the surname were found in the archives researched. Although the spelling Byles occurred in many manuscripts, from time to time the surname was spelt Bill, Bills and Billes, and these variations in spelling frequently occurred, even between father and son. It was also common to find the same individual referred to with different spellings of their surname. In the 16th century the famous playwright William Shakespeare signed his own name with different spellings and legal documents added further to the possible variations. "Shakespeare," "Shakespere," "Shakespear," "Shakspere" and "Shaxspere" were all used in reference to this famous individual. Scribes, church officials and the bearers of a name spelled words as they sounded rather than adhering to any spelling rules.

EARLY HISTORY

The Saxons were a Teutonic tribe originally from northern Germany who began to settle in England in about the year 400 A.D. Their first settlements were in Kent, on the south east coast. Gradually, they probed north and westward from Kent and during the next four hundred years forced the ancient Britons back into Wales and Cornwall to the west. They won territories as far north as Lancashire and Yorkshire, pushing the Britons into Cumbria and Southern Scotland. The Angles, another Teutonic tribe, occupied the eastern coast, the south folk in Suffolk, the north folk in Norfolk. The Angles sometimes invaded as far north as Northumbria and the Scottish border. The Angle and Saxon cultures blended together as they came to dominate the country. For hundreds of years England was comprised of five independent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms until unification in the 9th century. By 1066, England, under Harold, was enjoying reasonable peace and prosperity. However, the Norman invasion from France and their victory at the Battle of Hastings meant that the Anglo-Saxon landowners lost their property to the invaders. The Saxons were restive under Norman rule, and many moved northward to the midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire, where Norman influence was less pervasive. Rebellious Norman nobles frequently joined them in their flight northward.

As peace was restored, the Byles surname emerged as that of a notable English family in the county of Somerset. John Bill had manor and estates recorded in 1320, and by 1500 they had branched to Hertfordshire when the Reverend William Bill of Ashwell in that shire was Lord Almoner to Queen Elizabeth I at the end of the 16th century. His daughter married into the prominent Samwells of Upton Hall. The Bills also acquired Farley Hall. They moved north to Scotland and Thomas Bill held estates in Auchingrey in Carnwath in Lanarkshire in 1667.

EARLY NOTABLES

Distinguished members of the family include Reverend William Bill; and William Bill (c. 1505-1561), Master of St Johns College, Cambridge (1547-c.1551), Vice-Chancellor of University of Cambridge (1548), twice Master of Trinity College, Cambridge (1551-1553) and (1558-1561), Provost of Eton College (1558-1561) and Dean of Westminster (1560-1561).

LIFE IN IRELAND

Over the centuries, turmoil was not unknown in England. Disputes over royal succession, baronial revolts, fear of foreign invasion, and wars with neighbors in Scotland and Wales, all created periods of strife. However, these problems had largely been resolved by the Tudor monarchs. The succession of the Stuart monarchs saw the rise of political problems which effected even the common man. Conflicts between the king and parliament, and between the Catholics and the Protestants, along with plague and the great fire in London, made the 17th century a turbulent time. It is not surprising then to find that many families were banished or willfully left England.

During this period Irish lands were granted to Oliver Cromwell's soldiers and to Protestant settlers. While some of the confiscated lands were returned to their owners during the reign of King Charles II, most remained in the hands of newcomers. In 1890, a birth census of English families in Ireland was taken. From that census, it was estimated that there were over 224 people bearing the surname Byles throughout Ireland; about 80 percent were living in the province of Ulster where the families were found in Antrim.^[1]

THE GREAT MIGRATION

Turmoil at home made the New World appear attractive to many families in England. They immigrated to Canada, the United States, Australia, and some moved to continental Europe. Members of the Byles family risked the hazardous voyage to start a new life in new lands. This decision to emigrate was never made casually, for while there were hardships at home, the journey across the sea was so perilous that up to 40 percent of a ship's passengers would not reach their destination.

SETTLERS

- William Byles, who landed in Delaware in 1679^[2]
- Mr. Mather D. D. Byles Jr., U.E. born in Boston, Massachusetts, USA who settled in Saint John, New Brunswick c. 1783^[3]

As well as 43 more in the Appendix.

CURRENT NOTABLES

By the time of the American Revolution (1775-1783), the colonial population had reached approximately 2.5 million people. Black slaves constituted roughly 22 percent of the total; about 250,000 were Scots-Irish; approximately 200,000 were Germans. Protestants formed the overwhelming majority of white people, although approximately 25,000 Roman Catholics and about 1000 Jews also lived in the colonies. Approximately 50,000 people loyal to the British crown made their way north to Canada following the American Revolution. They were known as the United Empire Loyalists, and were granted lands in Nova Scotia, along the St. Lawrence River and along the Niagara Peninsula.

- Brigadier Gary Byles CSC, Australian Army officer, Commander of JTF Gold/Op Gold
- Tim Byles CBE, British Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools (2006-)
- Mather Byles (1706-1788) American clergyman, grandson of Increase Mather, known for his quote: "Which is better-to be ruled by one tyrant three thousand miles away or by three thousand tyrants one mile away?"
- Mather Byles II (1734-1814) American Congregational clergyman at New London, Connecticut until 1768 who settled as a Royalist in Halifax, Nova Scotia after the War of Independence
- Sir John Barnard Byles (1801-1884) British barrister, judge and author
- Sir William Pollard Byles (1839-1917) British newspaper owner and Liberal politician, Member of Parliament for Shipley (1892-1895) and for Salford North (1906-1917)
- Marie Beuzeville Byles (1900-1979) English-born, Australian conservationist, the first practicing female solicitor in New South Wales, mountaineer, explorer, feminist and author
- William Douglas Byles (1914-1988) Canadian broadcast pioneer, inducted into the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Hall of Fame in 1997, father of Alannah Myles
- Kerrie Byles (b.1948) also known as "Junior Byles", "Chubby", or "King Chubby", a Jamaican reggae singer
- Daniel Alan "Dan" Byles FRGS, MP (1974-2010) English mountaineer, sailor, ocean rower, polar adventurer and politician, Member of Parliament for North Warwickshire (2010-), he took part in the first ever Atlantic Rowing Race in 1997

As well as 11 more in the Appendix.

HISTORIC EVENTS

- Father Thomas Roussel Davids Byles (1870-1912) English Catholic priest who remained on board the RMS Titanic as she was sinking hearing confessions and giving absolution

As well as 0 more in the Appendix.

Omne solum patria



Byles

SYMBOLISM

INTRODUCTION

The practice of representing people with symbols is ancient, and in England this habit evolved with feudal society into a system of distinctive devices on shields. The heralds developed an extensive armory that had the important function of distinguishing members of the upper class from each other, whether at court or on the battlefield. Since then, heraldry has grown into a complex field with many rules and a terminology that requires some knowledge to interpret.



ACHIEVEMENT OF ARMS OF
BYLES



MANTLE OF BYLES

An Achievement of Arms such as the Byles arms depicted on the left typically consists of these parts: the Escrolls, displaying the family motto and name, the family crest (if any) seen above the helmet, the actual Coat of arms (also known as 'arms,' or 'the shield'), the Helmet depicted below the crest, the Torse on top of the helmet, and the Mantle draped from the helmet. Each of these elements will be described below. Supporters were a later addition to the Achievement; they are somewhat rare, and are usually personal to the grantee.

The mantle was spread over and draped from the helmet and served as a protection, 'to repel the extremities of wet, cold, and heat, and to preserve the armour from rust.' The numerous cuts and slits suggest that it had been torn and hacked on the field of battle. The style or design of the mantling is up to the individual heraldic artist, and it is usually depicted in the main color and metal from the shield. The helmet (or Helm) varied in shape in different ages and countries, often depicting rank. The Esquire's Helm, as depicted here, is generally shown silver, with a closed visor and facing to the dexter (its right). On top of the helmet is a Torse or wreath which was formed by two pieces of silk twisted together. Its purpose was to hold the crest and mantle on the Helm.

MOTTO

The motto was originally a war cry or slogan. Mottoes first began to be shown with arms in the 14th and 15th centuries, but were not in general use until the 17th century. Thus the oldest coats of arms generally do not include a motto. Mottoes seldom form part of the grant of arms: Under most heraldic authorities, a motto is an optional component of the coat of arms, and can be added to or changed at will; many families have chosen not to display a motto.

The motto for the Byles coat of arms displayed here is:

OMNE SOLUM PATRIA

This translates as:

EVERY LAND IS A MAN'S COUNTRY.

SHIELD

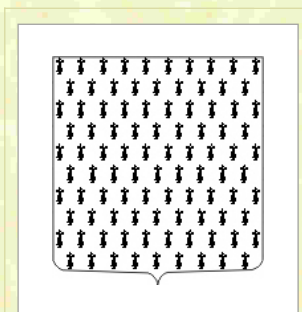
Shields (or Escutcheons) at first were painted simply with one or more bands of color or 'ordinaries'. Later, the ordinaries were used in conjunction with other figures or symbols. The Coat of Arms for the surname Byles can be described as follows:



THE BYLES SHIELD

BYLES ARMS

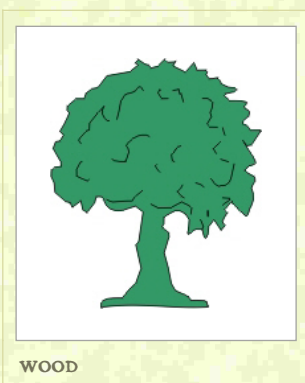
Ermine with two wood bills (battle-axes), a blue chief on which there is a rose between two pelican's heads.



ERMINE

ERMINE

Ermine is one of the five furs used in heraldry. The ermine is a white furred weasel with a black tipped tail, it is represented by a white field with black spots, where the spots represent the tails of this small animal. This is a regal fur, since ermine has long been associated with the crowns and robes of royal and noble persons. It symbolizes valor, justice and dignity. Ermine is the most common fur in heraldry.



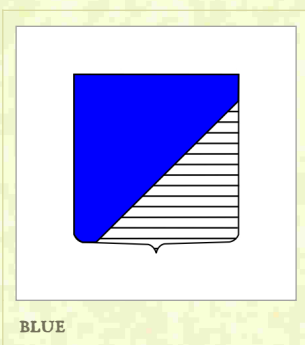
WOOD

The tree is a symbol of antiquity and strength. Many types of trees are blazoned on shields and crests, but they are generally not depicted accurately. The type of tree can relate to the characteristics of an early bearer of the family name, or perhaps to the land held by that family. The oak tree was sacred to the ancient Greeks and the Celts; the cedars of Lebanon are referred to in the scriptures as trees of stately beauty; the lime or linden tree was sacred to the Germans; the poplar is a symbol of great strength; the cypress tree is a symbol of death, because once cut, it never springs up again from its roots; evergreens, like the pine and the yew, symbolize of death and the hope of eternal life; the ash tree was venerated by the Scandinavians. Trees allude to home or property, and they are also generally considered a symbol of life and strength. Sometimes a hurst of trees, or a wood is found on a shield. Also, a tree stump or tree trunk may be used as a symbol of re-growth and rebirth, especially when it is borne with branches spouting new leaves.



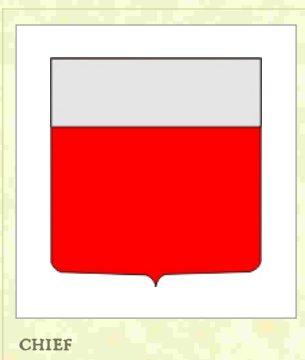
BATTLE-AXES

The battle-axe is a symbol of authority and of the execution of military duty. The battle-axe denoted a warlike quality its bearer. The battle-axe was a bearing introduced to heraldry as a token of the crusades, which began shortly after the rise of heraldry itself. Though other axes are used as devices in heraldry, the battle-axe is distinct because of its blade that it firmly mounted on the shaft and penetrates through it to the other side. It is a common symbol on a crest.



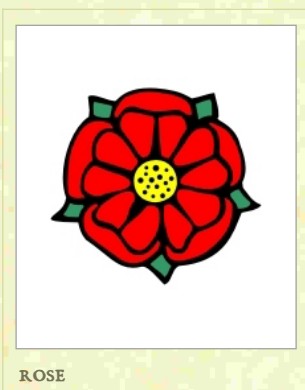
BLUE

Azure (derived from the French word for "blue") represents the color of an eastern sky on a clear day. It also corresponds to the metal tin. The word, "azure" was introduced from the east during the Crusades. It signifies piety and sincerity, and is equated with autumn. In engravings it is represented by horizontal lines.



CHIEF

The chief is a horizontal band across the top of the shield that stands for authority and domination of will. The chief has often been granted as a special reward for prudence and wisdom, as well as for successful command in war. The chief theoretically contains the upper 1/3 of the shield, although it rarely actually does. The chief is never surmounted by any other ordinary (a simple background symbol) except for in very exceptional cases.

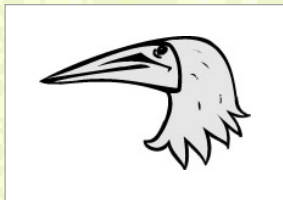


ROSE

The rose is a symbol of hope and joy; it is first among flowers and expresses beauty and grace. With a red blossom, it is a symbol of martyrdom. The white rose expresses love and faith; in Christian symbolism, it signifies purity. The yellow rose is a symbol of absolute achievement. The conventional form of a heraldic rose displays five petals that mimic the look of a wild rose on a hedgerow. The famous Wars of Roses, between the red rose of the house of Lancaster and the white rose of the house of York, ended after the succession of the Tudors to the throne. After this, the heraldic rose developed a double row of petals which was obviously in effort to combine the rival emblems. During the reign of the Tudors there was a more naturalistic trend in heraldry, and stems and leaves were sometimes added to the rose. Heraldry has accomplished what horticulture could not, and roses can be found tinted blue, black and green, in addition to the more natural colors.

THE CREST

The Crest was worn on top of the helmet, and was usually made of wood, metal, or boiled leather. It provided the double advantage of easy identification and the addition of height to the wearer. The Crest for the surname Byles is described as follows:



THE BYLES CREST

A STORK'S HEAD.



STORKS

STORKS

According to legend, cranes lived in a community in where individual members took turns standing watch. The sentry crane held a stone in one claw so that if it dozed, the falling stone would wake the bird. The crane is a symbol of vigilance, justice and longevity, but nevertheless, there are instances where the crane is depicted dormant (asleep) with its head under its wing, still holding its 'vigilance,' as the stone is termed. The stork and the heron, also called a herne, are very similar to the crane. Both birds were emblems of filial duty and gratitude or obligation, and like cranes, storks were believed to stand watch for each another. All three birds are usually depicted with wings close, the crane in its vigilance and the stork holding a snake, while the heron often holds an eel.

HEAD

The head stands for honor. After all, the head is the center of knowledge, thinking and learning for the body.

CONCLUSION

APPENDIX - NOTABLE LIST

- Brigadier Gary Byles CSC, Australian Army officer, Commander of JTF Gold/Op Gold
- Tim Byles CBE, British Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools (2006-)
- Mather Byles (1706-1788) American clergyman, grandson of Increase Mather, known for his quote: "Which is better-to be ruled by one tyrant three thousand miles away or by three thousand tyrants one mile away?"
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SURNAME VARIANTS OF BYLES

- Robert L Bill, Associate Professor of Basic Medical Sciences, Director of Veterinary Technology at the School of Veterinary Medicine, Purdue University
- Daniel Biles, American Justice on the Kansas Supreme Court (2009-)
- Keith Robert Biles JP, British born, Falkland Islands banker and politician, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands (2009-)
- Charles Bill (1843-1915) British Conservative Party Member of Parliament (MP) Leek (1892 to 1906)
- Alfred Hoyt Bill (1879-1964) American writer
- Max Bill (b.1908) Swiss writer, architect, and politician
- Martin Biles (b.1919) American javelin thrower at the 1948 Summer Olympics
- Ed Biles (b.1931) retired American NFL football coach
- Tony Bill (b.1940) American director, actor, and screenwriter
- Oliver Biles (b.1990) British-born Asian actor

- Simone Arianne Biles (b.1997) American gold, silver and bronze medalist artistic gymnast, the 2012 Junior National Champion

APPENDIX - HISTORIC EVENT LIST

RMS TITANIC

A British passenger liner en route from Southampton, UK to New York City, USA sunk in the early morning of April the 15th 1912. Operated by the White Star Line the RMS Titanic was traveling through Newfoundland when she hit an iceberg on the 14th April 1912 at 11.40pm ship's time. During the course of the night passengers and crew were evacuated to lifeboats, however of the 2,224 passenger and crew over 1,500 people died. The lifeboats could carry 1,178 people, which at the time was just over half the number on board.

- Father Thomas Roussel Davids Byles (1870-1912) English Catholic priest who remained on board the RMS Titanic as she was sinking hearing confessions and giving absolution

APPENDIX - SETTLER LIST

AMERICAN SETTLERS

- William Byles, who landed in Delaware in 1679^[2]

SURNAME VARIANTS OF BYLES

- Willen Bill, aged 28, who arrived in St Christopher in 1634^[2]
- Jo Bill, aged 13, who arrived in America in 1635^[2]
- Marie Bill, aged 11, who landed in America in 1635^[2]
- Robert Bills, aged 32, who arrived in America in 1635^[2]
- Walter Bill, who arrived in Virginia in 1636^[2]
- James Bill who settled in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1638, and was made a freeman in that year
- John Bill, who landed in Boston, Massachusetts in 1638^[2]
- Symon Byle, who arrived in Virginia in 1649^[2]
- Winekfield Bill, who landed in Virginia in 1650^[2]
- Thomas Bill, who settled in Boston in 1657
- Henry Bill, who arrived in Virginia in 1664^[2]
- William Biles, who landed in New Jersey in 1678^[2]
- Charles Biles, who arrived in New Jersey in 1679^[2]
- Charles Biles, who arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1679^[2]
- William Biles, who arrived in Delaware in 1679^[2]
- William Biles, who arrived in New Jersey in 1679^[2]
- William Biles (1644-1710), born in Dorchester, Dorset settled in Falls Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1679, he was granted 50,000 acres and became a Justice for the 1st Provincial Supreme Court in 1681^[2]
- William Biles, who landed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1679^[2]
- Charles Biles, who landed in Pennsylvania in 1686^[2]
- William Bill, who arrived in Virginia in 1696^[2]

CANADIAN SETTLERS

- Mr. Mather D. D. Byles Jr., U.E. born in Boston, Massachusetts, USA who settled in Saint John, New Brunswick c. 1783^[3]

AUSTRALIAN SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF BYLES

- Eliza Bill, who arrived in Adelaide, Australia aboard the ship "Bussorah Merchant" in 1843^[4]
- J. Bill, who arrived in Adelaide, Australia aboard the ship "Sir Charles Forbes" in 1849^[5]

NEW ZEALAND SETTLERS

SURNAME VARIANTS OF BYLES

- W Bills, who landed in Wellington, New Zealand in 1840 aboard the ship Duke of Roxburgh
- Frederick Bills, who landed in Wellington, New Zealand in 1842
- Frederick Bills, aged 27, a labourer, who arrived in Wellington, New Zealand aboard the ship "Clifton" in 1842
- Mary Ann Bills, aged 24, who arrived in Wellington, New Zealand aboard the ship "Clifton" in 1842
- James Richard Bills, aged 6 months, who arrived in Wellington, New Zealand aboard the ship "Clifton" in 1842

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here is a listing of some of the sources consulted when researching British surnames. The resources below directly or indirectly influenced the authors of our surname histories. We have most of these titles in our library, others we have borrowed or had access to. Source materials have been chosen for their reliability and authenticity. Our research into surnames is ongoing, and we are continually adding to our source library. For each surname history, we seek and refer to sources specific to the surname; these are generally not included in the list below.

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United Kingdom National Archives:
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

The National Archives (USA): <http://www.archives.gov/>

College of Arms (England): <http://college-of-arms.gov.uk/>

MEDIEVAL ROLLS

Where available we consult Medieval rolls or use their information as reprinted in secondary sources.

Subsidy Rolls: taxation records from the 12th to the 17th centuries.

Assize Rolls: records from court sessions

Pipe Rolls: rolls of the Exchequer of accounts of the royal income, arranged by county, for each financial year. Many 12th and 13th century documents have been published with indexes by the Pipe Roll Society.

Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem: Feudal inquiries, undertaken after the death of a feudal tenant in chief to establish what lands were held and who should succeed to them. Records exist from around 1240-1660.

Roll of Battle Abbey: a list of the principal Norman Knights said to have accompanied William across the English Channel. Original roll was lost.

Curia Regis Rolls (Rotuli Curiae Regis): Rolls and Records of the Court held before the king's Justices. Various translated and published, London 1835),

Feet of Fines: Legal agreements, usually about property ownership

Register of the Freemen of York: list of freemen from 13th-18th century, published by the Surtees Society, Francis Collins (editor) in 1897.

Charters: documents recording grants, usually of land recorded by the Chancery

Historia Regum Britanniae ("The History of the Kings of Britain"): a legendary account of British history, accredited to Geoffrey of Monmouth in around 1136.

Heralds' visitations: 16th-17th century, county by county visits to regulate the use of arms; many published by the Harleian Society.

Hundred Rolls (Rotuli Hundredorum): various royal inquests, documents were held in the tower of London. Much was published in 1818
Ragman Rolls: rolls of deeds on parchment in which the Scottish nobility and gentry subscribed allegiance to Edward I. of England, A. D. 1296.

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