



CLAN CHISHOLM

ARMS

Gules, a boar's head couped Or, langued Azure

CREST

A dexter hand holding a dagger erect Proper, the point thereof transfixing a boar's head erased Or

MOTTO

"Feros ferio (I am fierce with the fierce)

On Compartment Vi aut virtute (By force or virtue)

SUPPORTERS

Two savages wreathed about the head and middle (with laurel) each holding in his exterior hand an oak batten the end resting on the ground Proper

STANDARD

Azure, a St Andrew's Cross Argent in the hoist and of two tracts Gules and Or, upon which is depicted the badge along with the Motto 'Feros ferio' extended in the fly in letters Azure

BADGE

A leaf of fern Proper set in a chapeau Gules furred Ermines

The family was known in the Borders as early as the reign of Alexander III. The name derives from the Norman or French, 'chese', 'to choose' and the Saxon 'holm', meaning 'meadow'. Their lands were at Chisholm in the parish of Robertson in Roxburghshire. One of the earliest recorded members of this family is John de Chesehelme, who was mentioned in a bull of Pope Alexander IV in 1254. Richard de Chesehelme of Roxburghshire rendered homage to Edward I of England and is listed in the Ragman Roll of 1296. The seal he used shows a boar's head which remains this family's principal device to this day. There is a tradition that two Chisholm brothers saved the life of the king when he was attacked by a ferocious wild boar. It is somewhat fancifully suggested that the armorial supporters granted to the Chisholm chiefs are said to represent the two brothers. By way of reward for the deed the family were granted lands in Inverness-shire, and they achieved prominence in the north when, in 1359, they gained control of an important stronghold. Robert de Chishome was appointed constable of Urquhart Castle on the shores of Loch Ness in succession to his maternal grandfather. He had been knighted by David II and was taken prisoner at the Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346. He was later ransomed and lived to become sheriff of Inverness and justiciar of the North. His son, Alexander, married Margaret, heiress to the lands of Erchless, and Erchless Castle was to become the seat of the clan.

The family remained staunchly Catholic during the early years of the Reformation, and the Chisholms of Cromlix in Perthshire provided three successive Bishops of Dunblane. The third and last of these Chisholm bishops was later to become Bishop of Vaison near Avignon. They were implicated in Catholic intrigue which threatened the stability of the new reformed faith in Scotland. In 1588 it was alleged that William Chisholm, Bishop of Vaison, came in secret to Scotland bearing personal letters from the Pope promising that if the Scottish Crown acknowledged papal authority, the Holy See would ensure that the impending Spanish Armada did no harm to the realm. The news that the Armada had sailed later that year put the Church of Scotland into a state of general alarm and they took steps to neutralize Catholic sympathizers by summoning them before the General Assembly in Edinburgh for questioning. The son of Sir James Chisholm of Cromlix was amongst those brought before the Assembly although no charges were brought at that time. Sir James was, however, denounced in 1592 for 'trafficking in sundry treasonable matters against the true Religion' and was excommunicated at St Andrews in September 1593. During the seventeenth century the clan chiefs became Protestant, but they remained tolerant of the Catholic faith. Roderic Maciain Chisholm was active in the 1715 rising under the Earl of Mar. Chisholm of Crocfin, and aged veteran, led two hundred men of the clan at the Battle of Sheriffmuir. The family estates were forfeited to the Crown and sold, but a pardon was granted in 1727 and most of the lands were purchased back from MacKenzie of Allangrange. The Chisholms still adhered to the Jacobite cause, and when Bonnie Prince Charlie raised his father's standard in 1745, Roderick, a younger son of the chief, was appointed colonel of a battalion. Of the Chisholms who fought at Culloden, less than fifty survived, and Roderick was among the fallen.

After Culloden, the 'Young Pretender' was obliged to trust his life to seven of his devoted followers, and three of these – Alexander, Donald and Hugh – were Chisholms. They slept in a cave in Glenaffric and scavenged for food. Having conveyed the prince to the coast of Arisaig, Hugh Chisholm shook hands with him and vowed never to shake hands with another man. He lived to a ripe old age and is said to have kept his vow. The Chisholms were, however, more wary than they had been in the 1715 rising, and both the chief and two of his other sons did not openly support the Stuart cause. The Chisholm lands were accordingly preserved.

In the mid eighteenth century Ruairidh, the twenty-second chief, tried to raise money by increasing his tenant's rents, precipitating the mass emigration from the Chishoom lands to the New Worlds overseas. Alexander, the twenty-third chief, attempted to reverse this decline, but he died in 1793 leaving an only daughter, Mary, and the chiefship devolved upon his half-brother William. He made over most of the family land to sheep grazing and the emigrations continued.

In 1887 the chiefship passed through an heiress to James Gooden-Chisholm of Surrey, However, his descendents have since abandoned their English name, and once more the Chisholm takes his place in the Council of Chiefs.

Taken from "Scottish Clan & Family Encyclopedia", by Collins, HarperCollins Publishers 1994

Clan CHISHOLM Septs

CHISHOLM
CHISM
FENTON

KINGLASS
MAC CHISHOLM
MAC CHISSON,

MAC CHISSUM

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