

BODERLAND SURNAMES with loarn robertson

Below is a map showing many of the borderland family or clan names on both sides of the border (established 1237) between Scotland and England. Up until the 17th century there were regular sorties across the border by both English and Scottish families on raiding expeditions searching for cattle and other transportable goods that could be taken back across the border to the safety of family enclaves. This became commonplace and the name Reiver (bandit) became a term associated with these family warriors. Many Reiver families gained reputations for bloody, predatory and vicious attacks on their raiding expeditions. Many were excellent horsemen, skilled in the use of the long spear and short sword while on horseback. Some names like Armstrong, Elliot, Graham, Johnstone and Scott had strong Scottish origins while other names like Forster, Gray, Dunne, Tailor and Noble were of English extraction and still others like Bell, Carleton, Hall, Nixon and Robson were thought to be a mixture of both Scots and English.

The difficulty with Reiver surnames is that after a while liaisons arose between both Scottish and English families on either side of the border and many marriages took place among them. This led to a kind of melding of different border families and in some cases it became difficult to identify whether or not some family surnames were of Scottish or English origins.

In the early 17th century the then Scottish King James VI decided to end the strife along the borders by burning out, dislocating, transporting, imprisoning or otherwise ridding the area of many Reiver families and restoring the king's law to the borders. This gave rise to the survivors of many Reiver families emigrating to Ulster, and their descendants, who became known as the Scotch-Irish or Ulstermen, eventually emigrating to America in considerable numbers. If you scan the surnames in the map many will be recognized as common to America today.

