

# The Society of Scottish Armigers

## The Court of the Lord Lyon

### Crest Badges

Information Leaflet No. 2  
Scottish Crest Badges



## INTRODUCTION

Much confusion exists about the meaning, use and entitlement to wear Scottish Crest Badges, and it is constantly increased by well-meaning but ill-informed explanations. This leaflet is authoritative in setting out the main facts. Even the popular name "Clan Crest" is a misnomer, as there is no such thing as a "Clan" Crest. The Crest is the exclusively personal property of the Clan Chief, and it is fully protected to him by the law in Scotland. The circumstances in which it may be worn by his clansmen are set out hereafter. But, first, four brief definitions of the technical terms are necessary.

### 1. DEFINITIONS

#### (a) THE CREST



When a coat of Arms is granted by the Sovereign through Her Majesty's Lord Lyon King of Arms, the Grant of Arms document shows the coat of Arms on a Shield. Above the Shield is placed a conventional helmet, and on top of the helmet is shown an additional device called the CREST, accompanied by the owner's Motto on a conventional scroll. It is impossible to own a Crest without first owning a coat of Arms, shown on the Shield, as the Crest is an adjunct to the coat of Arms. Sometimes an additional Motto or Slogan is granted, which may correctly appear on the Clansman's bonnet badge as an alternative to the first Motto.

#### (b) THE WREATH

Between the Crest and the helmet usually appears a WREATH of twisted cloth of alternate twists of the owner's "Livery colours", on which the Crest stands. When the Crest is shown by itself, without the coat of Arms, this WREATH is always shown beneath it to indicate that it is a heraldic Crest and not merely a depiction of some object or other. It is usually shown as a sort of straight sausage, with six twists.



### (c) THE CREST CORONET



Sometimes a coronet appears instead of a Wreath, and serves the same function. This is usually a CREST CORONET, similar to that of a Duke but showing only one and two halves of strawberry leaves on its upper rim instead of a Duke's three and two halves, and without the velvet and ermine cap which fits inside a ducal coronet. Many Clan Chiefs have Crest Coronets beneath their Crests instead of Wreaths. Sometimes Crests have different forms of coronets beneath them instead of Wreaths, usually the form known the "antique crown" which is an "open" crown (having no arches over, it) showing on its upper rim three and two halves of tapering

### d) THE CHAPEAU

Sometimes a heraldic CHAPEAU replaces the Wreath, or occasionally appears between the Wreath and the Crest. This is a conventional depiction of a velvet hat, flat on top and lined with ermine fur which shows on the turned—up brim of the hat. The edge of the brim is sometimes shown scalloped, sometimes straight. The shape of the hat varies with the artist who drew it; usually a side view is shown, when the hat looks rather like a Glengarry, with the brim tapering to a point at one end; a front view looks like a pillbox, with the brim turned up across it. Nowadays the Chapeau, which indicates its owner's baronial rank, usually appears beneath the helmet instead of beneath the Crest.



NOTE: The choice and use of Wreath, Crest Coronet or Chapeau is NOT a matter of the owner's whim, but is part of his Grant of Arms where they are stipulated. They may ONLY be used when they have been so granted by the Lord Lyon King of Arms.

## 2. RIGHTS

Any Scot who has recorded Arms and Crest in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland ("Lyon Register" for short) has the right to wear his Crest as a badge in various particular forms (see Section 5). NO ONE ELSE AT ALL may wear a badge of the Crest that such an "armiger" has recorded as his own, and this is a matter of law. The Arms and Crest are protected for their owner by the Laws of Arms in Scotland, and illegal infringement of his sole rights can bring prosecution, a fine and confiscation of the property marked with the rightful owner's Arms and/or Crest. Such a prosecution is conducted entirely at the expense of the Crown, and so the owners of Arms invoke it very freely and at no cost to themselves.

In Scotland ALL Arms and Crests are PERSONAL. There is NO SUCH THING as a "Family" coat of Arms or Crest. Though the Arms or Crest may be borne by SUCCESSIVE members of a family, they are personal to each in turn. The rules of the inheritance of Arms and Crests are legal and strict.

## 3. SAME NAME

When a person has recorded Arms and Crest in the Lyon Register, it is strictly NOT open to anyone else of the same surname to use his Crest. This is an

infringement of the owner's legal rights, for which he may ask the Procurator Fiscal of the Court of the Lord Lyon to prosecute the offender.

Ownership of Arms and Crest is PERSONAL, and is NOT extended to others of the same surname except in the cases outlined in Section 5 hereafter.

#### 4. CHIEFS OF CLANS AND HEADS OR "REPRESENTERS" OF FAMILIES

Chiefs are heads of very large "extended" families, including all of the same surname and probably many "septs" as well. "Septs" are large extended families (i.e. including distant cousins and connections) within a Clan but bearing different surnames from the Clan, usually the result of arbitrary fixing of surnames about the 17th century, prior to which surnames were not general in their modern form in Scotland. Fairly comprehensive lists of sept names and their Clans are given in "The Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands" by Frank Adam and Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, 6th ed. 1960, in two extensive appendices, and also in "The Official Tartan Map" by John Telfer Dunbar and Don Pottinger, Hamish Hamilton 1976.

Heads or REPRESENTERS of families are those whose claims to be the genealogically senior living persons of their surnames have been Officially Recognised by the Lord Lyon King of Arms, and are recorded as such in the Lyon Register. They are usually heads of extended families too small in number to claim to be "Clans". But they can be small or Lowland too; "Clan" simply means "family", in the broad sense.

#### 5. WEARING AND FORM OF CREST BADGES (updated Nov 2008 Lyon Court)



##### Chiefs of Clans

Chiefs have the right to wear their Crests as badges

- either simpliciter, without the accompaniment of circlet, motto or feathers behind the badge.
- or, as is more usual, surrounded with a plain circlet inscribed with his Motto or Slogan, NOT a strap-and-buckle which is for clansmen; and, if they choose, with THREE eagle's feathers in silver behind the circlet.

##### Chiefs

Heads of large branches of a Clan, who have been Officially Recognised as Chiefs by the Lord Lyon King of Arms, may wear:

- either their own personal Crest within a plain circlet inscribed with the Motto, as for a Chief, but with two small eagles' feathers instead of the Chief's three. If the Chieftain is also a Peer, he may add the appropriate coronet of rank on top of the circlet,
- or they may wear their Chief's Crest badge without feather like any other clansman, as described for clansmen, below.





## Armigers

A person who has registered his or her own coat of Arms and Crest, or inherited these according to the Laws of Arms in Scotland from an ancestor who had recorded them in the Lyon Register, may wear their own Crest as a badge:

- either on its Wreath, Crest Coronet or Chapeau,
- or, as is more usual, within a plain circlet inscribed with his Motto.

An armiger may also choose to wear instead the Crest badge of his Chief if the armiger is a clansman. An armiger is entitled to one silver eagle's feather behind the plain circlet, and if he is also a Peer he may add his appropriate coronet of rank on top of the circlet.

## Clansmen and clanswomen

These are the Chiefs relatives, including his own immediate family and even his eldest son, and all members of the extended family called the "Clan", whether bearing the Clan surname or that of one of its septs; that is all those who profess allegiance to that Chief and wish to demonstrate their association with the Clan.



It is correct for these people to wear their Chiefs Crest encircled with a strap and buckle bearing their Chief's Motto or Slogan. The strap and buckle is the sign of the clansman, and he demonstrates his membership of his Chiefs Clan by wearing his Chief's Crest within it.

## 6. NOTES

1. Although the Crest Badge is purchased by and is therefore owned by the clansman, the heraldic Crest and Motto on it belong to the Chief and NOT to the clansman. They are the Chief's exclusive heraldic property, which the clansman is only thus permitted to wear.

It is illegal for the clansman to misappropriate the Chief's Crest and Motto for any other use of his own, such as decorating his own silver, writing paper or signet ring, which anyway would mean that these articles belonged to the Chief who is the owner of the Crest and Motto on them.

Clan Societies, Officials and clansmen who have reason to use the Crest Badge on stationery should add beneath it the words "Crest Badge of a member of the Clan. to make it clear that the Crest Badge is not being misappropriated by the Clan Society or official involved. It is the Crest Badge of ALL clansmen, whether members of Clan Societies or not, and non—members may not be excluded if they are clansmen.

2. The strap—and—buckle is NOT a "Garter", and it should NEVER be shown coloured blue with gold buckle and edgings like the insignium of the Order of the Garter. Crest Badges are for wear by the clansmen, and as they are made of silver or white metal they should never be illustrated on paper or other materials in colour, other than white or silver. Line drawings should be printed in

monochrome. It is the privilege of ladies to wear the Crest Badge of their Chief as a brooch, usually on the left lapel of a jacket or equivalent position on a dress, and they may wear it thus in gold if they choose. Real eagle's feathers behind the badge may be worn by those entitled to feathers on appropriate occasions, e.g. Clan Gatherings. Ladies do not wear feathers behind the Crest Badge, either real or in metal, unless they are Chiefs, Chieftains or armigers in their own right.

3. Strictly speaking, membership of a Clan goes with the surname. And so it does NOT pass through married women who take their husbands' surnames and do NOT therefore transmit their own Clan surname to their children. The children are members of their fathers' Clans. But many people who have no paternal Clan of their own are content to demonstrate their relationship with their mother's Clan by wearing the Crest Badge of a clansman of her ancestral Clan. Few Clans would be so strict as to reject such affiliation, but some Clan Societies do.

4. When surnames were generally adopted in Scotland in the 17th century, some families took the surname of their Chief, not always spelling it in the same way, as spellings were not yet firmly fixed. Some took descriptive names, such as ROY which means RED, or trade names such as SMITH, WRIGHT, FLETCHER and MILLER. Their descendants cannot expect to find Chiefs for such derivative names, but must search back in their ancestry to discover in which Clan their family originated, as every Clan would have had its own smiths, wrights, fletchers (arrow—makers) and millers — and redheads.

5. Many established and reputable Clans do not have a Chief, where the Chief's line has died out or been lost — possibly through long past emigration of the line who are now heirs to the Chief ship. No Chief can exist for such Clans till a claimant comes forward and proves to the Lord Lyon King of Arms that he is the senior heir, when the Lord Lyon will Officially Recognise him as the Chief.

In some such cases, the Arms and Crest of a former Chief are known from past records, though not the present Chief. His clansmen may wear the Crest Badge of the last known Chief, which would be the same as that of his present undiscovered successor. In some cases there is no such record, and the clansmen have no Crest Badge for their Chief at all, nor will have until a Chief is discovered.

6. Although the illustrations in this leaflet of Crest Badges for Chieftains and armigers show the same "notional" Crest within the circlet as for Chiefs and clansmen, these are of course intended to represent their own personal Crests, NOT their Chiefs'.