

The Last Word

SCOTTISH CREST BADGES

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. These notes are 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 exclusive *personal* property of the clan chief, and it is fully protected to him by the laws of Scotland. The circumstances in which it may be worn by his clansmen are set out hereafter.

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 grant of arms, as the crest is an adjunct to the coat of arms.

Sometimes an additional motto is granted which may correctly appear on the clansman's bonnet badge as an alternative to the first motto.

The Wreath

Between the crest and the helmet usually appears a WREATH of twisted cloth of alternate twists of the owner's livery colors, on which the wreath 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 one object or other. It is usually shown as a "loft" of straight sausage with six twists.

Rights

Any Scot who has recorded arms and crest in the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in

Scotland ("Lyon Register") has the right to wear his crest as a badge in various particular forms.

No one else at all may wear a badge of the crest that such an armiger (one legally entitled to arms) has recorded as his own, and this is a matter of law.

The arms and crest are protected by their owner by the Laws of Arms in Scotland, and infringement of his sole rights can bring prosecution, a fine, and confiscation of the property marked with the rightful owner's crest. [This is not the case in England or Wales, *ed.*] Such prosecution is conducted entirely at the expense of the Crown, so the owners of arms can invoke it 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 [and must be matriculated by each inheritor]. The rules of inheritance of arms and crests are strict.

WEARING AND FORM OF CREST BADGES

Chiefs of clans: Chiefs have the right to wear their crests as badges either without the accompaniment of circlet, motto, or feathers behind the badge, or as is more usual, surrounded by a plain circlet inscribed with his motto or slogan. He may wear three eagle feathers in silver behind the circlet.

If the chief is also a peer he may add his coronet of rank on top of the circlet.

Chieftains: Heads of large branches of a clan, officially recognized as such by the Lord Lyon, may wear either their own personal crest within a plain circlet inscribed with the motto, as for a chief, but with two

