

A GUIDE TO THE HERALDRY OF CLAN DONNACHAIDH

In recent years, the renewed interest in Heraldry, and increase in its use, has led to some confusion about the rules, and, since heraldry evolved as a means of identification, the whole thing becomes meaningless if the rules are not strictly followed. It is hoped that this article will do much to clear up some misconceptions, as well as to explain the various components which go to make up a complete grant of arms, taking those of Struan as the first example.

Armorial bearings consist of: [a] the **SHIELD**; [b] the **CREST**, upon its wreath; [c] the **MOTTO**; [d] the **HELMET** and **MANTLING**; [e] sometimes, two **SUPPORTERS**, and [f] very rarely, a **DEVICE** on the **COMPARTMENT** beneath the shield.

The Arms of Struan include all these things, and we will look at them individually.



1. - Struan

Chiefs crest encircled with a strap and buckle bearing the 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 Chiefs crest within it, where it would be wrong to wear the crest alone. It is the badge of ALL clansmen, whether they are members of Clan Societies or not.

Clan Chiefs are heads of very large extended Families, including all of the same surname, and possibly many Septs as well. Membership of a clan goes with the surname, but many people who have no paternal clan of their own are content to demonstrate their relationship with their mother's clan by wearing her ancestral clan's crest badge. This results in a wide range of surnames in the Clan Donnachaidh Society.

Where a clansman wishes to have something more personal, he can apply to the Lord Lyon King of Arms for a coat of arms and, if appropriate, he will be granted one with a variation of the Chiefs arms. Two of these are illustrated below, and there are many others.

All Scottish arms, which are officially recorded in Lyon Register, are strictly personal. In this case they belong to Struan himself. They are not the property of his Family or Clan, and anyone who wants to have their own version of the arms must register them separately, when they will be given some suitable "difference" from the Chiefs arms. This is all protected by law, and infringement of the owner's sole rights can bring prosecution, which is conducted entirely at the expense of the Crown.

Naturally, the law does not apply all over the world, and infringements do unfortunately occur overseas, sometimes through ignorance. A Lyon Office document states: "It is not only illegal, but a social crime of the most grave character, to assume and purport to use your Chief's arms without a due and congruent difference. Anyone who does so merely publishes his own ignorance's, and lapses into bad manners".

What, then, can a clansman and loyal supporter of his Chief do, in the way of heraldic display to proclaim that loyalty?

It is correct for him to wear his



[a] The **SHIELD**. This is the most important as it bears the basic device, in this case three wolves' heads, cut off at the neck, in silver, armed, with blue tongues.



[b] The **CREST** sits upon a wreath which in turn is placed on a helmet above the shield. The wreath is of twisted cloth in the livery colours of the owner, red and silver in the case of Struan. The crest is a right hand holding a regal crown. The crest can be omitted, at the request of the owner. (See 3.)



[c] The **MOTTO**. Struan has two mottoes - one in a scroll above the crest - "Virtutis Gloria Merces" (Glory is the reward of valour), and the other below the compartment - "Garg'n Uair Dhuisgear" (Fierce when roused).



[d] The **HELMET** and **MANTLING**. The mantling is draped over the helmet and falls below and is again in the livery colours of red lined with silver.

These four things complete a normal Grant of Arms, but, in the case of Peers, Clan Chiefs and a few other persons of special importance, there can be added:



2. - Alexander Irvine Robertson



3. - Robert Hugh Stannus Robertson

By comparing Shield numbers, 2. and 3. with Struan's arms at number 1., it is evident that his wolves' heads have been 'differenced' by adding other items. When these additions are chosen in consultation with the Lord Lyon, they usually refer, either to the bearer's descent showing items from the arms of their families, or of his special interest or profession.

On Shield number 2., the sprig of holly represents the Irvines, and the bangle which goes round the hand on the crest is checked blue and gold to recall the Stewart arms (the bearer is descended from the Stewarts of Garth, Drumchary and Kynachan).

Shield number 3. follows the other option. The bearer has, in his own words, "devoted his life to applying science to create new industry' and his arms illustrate this. The chequer board represents an ordered array (science and crytallography), the ray is an idea nurtured by science so that it develops into an industrial project, and the rewards are represented by the bag of gold.

Thus these two shields between them show that Heraldry can be based, either on tradition and the past, or on modern technology and the future.

Clan Donnachaidh Members:

It appears that there has recently arisen in the U.S. the question of clansfolk displaying the red shield with the three white wolves' heads on notepaper or T-shirts.

This is very definitely a **NO – NO!**

The design is the **PERSONAL** property of our Chief, and cannot be used by anyone else, and this includes his family. It is as personal to him as his signature. It is registered as such in the Lyon Register and protected by law. Use by anyone other than the owner can bring prosecution, conducted entirely at the expense of the Crown.



[e] SUPPORTERS. Struan has, on one side, a green serpent with a red ribbon round its neck, and, on the other side, a silver dove, with a blue beak and a blue hat trimmed with ermine on its head.

[f] The bound man in chains on the COMPARTMENT' is the DEVICE bearing evidence to the fact that the fourth Chief of Clan Donnachaidh captured one of the murderers of James I. Also on the compartment appears the bracken, the plant badge of the Robertsons.

In medieval times a fully armoured person was indistinguishable from any other person in armour, so to identify themselves they carried an easily visible design on their shield. This was unique to them and no-one else could use it.

This still applies today, and anyone using or displaying another person's coat of arms is in effect masquerading as that person. It is extremely bad manners and they are also displaying their ignorance for all to see.

Donald Reid, F.S.A. Scot, A.I.f.A.

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3 June 2011

WHICH CREST BADGE IS IT?

For many who are new to ancestry, specifically Clan Donnachaidh, there seems to be some confusion on which is the proper crest badge. This article will attempt to clear the confusion.

The crest badges used by members of Scottish clans are based upon armorial bearings of the chief recorded by the Lord Lyon, King of Arms. Wikipedia offers this definition: 'Scottish crest badges are heraldic badges used by members of Scottish clans to show their allegiance to a specific clan or clan chief. Even though they are commonly used by clan members, the heraldic crest and motto within the crest badge belong only to the clan chief - never a member'.

Crest badges consist of a crest and a motto/slogan within a strap. These elements are heraldic property and protected by law in Scotland. Crest badges may be worn by anyone who wishes to show unity with a particular clan and allegiance to its Chief. With that information in mind, one can understand why it is so very important that the *proper* crest badge be utilized. The only crest badge for Clan Donnachaidh displays a hand supporting a crown, with the words 'Virtutis Gloria Merces' (translation: Glory is the Reward of Valor) on the strap. See the correct crest badge below:



The crest within this badge is the property of Alexander Gilbert Haldane Robertson of Struan, 23rd chief of Clan Donnachaidh. Lord Lyon, King of Arms, describes Struan as *Chief of the name and head of Clan Robertson otherwise entitled Clan Donnachaidh*. Clan Donnachaidh literally translates as the **Children of Duncan** (Donnchadh). Quite often, when searching for merchandise displaying the 'Clan Donnachaidh' crest, we are presented with items bearing crests displaying a ship, particularly when searching for items with the surname Duncan. While these crests with a ship are official crests for particular Duncan individuals, Lord Lyon, King of Arms, does not recognise a Clan Duncan, nor a chief for Clan Duncan. Thus **crest badges bearing a ship ARE NOT the proper badge to be utilized to show allegiance to Clan Donnachaidh**. A sample of these crests are below:



Crest Badge of:
Admiral Robert Duncan
Baron of Lundie, Earl of Camperdown



Crest Badge of:
Alexander Duncan of Parkhill



Crest Badge of:
John A. Duncan, Sketraw

Several retail merchants and merchant websites, both in the U.K. and U.S., **DO NOT** have the correct crest badge on their merchandise. A few of these websites also offer 'search' information that is incorrect when pertaining to Clan Donnachaidh, especially with the surname Duncan. For example, when on these websites there is the option to search your surname. When 'Duncan' is searched you are directed to a 'Clan Duncan Society, Scotland' and merchandise items with the ship crest are presented.

Efforts are in the making to request that vendors correct their information output as well as their merchandise products. In the meantime, we can all be mindful of what we purchase, display and wear so that respect is given where due.

Please see a complete explanation on heraldry on the website of the Clan Donnachaidh Society:
<http://www.donnachaidh.com/heraldry.html>

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Approved by the Council of the Clan Donnachaidh Society, 23 April 2016