

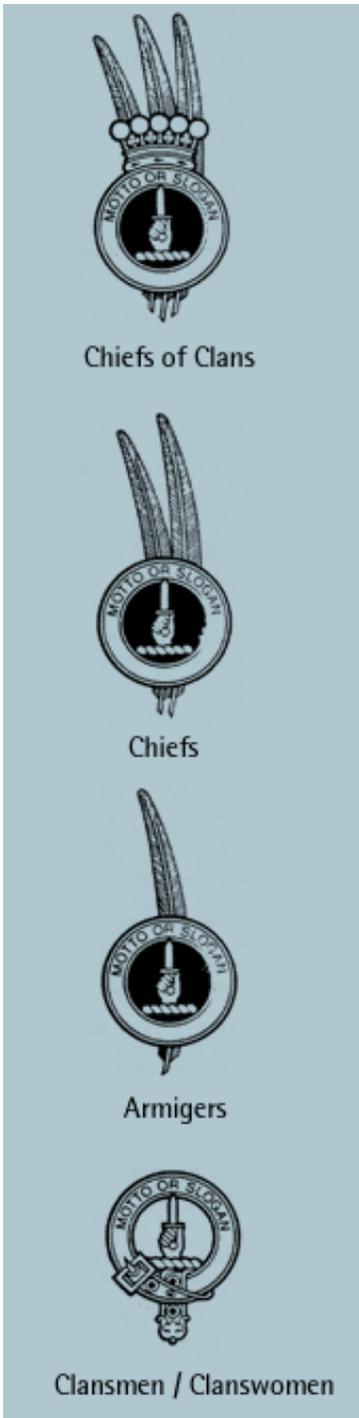
Clan Crest Badge

A **Scottish Crest Badge**, more commonly called a **Clan Crest**, is a heraldic badge worn to show one's allegiance to a specific Scottish clan. Crest badges may be worn by any member of a clan. Even though it is the most common name, the term *clan crest* is a misnomer. There is no such thing as a *clan crest*. Modern crest badges usually consist of the clan chief's personal crest surrounded by a strap and buckle and the chief's motto or slogan. Although "clan crests" are commonly bought and sold, the heraldic crest and motto belong to the chief alone and *never* the clansman or clanswomen. Crest badges, much like clan tartans, do not have a long history, and owe much to Victorian era romanticism, having only been worn on the bonnet since the 19th century.

The original clan badges were merely plants worn in bonnets or hung from a pole or spear. Plant Badges were characteristic of the highland clans. Many Scottish clans opted for sprigs from trees like oak, Scots pine, hazel, birch, juniper, rowan and even driftwood to identify them. Other clans chose among Scottish wildflowers for a plant badge.

A person does not need to be a member of a clan society to be able to wear a crest badge. Any clansmen or clanswoman has a right to it, not just clan societies and clan society members. According to the Court of the Lord Lyon clan membership goes with the surname. Clan membership does not automatically pass through a woman who has changed her name in marriage and through to her children - thus children are members of their *fathers'* clan. Although, today many people who do not bear a clan surname do wear crest badges of their mother's clan, and anyone who offers their allegiance to a clan chief is a member of a clan (unless the chief decides to refuse that person's allegiance). Many people bear names that, while not actual clan surnames, are sept names or associated names of certain clans. Surnames such as Smith, Wright, Fletcher, and Miller are examples as such names that are associated names of many clans (as every clan would have its own smiths, wrights, fletchers and millers). It is up to the individual to explore their personal ancestry and discover the correct clan that they belong to.

Clan chiefs, clan chieftains, armigers, clansmen and clanswomen may wear crest badges.



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 Recognized 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.