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# THE COURT OF THE LORD LYON

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## About the Court

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is my clan coat of Arms?

There is no such thing as a clan coat of Arms. The Chief of a clan has his or her personal coat of Arms but that belongs to the chief and cannot be used by anyone else. What a member of a clan may use is a badge consisting of the chief's 'crest' (see next question), within a belt and buckle design. The belt shows the chief's motto on it.

### Is a crest the same thing as a coat of Arms?

The word 'crest' is often used as a general description of a coat of Arms but this is not correct. A crest is one part of a heraldic design. It is the symbol which appears on top of the helmet which itself is on top of the shield. The shield contains the main part of the Arms.

### Who is my clan chief?

First of all you have to decide which clan you belong to. If your surname is the same as the name of a clan then you will want to be part of that clan. If your surname is different then your surname may be that of one of the septs which a particular clan chief has recognised as falling within his clan's wider family. If your surname is different from any of the recognised septs then it is for you to decide which clan you may wish to give your loyalty to. That is your personal choice. If you wish to know the name of the individual who is chief of a particular clan, the list of chiefs appears in the annual publication called Whitaker's Almanack.

### What tartan can I wear?

That depends on which clan you belong to. Strictly speaking you do not have the right to wear your mother's tartan unless you have taken her surname. You can only belong to one clan. If you do not belong to any particular clan you may wear a district tartan if you are descended from an ancestor belonging to the district concerned. The district tartans are Lennox, Huntly and Strathearn. Otherwise you may wear the Jacobite, Caledonia, Black Watch or Hunting Stewart.

### Who can have a coat of Arms?

Anyone resident in Scotland or who owns a house or land in Scotland may apply to the Lord Lyon King of Arms for a Scottish coat of Arms. If you are not resident in Scotland and do not own any property there, you may be able to apply for Arms to be granted in the name of an ancestor who lived in Scotland if you can prove descent from that ancestor. If you are uncertain of your position, you should write setting out your circumstances to the Lyon Clerk, Court of the Lord Lyon, HM New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT.

### **How do I apply for a coat of Arms?**

Application is made in the form of a Petition to the Lord Lyon. A copy of a leaflet containing various sample forms of Petition for different circumstances is available from the Lyon Clerk, Court of the Lord Lyon, HM New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT.

### **Can everyone who is descended from someone who had a coat of Arms use it?**

No. A coat of Arms belongs only to one person at a time. It passes from the owner to his eldest son and then to his eldest son and so on. Other members of the family may, depending on their relationship and their surname, be able to apply for a 'differenced' version of the Arms to be granted to them by the Lord Lyon. If you think that you are in this position you should write, giving details of the circumstances, to the Lyon Clerk, Court of the Lord Lyon, HM New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT.

### **I have located my coat of Arms on the Internet. Can I use it?**

There are many websites which supply information about coats of Arms which are said to apply to particular names. Unfortunately most of this information is completely unauthentic. In many cases what is supplied is the design of the Arms belonging to the chief of a clan. Only the individual chief himself can use these Arms and it is completely incorrect for anyone else to do so.

### **I have bought my coat of Arms from a heraldic shop. Is it correct?**

No. See the last question. What you have bought is simply a souvenir and has no authenticity. It is akin to having your photograph taken in front of a castle and giving the impression that the castle belongs to you.

### **When did heraldry start?**

Heraldry has its origins around the 11th century. It came into being in two main ways. One was the development of designs used on personal seals which were used to make a wax impression on a document when it was signed. This was to assist those who were unable to read in those days to know who it was that had signed the document. The other way that heraldry emerged was to identify Knights wearing armour, particularly when their faces were covered by a helmet. The Knight would wear a 'surcoat' containing a design over the outside of the armour. The 'surcoat', or tabard, is still worn nowadays on ceremonial occasions by the Lord Lyon, Heralds and Pursuivants.

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