



# Sennachie's Corner

by

**Richard Gillaspy**

## **CLARK-CLARKSON**

(CLARKE, CLERK, CLERKE)

The surname Clark(e) and its variations are one of the oldest sept names of the Clan Chattan and the Clan Macpherson. The name Clark(e) is the anglicized (English) form of the Gaelic name Cleireach (Chlerich) which means a man in a religious order such as a cleric or clergyman. Cleric (Clerec) means a priest. Clergy in religious orders that could marry and have children would use this name. Mac-a'-chlerich means son of the Cleric or Clarkson.

The Clan Chattan and the Clan Macpherson descends from St Cattan who was a disciple of St Columba and a Culdee and Cleireach of the Celtic Church. Culdee means a servant of God. St Cattan established a monastery on the Isle of Bute in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Celtic church held onto old Celtic traditions, and a priest of the Celtic church was allowed to marry and have children under their Celtic customs. Therefore, the name Chlerich was used in the Celtic Church.

In 1057 A.D. King Malcolm Ceanmor commanded his nobles, the chiefs of the tribes, and their lands and offices be called after their name. He implemented the use of surnames. Pursuant to this royal command, the first Chief of the Clan Chattan is believed to have been Gillespick Chlerich, and his title became Gillichattan mor, meaning the great servant of St Cattan. The anglicized (English) form of his name is believed to be Archibald the Clerk. The fourth Chief of Clan Chattan was Muriach Cattanach. He was the Celtic prior of Kingussie. Upon becoming the Chief of the Clan, he was required to leave his church office, and change his name to the title of the Chief. He changed his name to Gillichattan-Chlerich referring to his former church office. Gillichattan-Chlerich (Clerk) was the eponymous of the Clan Macpherson. An eponymous is the ancestor from whom the Clan descends. The name Clerk and Clark are ecclesiastical names going back to the ancestors of the Macphersons.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CAP BADGE

By Richard Gillaspay

A distinctive part of the Highland dress is the cap badge. The form of the cap badge, which was used as identification within a Scottish tribe or clan, has taken many forms over the centuries. These included plants, colored ribbon or cloth, and finally the metal badges which are worn today. The origin of the badge goes back to an ancient period in Scottish history.

It is mistakenly believed that the colored, checked cloth known as tartan (breacan in Gaelic) was used as a means of identifying members of a tribe or clan. However, this was not true. The breacan cloth was invented by the Celtic people by 500 B.C. It is now believed that it did evolve into a means of identification, but not to show which tribe the wearer belonged, but instead to identify the rank of the wearer in Celtic society. For example, slaves wore cloth of a single color. Rent paying farmers wore cloth with two colors. Officers had cloth with three colors, while chieftains wore cloth with five colors. Priests wore cloth with six colors, and the Chief or King had seven colors in their breacan cloth. The breacan (tartan) did not identify the tribe or clan to which the wearer belonged. Also, a Highland clansman would remove his breacan-feile or "belted plaid" before he ran into battle. His great plaid was an encumbrance during battle. This eliminated his breacan as a means of identification.

Therefore, the plant badge came into use as a means of identification of members of the tribe or clan. A sprig of the plant was affixed to the cap or bonnet. Each tribe or clan used a specific plant to identify their members or clansmen. Plant badges were occasionally-in special circumstances, and during large scale operations, used as a means of distinction or identification. However, many of these "badges" would have been hard to identify, even at a gathering, let alone during the heat of battle. Another problem was that many of the plants were only available during a limited season. Therefore, some historians believe that the plant badges have some more subtle origin, and are rather to be regarded as the "race-plant" of the tribe. Some of the plant badges are officially recorded in the Lord Lyon Court. For example, the red whortleberry is officially recorded in the Lyon Court for Clan Chattan. White heather is officially recorded as the plant badge for the Clan Macpherson.

For many reasons, some of which are already stated above, the plant badge was inappropriate as a means of identification, particularly

during battle. Therefore, the cockade came into use. The cockade was a knot of ribbon or similar cloth worn on the cap or bonnet as a badge. The cockade was of the Chief's "color" or "colors" for identification as a clansman of their Chief. At times it was the practice to affix the plant badge to the cockade.

The use of a Chief's badge may date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A silver badge had to be individually made, and they were not in wide use. Such heraldic badges were worn by the followers of Magnates or nobleman by the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was the custom for lords or chiefs to give their followers a silver plate of their crest, to wear as a badge, to which was affixed a leather strap. When not in use, the strap was coiled around the crest, and this in its conventional form constituted the crested badge. Thus the strap and buckle around the crest came into being. The crest was a heraldic symbol. The Chief was a descent of and represented the founder of the race (clan). The Chief succeeded upon his predecessor's death to inherit the crest and insignia of the eponymous (or what was heraldically appropriate to the eponymous). In Clan Chattan and the Clan Macpherson the crest is the cat. It is believed to represent St. Chattan. St. Chattan was a bishop, and led the tribe into Christianity. He is said to have been the eponymous of the tribe. The Gaelic word Chattan meaning a small cat. The cat would have been totem and therefore the appropriate heraldic symbol of the tribe.

The metal cap badge did not come into common use until the technology to mass produce the metal badge came into existence. The use of metal badges was mainly with Highland Regiments, and the Regimental badge had the crest of the chief or lord who originally raised the regiment. With the technology to reproduce the metal cap badge, came the means to mass produce the Chief's crest plate with the surrounding strap and buckle. The strap and buckle implies a clansman or clanswoman wearing his chief or chieftain's crest to indicate that he or she is the clansman or clanswoman of that chief or chieftain. One must remember that the strap and buckle is the Chief's badge for identifying his clansman.

The Scottish chiefs and chieftains never forgot that the clan was their kinsman, and that is precisely why the clan system, and the grandeur of Scottish titles, dignities, and heraldry survived, where so many of those in Europe were to fall into ruin.