

## Deep Roots: Family Mottoes

by Wilma Heberling

Scotland's clans are known the world over for their tartans and traditions, but there is another, often overlooked symbol of heritage--the family motto. If the family was a true clan, the family motto often features personal coats of arms held by the clan chiefs. These mottos are thought to have originated as battle cries in medieval times.

Mottos were written in Scots, French, Latin, English and Gaelic. All of them clearly aim to instill a deep sense of pride in the traditions of a particular family or clan. Some, like the **Brodies** and the **Camerons** share the simple motto, "Unite!" Others try to encapsulate their strengths and virtues in their mottos.

Not surprisingly, many emphasize courage and bravery needed for battle. For example, the **MacAulays** have the foolhardy "Danger is Sweet" while the **Gunn** family proclaim, "Either peace or war!" (Don't mess with Gene's family!) The **Robertsons** proclaim, "Glory is the reward of valour."

Other families take a more prudent angle. The **Lindsays** urge their people to "Endure with strength" while the **MacIntyres** stress determination with "Per ardua" (Through difficulties).

Some families show that the only thing to fear is fear itself when the shout, like the **MacNab's**, "Let fear be far from all!" Others seem to extol the virtues of faith—or even fear-in God. The **Munro's** "Dread God" and the **Craig's** "Live for God and you shall have life." The **MacKinnons**, on the other hand, seem to think that luck has more to do with it with their, "Fortune assists the daring."

Then there are those for whom serving king or country is important. The mighty **McGregor** motto is, "Royal is my race," which refers to their claim of being descended from Griogar, a king of Dalriada. A few have stories behind them such as the **Cunningham** motto, "Over fork over," which stems from the legend that a Cunningham hid King Malcolm III, and covered him with forkfuls of hay. The **Mackenzie's** Gaelic motto is, "Cuiddiche an Righ" (Tribute to the King).

Family mottoes of interest to members of the Scottish Society include the **Buchanan's**, "Clarion hinc honos" (Brighter hence the honor); **Matheson's** "Do and Hope", **Campbell's** "Ne Obliviscaris" (Forget not)—and those who forget not the **Campbells**, the **MacDonald's** "Per mare per terras" (By sea and by land). Clan **MacPherson** proclaims, "Touch not the cat!" while the **MacBeans** say, "Touch not a catt bot a targe" (Don't touch the cat without a shield). Finally, there is the **Sutherland** motto. I think it is most appropriate for Society presidents and also for a leader of a pipe band: "Without Fear."

Motto hunting is fun, and also enlightening. Why do you think Mel Gibson shouted "Freedom!" in the movie *Braveheart*? The **Wallace** motto is "For Liberty!"

Feumaidh mi faibh (I must go now),

Wilma