



Clan SUTHERLAND

ARMS

Gules, three mullets Or, on a border Or a Royal Tressure Gules

CREST

A cat-a-mountain sejant rampant Proper

MOTTO

Sans peur (Without fear)

SUPPORTERS

(on a compartment embellished with cotton-sedge plants Dexter, a savage man wreathed about the head and loins with laurel Proper, holding in his hand a club Glues resting upon his shoulder; sinister, another like savage sustaining in his sinister hand and against his shoulder, upon a staff ensigned of a coronet of an Earl, a bannerette Gules, charged of three mullets Or

PLANT BADGE Cotton sedge plant

A territorial name from the country of Sutherland in northeast of Scotland. Sutherland was the 'Sudrland', or 'Southland', of the Norsemen who had by the tenth century conquered all of the islands of Scotland and much of the mainland as far south as Inverness. The family are probably of Flemish origin, descended from Freskin, whose grandson, Hugh, was granted land in Moray around the year 1130 by David I. Hugh acquired estates in Sutherland and was referred to as Lord of Sutherland. His son, William, became Earl of Sutherland around 1235, at a time when earldoms were accorded only to near kin of the Scottish kings. Hugh's brother took the surname Murray, and he is the ancestor of the many powerful families who bear this name, including the Dukes of Atholl. The clan evolved around this powerful chief, who was strong enough to hold and protect the cathedral town on Dornoch.

Kenneth, fourth Earl of Sutherland, was killed with the regent of Scotland and three other earls while fighting against the English in 133 at the Battle of Halidon Hill. William the fifth Earl, was married first to Princess Margaret, daughter of Robert the Bruce and sister of David II. His son by her was heir to the throne prior to 1361, when he died of plague. William was murdered in 1370 by the Mackays in a feud which was to last for at least the next four centuries. Robert, the sixth Earl, William's son by his second marriage, built Dunrobin. He married the niece of Robert III in 1389. John, the eighth Earl, was declared unfit to manage his own affairs in 1494 at the insistence of his son-in-law, Adam Gordon, a younger son of the Earl of Huntly. He brought a further charge of idiocy against the earl's heir, and rounded things off with a charge of illegitimacy against Alexander Sutherland, the younger son of the eighth Earl who was ultimately mysteriously murdered. Adam Gordon's wife then succeeded to the Sutherland lands and titles.

John, the sixteenth Earl, resumed the ancient surname of Sutherland, and in 1715, was Lord Lieutenant for the north of Scotland, including the islands. He called out his men for George I, and garrisoned Inverness against the Jacobites. His son, William, the seventeenth Earl, reconciled the Sutherlands to their ancient enemies, the Mackays, and settled the ancient feud at the start of the rising of 1745. The Earl of Cromarty, commanding the Jacobite forces in the north, occupied Dunrobin Castle but was defeated and captured by Sutherland's militia. Dunrobin thus became the first British castle to be captured with bloodshed in time of war.

The death of the seventeenth Earl, leaving an only daughter, Elizabeth, led to a legal battle over the succession to the title. Her right as a woman to succeed was challenged by the nearest male heirs, George Southland of Forse and Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, a descendent of the second marriage of the twelfth Earl. The House of Lords heard the case on 21 March 1771, and decided in Elizabeth's favor, confirming her as Countess of Sutherland in her own right. She married the Marquess of Stafford, of the prominent Levenson-Gower family. He was later created first Duke of Sutherland in 1833.

The first Duke was a keen reformer and progressive planner. He set up new industries on the coast and achieve his ends by ruthlessly clearing his tenants off the land, abandoning the customary obligations of a chief to his clan. He virtually destroyed the old ways of life in Sutherland, uprooting the pastoral inhabitants of the hills and glens and moving some of them to modern housing on the coast to work in industries, such as distilling, which he had financed. Stafford lost a great deal of money in his schemes, and although he as hated at first, he came to be respected by some at his death, although many could never forgive the clearances which his policies had required.

The second Duke transformed Dunrobin from a traditional Scottish castle into a vast palace in the French chateau style through the work of architect, Sir Charles Barry. Dunrobin was badly damaged by fire in 1915 and was later restored and partly remodeled by Sir Robert Lorimer. The third Duke contributed nearly a quarter of a million pounds for the building of the Highland railway, and had his own line built from Golspie to Helmsdale.

On the death of the fifth Duke, the chiefship of the clan and the earldom of Sutherland devolved upon his niece, Elizabeth, the present Countess of Sutherland. The dukedom, however, did not die out, and was inherited by the Earl of Ellsmere, a descendent of the younger son of the first Duke. There is accordingly now a separate earldom and dukedom of Sutherland, and the holders of both titles still live in Scotland. The fairy-tale Castle of Dunrobin, the principal seat of the chiefs and the largest house in the Highlands, remains in the family's possession, but is now open to the public.

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