Bookplates, Badges & Publications

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It was an inherited bookplate belonging to Arthur Davidson which originally sparked my interest. I soon discovered that decorated bookplates had been used by book owners to show their ownership of a book for many centuries across Europe. Armorial designs were often used.

Bookplates vary in size. I make no apology for enlarging some of the items included in this section so that the detail can be seen.

In Britain the use of bookplates started to become widespread in the 19th century. We have over 150 different armorial bookplate designs from many different Davidson and Davison families.

One of earliest surviving items in our collection probably dates from the 18th century when a Davidson family from the Newcastle area used a design which we understand was made by the famous Northumberland engraver Thomas Bewick.

Thomas Davidson of Newcastle, *c.*1790

By the 19th century some printers became specialists in the design and production of bookplates. Serious collecting had also started. Most of the items in our collection probably date from this period. Many are copies of others' work. Most are irregular in that they are not based on any formal registration at the Lyon Court or the College of Arms.

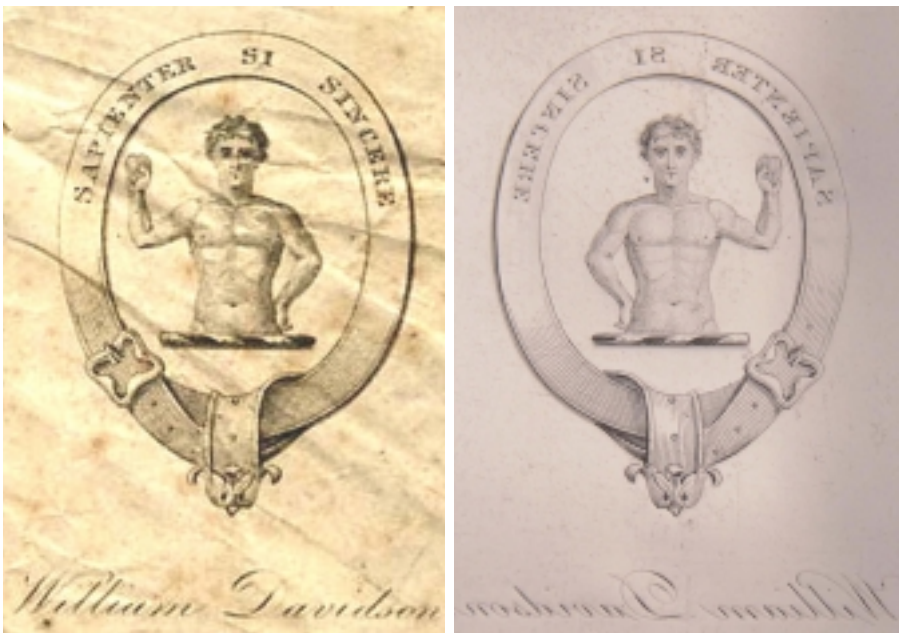
The Davidsons of Tulloch, the Chiefly family, did not matriculate their arms until 1906. This was much later than their contemporaries in the 18th century such as the Davidsons of Cantray and Muirhouse.

T. Davison, possibly from *c.*1740?

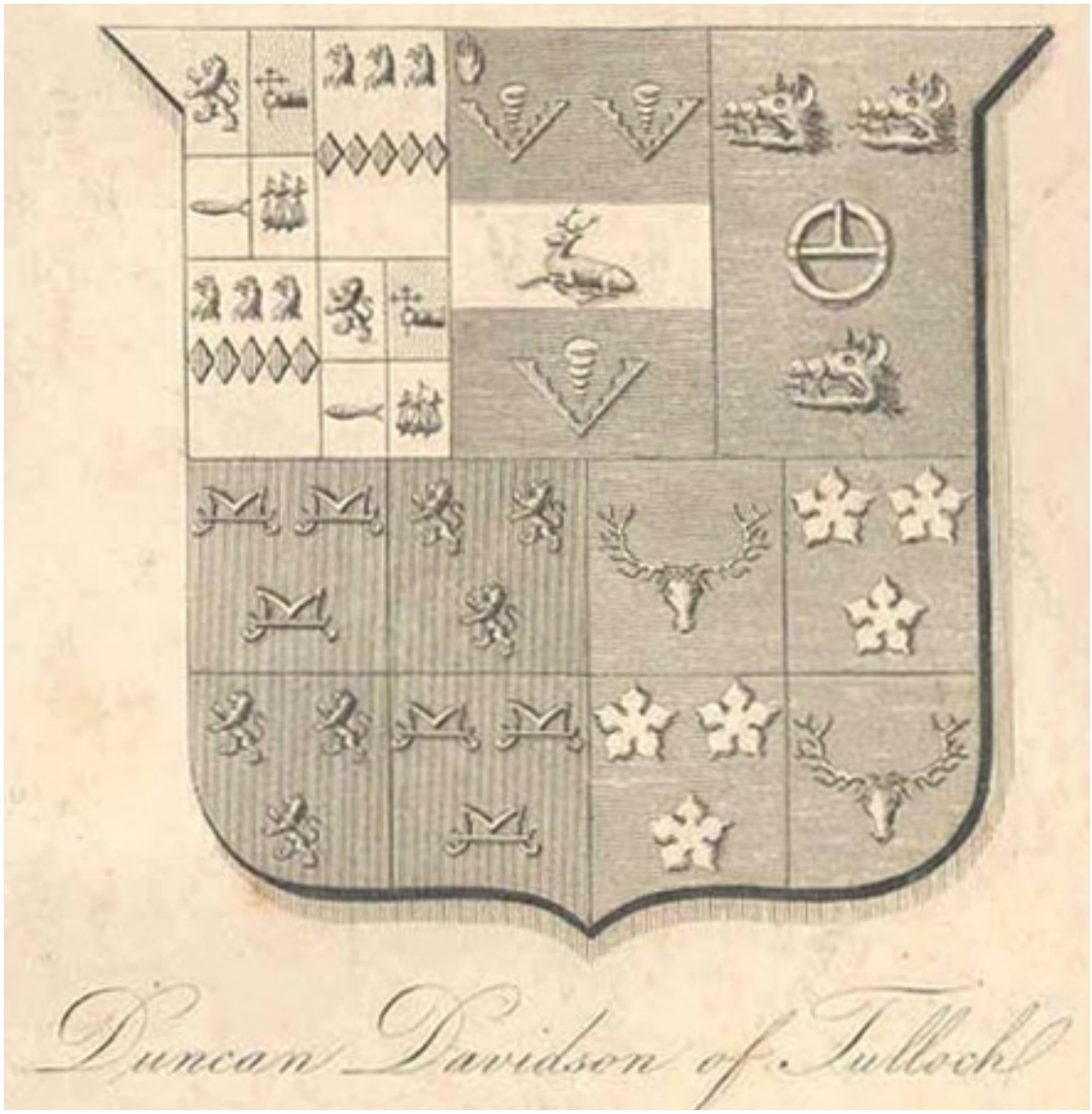
However, this did not stop this family using a wide variety of irregular armorial designs on their armorial bookplates.

For example, William Davidson 1808–1894, the youngest son of Henry Davidson, 3rd Laird of Tulloch, had a book plate using the Davidson of Cantray crest. There was no family connection.

I have a copy of one of William's books from the 1850s with this bookplate in place.



Bookplate of William Davidson and etched Printer's Plate used for its production



One of the Bookplates used by Duncan Davidson, 4th Davidson of Tulloch

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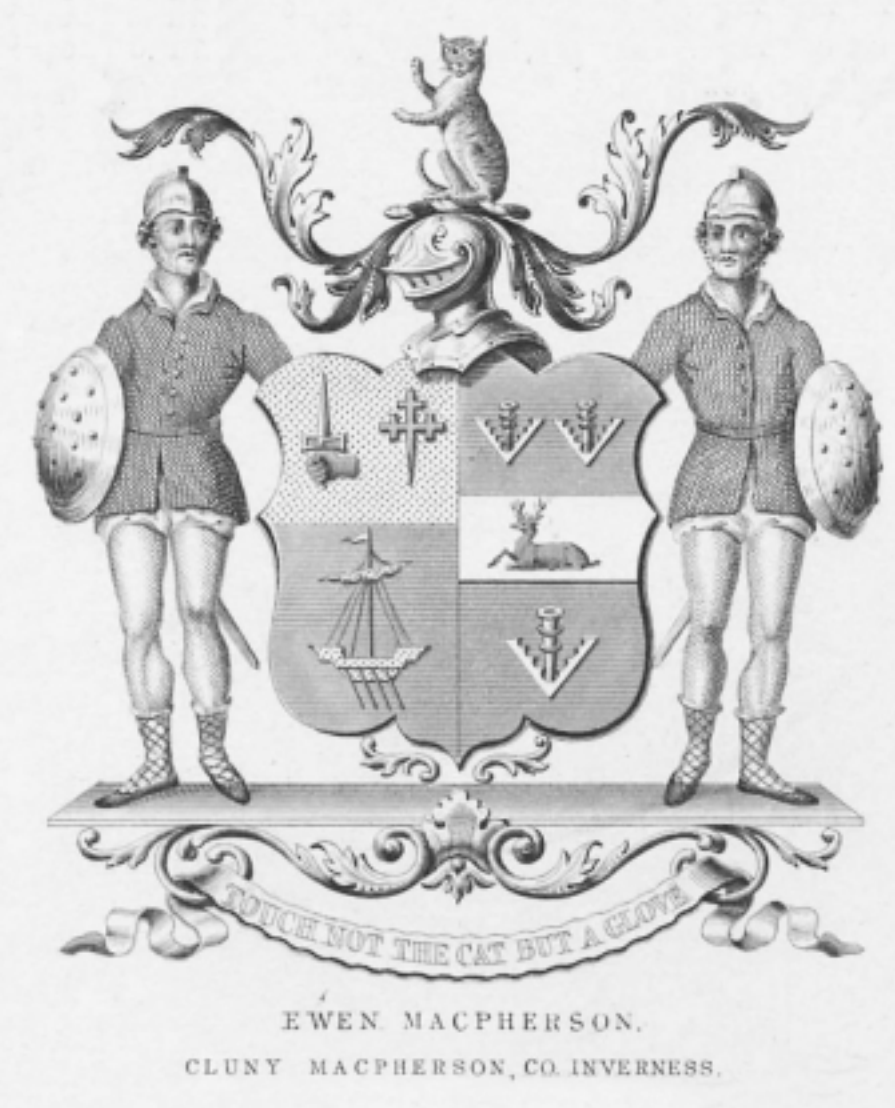
This wonderful concoction of homemade heraldry appears to celebrate Duncan's five wives.

The Arms of **Davidson of Tulloch** [*a stag lodged & three pheons*] are quartered with those of:

- **MacDonald of Sleat** [*lion rampant, arm holding cross crosslet, galley and & salmon*] & **Bosville** [*three boars heads & five lozenges*]
- **Fergusson of Kilkerran** [*three boars heads and a buckle*]
- **Ross** [*three water bougets*]
- **Mackenzie** [*a stag's head cabossed*]
- **Hall** [*three cinquefoils & three lions rampant*]

If you look carefully you will see that the Davidson section includes the Hand of Ulster motif described in the Origins Section. The Davidsons of Tulloch were simply copying the much earlier Corriehill design.

This design includes the Davidson design to reflect that Cluny Macpherson married Sara Justina Davidson of Tulloch in 1832.



The Bookplate used by Ewen Macpherson

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Arthur Davidson was knighted for his services to the Royal Family in a career which lasted from 1890 until his death in 1922. This is a typical bookplate of the time. Arthur Davidson was never granted arms.

Arthur Davidson was the youngest son of William Davidson [*see above*]. He was very proud of his Davidson roots and I have been fortunate to inherit one of his books with bookplate in place.

Bookplate of Sir Arthur Davidson

Some Davidson bookplates include major changes to the design motifs.

A Davidson Bookplate with Scottish Thistles instead of the Pheons

A Davidson Bookplate with the Comyns motifs instead of the Pheons

There were ancient connections between the Comyns and the Davidsons in medieval times in Scotland.

John Davidson the Traveller & Explorer 1797–1836 used two different bookplates as well as other armorial formats. He was never granted arms. Both he and his descendants were very proud of their Davidson heritage believing [*incorrectly*] that they were descended from both William Davidson who was granted arms in 1575 and also the Davidsons of Tulloch.

John Davidson's alternative bookplate

John Davidson's bookplate based on the Arms of William Davidson

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Sometimes the puzzles have yet to be explained. We have four different Davidson bookplates from the early part of the 19th century which include Mackintosh and Macpherson armorial detail. We have completed research into this family of Edinburgh lawyers but have yet to establish why they would have included these motifs. Maybe someone reading this can explain.

Look for the tiny pheons included in three of these bookplates

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James Mackenzie Davidson used two different designs and also changed the mottos used. The first appears to have been used before he was knighted and subsequently granted arms. This item is typical of its time and was probably copied from someone else's bookplate. The second item is unique and reflects the design used for his formal grant of arms.

Bookplates of James Mackenzie Davidson
Note the use of two mottos

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The discovery of some bookplates can help us unravel wide ranging families. In one pair of examples we have been able to pull together a Davidson family with London and Bristol roots and subsequent Australian links.

Madgwick Davidson was a successful lawyer in London and was granted arms.

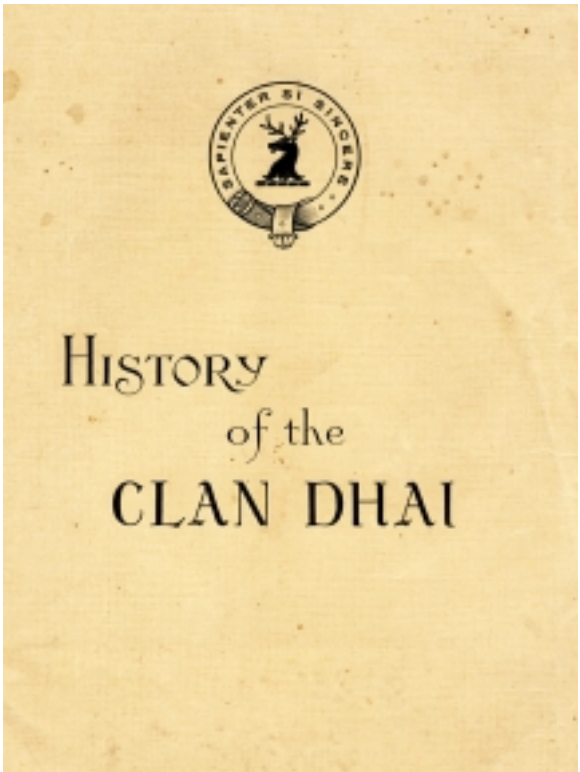
His cousin Alfred Davidson became a successful banker in Australia and was also granted arms. He used the same design as his cousin, but the colours on his bookplate do not match the formal records for his arms.

In the North-East of England we have found many armorial items for a group of Davison families who appear to be mainly descendants of Sir Alexander Davison of Newcastle & Blakiston who was granted arms in the 1630s. These descendants have left many bookplates.

Badges & Publications

I have deliberately linked Badges and Publications with Bookplates because of the way badges are used to show ownership or the branding of items for marketing purposes today in a similar way that bookplates were used to show ownership of an individual's books.

Early in the 20th century, the forerunner of the Clan Davidson Association, the Clan Dhai used armorial badges on its publications and membership documentation.



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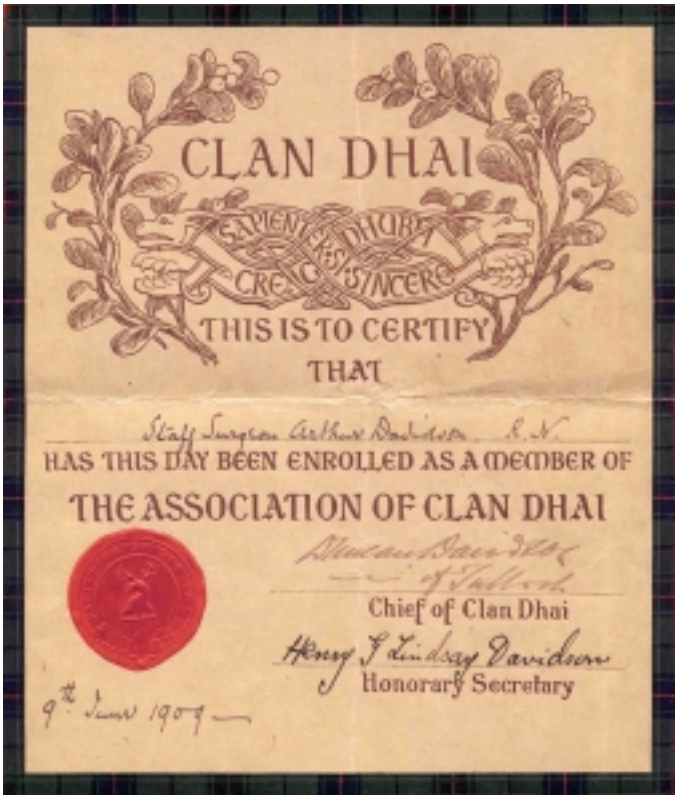
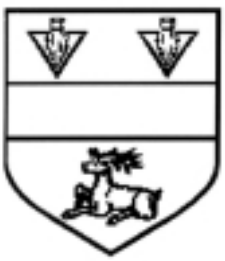
Armorial badge on membership documentation



Two examples of Davidson Buckle badges

Three examples of
Clan Davidson Association
letter headings



Davidson Badge

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The Letter heading & Badge used by Davidson High School, Davidson, New South Wales, Australia.

The name Davidson commemorates Walter Edward Davidson the Governor of New South Wales 1917–1923 after whom a large area of parkland was named. This forms the western boundary of the suburb now called Davidson. The school was founded in 1972.

Following the re-forming of the Clan Davidson Association in the early 1990s, the annual journal entitled *The Pheon* was launched. The Association was provided with a cover design by the distinguished armorial artist Denis Endean Ivall.

The Pheon cover