

## The Coronation Robes of the Sovereign

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The oldest extant coronation order<sup>8</sup> makes no mention of the royal coronation robes. According to an inventory of regalia by Sporley, a monk at Westminster Abbey in the mid-fifteenth century, there were then preserved from the time of the sainted King Edward, a tunic, supertunic, armil, girdle<sup>9</sup>, embroidered mantle (*paleum brudatum*), a pair of buskins (*par caligarum*), and a pair of gloves (*par cerotecaman*)<sup>10</sup>.

The second extant coronation order, one of the eleventh century, which may have been that used by Harold and William the Conqueror, is equally silent. The Bayeux Tapestry however shows Harold wearing a yellow tunic, a green dalmatic and a purple mantle. It is only in the twelfth century that a surviving order mentions the coronation vestments. This is a pontifical now in the British Museum. This specifically refers to the *armillae* or bracelets, and *pallium* or mantle.

The royal robes were eventually settled as comprising a coif<sup>11</sup>, buskins and sandals<sup>12</sup>, the *colobium sindonis*<sup>13</sup>, tunic and dalmatic<sup>14</sup>, belt or girdle<sup>15</sup>, stole in later days<sup>16</sup>, cope or mantle called *pallium regale*, ring<sup>17</sup>, sceptre (the crozier), rod, and crown<sup>18</sup>. A bishop also had a fanon, chasuble and gloves. According to William Wyndewode<sup>19</sup> the king was a clerk. The common law under Edward III held that an anointed king had spiritual jurisdiction<sup>20</sup>. It was little wonder that the king came to be attired as a cleric<sup>21</sup>.

Richard III's *little device*, his coronation order which was copied for Henry VII and Henry VIII, specified that a king would be arrayed in two shirts, "of lawn, and of crimson

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<sup>8</sup>Dating from the ninth or tenth century, it is now in Rouen.

<sup>9</sup>Styled *zona* in the Latin of the period.

<sup>10</sup>Legg, LGW, *English Coronation Records* (1901) 191.

<sup>11</sup>Compared to the amice of a bishop, the distinctive cap of the now obsolete grade of serjeants at law from whom the common law judges were recruited. Although this was a common enough item of dress in the thirteenth century, the coif came to be symbolic of membership of the Order of the Coif. It is believed to be derived from the sweating cap of the Knights Templar.

<sup>12</sup>As for a bishop.

<sup>13</sup>Comparable to the alb.

<sup>14</sup>As for a bishop.

<sup>15</sup>Comparable to the bishop's girdle.

<sup>16</sup>As by the bishop.

<sup>17</sup>Of the bishop.

<sup>18</sup>Comparable to the mitre of a bishop.

<sup>19</sup>*Provinciale* (1433) lib. iii. Ut clericalis, etc (London, 1505).

<sup>20</sup>Legg, J Wickham, *The Coronation of the Queen* (Church Historical Society xlii) 6.

<sup>21</sup>Hope, WH St John, MA, "The King's Coronation Ornaments" in *1 Ancestor* (April 1901) 127.

tartaryn"<sup>22</sup>. He was also to wear breeches, hosen, coat or cassock of crimson satin<sup>23</sup>, a surcoat of crimson with a hood, a mantle of crimson, and a cap of estate. For the anointing, he was divested of the outer robes as far as the crimson cassock, then invested with linen<sup>24</sup> gloves, "tabard of white tartaryn shaped in the manner of a dalmatic" (the *colobium sindonis*), linen coif<sup>25</sup>, long coat wrought with great images of gold<sup>26</sup>, hose and sandals, armils, and pall royal (*pallium regale*).

At the end of the service, the king was unarrayed to coat and shirt, then arrayed with hose, sandals, the other robes of estate similar to those in which he walked to church, but of purple and of finer material. He also wore the crown over his cap of estate, and carried a sceptre.

The seventeenth century was not a favourable time from the artistic standpoint, and the wardrobe furnished the new king with less taste and knowledge than did the goldsmiths. The succeeding period has been one of gradual degradation, so that each coronation has produced something a little worse, unless a nadir was reached with the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1838<sup>27</sup>.

George III's coronation robes, now in the Court Dress Collection, Kensington Palace, are the oldest surviving. The robe, surcoat and tipit required 36 yards of crimson velvet<sup>28</sup>, 36 yards of purple velvet, and 63 yards of open chain lace were required. For the two robes, two surcoats, and two tipits 116 yards of broad gold lace trimming were used. The two tipits, or stoles were both laced down before and round the bottom with two rows of the same gold lace and the same gold chain between the two rows. Length before and behind 14". George III's coronation also required a purple and a crimson silk sheet, each fringed all round with a rich gold fringe. A purple and a crimson velvet bag, each laced with broad gold lace, gold tassels and cords, were also used.

Over the crimson and scarlet surcoats (or coronation dress) the order of wear is firstly the *colobium sindonis*, then the *supertunica*, the royal stole, and then the *pallium regale*. The purple robe of state is donned last.

The following are the various items which have former, or still comprise, the coronation dress of the Sovereign.

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<sup>22</sup>*The Rutland Papers* (Camden Society, London 1842) vol 21 (Henry VII); Legg, LGW, *English Coronation Records* (1901) 219-239.

<sup>23</sup>Satin, with a glossy surface and dull back, is a closely-woven silk fabric showing much of the warp. Satinette, or satinet, is of a cotton warp, and woollen weft.

<sup>24</sup>A fabric woven from the fibres of flax. Cotton, or a cotton mix is now more usual.

<sup>25</sup>the distinctive cap of the now obsolete grade of serjeants at law from whom the common law judges were recruited.

<sup>26</sup>Similar to the tunicle or dalmatic.

<sup>27</sup>Hope, WH St John, MA, "The King's Coronation Ornaments" in *2 Ancestor* (Archibald Constable & Co, London, Jul 1902) 63.

<sup>28</sup>Velvet, the most elaborate of the plain weaves traditionally made from silk, has a short plush pile surface, and is used for the gowns of some office-holders, and for the hats of some doctors. Velveteen is a cotton or mixed cotton and silk imitation.

### Anointing Garment

A plain white garment, put on like a coat, but fastened at the back.

### Cap of Estate

This is thought to have been first worn by Edward III (1327-77), in place of his crown. It was, like the Cap of Maintenance, a badge of rank. It was placed under the crown by Henry VII, no doubt for reasons of comfort. Subsequently, all crowns and coronets have invariably been set on such a cap.

The cap as currently worn under the Crown of St Edward is purple velvet with an edging of white ermine<sup>29</sup>.

### Cap of Maintenance

This is a barret cap of fourteenth or fifteenth century type, and is of crimson velvet, lined and trimmed with ermine.

Although it may have been conferred on the Henry VII and Henry VIII by Pope Leo X, a cap of maintenance was apparently carried by Geoffrey de Lucy at the coronation of Richard I at the end of the twelfth century. The *Liber Regalis* (1307) requires a Cap of Estate to be used, but the meaning is probably that of maintenance rather than estate. Similar hats of dignity are borne before the Lord Mayor of London and other great dignitaries. According to a fifteenth-century source, the King's cap was carried by an earl or duke in the crown-wearing ceremonies of the Chapel Royal.

One of the insignia of royalty, it is carried at coronations, and at the State Opening of Parliament is borne on a white stick or wand by its hereditary bearer, the Marquess of Winchester, or an appointed deputy. It was not worn by Her Majesty The Queen.

### *Colobium Sindonis*

Also called the muslin undergarment, silk dalmatic, *tunica* or *talaris*. This is the first of the royal robes with which the Sovereign is invested during the coronation ceremony, and is immediately beneath the *supertunica*. It is a loose, sleeveless gown of white linen-lawn cambric<sup>30</sup> edged all round with a lace border, open at the sides and cut low at the neck. There are three small buttons, three sham buttons to match on the right, and is open on the left shoulder, and gathered in at the waist by a linen girdle. The word *sindonis* refers to the material, and means a fine cloth.

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<sup>29</sup>Ermine, the winter coat of the *Putorius erminea*, an animal of the weasel family. The fur, all white except for the black tip of the tail, is extensively used in robemaking, especially for official dress.

<sup>30</sup>A fine white linen fabric of light- or medium-weight plain batiste weave, usually of cotton, but also linen. Finished with a stiffer, brighter smoother finish.

It is symbolic of the derivation of royal authority from the people, being once worn by all classes of people, and is in form similar to a cleric's alb or surplice, or a bishop's rochet. It is thought to be derived from the robes of the Church rather than from those of the emperors, although they also wore the *colobium sindonis*. The Romans wore them, and it was later adopted as a liturgical vestment by the Church, but replaced subsequently by the dalmatic. The *colobium sindonis* resembles the sleeveless dress of a monk, but as it is worn under the vestments the alb is a more accurate comparison than the tunic<sup>31</sup>. The Confessor's robe (the so-called "coat of St Edward") was used from the time of Edward I (1272) till that of Charles I (1625).

The robe was newly made for the Queen in 1953, The Queen's robe is kept in the Tower of London.

### Coronation Dress of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

This replaced the crimson surcoat and purple surcoat. Commissioned October 1952 and designed by the couturier Norman Hartnell, LVO, of white satin, encrusted with thousands of tiny seed pearls and crystals, each in a small silver saucer, to create a lattice-work effect and to catch the effect of movement. The dress has a short sleeve, a fitted bodice, and a full skirt flaring out. The neckline, cut square over the shoulders, curves into a gentle heart shape in the centre.

There are three embroidered, jewel-encrusted bands run like garlands horizontally across the skirt. These bands are repeated round the hem of the skirt, and form a border for the bodice and sleeves. The gown is embroidered in pastel-coloured silks, pearls, diamonds, pale amethysts, golden crystals, gold and silver bullion and sequins for the details.

The embroidery depicts the emblems of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. There are Tudor roses (for England), thistles (Scotland), shamrock (Ireland), leeks (Wales), lotus (two different types, for India and Ceylon), protea (South Africa), wattle flower (Australia), wheat cotton and jute (Pakistan), maple leaf (Canada), fern (New Zealand) designs embroidered. It was made by a team of three seamstresses and six embroiders.

The all-white bouquet echoed the symbolic theme of unity with its orchids and lily-of-the-valley from England, more orchids from Wales, stephanotis from Scotland, and carnations from Scotland and the Isle of Man. On her way to her coronation, Her Majesty The Queen wore the dress with the George IV State Diadem, and on the way back with the Imperial State Crown. She also wore with the dress the diamond collet necklace made for Queen Victoria and the matching diamond drop earrings, with the collar and George of the Order of the Garter.

### Crimson Surcoat

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<sup>31</sup>Clinch, George, *English Costume* (Methuen & Co, London, 1909) 265-276.

This was replaced by the Coronation Dress for Her Majesty The Queen. It would be worn with the Parliamentary Robe for the first part of the coronation ceremony, to be replaced by the purple surcoat when the purple robe of state is donned.

George III's crimson surcoat was laced down before and round the bottom and round the back slit with two rows of broad gold lace and a gold chain between the two rows. The two hanging sleeves to the surcoat were laced round the top and down the slit and round the bottom with the same broad gold lace and gold chain.

### *Pallium Regale*

Also called the cloth-of-gold mantle, *pallium*, royal mantle, mantle, imperial mantle or robe royal of cloth-of-gold. It is a four-square cloth-of-gold<sup>32</sup> mantle decorated with silver coronets, fleurs-de-lis, purple and green thistles, green shamrocks, green leaves, and with imperial eagles in silver in the four corners. The lining is crimson silk. It is shaped like a cope, but with four corners instead of a rounded hemline.

Like the bishop's cope, this is derived from the imperial mantle or *χηλαμψο* (*chlamys*) of the Byzantine emperors<sup>33</sup>, and has been used since before the Conquest, or at least since Henry I (1100). The four corners signify that the four corners of the world are subject to the power of God, and no man can reign on earth who does not receive his authority from God. Eagles had been used in England since Saxon times, and signified the *imperium* (in effect, independence from the empire) possessed by the Kings of England.

While the *colobium sindonis*, the *supertunica* and the royal stole have liturgical equivalents, the pallium is predominantly lay in nature. Despite this, it was received by Her Majesty The Queen with the exhortation: "Receive this imperial robe, and the Lord your God endue you with knowledge and wisdom, with majesty and with power from on high, the Lord clothe you with the robe of righteousness, and with the garment of salvation. Amen". The imperial mantle however does resemble the back of a cut-down chasuble, and this may be the origin.

The present robe was made for George IV in 1821, and was used by George V, George VI and the Queen. Edward VII wore a new robe. The robe had been a perquisite of the Abbey authorities and passed into private ownership before being presented to the Crown in the early twentieth century. With the *supertunica* it weighs 23 lb. Queen Victoria's mantle, made for her, is now in the Museum of London. and measures 28" across the shoulders, 5" deep, and has a 2½" long gold bullion fringe. It is lined with rose-coloured silk. In the twentieth century

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<sup>32</sup>A tissue of gold threads, either alone, or interwoven with silk or wool.

<sup>33</sup>The *χηλαμψο*, was a cloak doubled or pinned over the shoulder, or the larger *ημματιον*, worn in winter, was toga-like, but much larger. It consisted of a woollen cloth oval three times the length of the wearer, worn halved along its length and draped in complicated folds. In the west it dwindled and became the stole. The *χηλαμψο*, derived from the *sagum* or *paludamentum*, differed from the ancient pallium only in size and in the way it was worn. This was by bringing together two corners of an oblong piece of cloth over the right shoulder and fastening them there by means of a clasp pin. It was a military cloak, but by the sixth century was accepted as Byzantine court dress.

the pall was kept in the headquarters of the Royal School of Needlework. It has fairly recently been transferred to the Tower of London.

### Parliamentary Robe

Also called the robe of crimson velvet Robe of State, it was worn on entry into Abbey with the Coronation Dress, diamond tiara and Collar of the Garter. Replaced after coronation with the purple robe of state. It is now used for the State Opening of Parliament.

In 1953 this robe was newly made. It consists of an ermine cape, decorated all over with small black Canadian ermine tails, and a long crimson velvet train. From the shoulder to the tip of the train the robe measures 18' 4½". At the foot the train is just under 4' wide. The train is fully lined with ermine and trimmed with ermine to a depth of several inches. It is decorated with two rows of gold lace with filigree gold work between and is bordered with ermine tails.

At George III's coronation the Parliamentary robe was laced down before and all round the 11' train with two rows of broad gold lace and a gold chain between the two rows.

### Purple Robe of State

Also called the robe of estate or imperial robe. It is worn at the end of the coronation service in place of the crimson parliamentary robe. It is emblematic of the imperial purple of the Caesars, adopted by the Byzantine emperors, and possibly the Holy Roman Emperors.

Made with a train of six yards of purple silk velvet, trimmed with Canadian ermine 5" wide on top, and fully lined with pure silk English satin. It was complete with embroidered ermine cape. The silk was from Lady Hart Dyke at Lullingstone Castle, Kent. This was made into yarn at a silk mill at Glemsford, Suffolk. Dyed in Staffordshire, it was woven on a hand loom at Braintree Mills, Essex, before being made up by Messrs Ede and Ravenscroft of Chancery Lane, and embroidered at the Royal School of Needlework. The gold thread is 90% silver, 2½ % gold. The embroidery represented sprays of olive branches and acorns, symbolic of peace and prosperity. It is worked entirely in gold purl.

It has not been used since the conclusion of the coronation service, the less formal crimson Parliamentary robe being used instead. At George III's coronation the purple robe of state was laced down before and all round the 11' train with two rows of broad gold lace and a gold chain between the two rows. Edward VII's coronation robe was similar to that of Her Majesty, being of purple silk velvet, with a long train heavily embroidered in gold, fully lined with the best ermine. Queen Mary's purple robe is embroidered in scrolling leaves and flowers.

### Purple Surcoat

This was replaced by the Coronation Dress for Her Majesty The Queen. It would be worn with the purple robe of state for the latter part of the coronation ceremony, having replaced the crimson surcoat when the Parliamentary robe was discarded.

George III's coronation robes included a gold brocade under-dress, now in the Court Dress Collection, Kensington Palace. The surcoat was laced down before and round the bottom and round the back slit with two rows of broad gold lace and a gold chain between the two rows. The two hanging sleeves to the surcoat were laced round the top and down the slit and round the bottom with the same broad gold lace and gold chain.

### Royal Stole

Also called the armilla, robe royal, pall of gold or simply the stole. This is a richly and heavily embroidered cloth-of-gold scarf, with gold and silver thread and set with jewels. It has a square panel at either end each with a red St George's Cross on a silver background. On a background of floral emblems of the Commonwealth<sup>34</sup> are the emblems of the four Evangelists<sup>35</sup>. There are also St Edward's Crowns, imperial eagles, and the dove of the Holy Ghost, as well as the flags of St Patrick, St Andrew and St George. The lining is of rose-coloured silk, and there are gold fringes at each end. The overall measurement is 5' by 3".

The royal stole was derived from the *λοροσ*, (*loros*) a jewelled scarf of the eastern emperors. This originated as the *stola* worn by noble ladies in the early Roman Empire. Senators and consuls were required to wear a coloured pall or scarf over the alb and *paenula* by the sumptuary Codex of Theodosius (382). Shortly afterwards it became a distinctive badge of episcopal status. The *Liber Regalis* (1307) requires its use although it has only been used since James I. The stole as a liturgical vestment is confined to the higher orders of the Christian ministry- deacons, priests and bishops. It is worn over the alb or surplice when performing religious functions. Although now widely used in the Anglican Church, it was replaced at the time of the Reformation with the scarf, a broad band of black silk. While the *colobium sindonis* resembles the surplice, which may now be worn by laymen, and the *supertunica* the dalmatic of the deacon, the stole as worn over both shoulders is proper only the higher orders of priest and bishop.

The present royal stole was newly made for the Queen in 1953, and presented by some of the Commonwealth countries of which she was Queen. It is kept in the Tower of London. It is worn uncrossed (like a bishop), but over the dalmatic.

### Supertunica

This is the second robe put on, after the *colobium sindonis*. Also called the gold surcoat, dalmatic, close pall of cloth-of-gold, or *tunica palmata*<sup>36</sup>. It is a long coat of cloth-of-gold,

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<sup>34</sup>The white lotus of Ceylon, the lotus of India, the fern of New Zealand, the wattle of Australia, the maple leaf of Canada, the shamrock of Ireland, the leek for Wales, the thistle of Scotland, and Tudor roses for England. The leek was used for Wales as the customary daffodil would not show on gold.

<sup>35</sup>The winged eagle of St Matthew, the winged lion of St Mark, the winged ox of St Luke, and the golden eagle of St John, and the keys of St Peter.

<sup>36</sup>So called because of the design of palm trees. This was the formal dress of generals celebrating a triumph. The *tunica laticlavia* indicated senatorial rank, and had a double stripe

reaching to the ankles, and lined with rose-coloured silk, having wide flowing sleeves. It is trimmed with gold lace, and fastened by a sword belt (also called girdle or cincture) presented by The Girdlers Company 1953. It is woven with a design of green palm trees between pink roses, green shamrock, and purple thistle.

The *supertunica* is derived from the full dress uniform of a consul, and the later *σακκος* (*sakkos*) of the Byzantine emperors. However, as it has been worn since at least the time of Edward the Confessor<sup>37</sup>, and the *σακκος* was only appropriated by the patriarchs in the twelfth century, the extent to which it was in origin a sacerdotal robe is disputed. The *σακκος* was originally a penitential garment, and became a peculiarly solemn vestment for patriarchs in the thirteenth century, and for all archbishops by the fifteenth century.

The dalmatic was also the dress proper to the order of deacons at Rome, from the time of its introduction by Pope Sylvester I (314-335), and later to deacons elsewhere. Later, it was conferred upon abbots, and finally to kings and emperors for wear at their coronations and when solemnly assisting at mass<sup>38</sup>. The *Liber Regalis* (1307) requires its use. George III's robe is now in the Court Dress Collection.

The robe was made for George IV in 1821, though not worn by him, and was used in 1911, 1937 and 1953. The robe last used passed through the same ownership as the *pallium regale*, after being made in 1821. It was used by George V, George VI and the Queen. The robe had been a prerequisite of the Abbey authorities and passed into private ownership before being presented to the Crown in the early twentieth century. It is patterned in green palm leaves, interspersed with pink roses, green shamrocks, purple thistles. The *supertunica* is kept in the Tower of London.

**Biography:**<sup>39</sup> Noel Cox is a Barrister of the High Court of New Zealand where he specialises in commercial litigation. He also teaches part-time as a Lecturer in Commercial Law at the Auckland Institute of Technology. He is studying at the University of Auckland, writing a PhD in political studies (with the rather painful title, "The Evolution of the New Zealand monarchy: The Recognition of an Autochthonous Polity in New Zealand"). In his spare time- when he has any- his is Vice Chairman of The Monarchist League of New Zealand Inc, a long-standing member of The Heraldry Society (New Zealand Branch) Inc., and more recently, a member of the Research Committee for the Almanach de Gotha. Incidentally, he also possess a South African coat of arms, granted 14 March 1997 (no 2906).

Articles of an heraldic nature which he has published recently include-

"Royal Dukedoms and other titles" (1999) 13 (2) Lyrebird, the Official Journal of the Armorial and Heraldry Society of Australasia Inc. 9-13

"The Honours prerogative in New Zealand" (1999) 70 New Zealand Armorialist 6-22

"The Law of Arms in New Zealand" (1998) 18 (2) New Zealand Universities Law Review 225-256

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of purple down the front. The *tunica angusticlavia* of equestrians had a narrow purple stripe running from each shoulder downwards. The tunic came into common use in this form.

<sup>37</sup>Or at least, in its "modern" form, from Edward II.

<sup>38</sup>Clinch, George, *English Costume* (Methuen & Co, London, 1909) 265-276.

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"The Protection of the flag, royal crown, and other royal and national emblems" (1998) 33  
New Zealand Armiger 6-11  
"The New Zealand Coat of Arms" (1998) 33 New Zealand Armiger 20-23  
and numerous others