

Intriguing treasures from the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection

To celebrate its recent recognition under the MLA's Designation Scheme as a 'pre-eminent collection of international importance', here are our top-10 intriguing treasures from the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection, cared for by Historic Royal Palaces at Kensington Palace. As well as being beautiful objects in their own right, they are made more fascinating through the stories they have to tell about the past - and the colourful, royal characters who wore them!

NB: these are just a selection of the photographs available for media use which, along with more detailed information about each, are available on request: press@hrp.org.uk

1. Queen Victoria's underwear



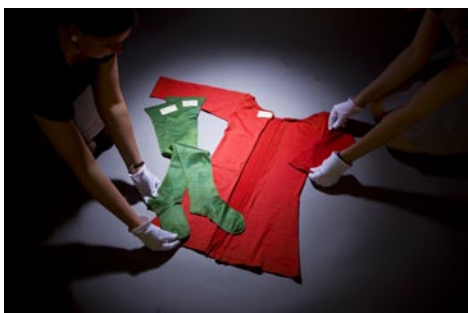
- These fine linen chemise and split drawers were worn by Queen Victoria at the end of the 19th century. Both are embroidered with a crown, 'VR' and a number so they could be kept track of when sent to the laundry.
- The chemise has tiny buttons to fasten the shoulders - making it easy for her attendants to slip it on.
- There are a few examples of royal underwear in the collection but they are rare - they are thought to have survived as the Queen's clothes were divided up after her death and distributed amongst the Royal Household as a memento.
- They were purchased at auction by Historic Royal Palaces in 2009.

2. Diana's tweed honeymoon suit



- This tweed sports suit, worn for the famous photo shoot in the grounds of Balmoral, was made for Princess Diana's honeymoon by designer Bill Pashley. Two copies were made and Diana chose the larger one as there was more room in the shoulders for shooting.
- At Diana's request no more copies of the suit were made, so it remains one of the few outfits associated with Diana in the public domain that is not an evening dress. It also draws on the royal family's tradition of wearing tweed in the country.
- The suit was generously donated by Bill Pashley to the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection, along with original sketches and fabric samples.

3. William III's stockings and vest



- These bright red and green knitted silk stockings and vest were worn by William III and are extremely rare examples of 17th century royal dress.
- They have a design of a little flower, surmounted by a crown worked in at the ankle, and a 'W' in the cuff at the top.
- He is generally known as a serious monarch and soldier and it is fascinating to see that, informally, the King must have looked very stylish in his brightly coloured stockings. The vest in particular gives a wonderful indication of just how small William III was.

4. George III's waistcoat



- This turquoise silk damask waistcoat that is probably one of the last items of clothing King George III wore before his death in January 1821.
- It is one of the earliest examples of costume adapted for illness - in the last months of his life pieces of fabric were inserted into the sleeves to aid mobility and make dressing the King easier.
- It was first acquired by the Rev James Drake, Vicar of Warmfield in Yorkshire, a few months after the king's death. A letter of 19 July 1821 from Rev William Monsell, a chaplain to King George IV, describes obtaining it for Rev. Drake.
- It was bought at auction by Historic Royal Palaces for the collection in 1995.

5. Edward VIII's safari suit



- This safari suit - consisting of jacket, shorts, helmet, boots and boot trees - was designed by Edward VIII (known as the Duke of Windsor, post-abdication) and worn when in Africa in the late 1920s.
- "When in East Africa I designed a special type of safari shorts. These were made of thick khaki drill which could be worn long, in the bush, to protect the knees from long grasses and thorny under brush, or could be buttoned up above the knee for the sake of coolness on the march in more open country" - A Family Album, by H.R.H. The Duke of Windsor
- The Duke was known as a clothes horse - with a legendary sense of style - and travelled with 40 tin trunks.
- This unique example of royal sporting wear was added to the collection in 2004.

6. Queen Mum's toile



- This is a toile - a full size 3-D working pattern - for the Queen Mother's coronation dress, made of cotton and painted with an indication of the rose, thistle and shamrock embroidery.
- It would have been used to fit the Queen for the final dress, and was also sent on to the embroidery workshops at the Royal School of Needlework to give the craftspeople there information about how the embroidery design was to be realised.
- The dress Queen Elizabeth wore on 12 May 1937 was described in contemporary press as being of "'princesse' style with a square décolleté and slashed sleeves trimmed with old lace". It was embroidered in gold and diamanté with emblems of the British Isles and the Dominions.
- It was designed by Mme Handley-Seymour, whose extravagant and theatrical creations shaped the style of 20th century royal women, and the collection also includes original sketches.

7. Herald's tabard



- Having changed little in design and shape since the Middle Ages, the front, back and sleeves of this herald's tabard are embroidered with the Royal Coat of Arms; along with the three gold lions on a red background of England, the red lion of Scotland on a gold background and the stringed harp of Ireland on a blue background.
- Since 1484 heralds have made royal or state proclamations, as part of the Royal Household.
- This one was worn by Sir Gerald Woods Wollaston, appointed Richmond Herald in 1919, and Garter Principal King of Arms, the highest office in the College of Arms, in 1930.
- They are still now responsible for organising the procession and service of the Sovereign and Knights Companion of the Order of the Garter, and the state opening of Parliament.

8. Princess Ena's rice confetti



- This silk and gilt cone of rice confetti, with the initials 'VE' adorning the side, is thought to have belonged to a bridesmaid of Queen Victoria Eugenia (known as Queen Ena) and carried at the wedding.
- The confetti is still inside as tragedy struck the wedding procession when an anarchist threw a bomb at the royal carriage and an outrider riding alongside the new bride and groom was killed.
- Ena was Queen Victoria's grand daughter and daughter to Princess Beatrice who resided at Kensington. Ena herself lived at Kensington Palace for a short while before her wedding.
- The confetti was purchased at auction by Historic Royal Palaces for the collection.

9. Princess Pat's coronet



- This coronet was worn by Princess Patricia to her uncle King Edward VII's coronation in 1902 and was supplied by Garrards, the Royal Jewellers.
- This form of coronet - comprising a purple velvet cap and a hall marked silver gilt cirlet with two crosses patée, two strawberry leaves and four fleurs de lys - was used between 1662 and 1917 for the sons and daughters of sons of the Sovereign.
- Princess Patricia was the daughter of Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, the third of Queen Victoria's sons, and chose a commoner rather than a husband of royal blood - marrying naval Commander (later Admiral) The Hon. Alexander Ramsay, and voluntarily relinquishing her title on her wedding day.

10. Silver court mantua



- This silk brocade court mantua with petticoats from the 1760s is woven with a design of stripes and scrolling garlands in silver and trimmed with sparkling silver lace.
- This bizarre fashion for enormously-wide dresses fossilized into a kind of uniform that all the ladies at the Georgian court were required to wear - over whalebone hoops and weighed down with heavy silver thread!
- It is believed to have belonged to Mary, Marchioness of Rockingham, married to Charles, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and probably worn when her husband became Prime Minister.
- The dress was generously donated to the collection by the Art Fund in 2007.