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**Taken into State care:** 1906 (Ownership)

**Last reviewed:** 2012

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# EDINBURGH CASTLE – HONOURS OF SCOTLAND



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.

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# EDINBURGH CASTLE – HONOURS OF SCOTLAND AND CROWN JEWELS

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Honours of Scotland comprise the Crown of Scotland, Sceptre and Sword of State (with its scabbard and belt). Dating from the late 15th/early 16th century, they are the oldest suite of sovereign regalia in the United Kingdom, and amongst the oldest in Christendom. They are marvellous representations of Scottish and Italian Renaissance craftsmanship. The enlargement of the Sceptre (1536) and the creation of the present Crown (1540) are tangible illustrations of James V's determination to propagate the overarching power and dignity of the Scottish sovereign – his 'princelie majestie' – to his subjects and foreigners alike, in much the same way as did his patronage of fine art, architecture, scholarship, literature and music.

The Honours were first used together at the coronation of Mary Queen of Scots in 1543, and last used as coronation regalia at the coronation of Charles II in 1651. Thereafter, they continued to represent the absent sovereign at Parliament. They were locked away in the Crown Room in Edinburgh Castle at the Act of Union in 1707, and rediscovered in 1818. They have remained on secure display ever since, except for the duration of World War II.

The Honours of Scotland are securely held in the Crown Room, specially built for them in 1615/16. The large Crown Chest probably dates from that time also. The Honours have since been joined by other royal regalia and jewels of a personal nature – the Wand (found in the Chest in 1818), the Stewart Jewels (presented by William IV in 1830) and the Lorne Jewels (bequeathed by Princess Louise in 1939) – and by the Stone of Destiny (see separate Statement), which was returned from Westminster Abbey in 1996 after an absence from Scotland of 700 years.

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## CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

### Historical Overview

**574:** First reference to a royal sceptre, by Cumméne 'the White', seventh abbot of Iona, in connection with the inauguration by St Columba of Aédán mac Gabhráin as king of the Scots of Dál Riata.

**1097:** King Edgar is depicted on his seal wearing a crown, and holding a sceptre and sword.

**1157:** David I is depicted in a posthumous charter holding an orb in place of a sceptre.

**1182:** William I 'the Lion' is presented with a golden rose by Pope Lucius II.

**1296:** Edward I of England strips John I (Balliol) of his crown, sceptre and sword and takes them, together with the Stone of Destiny, to England, where they are subsequently lost or destroyed.

**1306:** Robert I (Bruce) is enthroned at Scone with a new circlet of gold.

**1329:** Pope John XXII formally recognises the right of kings of Scots to be formally crowned and anointed, hitherto denied them on account of English opposition.

**1331:** David II, Robert I's heir, is formally crowned and anointed at Scone, the first king of Scots to be so enthroned.

**1484:** Coin evidence (a silver groat) indicates that the crown, hitherto a simple open circlet, has by now become an 'imperial' crown (ie, closed with arches).

**1486:** James III is presented with a golden rose by Pope Innocent IV.

**1491:** James IV is presented with a golden rose by Pope Innocent VIII.

**1494:** Tradition has it that the Sceptre was presented to James IV by Pope Alexander VI. However, it is possible that the Sceptre was presented with the golden rose in 1491.

**1503:** James IV is depicted in the *Book of Hours*, made to commemorate his marriage, wearing an 'imperial' crown. Also, first mention of a crown bonnet.

**1507:** The Sword of State is presented to James IV by Pope Julius II. A consecrated, or blessed, hat is presented at the same time.

**1532:** The bonnet is renewed and the crown repaired by Thomas Wood, goldsmith.

**1536:** The Sceptre is lengthened and embellished for James V by Adam Leys, an Edinburgh goldsmith, perhaps in preparation for his first marriage, to Princess Madeleine de Valois. This enhancement is formally acknowledged when the Crest above the Royal Arms is amended, the Sceptre replacing the Saltire in the lion's left paw.

**1540:** The Crown, reported as broken in 1539, is refashioned to its present form for James V by John Mosman, Edinburgh goldsmith. James wears it for the first time at the coronation of his second wife, Mary of Guise, in **Holyrood Abbey**. The purple velvet bonnet, made by Thomas Arthur, has not survived, but its four delicate ornaments have.

**1543:** Mary Queen of Scots is crowned in **Stirling Castle**, the first sovereign to be enthroned with all three Honours.

**1560:** Queen Mary receives a golden rose from Pope Pius IV.

**1567:** James VI is crowned with the Honours in the Kirk of the Holy Rude, Stirling.

**1571–73:** Substitute Honours are used at sittings of Parliament, because Edinburgh Castle is in the hands of the supporters of the exiled Queen Mary.

**1615–16:** The Crown Room is created, part of the wholesale remodelling of the Palace in preparation for James VI's 'hamecoming' in 1617. The present Crown Chest is very probably also made at this date.

**1633:** Charles I is crowned in **Holyrood Abbey** with the Honours.

**1638–39:** The Honours are taken to Dalkeith Castle for safe-keeping during the conflict between Charles I and those supporting the National Covenant.

**1650:** The Honours are removed from the castle, possibly to **Stirling Castle**, for safe-keeping, prior to Oliver Cromwell besieging the castle.

**1651:** Charles II is crowned with the Honours at Scone. Following the ceremony, the Honours, unable to be brought back to Edinburgh Castle, are taken to mighty Dunnottar Castle, Kincardineshire, seat of the Earl Marischal.

**1652–60:** The Honours are smuggled out of Dunnottar and buried under the floor of nearby Kinneff Kirk. On Charles II's return to the throne, the Honours are returned to Edinburgh Castle: all except the Sword belt and Crown cushion.

**1687:** James VII has the crown bonnet changed from purple to red.

**1707:** Following the adjourning of Parliament after the passing of the Act of Union with England, the Honours are returned to the castle and locked away in the Crown Room. Article XXIV of the Treaty of Union specifically states that the Honours shall 'continue to be kept as they are within ... Scotland ... in all times coming, notwithstanding the Union.'

**1790:** The Sword Belt is discovered hidden in a wall at Barras, near Dunnottar Castle, by Sir David Ogilvy.

**1794:** Lieutenant-Governor Major Drummond briefly opens the Crown Room in search of old Parliamentary records but, because he lacks the necessary royal warrant, does not break open the Crown Chest.

**1818:** Walter Scott and others, with a royal warrant from the Prince Regent, officially break into the Crown Room, break open the Crown Chest and there rediscover the Honours, together with a wand, or baton of office. A second royal warrant appoints the Commissioners for the Keeping of the Regalia (Keeper of the Great Seal, Keeper of the Privy Seal, His Majesty's Advocate, the Lord Clerk Register and the Lord Justice Clerk). Scott's friend Adam Ferguson is appointed Keeper of the Regalia, with a 'grace and favour' flat above the Crown Room.

**1819:** The public are invited to inspect the Honours in the Crown Room, on payment of an admission fee.

**1822:** George IV (the former Prince Regent) formally visits Scotland, and the Honours are taken to the **Palace of Holyroodhouse** for the duration of his stay.

**1830:** The Stewart Jewels, bequeathed to George III in 1807 by Prince Henry, Cardinal York, the last Stuart claimant to the throne of Great Britain, are entrusted by William IV into the safe-keeping of the Keeper of the Regalia for display in the Crown Room.

**1837:** The Turkish Ambassador is denied entry to the Crown Room because he does not have an admission ticket.

**1842:** The Honours are temporarily removed to an adjacent room so that they may be better viewed by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

**1848:** The present panelling is installed in the Crown Room by the Edinburgh firm of Charles Trotter, cabinetmakers and joiners.

**1871:** The Honours are redisplayed behind a cage of ornamental bars, for their better security.

**1892:** The Sword Belt is returned to the Crown Room from Barras Castle, Kincardineshire, by Rev. Samuel Ogilvy Baker, a descendant of Sir David Ogilvy.

**1905:** The old Crown Cushion is presented to the State by Sir Patrick Keith Murray, who states that it had been retained at Dunnottar by his ancestor, Sir William Keith, 9th Earl Marischal, after the Honours had been smuggled out in 1652.

**1911:** The Sword is taken to St Giles' Cathedral for the official opening of the Thistle Chapel. Gyp, the Crown Room dog, dies and is buried in the Dog Cemetery below St Margaret's Chapel.

**1939:** Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's fourth daughter, bequeaths the Lorne Jewels, presented to her by Clan Campbell on the occasion of her marriage to the Marquis of Lorne in 1871, to the Scottish nation, and they are added to the display in the Crown Room. Shortly thereafter (1 September), the Crown Jewels are taken down to the basement of the Palace to protect them from aerial bombardment by German planes.

**1942:** The Honours are secretly taken out of the basement and buried in David's Tower, where they remain for the duration of WWII.

**1953:** The Honours are presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the National Service of Thanksgiving in St Giles' Cathedral that follows the Coronation in Westminster Abbey.

**1971:** The Sword of State is used for the first time at the ceremonial installation of a Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Scotland's premier Order of Chivalry, held in the Thistle Chapel, in St Giles' Cathedral.

**1980s:** The post of Warden of Regalia is abolished.

**1987:** The Sword of State is used alone for the final time, in St Giles' Cathedral for the tercentenary anniversary celebrations of the Order of the Thistle. Thereafter, in view of its parlous condition, its ceremonial role is restricted to National Services of Thanksgiving.

**1993:** Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth formally opens the Honours of the Kingdom exhibition, including the extensively refurbished Crown Room and redisplayed Honours. The present Crown Cushion is made specially for the occasion. The Crown Chest is relocated from the Crown Room to an adjacent exhibition space and displayed alongside one of the original padlocks, broken in 1818.

**1999:** The Crown is formally taken to the State Opening of the Scottish Parliament, the first in the modern era.

## Archaeological Overview

N/A

## Architectural/Artistic Overview

**The Honours of Scotland:** The Honours of Scotland comprise the Crown of Scotland, Sceptre and Sword of State together with its scabbard and belt. They are marvellous representations of Scottish and Italian Renaissance craftsmanship. The enlargement of the Sceptre (1536) and the creation of the present Crown (1540) are tangible illustrations of James V's determination to propagate the overarching power and dignity of the Scottish sovereign – his 'princelie majestie' – to his subjects and foreigners alike, in much the same way as did his patronage of fine art, architecture, scholarship, literature and music.

**The Crown of Scotland:** The Crown was created to its present form by John Mosman, a member of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths in Edinburgh. He took delivery of the former crown, retained its four arches, 20 gemstones and 68 pearls, but created everything else, purchasing more gemstones and pearls and using Scottish gold obtained from Crawford Moor in Upper Clydesdale.

The circlet, or band, with its diamond-encrusted decorative strip, has ten fleurs de lis and ten crosses fleury above. The band itself is encrusted with 42 gemstones in claw settings, interspersed with 22 large oriental pearls. The arches are each decorated with three gold and red-enamelled oak leaves. At the point where they meet is an ornament of four chased gold leaves, which form the base of the orb and cross. The gold orb, which is of French craftsmanship (James V may have purchased it in Paris in 1537), is blue-enamelled and spangled with small stars which have been left uncoloured. Horizontal and vertical bands enclose the upper part of the orb and at one time four jewels hung from the horizontal band. Above the orb is a gold cross with leafy ornaments on the arms, set off with black enamel. In the centre of the cross at the front is a large amethyst acquired by Mosman. At the foot of the cross on the back is a small rectangular panel with the letters IR5 (for Jacobus Rex V). The cross is further enriched with eight oriental pearls held in place with small gold rosettes.

**The Sceptre:** The silver-gilt Sceptre is a splendid piece of joint Italian–Scottish craftsmanship. However, it is not absolutely certain which elements belong to which phase of creation (Italian/1490s or Scottish/1536), though Leys appears to have taken moulds of the Italian-made finial, cast the work anew in solid silver, and added another section of hexagonal shaft.

The Sceptre as it exists today comprises a handle attached to two hexagonal lengths of rod and topped with an elaborate finial. The lower length of rod is the original Italian section, superbly engraved on three of its six sides with urns, oak leaves and grotesque masks (the last, a High Renaissance motif, is also to be seen on corbels in James IV's Great Hall: see separate Statement). The upper length of the rod is engraved with thistles and fleurs de lis and bears the initials IR5 at the top. The lower part of the finial has three stylised dolphins with their tails curling around applied flower shapes, and between them three small human figures, each under a Gothic canopy, representing the Virgin and Child, St James the Great, and St Andrew. Above them is the crystal ball, held in place by three

silver strips that come together at the top to support a pierced knop. The finial terminates with another small golden globe surmounted by a pearl.

**The Sword of State:** The Sword of State, together with its scabbard and belt, are craftsmanship of the Italian High Renaissance. Unlike the Sceptre, whose creator remains anonymous, we know who made the Sword: the Italian cutler Domenico da Sutri. Da Sutri is known to have made two other ceremonial swords (with their scabbards and belts) for Pope Julius II that likewise survive; one was presented to Ladislaus II of Hungary in 1509, and the other was a gift to the Swiss Cantons in 1511. Both are almost identical to the Scottish Sword of State, but the former (now in the Magyar Nemzeti Museum, Budapest), because it is in almost pristine condition, is a valuable reminder of what our own somewhat careworn Sword, scabbard and belt looked like when presented in 1507. All three swords are liberally adorned with Pope Julius II's arms – the oak tree, oak leaves and acorns – symbols of the Risen Christ, plus the dolphins, symbolising Christ's Church.

The Sword's steel blade, 991mm long and 44mm wide, is etched on both sides, one with the figure of St Peter, the other with St Paul. Beneath each are etched the words JULIUS II PONT MAX...(Julius II Supreme Pontiff...); these were originally inlaid in gold. The silver-gilt handle, 387mm long, and all of repoussé work, has dolphin-shaped quillons 438mm across. The upper part of the handle, decorated with oak leaves and acorns, terminates in a circular pommel that once had inset blue-enamelled plates. At the bottom of the handle two stylised oak leaves overlap the blade.

The sword scabbard, 1128mm long and 50mm wide, is made of wood, covered in dark red velvet and mounted with silver-gilt repoussé work. On the front at the mouth is an enamelled panel engraved with an oak tree and, above, crossed keys linked by a tasselled cord, surmounted by the papal tiara. The remaining scabbard length is divided into three sections by two roundels decorated with blue-enamelled plates. The three areas are filled with elaborate decoration of acorns, oak leaves, dolphins and grotesque masks. Fittings for the sword belt are visible on the reverse.

The sword belt, 1499mm long, is of woven silk and gold thread. This too features the personal arms of Pope Julius II – the oak tree, leaves and acorns – repeated in shields along the whole length; the shields were originally decorated in bright red, as the Hungarian belt clearly shows. The Hungarian belt also shows that the buckle holes were all originally decorated with silver-gilt sprays of oak leaves and acorns. The belt is fastened by a massive silver-gilt buckle with hinged prongs.

### **The Other Regalia**

*The Wand:* The fourth object discovered in the Crown Chest in 1818 is a silver-gilt rod. It is now described as a wand rather than a mace (Walter Scott speculated that the object was the Lord Treasurer's Mace, first mentioned in 1616), which would probably have had a far more bulbous head. The silver-gilt wand, 1 metre long and reinforced by a wooden core, is topped by an oval-faceted globe of rock crystal surmounted by a cross. The rod bears the unknown maker's mark 'FG'. It may conceivably have been a baton of office of one of the officials responsible for locking the Honours away in 1707.



*The Stewart Jewels:* There are three items associated with the royal house of Stewart: a ruby ring, the St Andrew Jewel of the Order of the Thistle, and the Collar and Great George of the Order of the Garter. Bequeathed to George III by Prince Henry, Cardinal York, last Stewart claimant to the throne of Great Britain, at his death in 1807, they are important survivals, intrinsically superbly crafted and imbued with historical significance, having been personal regalia associated with James VII, James VIII (the 'Old Pretender') and Prince Charles Edward (the 'Young Pretender'). Indeed, the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle was founded (possibly re-founded) by James VII in 1687. Tradition has it that the ring was that worn by Charles I at his English Coronation in 1625.

The ring has a large, thin ruby at its centre, engraved with the cross of St George and foiled behind to provide added depth of colour. The ruby is surrounded by 26 small diamonds set in silver, whilst the head is polished gold engraved with scroll work. The shank is adjustable to fit fingers of all sizes.

The St Andrew Jewel was made by an unknown London goldsmith in 1687/88. It consists of an oval chalcedony cut with a cameo of St Andrew and his cross with a thistle below the figure. The cameo is surrounded by 12 large rose-cut diamonds with a larger diamond set on the ribbon loop. The cameo's reverse has an enamelled oval circumscribed with the Order's motto: NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT ('No one assails me with impunity') in gold letters. The oval opens to reveal a miniature portrait of Princess Louise of Stolberg, Prince Charles Edward's wife. Probably the miniature formerly showed Mary of Modena, James VII's second queen. Conservation work in 2005 revealed a monogram 'JD' etched onto the back of the miniature, with the date 1774.

The Collar and Great George of the Order of the Garter, England's premier Order of Chivalry, may be of French workmanship. The Collar is of gold and enamel forming 21 garters, each containing a red rose and engraved with the Order's motto: HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE ('The shame be his who thinks ill of it'). The gold, enamelled Great George is in the form of St George on horseback slaying the dragon with his spear. The obverse is studded with 64 rose-cut and 57 table-cut diamonds.

*The Lorne Jewels:* The necklace, locket and pendant were a gift from Clan Campbell to Princess Louise on the occasion of her marriage to John Campbell, Marquis of Lorne (later the 9th Duke of Argyll) in 1871. Of all the treasures in the Crown Room, these are the most admired by the visiting public. However, they are of no relevance either to the castle, the sovereign regalia or the wider royal history of Scotland, and it must be questioned why they should continue to be displayed therein.

The jewels certainly sparkle. The necklace drips with 190 diamonds connected by 13 diamond-encrusted pearls, the locket has a large oriental pearl set amidst two rows of 20 diamonds, whilst the pear-shaped pendant is attached to the locket by a double sprig of bog myrtle (the Campbell plant badge) and encrusted with sapphires on a pavé of diamonds to form the Galley of Lorne. The Argyll motto NE OBLIVISCARIS ('Do not forget'), composed of diamond chips, surrounds the Galley.

**Other royal regalia:** Two other items, not on display in the Crown Room (nor indeed in the care of Historic Scotland), merit mention here because they complete the suite of royal regalia that have been handed down through the generations. Both are in the possession of the National Museums Scotland.

*The Ampulla:* This was especially made for the Coronation of Charles I in 1633, possibly by James Denniestoun, deacon. The golden vessel held the sacred anointing oil.

*The Crown Cushion*

### Social Overview

The Honours of Scotland are no longer in formal use as a suite, except during the National Service of Thanksgiving (see 'Spiritual overview'). However, the Crown alone is ceremoniously taken to the State Opening of the Scottish Parliament, held every four years.

The Honours and the other regalia remain the principal treasures on display in Edinburgh Castle, viewed by over one million people each year.

### Spiritual Overview

The Honours themselves, although no longer used in coronation rituals, still have a role to play in the acclamation of a new sovereign, at the National Service of Thanksgiving, held in St Giles' Cathedral, in Edinburgh's High Street, as soon as practicable following the Coronation itself in Westminster Abbey. The first such National Service was held in June 1953, when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was presented with the Honours.

The Stewart Jewels, Lorne Jewels and Wand have no observable spiritual associations.

### Aesthetic Overview

The Crown Room, with its display of royal and personal regalia, as well as the Stone of Destiny, provides a suitably intimate and enclosed environment, helping to evoke in visitors an air of history and mystery. However, the present eclectic display can be confusing to them. The chunk of rock that is the Stone of Destiny sits uneasily with the ancient Honours, glistening and studded with gemstones. Indeed, the Honours themselves more often take second place, in the minds of most visitors, to the far more glittering Stewart and Lorne Jewels in their adjacent wall-mounted case. Aesthetically, as well as historically, the present display is far from satisfactory, and it would be an infinite improvement if the truly national sovereign regalia (the Honours, the Crown Chest, the padlock – and probably the wand also) were displayed on their own. The Stone of Destiny merits special treatment elsewhere in the castle, where it could more powerfully and meaningfully help tell the story of royal inaugurations in Scotland.

### What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

What became of the other sovereign regalia, such as the various golden roses, and the blessed hat presented with the Sword of State in 1507?

Who placed the Wand in the Chest in 1707, and why?

What happened to the original copy of the letter of Charles II to the Dowager Countess of Marischall of Dunnottar Castle, thanking her for her role in saving the Honours?

## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Key Points

The Honours of Scotland are the oldest sovereign regalia in the United Kingdom, and amongst the oldest in Christendom.

The Crown of Scotland, created from the former crown by James V in 1540, is entirely of Scottish craftsmanship. The Sceptre (1491 or 1494) and Sword of State, scabbard and belt (1507) are principally treasures from the Italian High Renaissance. All are masterly works of art in their own right, as well as extraordinarily potent symbols of Scotland's history.

The Honours still retain an important ceremonial use. They are presented to the new sovereign at the National Service of Thanksgiving that follows the Coronation itself, and the Crown of Scotland is presented to the sovereign at the State Opening of the Scottish Parliament, held every four years.

The other regalia in the Crown Room, whilst lacking any formal state role, are without question precious in their own right.

## ADDENDA

### Associated Properties

*Some other medieval state crowns:* Austrian Imperial Crown and Imperial Crown of the Holy Roman Empire (Hofburg Palace, Vienna); Bohemian Crown (Prague Castle); Danish Crown (Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen); Holy Crown of Hungary (Hungarian Parliament Building); Iron Crown of Lombardy (Monza Cathedral)

### Keywords

crown; sceptre; sword; scabbard; belt; regalia; jewels; coronation

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