

Addendum 1

The Wilton Diptych

The publication in 2012 of the *Inventory of the English Royal Treasure of Richard II* provides access to a series of detailed contemporary descriptions of the existing gold and jewel-set medieval crowns of English kings. The Wilton Diptych accurately depicts three of these crowns as worn by Richard II, who commissioned the Diptych and two former kings then royal saints, Edmund the Martyr (841-870) and Edward the Confessor king from 1042 until 1066. (Plate 1)

The earliest crown is that worn by Edmund the Martyr (Plate 2) which, as one would expect, is the simplest in design, this king's slippers survived to be part of the Regalia used at the coronation of Richard II, on this pictorial evidence so did his crown.

Edward the Confessor wears his Coronation Crown, (Plates 3, 3a, 3b) a crown that by his special request was to be used to crown all future sovereigns and never leave Westminster Abbey, a crown that survived to be used with additions and alterations at the coronation of Charles I only to be melted under Cromwell and the Diptych sold from the Royal collection.

If Edward the Confessor is wearing his Coronation Crown then the crown worn by the kneeling Richard II (Plates 4, 4a) is the Crown of State, each sovereign ordering a new State Crown for both husband and wife for use after their coronation. The Crown of State is depicted as being set with pearls below the circlet, a curious and probably uncomfortable fashion, yet a feature still to be seen on the much altered but originally matching surviving crown of his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, now in the Schatzkammer at the Residenz in Munich. (Plate 5) Uniquely and as a further important indicator regarding the accuracy of the painting both crowns have unusual decorated gadrooned or milled edges to their matching gold mounts.

These three different crowns are so accurately depicted in the Diptych that it is possible to suggest that the artist be he English or European painted them in London for Richard II as the Coronation Crown of St Edward was never allowed to leave the Abbey, much less the country.

My interest regarding the jewels in the left hand panel of the Diptych was aroused by the claw-mounted sapphire set into a ring held between the finger and thumb of Edward the Confessor. (Plates 6, 6a) This ring was reputedly taken from his coffin in Westminster Abbey and later exhibited as a Holy Relic by the monks at the Abbey until Dissolution under Henry VIII.

Addendum 2 shows a portrait of Henry VIII circa 1542 in which he traditionally and correctly wears a ruby Coronation Ring on the index finger of his right hand, (Part 2, Plate 2). This ring may have been made from the recut Regale ruby taken by Henry VIII from the shrine of Thomas a Becket being substituted for his original coronation ring. On the index finger of his left hand he wears a sapphire mounted in an almost identical Holbein setting a concept that I shall detail in Addendum 6. The claw set cabochon sapphire on his little finger is possibly from the Abbey at Glastonbury. As the portrait is dated after the Dissolution in 1540 the claw set small sapphire is a possible choice for the cabochon sapphire taken from the ring of Edward the Confessor but it is noticeably smaller in size than the ring in the Diptych which may however have been enlarged or altered later to emphasize its importance.

I suggest that the Confessor's sapphire when removed from the Abbey may have been recut and reset in a contemporary mount to match that surrounding the king's Coronation Ring thereby disguising its origin so as not to further upset those who previously knew these stones as Holy Relics.

The *Sapphire and Diamond Coronet* is believed to have been designed by Victoria's husband Prince Albert a university trained expert and collector of European Primitive paintings. Albert may have gained his inspiration for the design of the Coronet from what was once his wife's family Diptych when in the possession of Charles I in which three medieval English sovereigns have arcaded coronets as crowns and St Edward the Confessor holds the all-important sapphire.

Queen Victoria in her diary passes comment on the Earl of Pembroke noting his costume at their *Bal Costume* of May 1842 this leads one to assume that the initial point of contact may have been the Diptych then hanging at Wilton. The use and form of coronets as crowns, confirmed by Landseer's detailed painting recording the event, is in the context of the Diptych worthy of note.

Prince Albert lent to the Manchester Art Exhibition in 1857 nine important paintings from his much larger collection of Primitive Italian and German Art and the Earl of Pembroke lent the Wilton Diptych. Is the inclusion of the Diptych alongside the Prince's paintings the result of the Prince Albert's particular and specific prior interest in the Diptych and the Coronet?

The Wilton Diptych provides a visual royal link spanning a period of nearly a thousand years between a saintly sapphire and three royal coronets as distinct from crowns. The history if only attributed to the Confessor of the sapphire to the front of her coronet may have been made known to his wife by King Leopold of the Belgians whose wife Charlotte Princess of Wales wore it in her coronet when taken from the George I Grisoni crown by her father George IV.

The principal design source was known to an erudite Prince Albert with his specific interest in medieval art. This combination then resulted in a most unusual feminine Coronet as a Crown for a Queen of diminutive stature as used in her first State Portrait.

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Plate 1.

Left - St Edmund the Martyr, the arrow of his martyrdom held in his left hand.

Middle - St Edward the Confessor holding a ring set with a sapphire now known as St Edward the Confessor's Sapphire.

Right - John the Baptist carrying the Lamb of God.

Kneeling - King Richard II who commissioned the Diptych.



Plate 2. The Crown of Edmund the Martyr arcaded with trefoil finials set with sapphires and pearls.



Plate 3. St Edward the Confessor holding the now famous sapphire ring.



Plate 3a. The crown of St Edward the Confessor arcaded with central single stone finials, the whole set with sapphires and pearls. Note the kite shaped sapphires.



Plate 3b. The details of the kite shaped sapphires, gadrooned/milled decorative edges to the arcades Fleur-de-lys and finials.



4

4a

Plates 4 & 4a. King Richard II crown/coronet set with sapphires and pearls with extra pearls set below the circlet, also with kite shaped sapphires, arcaded trefoil finials and gadrooned/milled edges, the x-ray alongside gives a better definition of the pearls below the circlet.



Plate 5. The surviving crown of the wife of Richard II showing the pearls set below the circlet and the gadrooned/milled edges which confirm the accuracy of drawing of Richard III's crown/coronet in the Diptych.



6



6a

Plate 6 & 6a. Detail of the St Edwards Sapphire showing its gold claw setting, the double cabochon shape is shown oversize to emphasise the importance of the ring which would fall off any of the fingers portrayed. The x-ray detail emphasises the shape of the claw settings to the sapphire.