

6. A NOTE ON THE REGALIA OF SCOTLAND

In his 'Technical Description of the Regalia of Scotland',¹ A. J. S. Brook wrote, 'The nature of the arrangement by which the cross pattée surmounting the arches [of the Crown] is fixed is worthy of some consideration. It is very primitive, and is very similar to what will be found in the work of Indian goldsmiths who have a limited set of appliances.' He proceeded to describe the simple structure of the threaded tube into which the screw attached to the cross goes, and continued, 'The workmanship of this is undoubtedly Scottish, while the mound through which it passes and the cross which surmounts it are of French workmanship.'

The importance of this conclusion to Brook was that it seemed to supply evidence that there had been a mound and cross above the arches of the crown *before* the present ones, which he felt sure were of French workmanship and dated from the 1540 reconstruction of the crown.² The gold tube with its crude threading dated therefore to before 1540.

There is counter-evidence, however, which suggests that the tube was not made until 1692 and was the work of an Edinburgh goldsmith. It is contained in an anonymous poem, printed below, entitled *The Crowns last speech 26 March 1707 When lodged in y^e Castle of Edin^r after y^e rising of y^e parliam^t.*

The Wilson of the poem was William Wilson, an under clerk of Session, who, as Depute for the Earl Marischall, had had custody of the Regalia, when Parliament was in session, from 1681 to 1707. This relationship with the Regalia is told in a collection of papers belonging to the Society of Antiquaries, deposited in the National Library.³ Wilson took his guardianship very seriously. In 1705 he received a 'Discharge and Exoneration' from the Earl Marischall when he returned the Honours to Edinburgh Castle, and when he lodged them for the last time on 26th March 1707 – the occasion celebrated by the poem – he drew up a description of the Regalia, and took instruments recording all that was done. Included in the Instrument⁴ is a description of the Regalia, a protest safeguarding the Earl Marischall's hereditary rights and an exoneration of William Wilson for his conduct when the Regalia was in his hands. Along with the other witnesses to the laying up of the Regalia, Wilson had assembled the seven Notaries Public of the poem to testify for him; but that was not enough for him. In 1709 he received a Discharge and Exoneration from the Earl Marischall, a document which states that, without any payment, 'he has been at the Charges in helping severall things about the honours – providing the necessary ornaments at the Lodgement of the Regalia into the Crown Room'. Also in 1709, he sent copies of the Act of Deposition to Marischall and King's Colleges, Aberdeen, to the Colleges of St Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh, to the Earl Marischall, the Earls of Erroll and Strathmore, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Faculty of Advocates of Edinburgh. Finally he had the replies he received from these individuals and corporate bodies registered in the Books of the Council and Session!

The Wilson of the poem is not the ultra-careful lawyer who safeguarded himself at every step, but a man who took a delight in showing the Crown of Scotland to everyone who wanted to see it. Perhaps it was on one of the occasions when the Crown was laid 'gently' in someone's arms that, in 1692, 'by stress' the 'upper cross' flew off, and had to

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, xxiv (1889-90), 84.

³ *Antiquaries Papers*, No. 2052.

² *ibid.*, 83.

⁴ *P.S.A.S.*, xxiv (1889-90), 50-55.

be screwed on again. The screwing was done at Wilson's expense; presumably he took it to an Edinburgh goldsmith who re-made the attachment in the 'primitive' manner commented on by Brook. There is therefore no evidence of an earlier, Scottish mound and cross in existence before the present one.

In defence of Edinburgh goldsmiths, attention is drawn to the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club,¹ where there is evidence that one at least studied his craft abroad.

Whether William Wilson was rewarded or not, the interest shown by the ordinary folk of Edinburgh in 1818 when the Regalia was rescued from oblivion may well have had its origin in their memory of his guardianship.

The Crouns last speech 26 March 1707 When lodged in y^e castle of Edin^r after y^e rising of y^e parliam.²

I royal diadem relinquisht stand
 By all my friends and robbed of my land
 So left bereft of all I did command
 Yet I admire y^e kindness of some few
 Scots hearted men who're trusty as y^e yewe
 but faith none more Wilson I do than you
 23² days six months and five and twenty years
 Thou kepted me in time of peace and weirs
 And now at parting spares not sighs and tears
 Most faithfully thou did exerce y^e trust
 And after means by me thou did not lust
 for all thy actings were both good and just
 No man, wife, child, yeeld nurse or servant maid
 came to see me with scarf cockup or plaid
 but gently me upon their arms you laid
 You did delight to tell them ancient glories
 how scepter sword and I were Scotlands glories
 here's pearls saphires cross patie's and florees
 And when by stress in y^e year ninty two
 My upper cross from off my head it flew
 On thy expence thou caus't again to screw
 Mine and y^e marshalls earands you ay trudg'd
 And t'was thy care to see me safely lodg'd
 Thy honest Wife my winding sheets not grudg'd
 Seven notars publick I see thou's here brought
 to testify by thee I've losed nought
 thy eyes with tears Will I see fully fraught
 The day shall come when thou's rewarded be
 for all the services thou's done to me
 And these seven Notars Lord Registers shall be

STUART MAXWELL

¹ Vol. xxxii, p. 218.

² 23 added in ms.