

29-2: Dalmatic from Whalley Abbey



Dalmatic in cloth of gold woven with diagonal bands that alternate between a polychrome design in velvet of knotted crowns and cords worked in gold thread and a pattern of stylized pomegranates worked with two lengths of cut red silk pile, flowers in white silk pile and leaves in green silk pile against an extended tabby ground. The gold is a file thread of silver gilt wrapped around a yellow silk core, whilst the red silk is dyed using Polish cochineal. Italian, circa 1415.

T-shaped dalmatic with neckline curved at front and straight at back and short sleeves made-up from several pieces of the cloth of gold from an earlier vestment or secular garment donated to the abbey. Narrow plain weave silk ribbons in dark blue and green cover the outer seams and hem. Sides and underarm left open with no fastenings. Along the edge of the sleeves, sides and bottom of the body are borders of brocaded voided satin velvet woven in filé gold, silver, turquoise and yellow silk against a red ground (dyed with kermes). Italian, early 1420s. Inner edge has plain-weave light blue silk ribbon over the seam. Outer edge with polychrome silk thread fringe. Lined with blue linen.

Applied band of embroidered orphreys at centre front and back depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary within architectural frames in multicoloured floss silk threads and silver gilt thread worked primarily in split stitch for the figures with some details in raised work, and underside couching in a lozenge pattern for the backgrounds. On the front in the pillar orphrey are (1) Joachim and Anne are cast out of the Temple, (2) an angel appears to Joachim as he tends his sheep, and (3) the meeting of Joachim and Anne before the golden gate. On the reverse in the cruciform orphrey are (1) the birth of Mary, (2) the childhood of Mary with her learning to walk using a frame, and (3) the Presentation of the Mary in the Temple. The design of the drawings, including their architectural canopies, is uniform. Orphreys originally embroidered in England, circa 1415-1430. However, the dalmatic has been altered or re-made, at which time some of the orphreys have been shortened.

Part of a set of vestments from Whalley Abbey, Lancashire, England.

Notes

Purchased by Sir William Burrell from Mr John Hunt, 1939 for £50.8.?. See Purchase Book 1939 p.29 'A Dalmatic of gold brocade, with a woven pattern of diagonal bands alternately filled with flowers in red, green and white and knotted cords passing through crowns in gold. The orphreys are embroidered in gold and silver thread and coloured silks on linen. On the front orphreys are the following subjects: (1) The marriage of Joachim and Anne, (2) The Angel appearing to Joachim as he tends his sheep, (3) The meeting of Joachim and Anne before the golden gate. On the reverse the subjects are as follows: (1) The birth of the Blessed Virgin, (2) The Childhood of the Virgin, who is wheeling a go-cart with Joachim and Anne standing behind (3) The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple. She ascends the steps towards the altar behind which is a High Priest. English, 15th century, the brocade 18th century, the narrow woven border 15th century. From the Whalley Abbey vestments. Exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1905, case C, no.2, illustration in colour plate V. 4ft high x 4ft 1 1/2. Bought at Christie's 22 June 1939. The property of the Rt. Hon. Maurice Herbert Towneley, 3rd Lord O'Hagan'. [Burrell copied the description in his Purchase Book directly from the catalogue of the Christie's sale.]

Part of a set of vestments from Whalley Abbey, Lancashire, England, a Cistercian monastery founded by monks from Stanlaw Abbey in 1296. The first section was consecrated in 1306, but it was not ready to celebrate its first mass until 1380. The abbey (pronounced to rhyme with Chorley) was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Inventoried by the Earl of Sussex in the second 1536 Dissolution survey, 'Revestury next unto the Galary ... It. there one vestment of red clothe of gold with an image on a crosse on the bak with tynnacles for a deacon and sub-deacon belonging to the same'. The set of vestments were reputedly from Whalley Abbey at the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Sir John Towneley (1473-1541).

Sir John Towneley was born in 1473. He married a member of the Pilkington family and had a least eight surviving children. In 1531 he was appointed Sheriff of Lancashire. Towneley founded St Mary's chantry in St Peter's parish church, Burnley and built the chapel at Towneley Hall. A staunch Catholic, he disinherited his Protestant son in favour of his Catholic grandson, Sir Richard Towneley. He died in 1541.

The Towneleys were a recusant family and the vestments were kept safe and appear to have been used regularly by the family until a descendent, Right Honourable Maurice Herbert Towneley, 3rd Lord O'Hagen, sold them at Sotheby's on 23 June 1922, where Burnley Town Council purchased the chasuble, one dalmatic and the maniple (now at Towneley Hall Art Gallery, Burnley, T.141-1974, T.142-1974, T.147-1974). There was a subsequent sale at Christie's 22 June 1939, where this dalmatic was bought by Mr John Hunt possibly on behalf of Sir William Burrell.

Dalmatics are loose T-shaped vestments with slits up the side. The term is said to have derived from Dalmatia. The garment is generally worn by Deacons during the Eucharist, as well as by bishops under their chasuble. It was in use in Rome by the end of the 2nd century AD. Most were made using two widths of material, which was often only 27-30" wide. This resulted in having a centre seam front and back that was covered with an decorative band, or orphrey, derived from the Latin *auriphrygium* meaning gold embroidery. Over time these became wider as they began to include individual compartments that either included the figures of saints, apostles or prophets or scenes from the Bible and associated sacred texts, often depicted with architectural canopies. Often there is a cruciform orphrey across the back of the dalmatic, and a pillar orphrey on the front.

The account of Anne and Joachim, whilst not appearing in the New Testament, appeared in several early medieval apocryphal accounts of the Virgin Mary, including Jacopo de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 13th century. The depiction of Anne and Joachim's story appears in Giotto's cycle of frescoes at the Arena Chapel, Padua, Italy, circa 1306, and became increasingly popular in the 14th century, especially in northern Europe. Scenes from the Virgin Mary's life were represented in several churches in the north of England, including Fountains Abbey, Ripon, Wakefield, Thornhill, Almondbury, and Elland. The story also appeared in English *Corpus Christi* plays, including the *N-Town Play* and *The Mary Play*, which closely mirror the sequence on the Whalley Abbey vestments. The orphreys are in a similar style to another pair showing scenes from the life of the Virgin on a chasuble in the Victoria & Albert Museum (T.27-1922), which may have been made in the same workshop. (For further discussion of the orphreys see Linnell, C (1985)). The scene with the young Mary learning to walk was popular scene in northern Europe. Children were encouraged to walk as soon as possible, to differentiate them from the beasts who walk on all four limbs.

Cloth of gold initially dated to the 18th century (Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1905). Re-dated to the early 15th century (Donald King, 1963), or 15th-early 16th century (Nathalie Rothstein, 1985). Orpheys previously dated circa 1390-1420 (Christine Linnell). Current dates for cloth of gold, velvet and orphreys by Lisa Monnas, 1992. (For further discussion of the cloth of gold and velvet see Monnas, L (1992), (1994)).

Exhibitions

English Embroidery, Burlington Fine Arts Fair, 1905.

Rarer gifts than Gold, University of Glasgow History of Art Department, Burrell Collection, 28 April - 26 June 1988. No. 37.

Publications

Arthur, L (2000). Entertaining Royalty: British Needlework in the Burrell Collection. *Hali* 110. pp.114-118.

Linnell, C (1985) *Opus Anglicanum, with particular reference to the Dalmatic in the Burrell Collection*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Honours Dissertation.

Monnas, L (1994). *Opus Anglicanum and Renaissance Velvet: the Whalley Abbey Vestments. Textile History* 25. pp.3-27.

Palmer, B D (2002). Recycling "The Wakefield Cycle": The Records. *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* Volume XLI. Tacoma: The University of Puget Sound.

The Whalley vestments are decorated with orphreys depicting the Life of the Virgin and Infancy of Christ:



