

The Dress of Rectors at the Scottish Universities

By Jonathan C. Cooper

Introduction

The Rector's gown at the University of St Andrews is arguably the only surviving relic of true medieval academical dress in Scotland.¹ Today, the students of each of the ancient universities at St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh elect a Rector every three years to preside over Court, the governing body of the institutions. The University of Dundee also elects a Rector but, unlike at the other universities, there he sits on but does not chair Court.² The role of Rector was constituted at each of the universities from the time of their respective foundations; the Rector was, and continues to be, a prominent figure both ceremonially and administratively. The Universities (Scotland) Act 1858 standardized the role and university governance in general.³ This paper will briefly treat medieval Rectorial dress in continental Europe, introduce general aspects of Scottish Rectorial dress, and then detail its development at each of the ancient Scottish universities in order of foundation date. The conclusion will deal briefly with the question of whether Scottish Rectorial dress is truly *academical* or *official*.

Early Rectorial Dress in Europe

As continental universities appear to have served as models for their Scottish counterparts in several respects, it is worth giving some preliminary consideration to medieval Rectorial dress in Europe. It has been proposed that purple Rectorial robes were a counterpart to the dress of Cardinals introduced during the reign of Pope Paul II (1464–71) and were intended to withdraw the European universities from the supremacy of the Holy Roman Emperor and subject them instead to the Holy See.⁴ By 1784, Emperor Joseph II abol-

1 R. G. Cant, *The University of St Andrews: A Short History* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1946), pp. 20, 119.

2 The University of Dundee has the same governance structure as the ancient universities as it was a constituent college of the University of St Andrews from 1897 until 1967. Sometimes the Rector is styled as 'Lord Rector' but this has varied among universities and over time.

3 For a guide to the modern role of the Rector, see Scottish Rectors Group, *The Scottish University Rector: Introduction to the Role of University Rector in Scotland* (St Andrews: Scottish Rectors Group, 2007). For a general history of the Rectorship at the Scottish Universities, see A. Morgan, *Scottish University Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 10–25.

4 H. Conring, *De Antiquitatibus Academicis Dissertationes Septem* (Göttingen: Georg-August-Universität, 1739), pp. 162–63, in: F. Delitzsch, *Iris: Studies in Colour and Talks about Flowers* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), p. 85. When the Eastern Empire fell in 1453, *murex* became scarce in the West so Cardinals' robes were changed from purple to red (C. P. Biggam, 'Knowledge of Whelk Dyes and Pigments in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 35 (2006), pp. 23–55 (p. 25); B.



University of St Andrews Library

FIG. 1 Rector of the University of St Andrews, c. 1850. (Photographic Collection, FramedShelf-11-45)



University of Glasgow Library

FIG. 2 Rector of the University of Glasgow, c. 1840 (front). (Special Collections, MS Murray 593, fol. 1)



University of Glasgow Library

FIG. 3 Rector of the University of Glasgow, c. 1840 (rear). (Special Collections, MS Murray 593, fol. 2)

ished all official academical dress and Rectorial dress in particular because ‘by the monk’s hood stitched on behind, it betrayed the dark times when the Papal See arrogated to itself the exclusive right of establishing universities’.⁵ At the University of Paris, on which St Andrews modelled its ceremonial,⁶ Rectorial dress consisted of a ‘scarlet closed pleated and girded *supertunica* with a close hood and a “shoulder piece” of the same colour’ by the beginning of the fifteenth century and ‘a soft violet bonnet, a white ruff, a pleated tight violet *supertunica* worn closed, and a full “shoulder piece” of white fur on a violet foundation’ by the mid-sixteenth century.⁷ At the University of Bologna, on which Glasgow modelled its constitution and academical dress,⁸ the Rector in 1432 wore a black cloth *cappa manicata* or a sleeveless tabard with and a hood furred with miniver or an unfurred one for informal

Christianson, ‘Doctors’ Greens’, *TBS*, 6 (2006), pp. 44–48 (p. 46)).

⁵ Delitzsch, p. 86.

⁶ Cant, p. 19. The St Andrews constitution was based on that of Orléans (Cant, p. 5; H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn, ed. by F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford University Press, 1936), Vol. II, p. 308.)

⁷ W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Academical Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 41–42. Also see Plate 4b (facing p. 44) for an illustration of the Rector of the University of Paris in 1605.

⁸ C. Innes, *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis* (Glasgow: Maitland Club, 1854), Vol. II, pp. 13, 24; R. K. Hannay, ‘Early University Institutions at St Andrews and Glasgow’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 11 (1913–14), pp. 266–83 (p. 271); Rashdall, Vol. II, p. 312.



University of Aberdeen

FIG. 4 Sir James McGrigor, Rector of Marischal College, 1826-27 & 1841. (Marischal Museum, ABDUA 30104)



University of Aberdeen

FIG. 5 Charles Gordon, 11th Marquis of Huntly, Rector of the University of Aberdeen, 1890-99. (Marischal Museum, ABDUA 30040)

occasions.⁹ At the University of Orléans, on which Aberdeen modelled its constitution,¹⁰ records from 1679 show that the old ceremonial of the University was to be revived, including the red robe of the Rector.¹¹ Each example indicates clear parallels between the Rectorial dress of the Scottish university and the ancient European institution it modelled itself upon.

Scottish Rectorial Dress

The *First Book of Discipline*, a set of regulations published by the Protestant reformers in 1560, says that Rectors 'shall be propyned to the Universitie, at his entre, with ane new garment, bearing *Insignia Magistratus*'.¹² The fact that the reformers specifically provided for Rectorial dress is perhaps an indication of the dignity of the office—especially at a time when much of the existing ceremonial with Catholic associations was swept away. The 'new

9 Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 14–15. At Bologna 'a still more curious and no less expensive feature of the entertainment as conducted in the sixteenth century was the custom of setting upon the newly elected rector, tearing his clothes off his back, and then requiring him to redeem the fragments at an exorbitant rate. The Statute of 1552, which was passed to restrain "the too horrid and petulant mirth" of these occasions, does not venture to abolish the time-honoured "vestium laceratio"' (Rashdall, Vol. I, pp. 185–186).

10 Rashdall, Vol. II, p. 320.

11 Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 52.

12 D. Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox* (Edinburgh: The Bannatyne Club, 1848), Vol. II, p. 217.

garment' may have been completely re-designed or it may have been the pre-Reformation dress altered to include the specified insignia, the nature of which remains unclear. An Act of 1621 outlaws 'any clothing of gold or silver cloth, or any gold or silver lace upon their apparel or any part of their bodies hereafter, and that no manner of person shall have any apparel of velvet, satin or other stuff of silk' but excepts 'rectors of universities', amongst others.¹³ A further Act of 1672 excepts rectors from an order that no subject was to 'wear any clothes or apparel wherein there is any gold or silver, or wear any gold or silver laces of whatsoever kind, buttons, ribbons, tracings, fringes or looping made of gold or silver; or have any embroidering of gold or silver upon their apparel, sword belts or any other manner of way, excepting always buttons, buckles and hilts of swords of goldsmith work, which the privileged persons after-expressed are allowed to wear, and no others; and that none wear any flowered stuffs, striped stuffs or brocade of silk, or have any silk lace, gimp-lace or any other kind of lace or embroidering of silk upon their wearing clothes'.¹⁴ These Acts indicate that Rectorial dress would have been sumptuous at some, if not all, of the Scottish universities during the seventeenth century despite the general trend for the toning down of showy dress at the time. A practice common across Scotland until the present is that the prospective Rector sometimes wears the scarlet undergraduate gown during the election campaign and the victor continues to wear it until he is formally installed and adopts the official Rectorial dress.¹⁵

University of St Andrews

Despite assertions that the Rectorial gown at St Andrews is the only surviving relic of medieval academical dress in Scotland,¹⁶ details of its use and appearance are surprisingly sparse in the early historical records of the University, founded in 1413.¹⁷ In 1692, receipts record the return of the rector's gown and hood, as well as two silver maces, by Dr Alexander Skene at the end of his time in office.¹⁸ In 1710, the Rectorial dress is described as 'a purple robe with a large hood, the hood and borders of the robe lined with crimson satin'.¹⁹

¹³ Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, *Act XXV Regarding Banqueting and Apparel*, King James VI (Edinburgh: 4 August 1621).

¹⁴ Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, *Act Concerning Apparel*, King Charles II (Edinburgh: 26 July 1672).

¹⁵ See Lord Huntly's election campaign poster from 1893 (P. J. Anderson, *Rectorial Addresses Delivered at the University of Aberdeen, 1835–1900* (Aberdeen University Press, 1902), p. 388). See also a letter from Sir George Cunningham to the President of the Students' Union at St Andrews, dated November 1946, in which he mentions 'the wearing of a red gown for the first time'; he was installed as Rector in April 1947 (University of St Andrews, Special Collections, ms38669/5/3. Papers of Walter Lamb Davidson). See also Sir Clement Freud wearing the undergraduate gown during his Rectorial 'drag', prior to his installation in 2003 (B. Lang, 'Standing on Ceremony', *The StAndard*, 7 (2006), p. 22).

¹⁶ Cant, pp. 20, 119.

¹⁷ The Rector's mace, presented to the University in 2003 by Donald Wintersgill, shows a representation of Lawrence of Lindores (1372–1437), the first Rector of the University, wearing the dress of a friar.

¹⁸ University of St Andrews, Special Collections, UYSS110/AP/13. Copy Inventories and Receipts for Papers and Furniture returned to St Salvator's College.

¹⁹ R. Sibbald, *The History, Ancient and Modern, of the Sheriffdoms of Fife and Kinross* (Cupar: R. Tullis, 1803), p. 267.

It is mentioned in University records of 1728 when the Library Quaestor was appointed to 'pay four shillings for the repairing of the rectoral gown'.²⁰ This probably indicates that the robes were passed down between incumbent Rectors rather than each having his own made to fit. In 1750, further records show that the new Rector was 'vested with "Rectoral robes," administered an oath and had the "Rectoral books" delivered to him'.²¹ A watercolour dated c. 1850 shows a rear view of the Rectorial dress and indicates that a dark ankle-length gown with a crimson flap collar was worn with a hood, including a long liripipe and cape covering the shoulders, also lined in crimson (see Fig. 1). This parallels the *supertunica* and hood worn by the Rector at the University of Paris and it could be suggested that the crimson and purple on the St Andrews gown may have been drawn from the fifteenth century scarlet and sixteenth century violet worn at Paris. An alternative possibility is that the dress was based upon that of the Ordinary Lords of the Court of Session who, by an instruction of King James VI of 1610, were to wear 'a purple gown faced with crimson satin, and a purple hood lined with crimson'.²² This may have reflected the authority of the Rector as the supreme magistrate of the University.

Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster, was Rector from 1874 to 1877 and in a description of his installation we are told that he wore 'a remarkably shabby gown, venerable for antiquity but not otherwise'.²³ This indicates that the gown was indeed passed from one Rector to his successor for a lengthy period without being remade. Portraits of John Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquis of Bute, Rector in 1892-98, show that he wore the gown with the hood over his head.²⁴ The cape of the hood was worn over the shoulders and fastened down the front with buttons of claret, covering the flap collar; the sleeves were bordered with cuffs of claret silk, much like the style of the edgings on the sleeves of modern Oxford doctoral robes, but shorter—at the time, the sleeve edgings were also shorter at Oxford. During the early twentieth century, it seems that the shoulder cape was worn or omitted, depending on the taste of the Rector. For example, Andrew Carnegie, Rector from 1901 to 1907, wore the gown without the shoulder cape, exposing the flap collar, and the hood appears to have been fixed to the gown;²⁵ he is described at his installation as 'assum[ing] his robes of mingled claret and purple silk'.²⁶ However, the shoulder cape was worn by Field Marshal Jan Smuts, Rector from 1931 to 1934, in such a way that it exposed the flap collar.²⁷

20 *Library Bulletin of the University of St Andrews*, 1 (1904), p. 383.

21 R. Hart, 'All the Tens', *Alumnus Chronicle*, 24 (2010), p. 24.

22 J. P. B., 'Gleanings from Old Statute Books—Laws Relating to Dress', *Journal of Jurisprudence*, 20 (1876), pp. 78–84, 178–84 (p. 179).

23 A. K. H. Boyd, 'Dean Stanley at St Andrews', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 16 (1877), pp. 516–25 (p. 520).

24 See <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/john-patrick-crichton-stuart-18471900-3rd-marquis-of-bute-125534>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

25 See <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/andrew-carnegie-18351919-125668>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

26 A. S. Cunningham, *Three Busy Weeks: Dr Andrew Carnegie at Perth, Edinburgh, Greenock, Falkirk, Stirling, Hawarden, Liverpool, St Andrews, Dundee* (Dunfermline: Andrew S. Cunningham, 1902), p. 107.

27 See <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/field-marshal-the-right-honourable-jan-christian-smuts-18125622>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

The St Andrews Rectorial gown was worn without the shoulder cape throughout the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as is evident from photographs of Donald Findlay QC, Rector from 1993 to 1999, and Sir Clement Freud, Rector from 2002 to 2005, both of whom wore a John Knox cap of claret velvet with the gown.²⁸ In the past few years, however, the Rectorial gown has been altered to have a rounded collar and far narrower facings and sleeve borders of claret velvet.²⁹ A hood has not been worn of late, despite the fact that a tippet and hood in maroon (claret) are stipulated in the University's current academical dress regulations. The headwear now prescribed is a black velvet cap with a maroon tassel.

University of Glasgow

There is evidence of Rectorial dress being used at Glasgow soon after its foundation in 1451. Regulations of 1469 resolved that 'the Rector, when going to church, or going through the city on feast days, shall wear a distinguishing habit; shall have at least a furred hood, or one lined with silk or taffety [*sic*]; on Sundays and the minor double feasts, he shall walk with a suitable number of attendants, in the Rectorial dress, and having a white wooden rod carried before him. On the greater double feasts he shall wear a richer dress, have a suitable retinue, and the silver rod carried before him'.³⁰ The furred hood would have been used in winter and in summer the hood would have been lined with taffeta, a type of silk.³¹ In 1481 John Laing, Bishop of Glasgow and Chancellor of the University, gave the Rector, Patrick Leitch, a 'red hood, well furred with letteys and menyver above and below'.³² It seems reasonable to suggest that this hood would have been the one used for greater double feasts in winter. 'Letteys' or, more commonly, *lettice* is the pelt of the white/light grey winter fur of the weasel.³³ Miniver is also a high-status white fur of grey squirrel bellies with a little grey left around the edges.³⁴ This dress may well have been inspired by that of Bologna, where a hood lined with miniver or an unfurred one for informal occasions was worn by the Rector

28 University of St Andrews Library Photographic Archive, PGA-R58-10, PGA-E1666-18. This gown is held in the collection of the Museum of the University of St Andrews.

29 It seems that velvet was used to match the gown of the Rector's Assessor.

30 Innes, *Munimenta*, Vol. II, pp. XIII–XIV, 75. Original text: 'quod rector universitatis qui pro tempore fuerit pro perpetuis futuris temporibus incedendo ad ecclesiam seu per civitatem transeundo ferialibus diebus utatur honesto habitu ut noscatur in officio differre ab aliis/ad minus habeat capucium foderatum in humeris vel capucium cuius interior pars erit sericum anglice le taphat secundum morem in aliis universitatibus observatum · Item in Dominicis diebus et minoribus festis duplicibus incedat ut supra cum honesta comitiva in habitu rectoris feriali alba virga lignea precedente · Item in maioribus duplicibus per totum annum incedat in habitu meliori cum turba honesta et virga argentea precedente.' It seems unclear as to why English silk was particularly specified.

31 Taffeta was often imported from Spain (M. H. B. Sanderson, 'Clothing Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Crafts, Clothes and Clients', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 22 (2010), pp. 35–51 (p. 41)).

32 Innes, *Munimenta*, Vol. II, pp. XVI, 91. Original text: 'capucium rubeum benefoderatum cum le letteys et menyver superius et inferius'.

33 S. M. Kuhn (ed.), *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 932.

34 N. Cox, 'Tudor Sumptuary Laws and Academical Dress: An Act against Wearing of Costly Apparel 1509 and An Act for Reformation of Excess in Apparel 1533', *TBS*, 6 (2006), pp. 15–43 (p. 32 n).

in 1432.³⁵ In 1490, the records show that the robes, hoods and mace (*cappe capuciorum et virge argenteae*) of the University of Glasgow were ordered to be remade.³⁶

Adam Colquhoun, Canon of Glasgow, was Rector of the University in 1517–19 and 1528–33. Among his accounts are found references to three surplices: ‘one of crape, one of lawn and one of holland,’ a ‘hude of crammase satyn with welvot, drawin with ane string of gold,’ an ‘almos’ (almuce) and another cape ‘firrit with spottit arming’ (ermine).³⁷ It has been suggested that this latter garment may have been the Rectorial dress of the University rather than his clerical dress for duties in the Cathedral,³⁸ although the fur is different from that of the hood described fifty years earlier, ermine being the white winter fur of the stoat spotted with black tails.

Rectorial dress survived the Reformation at the University of Glasgow, as a passage from the diary of Regent James Melville, dated 1578, tells us that the Rector and the Principal wore their gowns.³⁹ The form of the dress in this period is not known; however, it seems likely that it would have been toned-down somewhat after the Reformation. In 1690, the University orders that ‘the gown now worn by the Rector to have on it some marks of distinction becoming a magistrate’.⁴⁰ Hargreaves-Mawdsley suggests that these ‘might consist of decorations of either braid or velvet’.⁴¹ A portrait of John Orr of Barrowfield, Rector in 1731–33 and 1741–42, shows that the black gown worn during the eighteenth century was richly decorated with at least sixteen bars of gold braid down the sleeves and facings.⁴²

The Rector appeared in his gown alongside the Principal and Professors at a procession to mark the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of King George III in 1809.⁴³ The poet Thomas Campbell was elected Rector in 1826 and of him we are told by a biographer: ‘we see him, as we pen these sentences, standing at the top of the professors’ bench, clothed in the rectorial gown, his keen piercing eye beaming with intellect and emotion’.⁴⁴ In 1837, Robert Peel was elected Rector of the University and is illustrated in an engraving wearing what appears to be a gown in a very similar style to that which continues to be worn to this day, although detail is not visible.⁴⁵ Further, we are told that ‘the Rector wears at his inau-

35 Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 14–15.

36 Innes, *Munimenta*, Vol. II, p. 106.

37 J. Warrack, *Domestic Life in Scotland, 1488–1688: A Sketch of the Development of Furniture and Household Usage* (London: Methuen, 1920), p. 47. Adam Colquhoun’s ordinary dress was ‘a doublet of velvet lined with scarlet’ (J. Durkan, ‘The Scottish Universities in the Middle Ages, 1413–1560’ (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1959), p. 489).

38 J. Durkan, and J. Kirk, *The University of Glasgow, 1451–1577* (University of Glasgow Press, 1977), p. 197.

39 J. Melville, *Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melville: 1556–1610* (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), p. 72.

40 Innes, *Munimenta*, Vol. II, p. 350. This regulation echoes the *First Book of Discipline* (see note 12). Perhaps the use of the distinguishing marks had lapsed since the Reformation.

41 p. 141.

42 See <<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/images/UGSP00118.jpg>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

43 R. Renwick, *History of Glasgow* (Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson & Co., 1921), Vol. III, p. 431.

44 ‘Biographical Sketches: Thomas Campbell’, *Hogg’s Weekly Instructor*, 1 (1845), pp. 98–102 (p. 99).

45 J. B. Hay, *Inaugural Addresses by Lords Rectors of the University of Glasgow; To which are Prefixed an Historical Sketch Account of the Present State of the University* (Glasgow: David Robertson, 1839), frontispiece.

guration a very ancient and shabby gown, decorated with faded gold lace. It is never forgot in Glasgow College, that Sir Robert Peel said, on assuming it, that he felt greater pride in putting on that gown, than in putting on the robes of Prime Minister'.⁴⁶

Two watercolours of c. 1840 show the Glasgow Rectorial gown in great detail from both front and rear perspectives (Figs 2 & 3).⁴⁷ The gown is black with false-panel sleeves and both the facings and sleeves are decorated with gold braid and tassels (five strips on each sleeve and seven on each facing); the back of the round flap collar is also edged with gold braid and the gown is gathered in at the waist. It is interesting to note that the Rector wears knee-breeches and shoes with gold buckles, whereas the other University officers depicted in the set of folios wear trousers with plain shoes.⁴⁸ An illustration of John Inglis, Rector from 1865 to 1868, indicates that the collar later came to an acute point and was edged with gold braid at the front also.⁴⁹

Of Benjamin Disraeli at his Rectorial installation in 1873, we are told that 'he might have been taken for a magician, the more easily in his mediaeval costume as Lord Rector, a long gown, heavily embroidered with gold lace, and he might have been credited with knowing and practising the Black Art'.⁵⁰ This commentator is mistaken in asserting that the gown is medieval but, rather, it developed since the Reformation. An illustration of the event shows that the black gown was the same as that depicted in 1868.⁵¹ In 1879, when William Ewart Gladstone was installed, the gown is shown being worn with a separate degree hood.⁵² A bronze statue of Gladstone erected in Glasgow's George Square after his death in 1898 shows him in Rectorial dress without the hood.⁵³ The gown of Sir Edward Montague Compton Mackenzie is described as 'a handsome and extremely becoming garment frogged with gold, the wide, long sleeves like wings,' and it was bestowed upon him after he had removed the LL.D robes with which he had been invested immediately prior to his installation as Rector in 1932.⁵⁴ The gown worn today has remained largely unchanged but has eight rather than seven gold bars down the facings. The bars now have tassels on either side, whereas formerly they only adorned one side; a black velvet mortarboard with gold edging to the skullcap and a gold tassel is worn with the gown.⁵⁵

46 A. K. H. Boyd, 'College Life at Glasgow', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 53 (1856), pp. 505–22 (p. 521). Rather, these would likely have been the robes worn in his capacity as First Lord of Treasury.

47 University of Glasgow, Library, Special Collections, MS Murray 593, fols 1 & 2. (Note the striking artistic similarity to Fig. 1—also unattributed but from a different collection.)

48 A. Kerr, 'Hargreaves-Mawdsley's *History of Academical Dress* and the Pictorial Evidence for Great Britain and Ireland: Notes and Corrections', *TBS*, 8 (2008), pp. 106–50 (p. 143).

49 D. Murray, *Memories of the Old College of Glasgow: Some Chapters in the History of the University* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1927), pp. 594–95.

50 J. Mayor, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1923), Vol. 1, p. 96.

51 *Illustrated London News*, 29 November 1873.

52 *Illustrated London News*, 13 December 1879. This illustration would appear to show the gown being worn with a fringed cape covering the shoulders but this is likely to be an exaggerated depiction of the flap collar being worn closed (with thanks to Dr Neil Dickson for pointing this out).

53 *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* 143451.

54 F. Compton Mackenzie, *More Than I Should* (London: Collins, 1940), p. 244.

55 See <<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/images/UGSP00586.jpg>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

Universities of Aberdeen

King's College was founded in 1497 and Marischal College in 1593; the two universities finally merged in 1860 to become the University of Aberdeen. An inventory of the effects of King's College compiled in 1542 indicates that Rectorial dress consisted of a scarlet *cappa* and a hood of skin lined with lettice doubled over (*cappa lutea, vulgo 'ane scarlat caip', pro rectore cum caputio pelleto cum foderatura de letteis, que duplicatura est*) as well as a small 'French brown' *cappa* without a hood (*alia parua cappa rectoris ex ly Fransche brown, absque caputio*).⁵⁶ The term *lutea* has been translated as 'yellow'⁵⁷ but the inclusion of the common Scots description as 'scarlat' would suggest that the *cappa* was red, rather. In earlier medieval times the term 'scarlet' referred to a fine weave of woollen cloth rather than to a colour but by the beginning of the sixteenth century the term referred to the colour with which the cloth was most commonly dyed.⁵⁸ It has been proposed that the scarlet *cappa* would have been used for special occasions and the brown one would have been the Rector's everyday dress.⁵⁹ Both of these sets of robes were given to the College by Alexander Galloway, Prebendary of Kinkell, who was Rector during the 1540s.⁶⁰ The formal scarlet *cappa* may well have been based on the red robe worn by the Rector of the University of Orléans.⁶¹

As for Marischal College, the only indication we have of the Rectorial dress is to be found in a portrait of Sir James McGrigor, Rector in 1826–27 and 1841 (Fig. 4).⁶² The Rector appears in an unusual closed robe of dark blue or purple with long tight sleeves and a flap collar and facings in scarlet fastened with a long scarlet cord. This gown was presented to the College by Charles Forbes of Auchmedden MP, Rector in 1814–18 and 1822, who had it made for King George IV's visit to Scotland in the final year of his office.⁶³ It is unclear whether this gown was re-designed for the occasion or a new gown was made in an existing

⁵⁶ C. Innes, *Fasti Aberdonenses: Selections from the Records of the University and King's College of Aberdeen, 1494–1854* (Aberdeen: The Spalding Club, 1854), p. 571; F. C. Eeles, *King's College Chapel, Aberdeen: Its Fittings, Ornaments and Ceremonial in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1956), p. 21. 'Fransche' refers to the provenance of the cloth; similarly, garments described as 'Paris brown' were high status clothes (Sanderson, p. 48).

⁵⁷ Eeles, p. 44. *Luteus* can be translated as golden-yellow, saffron-yellow, orange-yellow or, alternatively, as rose-coloured, rosy, rose-red. In this case, the context indicates that the latter was most probably intended.

⁵⁸ Christianson, p. 45 n. Scarlet was an especially expensive colour to dye cloth (Sanderson, p. 44).

⁵⁹ Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 142.

⁶⁰ Innes, C., *Fasti*, p. xxv.

⁶¹ In 1505, it was ordered that Doctors of Civil Law at King's College were to dress in the style of those of the University of Orléans but Doctors of Canon Law and Medicine were to follow the style of the University of Paris; these statutes were repeated in 1529 (Innes, *Fasti*, pp. 58, 87).

⁶² University of Aberdeen, Marischal Museum, ABDUA 30104. The catalogue describes the sitter as wearing 'MD robes or Knights robes'. McGrigor graduated MD in 1804 but there was no academical dress for this degree at Aberdeen until the 1860s; he was made knight bachelor in 1814 but this honour has no mantle. The portrait was painted in 1827–28, coinciding with the end of McGrigor's first term as Rector, so it seems likely that the Rectorial robes are depicted in this portrait. McGrigor was created 1st Baronet of Campden Hill in 1831 and made KCB in 1850 (H. M. Chichester, rev. by J. S. G. Blair, 'McGrigor, Sir James, first baronet (1771–1858)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004)).

⁶³ Anderson, p. 346.

style. In terms of colour, this gown is rather similar to that of the Rector of the University of St Andrews, although there was apparently no hood. Evidence presented to the University Commission that visited Aberdeen in 1827 confirms that the Rectors of both King's and Marischal Colleges wore their gowns.⁶⁴ In 1832, in a report detailing the findings of this Commission, we are told that Rectorial Courts were set up to try complaints from members of the Universities and that the Rectors wore 'splendid gowns and gold bands'.⁶⁵ The bands were probably only worn by the Rectors when chairing the courts, symbolic of their status as magistrates and echoing the distinctions prescribed in the *First Book of Discipline* and those added to the Glasgow Rectorial gown in 1690.

Just as student dress was reformed at Aberdeen when the Colleges merged in 1860,⁶⁶ a new Rectorial gown was commissioned at the same time.⁶⁷ The new gown was in the style of the doctoral gowns introduced at the University in the mid-nineteenth century but referenced (perhaps by coincidence) the medieval scarlet *cappa* of King's College in its colour. Portraits of Alexander Bain (1882) and of Charles Gordon (1896) (Fig. 5) show the Rectorial gown in fine detail.⁶⁸ The gown is of scarlet in the Cambridge doctoral shape with long open sleeves and is faced with pink silk. The sleeves are lined with pink silk and are turned-up with crimson button and cord.⁶⁹ One of the portraits shows the gown being tied at the front with long pink ribbons whereas the other does not so this was presumably left to the personal choice of the wearer. The gown now worn by the Rectors at Aberdeen remains largely the same, with the addition of an edging of gold lace to the collar and facings, and is accompanied by a black mortarboard with gold tassel.⁷⁰

University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh was founded in 1583 and was tied to the Town Council rather than to the Church, as the three medieval universities had been. Minutes of the Town Council from 1619 stipulated that Rectorial dress be worn as follows: 'Ordains the rector and regents of the college, in all tyme coming, to weir thair gowns upon the open streets and within the college in all tyme coming'.⁷¹ The cap and gown of Alex Henderson, Rector of the University c. 1640, remained for many years in the College chest. An inventory of an unknown date describes the gown thus: 'Est è panno Cilicino tenuiore, collo

64 Parliamentary Commission, *Evidence, Oral and Documentary, Taken Before the Commissioners for Visiting the Universities of Scotland (Aberdeen)* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1837), p. 302.

65 'Remarks on the Report of the University Commissioners', *The Aberdeen Magazine*, 2 (1832), pp. 106–10 (p. 107).

66 J. C. Cooper, 'The Scarlet Gown: History and Development of Scottish Undergraduate Dress', *TBS*, 10 (2010), pp. 8–42 (p. 27).

67 Anderson, p. 346.

68 University of Aberdeen, Marischal Museum, ABDUA 30001; ABDUA 30040; C. A. M^cLaren, *Aberdeen Students 1600–1860* (Aberdeen University Press, 2005), p. 108.

69 This gown was the same style and colour as the Cambridge lay doctoral gown of the period. It is of the same pattern as Aberdeen doctoral gowns with pink facings and sleeve linings symbolising the Rector, rather than doctors of the faculties, each represented by another colour.

70 See a photograph of the Rt Hon. Joseph Grimond (*Aberdeen University Review*, 43 (1969–70), facing p. 339).

71 A. Bower, *The History of the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh & Innes, 1817), p. 53.



FIG. 6 Sir Stafford Northcote, Rector of the University of Edinburgh, 1883–87. (Hole, p. 19.)

verò quadrangulari formâ partibus à fronte replicatis assuto, manicis apertis et promissis, iisque fibulis sericis candatis et ansulis similibus exornatis, undique verò serico villos prætexta.⁷² The items were donated by the Senatus Academicus to the Society Antiquaries of Scotland in 1862, when the gown was described as ‘richly ornamented with braid and tassels of silk, and faced with velvet’ and the cap is referred to as a ‘doctor’s cap’.⁷³ This description matches that of the Scottish professorial gown,⁷⁴ which had false-panel sleeves and was worn between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The Rector at Edinburgh, therefore, and other Scottish doctors/professors would not have been distinguishable by their dress during this period.

The Rector’s gown was re-designed in 1860 at a cost of about £20 and the new pattern was of ‘black silk with scarlet velvet sleeves’.⁷⁵ Two separate accounts of the installation ceremony of Thomas Carlyle in 1866, describe the Rectorial gown as being ‘gold-laced’⁷⁶ and as having ‘frogs and tassels’.⁷⁷ A sketch prepared for the University’s tercentary festival in 1884 shows Sir Stafford Northcote (created 1st Earl of Id-

72 A. Dalzel, *History of the University of Edinburgh from its Foundation* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1862), Vol. II, p. 112 n. ‘It is of thinnish hair-cloth; with the collar in a truly square shape, the parts at the front folded over and stitched; with the sleeves open and hanging and ornamented with silk braid strips (frogs) embellished with loops in the same material; and trimmed all over with silk tassels.’ (With thanks to Dr Alex Kerr for assistance with this translation.)

73 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 4 (1860–1862), p. 398. These ancient garments are now held by the National Museums of Scotland (accession numbers: H.NC 10 & H.NC 11). The square cap is of the same style worn at the English universities contemporaneously.

74 Henderson’s gown has been wrongly described as a Geneva gown in the past (A. Grant, *The Story of the University of Edinburgh during its First Three Hundred Years* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1884), Vol. I, p. 207). The Geneva gown was plain with bell-shaped sleeves and was worn by Masters of Arts. For further details of the Scottish professorial gown see N. K. Dickson, ‘Tradition and Humour: The Academic Dress of the University of Glasgow’, *TBS*, 12 (2012), pp. 10–35.

75 Minutes of the Senatus Academicus of the University of Edinburgh, 16 February, 1855–61 volume, p. 387.

76 G. W. Curtis, ‘Editor’s Easy Chair’, *Harper’s Magazine*, 33 (1866), pp. 117–21 (p. 118).

77 J. H. Balfour Browne, *Recollections Literary and Political* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1917), p. 127. The Rectorial gown had neither frogs nor tassels after 1860 so perhaps the Chancellor’s gown was being recalled or the author was describing Carlyle based on memories of the gown worn by previous Rectors.

desleigh in 1885) wearing the gown with the LLD hood of the University, which he had been awarded previously (Fig. 6).⁷⁸ The gown has broad gold lace trimming to the collar and front and narrow gold lace trimming to the sleeves and has remained constant since then; it is worn with a black trencher with gold button and tassel.

University of Dundee

The University of Dundee was granted its charter by the Privy Council in 1967. However, University College, Dundee was founded in 1881 and became a constituent college of the University of St Andrews in 1897. As such, the undergraduates of University College wore the same gown as at St Andrews with a distinguishing badge on the collar; after 1967, the distinction was made instead by replacing the crimson collar with one of Stewart blue, very close in shade to 'liturgical blue' the colour of the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of the city of Dundee.⁷⁹ We defer to the description of the Rector's gown given by Sir Alan Langlands, former Vice-Chancellor of the University, at the installation of television personality Lorraine Kelly as Rector in 2004:

Lorraine is wearing: "A robe of Union jack red ottoman with a Stewart blue yoke collar and full length 5 inch facings also in ottoman." The sleeves are 'cape' sleeves (mine are bag sleeves with an inverted-T arm-slit braided in silver!)[.] Lorraine's 'cape' sleeves are the same style as student sleeves but fuller. I can see a large thinks [*sic*] bubble above your heads which reads, "What is he talking about?" Well, ottoman is a corded fabric—in this context it is nothing to do with the Empire, the Turkish language or a padded box where you keep your spare blankets! The serious fashion point is that our new Rector's robe is an elaboration of the student gown and is designed to signify the special relationship between the Rector of a Scottish University and the students.⁸⁰

Essentially, the Rector's gown is based on the undergraduate gown but has blue facings as well as a collar and is made of ottoman silk rather than nap cloth. The Rector's gown is also longer, reaching the ankles rather than the knees. A blue trencher with a red tassel is worn with this gown. Dundee's Rectorial dress is unique in indicating a link to the students, who elect and are represented by the Rector.

Conclusions

It is arguable as to whether Scottish Rectorial dress is *academical* or *official*.⁸¹ The term *academical dress* could be defined either as the special dress worn by graduates and undergraduates of academic institutions or, more broadly, as any dress worn in connection with university life. However, the distinction between these two alternative definitions is

78 W. Hole, *Quasi Cursores: Portraits of the High Officers and Professors of the University of Edinburgh at its Tercentenary Festival* (Edinburgh University Press, 1884), pp. 19, 22. For a portrait of Sir J. Donald Pollock, 1st Baronet, Rector 1939-45, (also with LLD hood) see <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/sir-donald-pollock-18681962-94068>> (accessed 22 June 2013).

79 Cooper, p. 32.

80 University of Dundee, 'Lorraine Kelly's Rectorial Address', press release, 28 April 2004. The first quotation, 'A robe of Union jack red ottoman ...', comes from the University's calendar.

81 With thanks to Dr Alex Kerr for his helpful comments for this section.

not as clear-cut as might be thought. If the narrower definition of academical dress were taken then it could be argued that the *cappa clausa* of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, for example, should be included because it is a relict form of the congregation dress of Doctors of Divinity of that University, whereas the Chancellor's gown would not be included because it is modelled on the official robes of Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain.⁸² The latter definition seems preferable as it would include the dress worn by university officials such as chancellors, vice-chancellors, deans, college heads etc. It could then be debated whether or not the livery worn by *bedelli*, the uniforms of university constables or the gowns worn by student union officers, for example, should also be included as academical dress.

The medieval Scottish universities probably based their Rectorial dress on that of the particular continental universities to which they looked in large measure for their constitution, ceremonies and academical dress: perhaps they regarded it simply as part of their suite of robes, academical or official. The Rectorial dress of the University of St Andrews may have been based on that of the University of Paris. The use of the shoulder cape declined during the twentieth century and hood became attached to the gown. Further unsanctioned modifications in very recent years have continued to erode links with the medieval dress. The University of Glasgow seems to have based its medieval Rectorial dress on that of the University of Bologna, having a furred hood and an unfurred one for different occasions. The current dress dates from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, when the black gown was decorated with gold braid to indicate the Rector's status as a magistrate—more official and less academical. Similarly at Aberdeen, there were two robes at medieval King's College, one of which was likely based on the red robe of the Rector of the University of Orléans. The Rectorial gown of Marischal College was similar to that of the University of St Andrews in the early nineteenth century and the current scarlet Rector's gown at Aberdeen dates from the amalgamation of the Colleges in 1860. It is more academical than official in style, resembling a doctoral full-dress robe. The Rector of the University of Edinburgh used an ordinary black doctoral/professorial gown in the seventeenth century and the current gown, designed in 1860, is black decorated with crimson and gold, and thus has taken on a more official character. The gown of the Rector of the University of Dundee is an embellished version of the Scottish undergraduate academical gown of scarlet with additional decorations in Stewart blue and shows a link to the students whom the Rector serves.

The practice of wearing degree hoods with Rectorial gowns, common in the nineteenth century, has varied between the universities but survived into the mid-twentieth century at least, although it now seems to have gone into abeyance. Even if the narrow definition of academical dress were taken, it might be said that the dress of the Rector of the University of St Andrews could be counted as it includes a hood; and that of the University of Aberdeen because it is based on the doctoral dress of that institution. However, Rectorial dress at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee is not directly associated with degree dress.

82 Another example of the former category is the Oxford Proctor's gown of office, which is a relict form of the seventeenth-century MA full-dress gown.

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Appendix: Current Rectorial Dress Regulations

University of St Andrews

GOWN 'Purple-blue corded silk gown with full sleeves, tippet, and hood, faced and lined with maroon silk and with a maroon velvet collar.'

CAP 'Black velvet cap with a maroon tassel.'⁸³

University of Glasgow

GOWN 'Black cloth, with square collar and full-length capelike sleeves: five gold bands on each sleeve.'

CAP 'Black velvet trencher cap trimmed with gold lace and with a gold tassel.'⁸⁴

University of Aberdeen

GOWN 'The Rector wears a gown ... made from scarlet cloth and having a square collar at the back. The gown is faced, down each side in front, with pink silk and the facings and collar are edged with gold lace. The sleeves are lined with pink silk and are held up in front with a crimson cord and button.'

CAP 'With this gown is worn a black velvet mortar-board cap with a gold tassel.'⁸⁵

University of Edinburgh

GOWN 'Black silk gown, with crimson velvet sleeves; the gown is trimmed round the collar and down the front edges with broad gold lace, and the sleeves round the bottom with narrower gold lace.'

CAP 'Black silk velvet trencher, with gold button and tassel.'⁸⁶

University of Dundee

GOWN 'A robe of Union Jack red (BCC210) ottoman with Stewart blue yoke collar and facings (full length facings of 5 inch width) also in ottoman. The sleeves are "cape" sleeves (as opposed to "bell" sleeves) of the same style as student gown sleeves but fuller.'

CAP 'Trencher cap in Stewart blue with silk tassel of Union Jack red.'⁸⁷

⁸³ See <<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/graduation/checklist/dress/>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

⁸⁴ Calendar 2009–10, University of Glasgow, at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_126376_en.pdf>, p. 13. Accessed 22 June 2013.

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⁸⁶ See <<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/graduations/robes-hoods>>, accessed 22 June 2013.

⁸⁷ See <<http://www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/calendar/senate/dress.htm>>, accessed 22 June 2013.