

The Development of the Burgon Society Hoods

The [s2] was straightforward, but the [f7] had a more dramatic inception, *Philip Goff writes*

It is unsurprising that a society set up for the study and enjoyment of academic dress would devote some time to discussion of costumes for its members. The truth is, however, that there was much else to do in the early years of the Society, and creating something that would be taken seriously, at least in the world of costume and dress studies, was uppermost in the minds of the founders. Of course, we had no shortage of ideas and plenty of experience, elsewhere, of dry-as-dust committees and procedures that we had no wish to replicate. In fact, the early Burgon meetings were full of fun and laughter and when we did get round to discussing costume, as might be expected, there was an abundance of proposals.

Primary Source

Wherein a Fellow's expertise and the outside world meet

A supplement to the twentieth-anniversary volume of *Transactions* records the advent of the Society's official and academic costume along with a record of how the Society was formed in 2000.¹ The specification for the Burgon Society Fellows' hood was agreed at a Council meeting in January 2001.

The FBS Congregation hood

Made in a generously cut Burgon [s2] shape,² the Fellows' Congregation hood has a shell of black corded silk or artificial silk. Its pink lining fabric is known, in the robe-making business, as judges' ruby and is a shot silk which has a crimson weft woven on an ivory white warp.³ The silk takes its name from the sleeve linings of the robes of the Bailiff of Guernsey, as can be seen in the portrait of Sir Peter Stafford Carey, Kt. (1803–86) (Fig. 1), and in the photo of HM King Charles with the current Bailiff (Fig. 2). The silk is also seen on the facings on the cuffs of the robes worn by the jurats, or judges of that island.⁴

As an admirer of this particular silk for many years, I wanted to preserve its use and was able to incorporate it into the new University of London specialist doctors' robes designed for Ede & Ravenscroft Ltd, in 1997 (Fig. 3).

The ruby shot silk was woven by Stephen Walters & Sons Ltd, of Sudbury, a company, founded in 1720, that grew out of the exodus of the Spitalfields silk weavers, who settled on the Essex/Suffolk borders in the mid-nineteenth century. Over many years

1 Philip Goff, *Hoods by the Armful* (London: Burgon Society, 2021).

2 There was never any doubt as to which shape would be used!

3 The warp colour is described in the trade as 'natural'.

4 After 1635 High Court Judges in England wore robes lined with miniver in the winter and shot pink silk in the summer, but by the mid-eighteenth century grey taffeta had replaced the pink silk. It is possible that judges in Guernsey preserved the older silk in their robes; as does the Burgon Society in its hoods.

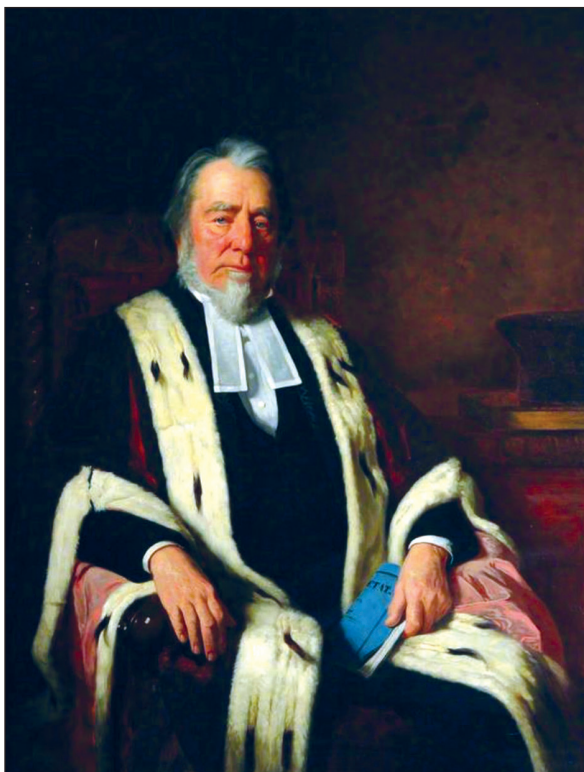


Fig. 1. Sir Peter Stafford Carey, Kt., Bailiff of Guernsey, by Frank Brooks (1854–1937).



Kit Hannah for Bailiwick Express Guernsey

Fig. 2. HM The King in the Channel Islands, in July 2024, accompanied by the Bailiff of Guernsey, Sir Richard McMahon.



Fig. 3. University of London specialist doctors' robe.

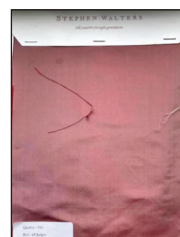


Fig. 4. Judges' ruby silk (original shade).

the company has supplied several of the familiar and much-admired silk and silk/ray-on taffetas employed in the manufacture of academic robes.

The reference given for the ruby silk by Stephen Walters is '48 Judges' and their name for the shade of silk is 'terracotta' (Fig. 4).

Nevertheless, those present at Burgon Society gatherings cannot have failed to notice that there have, for some time, appeared to be two distinctive shades of the ruby silk used for the Congregation hoods worn by Fellows, as illustrated in the photograph in Figure 5, taken at the Congregation in the University of Chester in October 2023.

Upon investigation, it seems that a redder version of the hood had appeared around 2010, although there doesn't seem to have been any previous discussion of it. However, a meeting with James Middleton, the Academic Director of Ede & Ravenscroft Ltd, also in autumn 2023, to discuss the ruby shot silk, shed some light on the issue. It transpired that by the time the company needed a new supply of the silk, it had not been woven for several years. In the meantime, the silk weaving industry had undergone a profound change. The old shuttle looms had given way to the new automated looms and when the same crimson and ivory threads were used on them, the result was a different shade of silk. Apparently, the newer looms are more sensitive to temperature and air pressure, and both of these can affect the finished shade of the product.



Fig. 5. Two versions of the lining in the Congregation hood, seen in 2023.



Fig. 7. Prototype FBS winter hood, bound with grey possum fur.

Discussion on the ruby silk is ongoing but, for the present, the Society has decided to be relaxed about the presence of both the older and newer versions of the silks.

Currently, the Society holds a stock of FBS hoods in the more recent silk, but the archivist, occasionally, is able to recycle one of the original ruby silk hoods when it is bequeathed to it.

Meanwhile, in a curiously positive outcome to a rather tragic story, the recent demise of the academic and clerical robemaking firm of J. Wippell & Co., after almost 140 years, resulted in the Society being given a wonderful opportunity to salvage many items for the archive.⁵ Amongst these, the archivist spotted a large bolt of the original judges' ruby silk, which the Society has made available to fellows and robemakers to purchase in lengths of one or two metres.⁶

Additionally, in these days when some people reject natural fibres or prefer not to wear them, the Society has sanctioned a non-silk version of the FBS hood lining. Currently, this version of the FBS hood is available from Ede & Ravenscroft. The lining material is a flat ruby coloured fabric called Vallore, although the search continues for other alternatives (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Ruby polyester silk substitute.

⁵ While this article was being prepared in summer 2024, news of Wippell's resurrection was announced. Watts & Co. have bought the name and will use its patterns and several of its skilled workers.

⁶ In order to make up a Congregation or festal hood, respectively. I'm not aware that Wippell ever made robes for Channel Islands' judges, but they did supply robes for some University of London ceremonies. Therefore, it is not surprising that they had stocked some of the ruby silk.

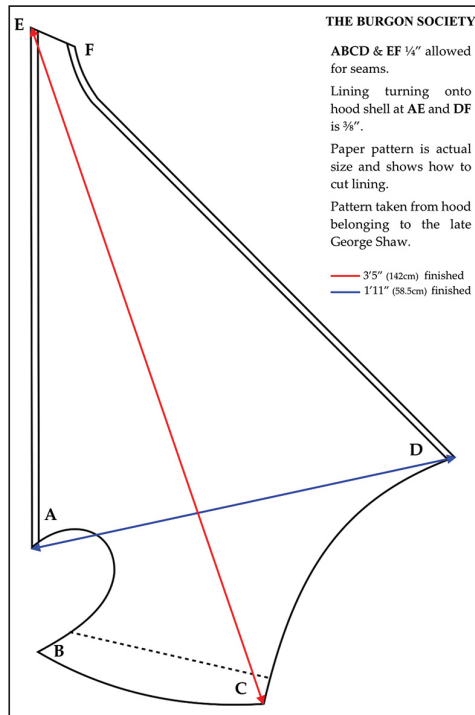


Fig. 8. Pattern for the Congregation hood.

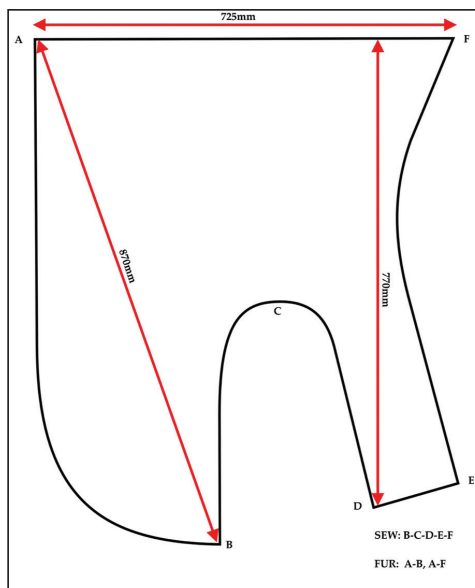


Fig. 9 (above). Pattern for the festal hood.

Fig. 11 (right). A later festal (winter) hood, made by The Revd Kenneth Crawford, Robes of Distinction.



Chris Williams

Fig. 10. An early winter (festal) hood, made by Philip Goff from an existing corded Ottoman silk shell and using fur stripped from another hood.



Philip Goff



Fig. 12. The winter (festal) hood in Fig. 10 being shown to members of Council Colin Fleming, Prof. Bruce Christianson and Dr Nicholas Jackson, by Fr Goff, in 2009.

That other Burgon Society hood

*A hood for all seasons: the festal (winter) hood;
formerly the winter (festal) hood*

Seven years after the Burgon Society was founded; with several serious scholars in our midst, a growing reputation for research and the establishment of a fine and respected journal, there was, surely, time for more discussion about hoods and gowns—our *raison d'être*. At the Council meeting of 12 May 2007, I raised the issue of a winter hood for Fellows of the Society. Council agreed that it would welcome the sight of a 'prototype for consideration, to include fur'. The minute continues, 'Consideration needs to be given as to when it is to be worn'.⁷ At the meeting I argued for use of the Warham (or medieval) shape for this hood but the mood of the Council was much more in favour of a Durham full shape.

Mention of the proposed hood appeared next in the minutes of 11 October 2008, in a single line which reads: 'Philip Goff revisited the possibility of a BS winter hood, potentially in a cosy Durham shape'.⁸

Supported by Professor Bruce Christianson, we therefore proposed to Council that, following the ancient practice in the universities of doctors wearing fur lined hoods during the winter months,⁹ it sanction a hood adorned with fur as well as silk as an option for Fellows.

This 'winter hood' was agreed at a meeting of the Council on 4 July 2009, with Professor William Gibson in the chair. The minutes of the meeting record the following:

- 3. Matters Arising
 - d) Burgon Society Winter Hood

⁷ No. 12.

⁸ I am not convinced that the word 'cosy' was used but this, clearly, is what the Secretary thought he had heard.

⁹ Originally all university graduate hoods were lined with fur. In the early fifteenth century the practice began, at Oxford anyway, of allowing those of the rank of MA and above to substitute silk-lined hoods from Easter (moveable, but always in the spring) to All Saints' Day (1 November). For a fuller treatment of the subject of fur and silk in hoods, see Bruce Christianson et al., 'Capucis Furruratis cum Serico Duplicatis: Furred Hoods with Silk Linings from the Late Nineteenth Century', in this volume at pp. 21–36.

A sample of a hood was presented [Fig. 7] which had been made in New Zealand:¹⁰ modified Durham BCL shape,¹¹ made of black cloth, lined with ruby shot silk and bound with 2" miniver. The fur on the presented hood was possum (grey); however, as it could be bleached, there will be no prescription as to the colour used. The price was estimated at around £200. It was proposed to adopt this as the Society's winter hood, and Council passed the proposal with 6 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

In the summer 2009 issue of *Burgon Notes* a notice of the new hood appears:

At its meeting in July [2009], the Council authorised a 'winter' hood for the optional use of Fellows. The hood specification is:

The winter hood is made in black cloth in the Society's modified Durham BCL shape, lined with crimson shot white silk,¹² and bound on cape and cowl edges with two inches of fur." By not specifying the colour of the fur (which may be real or artificial) the Society is permitting a range of fur colour to be used.

From winter to festal

It was pointed out that since the new hood was not entirely lined with fur but instead lined with the Society's ruby shot silk and bound around the cape and cowl with fur it was not, in the strict sense, a winter hood. Professor Bruce Christianson began to refer to it as a 'festal' hood and Dr Alex Kerr drily called it, 'a hood for all seasons'. The Council was clear, however, that the hood would not be worn at Congregation, the Society's annual foundation day gathering in October.¹³

Notwithstanding, the term 'festal hood' prevailed,¹⁴ as we can see from part of an email containing information about Burgon Society dress sent by Professor Christianson to Dr Nicholas Groves, the editor of *Shaw's Academical Dress of Great Britain and Ireland*:

Academicals for Fellows.

The FBS congregation hood is of the Burgon shape [s2], in black silk, lined and bound with ruby silk (crimson shot with ivory). The FBS festal hood is of the Society's special modified Durham [f7] shape, lined with ruby silk, edged with fur inside the cowl, and bound with fur on the cape.¹⁵ The fur may be white, with or without spots, or grey. The FBS festal hood is not worn with congregation dress.

10 By Paul Fielder of Étude Classique.

11 The pattern for the hood was cut on my vicarage dining room table, by Professor Bruce Christianson and Dr Nicholas Groves from a hood in the Burgon archive. It was modified somewhat by giving the liripipe a slightly wider angle.

12 As mentioned above, the warp of the silk is, in fact, off-white or ivory rather than white.

13 Council was keen to ensure that all Fellows should appear vested in similar hoods at Congregation, and the original Burgon shape hood has become known as the Congregation hood in consequence.

14 Professor Christianson points out that since several Fellows live in the opposite hemisphere of the world from the UK, the term 'winter hood' cannot adequately describe the garment.

15 Professor Christianson confesses that not only was his description inconsistent with what Council had agreed, but he had inexplicably failed to describe his own festal hood. He pleads incuria.

But the entry in Shaw reads:

The hood is of the Durham full shape [f7], in black silk, lined with ruby shot silk, bordered inside the cowl and bound on the cape with ‘miniver’ (real or artificial), which may be grey, plain white or spotted (‘ermine’).¹⁶

Sorting it out

Unfortunately, the disparity in the various descriptions of the hood had led to some confusion among Fellows wishing to have a festal hood made up. Moreover, robemakers have sometimes been unsure of the precise instructions to follow (partly, because some flexibility was included in the description from the beginning). Should the hood be made from silk or cloth and does ‘cloth’ include silk?¹⁷ The experience of a newish Fellow who contacted the Society for assistance, after a robemaker’s unsatisfactory attempt at making up his order, prompted me to contact those others involved in the hood’s creation.¹⁸ This has led to a highly enjoyable exchange of emails among various Fellows in which we have attempted to reconcile the inconsistencies in the descriptions of the hood and to afford the Executive Committee¹⁹ the opportunity to endorse and promulgate a definitive regulation that will assist Fellows and robemakers now and in the future.

The updated regulation

Here is the statement and approved new regulation for the Burgon Society festal hood:

In 2009, in a nod to the ancient practice of the universities, Council introduced a second hood for fellows, adorned with fur, which may be worn on festal occasions (but not at solemn occasions such as the Society’s annual Congregation). Variation of description had led to some confusion about the specification of the hood, so the Executive Committee has approved the following regulation to be followed from June 2021.

The festal (or winter) hood

A black hood of the Durham BSc shape [f7]²⁰ lined with the Society’s ruby shot silk and bound around the cape and cowl with white or grey fur, with or without spots, so that 2” fur shows all round. The fur may be real or artificial. The neckband is plain black, straight, and narrow.

Notwithstanding the above, any Fellow is entitled to wear a winter/festal hood obtained before this regulation was introduced.

The Society recognizes that Fellows may wish to have their FBS hoods made by a robemaker or tailor of their choice, or even to make them themselves. To this end, thanks to The Revd Kenneth Crawford, FBS, of Robes of Distinction, copies of the

16 Nicholas Groves (ed), *Shaw’s Academical Dress of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3rd edn (London: Burgon Society, 2011–14), Vol. II, p. 220.

17 It does.

18 One of the robemaking companies even thought that the Society had both a winter hood and a festal hood.

19 Successor to the Council.

20 Since the Durham BCL hood is now defunct, the [f7] pattern is referred to as the Durham BSc shape in the Groves classification system. This pattern is used for all bachelors’ degrees at Durham, apart from the BA and BD, but like the FBS, and unlike the BCL, the BSc has fur on the edge of the cowl, as well as on the cape.

approved patterns of both the congregation hood and festal hood are available from the Society and specimens have been deposited in our archive (Figs 8 and 9).

Whilst the Society aims for reasonable congruence in its regulation of the Congregation hood, it will be noticed that there is more scope for personal interpretation in the winter/festal, now festal/winter hood.

Afterword

Having written about the Society having two hoods, I realize that this is not strictly accurate. In fact we have three, because the original design was taken up and used in the Burgon Society logo, created by Dr John Horton, in our very early days. It depicts a dark blue [s2] hood lined and bound with crimson silk, as the Oxford MA, and surrounded by eleven Bishop Andrewes caps, representing the founders of the Society. The hood was much admired and supported but not adopted because of its similarity to the aforementioned garment. The colours, of course, have survived in the robes of our senior officers but, alas, the hood, apart from being seen in our logo, exists only as a cherished idea: perhaps as the Platonic form of the hood!

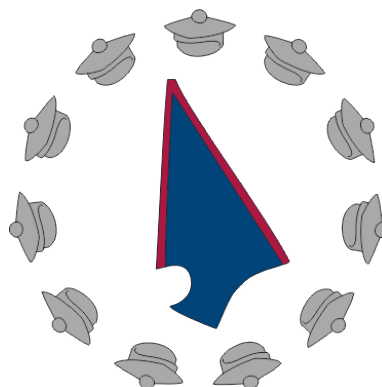


Fig. 13. The original Burgon Society hood appears only in the logo: dark blue bound with crimson silk, in the Burgon [s2] shape, surrounded by Bp Andrewes caps [h4].